



sunday pioneer

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Election Commission warns violators of penal action

'Cong approach towards TERRORISM weak and soft'

Balancing thrills of ACTING with joys of motherhood

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

KCR did not learn lessons even after people defeated him. He has struck a secret deal with the BJP to protect his daughter Kavitha, who was allegedly involved in the Delhi liquor scam and to protect his hundreds of acres around Hyderabad. KCR is criticising the BJP during the day and holding talks with them at night.

- Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, Minister

DON'T MISS...

'Atithi Devo Bhava'...

The first Experiential Tourism (ETTM) conclave will be held in Hyderabad from July 27-30. The Conclave will be organised under the aegis of the Government of Telangana and Telangana Tourism. The Tourism Committee of FTCCI is collaborating with iCONEX, a new Delhi-based international conferences and exhibitions organiser. Vijay Mohan Raj, Advisor of the Tourism Committee said, "The Mercer's Quality of Living (city ranking) for 2023 puts Hyderabad at a ranking of 153..."

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'Athletes running a mile in 4...'

Athletes who run a mile in under four minutes are found to live for about five more years than their predicted life expectancy, according to a new study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine. Researchers tracked the longevity of the first 200 athletes ever to have run a mile (roughly about a kilometre-and-a-half) in under four minutes. The athletes' 4-minute mile achievements spanned a period of 20 years from 1954 to 1974 and the runners came from 28 different...

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IMF doubts cash-strapped...

The IMF has said that Pakistan faces major debt-repayment challenges and expressed serious doubts over the cash-strapped country's capacity to repay the global lender, according to a media report on Saturday. The Washington-based bank's assessment of Pakistan's economy came as an IMF support team reached the country on Friday to hold talks with officials here after Islamabad requested a fresh bailout package under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF). "Pakistan's..."

-MONEY

Strong solar storm hits Earth...

An unusually strong solar storm hitting Earth could produce northern lights in the US this weekend and potentially disrupt power and communications. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued a rare severe geomagnetic storm warning when a solar outburst reached Earth on Friday afternoon, hours sooner than anticipated. The effects were due to last through the weekend and possibly into next week. NOAA alerted operators of power plants and spacecraft in orbit to take precautions, as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency. "For most people here on planet Earth, they won't have to do anything," said Rob Steenburgh, a scientist with NOAA's Space Weather...

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OBTUSE ANGLE



Congress trying to divide India again, says Shah

● 'We will scrap quota for Muslims'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that the Congress is trying to cut the nation into pieces. He said the Congress divided the country once and now it is trying to divide the country into North India and South India.

Addressing the media at the ITC Kakatiya Hotel on Saturday, Amit Shah said that he was confident that the BJP is going to win most of the LS seats in Karnataka, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. He said the BJP is

going to win more than 10 seats in Telangana as the party's position in 13 LS constituencies is satisfactory. He said the Congress failed to launch Rahul Gandhi successfully even though it tried almost 20 times. The Congress is on the path of failure in launching Rahul for the 21st time, he added. Amit Shah said that Telangana politics have been maligned by corruption and family politics. People have understood the situation and have decided to give more LS seats to the BJP this time, he said. He said that AIMIM is the

party running the government when the Congress or the BRS is in power.

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OVER TO VOTERS

Issues like reservations, appeasement politics, corruption, and jobs dominated the battle of narratives in the high-octane campaign for the 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana. Giving breathing space and time to think for voters, the campaign ended on Saturday. Along with political issues, some emotional issues were also raised by leaders of the Congress, Bharatiya

Janata Party, and Bharat Rashtra Samithi to turn the tide in their favour. All three parties tried their best to capture the maximum number of seats so as to be in a position to assert themselves at the

national level in the eventuality of a fractured verdict. In their campaign, Modi, Rahul, and KCR touched on sensitive issues also to drive home their point and draw voters to their fold. Now, as the *netas* are done with their part, it is the turn of the voters to make a wise choice. Polling will be held on Monday for 96 Lok Sabha seats across 10 states and UTs.



CM vows again to waive farm loans by August 15

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Declaring that he will waive farm loans up to Rs 2 lakh taken by farmers by August 15 before Ananthagiri Padmanabha Swamy, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said,

"If I don't clear farmers' loans the post of Chief Minister will be useless. There is no meaning in my life if I do not waive farm loans." The CM said that it is the responsibility of the Congress government to support farmers. Revanth said that KCR should rub his nose on the ground as the government deposited Rythu Bharosa funds in the bank accounts of farmers on May 7.

Revanth said that Prime Minister Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah are coming to Telangana every day like Sankranti Gangureddulu (Sankranti bullocks). The CM said the BJP is trying to 'divide' the nation in

the name of God and that those begging for votes in the name of God are Hindu betrayers.

He appealed to the people to ensure a majority of one lakh votes for Chevella Congress candidate G. Ranjith Reddy. Addressing the Tandur Jana Jatar public meeting on Saturday, Revanth said the BJP government cancelled the industries allocated by the UPA government as per the AP Division Act.

He said that Modi has given only a 'donkey's egg' to Telangana in the last 10 years and appealed to the people to shock the BJP by giving it a 'donkey's egg'.

Communal hatred won't work in Telangana: Priyanka

□ Says BJP destroyed India in the last 10 years

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Stating that the Telugu film 'RRR' is world famous and that the Congress also has an RR (Rahul Gandhi and Revanth Reddy), AICC General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi said that both the Congress Rs think only about the people.

She said the BJP 'destroyed' the nation in the last 10 years and that the Modi



Government has imposed the 'AA tax' through which the people's wealth is 'going' to Ambani and Adani.

She said that Modi who

said that he would bring black money and eradicate corruption committed through electoral bonds. Addressing the Tandur Jana Jatar public meeting on Saturday, Priyanka said that communal hatred will not work in Telangana as the people of Telangana are politically conscious. She said that Modi helped only the rich in the last 10 years.

Continued on Page 2

BRS, BJP blame Congress for investors dumping TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Private companies avoiding Telangana, especially the case of Tesla dumping Telangana, has become a major issue in the Lok Sabha elections.

None other than Chief Minister Revanth Reddy himself said that due to political pressure investments are going to Gujarat.

"Whenever an MNC is coming to Telangana to invest, the Centre, especially Modi and

Amit Sha, exert pressure to divert investments to Gujarat. Their only objective is that whatever investments come to India should go to Gujarat and only the spillover should go to others. Not just Tesla, many other companies rejected TG and opted for Gujarat. After May 13, I will list all the investments that went to Gujarat from Telangana.

Voter turnout in phase 3 at 65.68 pc, says EC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The updated voter turnout figures for the third phase of polling in the Lok Sabha elections stood at 65.68 per cent, the Election Commission said on Saturday.

The poll panel had given a similar voter turnout figure on May 8, a day after the third phase of voting took place. In a statement on Saturday, EC said 66.89 per cent of men, 64.4 per cent of women and 25.2 per cent of the registered transgender voters turned up at polling stations. In the third phase, 17.24 crore citizens, including 8.85 crore males and 8.39 crore females, were eligible to vote.

PM Modi on 'One nation, One leader' mission: Kejriwal

KCR plays down phone tapping

Asks: Who is Radha Kishan Rao?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao tried to distance himself from the phone-tapping case. He said that he doesn't know Radha Kishan Rao (A5) who mentioned KCR's name as "peddayana."

"Who is Radha Kishan Rao? Who is he? I don't know him. There are 100s of DCPs in the state. If you ask me, how would I know? What is this madness of phone tapping? Will any Chief Minister have any connection with phone tapping? The CM gets reports from the Intelligence department. How will I know how they are getting the reports? Whether they did it by tapping phones or paying money? How will I know," he said.

Continued on Page 2

RECALL INDIA'S IMAGE BETWEEN 2004 AND 2014

- Over 12 lakh crores plundered through multiple scams
- Scams covered earth, sky and underground
- Indians here and the diaspora couldn't hold their heads high

YOU HAVE WITNESSED A MASSIVE TRANSFORMATION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2024

India not only became corruption-free but also incorruptible

On Modi's word warring nations paused their war to facilitate safe passage for Indian students

India become the first nation to step on the south pole of the Moon

The world looks at India as Vishwa-guru and Vishwa-Mitra

PHIR EK BAAR MODI SARKAR

IT'S MODI'S GUARANTEE

This is how Modi pulls off miracles works his magic



Chief Minister's evening with veteran journalists

A journalist's basic job is to be the people's eyes and ears. The executive head of a state, who believes in keeping his ear to the ground, would love to take time out for newshounds, especially veterans in the profession who might have seen many CMs come and go. Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy willingly attended a 'Meet the Press' event organised recently by the Press Club. What did not go unnoticed at the highly anticipated event was that veteran journalists got special treatment, going by the many chances given to them to shoot questions. This table of 'grey eminence' had a mix of journalists, including K Ramchandra Murthy, Allam Narayana, Somashekar, Nagesh, and Gowrishankar, among others. All told, the message from Revanth Reddy is clear that, he, unlike his immediate predecessor, is open to feedback from all sections of journalists and that he has a high regard for scribes who know the pulse of people. The event was supposed to begin at 8:30 pm. However, it started at 9:49 pm and had to be concluded around 11:20 pm in view of the closing time of newspapers' city/late city edition. Later, the Chief Minister joined the table occupied by veteran journalists for dinner, which ended around 12:10 am with the seasoned guys prepared to sit through the 'revved-up' conversation.

CHOPPER CHODO, BUS NIKALO

Election campaigning style differs from neta to neta and is often also a reflection of their experience. First-time Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy must have realized it belatedly. The Chief Minister recently shared with scribes how campaigning in this hot summer was difficult even for star campaigners like him. "People think it is easy travelling by helicopter. But it is even more difficult in this hot summer -- very difficult", he exclaimed. The Chief Minister had used a chopper during the Assembly poll campaign too, but was comfortable then because of winter. Realising

the summer heat, Revanth's bête noire and former CM K Chandrasekhar Rao neither used a chopper nor campaigned in the open. He simply sat in an AC bus for campaign stops during his Bus Yatra. He did more than 97 meetings in the Assembly elections using helicopter. Call it the consequence of the outcome of Assembly polls or whatever; his feet are literally on the ground now.

REPORTERS' DIARY

DAKHNI RULES IN CAMPAIGN

It pays for leaders, whether local or national, to connect with people in their language and, more importantly, dialect. With Dakhni ruling the election campaign in Telangana, even Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his Hyderabad public meeting, used Dakhni to strike a chord with voters. He said "BRS, BJP, AIMIM nakko, BJP ko ich vote dhenge". AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi, throughout his poll campaign, has been using biting satire in Dakhni to corner Prime Minister. A journalist from a media house in north India, who was here to cover the election campaign, opined that their audience liked Dakhni so much so that they prefer a spokesperson who could speak the dialect, which sounds like an amalgamation of Hindustani, Telugu and Marathi.

MEDIA'S BLINKERED APPROACH

"When in Rome, do as the Romans do", goes a proverb. It underlines the importance of adapting oneself to the customs of the people who are in a certain place or situation and behave like they do. Curiously, journalists do not follow this basic etiquette even when they are in other states on campaign trails during polls. At pressers conducted by national leaders, such media representatives adopt a blinkered attitude and deliberately raise queries relating to non-local issues. Telangana has just hosted many such national media rep-

resentatives who are both blind and deaf to local issues, but ask questions about all other corners of the nation - Delhi, Mumbai, Lucknow, Kolkata or whatever. Another problem with them is that they compete with one another in asking questions, virtually mistaking local reporters' decency for diffidence. During Union Home Minister Amit Shah's recent press conference in Hyderabad, a senior reporter from a Telugu media house vented his anger at some national media representatives, observing: "What can Delhi reporters ask if Hyderabad reporters ask about Kejriwal's issue?"

THERE IS MANY A SLIP BETWEEN THE CUP AND THE LIP

At times, the outcome may be certain; but a slip of the tongue could prove costly; more so, during election campaigns. During public meetings, netas can ill-afford to shoot themselves in their foot. Unfortunately, in both Telugu states, prominent netas did precisely this. In Telangana, BRS trouble shooter T Harish Rao, while campaigning in the Karimnagar Lok Sabha constituency in support of BRS candidate G Vinod Kumar, mistakenly appealed to people to 'vote for the Congress' in the Lok Sabha elections scheduled for 13th May. It took shocked BRS candidate Vinod Kumar some time to correct Harish, who then sheepishly reworded his appeal to 'favour BRS'. Of course, Congress leaders who had fond hopes that Harish will join them winked at the mistake. Likewise, in Andhra Pradesh, Telugu Desam Party supremo N Chandrababu Naidu, while addressing a public meeting in the Rayachoti Assembly constituency, urged people to vote for Srikanth Reddy who is the YSR Congress' candidate for the seat in the Assembly elections. After 'Ayyo Rama' cries from Ramprasad Reddy, the TDP candidate for the seat, Chandrababu corrected himself. The affected candidates know that such mistakes are no laughing matter during high-stakes poll.

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

'INDIA bloc storming, Modi won't be PM after Jun 4'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday claimed the storm of INDIA bloc is everywhere and Narendra Modi will not be the prime minister after June 4.

He said this while sharing a post on X by sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra of a crowd at a rally at Nandurbar in Maharashtra. "Be it Maharashtra or Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, the storm of India is blowing everywhere. I say it again - Narendra Modi will not be the Prime Minister after June 4," Rahul Gandhi wrote.

The post by Priyanka Gandhi showed a huge crowd gathering for the Congress rally.

"Heartfelt gratitude to the people of Nandurbar, Maharashtra for this enthusiastic welcome.

The message of Maharashtra is clear - India's government is going to be formed," she said.

Nandurbar was a Congress stronghold for long but the party lost for the first time in 2014. BJP's Heena Gavit defeated Manikrao Gavit, a nine-time MP of the Congress who had held the seat since 1981.

Kharge: Why no action against Ambani, Adani for 'sending black money to Cong'?

PNS ■ SAMASTIPUR

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday lashed out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, questioning why did his government not take any action if, as per his allegation, industrialists Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani were sending black money to the grand old party. Addressing an election rally in Bihar's Samastipur, Kharge

asserted that Modi could become the prime minister of India only because Congress fought for its Independence. "PM Modi says we are silent on Ambani and Adani, we are not... I am asking why did his government not take any action if, according to his allegation, we received black money from these industrialists? Is it because they themselves received black money?" Kharge alleged.

BJP MP Navneet booked for statements against Akbaruddin

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Saidabad police booked BJP MP Navneet Kaur Rana on Friday for her alleged statements against AIMIM leader Akbaruddin Owaisi.

A criminal case was registered against Navneet following a complaint by Ch. Rakesh, a flying squad member of the Yakutpura Assembly constituency. In his complaint, Rakesh said that Navneet had made the alleged statements during a public meeting at Laxmi Garden on May 8. Reacting to Akbaruddin's 2012 speech, the BJP MP said she needed only 15 seconds to act against the Owaisi brothers.

KCR struck secret deal with BJP to save Kavitha: Ponguleti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao did not learn any lesson even after the people defeated him, Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said here on Saturday. He said that KCR entered into a secret pact with the BJP to protect his daughter Kavitha who was allegedly involved in the Delhi liquor scam.

The Revenue Minister also said that KCR has a secret pact to protect his hundreds of acres around Hyderabad City and the thousands of crores that were looted through pro-



jects. Addressing the media at Khammam on Saturday, Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said that KCR did not respond even after Medigadda's piers sagged.

Moreover, KCR has been criticising the Congress stating that drought came due to the Congress, he pointed out.

He said that KCR had said that he had read 80,000 books but he never used to come to the Assembly. However, the same KCR launched the Bus Yatra, he said. Ponguleti made it clear that KCR will not be even able to touch the praja government.

He said KCR was criticising BJP during the day and holding talks with BJP leaders at night. He never bothered about the unemployed, farmers and women, Ponguleti added.

'I will not bow before Modi even if beheaded'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA KTR said that even if he is beheaded he will not bow before Modi. "We live only once, die once and we will not bow to them. This is our promise," he said while speaking at a meeting of Secunderabad Parliament constituency minorities.

"The Congress will say that the BJP and the BRS are one. If there is really such a friendship, will KCR's daughter be in



jail for 50 days? Is there any Congress leader or is their daughter or son in jail? Only people like KCR's daughter,

Hemant Soren and Kejriwal are in jail for fighting the BJP," KTR said.

"There are four crore Muslims in Uttar Pradesh, but only Rs 1,600 crore have been budgeted for them. There are more than two crore Muslims in Bengal and the budget for them is Rs 2,000 crore. But in Telangana for 50 lakh Muslims, there is a budget of Rs 2,200 crore. Only KCR has worked honestly for the minorities and the poor," KTR said.

"Religious harmony was preserved during KCR's rule. There was no need to impose a curfew even once. KCR never engaged in politics citing religion. 204 minority schools have been established. Has anyone got Ramadan Tofa? No, because the Congress government is here. RSS man Revanth's admin is here," he said.

"He will go to AP Ki Adalat programme and ask Modi to vote there too," KTR said.

BRS, BJP blame Congress...

Continued from page 1

Some companies left the country as they were forced to listen to Modi and Amit Shah to get permission from the Centre. As of now, Tesla is trying to go to China," he said.

Reacting to this Union Home Minister Amit Shah said, "The way he is running the government in Telangana, I don't think anyone is going to invest there. If he had a problem, he could have met the Prime Minister and asked

for investments. Every state takes help from the Prime Minister to get investments. No one will invest in Telangana due to the rampant corruption there."

When asked about the CM's statements regarding investments moving out of Telangana, BRS supremo KCR said, "If there is such an incapable Chief Minister companies will go to Gujarat, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and everywhere else. What is he doing if Modi took away Tesla? When we

were in power too such things happened. Modi tried to use international lobbyists to stop Facebook from coming to TG. We resisted that and brought some big companies here."

It may be mentioned here that within a week of postponing his visit to India, Tesla CEO Elon Musk landed in Beijing to push for Full Self-Driving (FSD) cars, proving China's importance in the global supply chain for the world's most valuable electric vehicle maker.

Cong will get fewer seats than age of its 'Shehzada': PM

PNS ■ CHATRA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday flayed the opposition INDIA bloc for "insulting" President Droupadi Murmu after she visited Ayodhya's Ram temple, and asserted that the Congress will get fewer seats than the age of its 'shahada'.

Addressing a poll rally at Chatra, Modi also said leaders of the alliance are planning to merge small parties post the Lok Sabha polls to attain opposition status. "Congress will get fewer seats than the age of its 'shahada'," the PM said, in an apparent reference to Rahul Gandhi, and added that the bloc "has already accepted defeat." "The mentality of the Congress is of the 18th century... after the President paid obeisance at the Ram temple, they talked about cleaning the temple... they insulted the President," Modi said.

He also asserted that NDA governments would be formed in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Arunachal Pradesh where simultaneous assembly polls were underway.

I will join the PM race if...

Continued from page 1

Addressing a press conference on Saturday, KCR said that definitely, a coalition government of regional parties will take over at the Centre. "The BJP or the Congress may have to support us instead of us seeking their support," KCR said.

"The BJP might get one LS seat or none in TG. The BJP won't cross 10 seats in South India. The BRS will get 12 to 14 seats. In nine constituencies the Congress is third. Modi's

graph has gone down. No more 400 paar but it is difficult to get even 200. Give me 14 LS seats, I will show what Telangana can do. Telangana will decide national politics," KCR said.

He said that Goebbels would die out of shame seeing the BJP's propaganda. Ten years of Modi rule was a failure. "The GDP growth rate was 6.5% before 2014. In the Modi era, it is just 5.8%. Even one lakh Revanth's cannot wipe out the BRS," KCR said.

He said the Chief Minister

is not saying which year August 15 he will waive loans, that is, this year or the next year.

KCR rejected Kharge's statements and said, "Kharge talking about Hyderabad becoming a UT is not good. We will fight it out."

On defections, KCR said that the "Sunflower gang has increased in Telangana."

"The people are asking if this government is a curse on us. No CM will say that his state is bankrupt as it damages the state's image," KCR said.

KCR plays...

Continued from page 1

"The police whenever they tap phones do it as per The Telegraph Act after taking the Home Secretary's permission. There is an option to destroy the data as per The Telegraph Act after a specified duration. Without knowing this, they are making a mountain out of a molehill," he said.

"This government is silly and making the phone tapping issue big. Isn't intelligence tapping phones for the Chief Minister? Every government will have its intelligence wing. Every morning intelligence report comes and they brief the Chief Minister about the law and order situation, bomb blasts, accidents, gangs, spurious seeds etc. No Minister is connected with tapping. We are only concerned with reports. How they got the report we don't know.

food grains and Rs 2,500 to every woman from BPL families. However, Revanth Reddy is implementing one assurance given to the high command, that is, sending money from Telangana to meet election campaign expenses nationwide," he said.

Stating that senior Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar and INDIA leader Farooq Abdullah's statements were against national integrity, Amit Shah said that the BJP condemns them.

He said that the Congress engaged in a false campaign that the BJP would scrap reservations by editing his video. He said that the Congress has been stating that it will restore Article 370, triple talaq, personal law etc.

Congress trying...

Continued from page 1

Amit Shah said that giving four per cent reservations to Muslims is nothing but violating the rights of SCs, STs and BCs. He made it clear that the BJP would scrap the reservations for Muslims immediately after coming to power.

Amit Shah said that the Congress government in Telangana failed to implement its six guarantees.

"The Congress assured that it will waive farm loans up to Rs 2 lakh on Sonia Gandhi's birthday. However, it failed to mention the date of Sonia's birthday. The Congress government failed to implement the Rs 15,000 per acre Rythu Bharosa scheme, the promise to pay Rs 500 as a bonus for every quintal of

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Panchami: May 12 02:04 AM to May 13 02:04 AM
Shashthi: May 13 02:04 AM to May 14 02:50 AM

Nakshatram:
Ardra: May 11 10:15 AM to May 12 10:26 AM
Punarvasu: May 12 10:26 AM to May 13 11:23 AM

Rahukalam: 5:00 PM to 6:36 PM
Yamagandam: 12:12 PM to 1:48 PM
Varjyam: 10:55 PM to 12:35 AM
Gulika: 3:24 PM to 5:00 PM

Amritkalam: None
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:46 AM to 12:38 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 36°
Humidity: 51%
Sunrise: 5:45 AM
Sunset: 6:40 PM

Updated: May 11 2024 5:00 PM

Auxiliary polling station set for 10 voters in Nagarkurnool

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has set up an auxiliary polling station for 10 electors in Nagarkurnool parliamentary constituency for elections on May 13. ECI has set up 453 Auxiliary polling stations in the state.

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Vikas Raj said that 11 polling stations have less than 25 voters each, 22 polling stations have less than 50 voters each, 54 polling stations have less than 100 voters each have been set up for the elections. The top four least voters' polling stations are in Nagarkurnool parliamentary constituency and in Achampet assembly constituency. The polling stations have been set up for 14 voters, 14 voters, 15 voters.

After that for 20 voters, the ECI has set up a polling station in Nalgonda Parliament segment and Devarakonda assembly constituency.

PAID HOLIDAY ON POLLING DAY

Election Commission warns violators of penal action

CEO Vikas Raj said that the EC received complaints that some companies are not willing to grant holiday to their employees

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Vikas Raj said that the Election Commission is getting reports that certain software and other companies have refused to grant paid holiday to their employees on the day. Any body found will face penal action.

On Saturday he held a press conference in BRK Bhavan in Hyderabad. He said that the Election Commission of India has identified 9,900 critical polling stations in the state. The ECI has received 92 complaints from the political parties in the state and it issued notices to them. Those who received notices should reply to the ECI within 14 days. For the first time, the ECI was sending SMS directly to the



voters of a particular age group to participate in voting.

The Commissioning of all the EVMs had been completed. A total 293 cases related to drugs and narcotics, 449 cases related to IPC cases were registered.

A total of 160 Central Forces

Companies, 72,000 State police, 20,000 From neighboring States, 4,000 Other uniformed Services have been deployed for the elections. A total of 1,05,019 Ballot Units (BU), 44,569 Control Units (CU), 48,134 Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) are available for the elections.

A total of 559 approvals given to advertisements by MCMC, 11,112 Permissions given under Suvidha, 2,342 complaints received through C-Vigil, 511 complaints received through 1950 call-centre, 10,526 complaints received through National Grievance Service Portal (NGSP).

Display of election campaign related matters on TV, cinematograph and other apparatus banned for 48 hour.

City CP police personnel: Facilitate free and fair polls

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Police Commissioner Kothakota Sreenivas Reddy on Saturday took stock of the law and order situation ahead of the Lok Sabha elections in Hyderabad on May 13.

The Police Commissioner stressed the need to intensify enforcement activities two days ahead of the elections.

As campaigning comes to a close, door-to-door campaigning will be conducted. The Commissioner also gave instructions on carrying mobile phones of voters. "Proper food arrangements have been made for the entire police force.

The police personnel are expected to exhibit good and impartial behaviour and have a neat turnout uniform on polling day," he added. The Police Commissioner also gave suggestions on the safety of EVMs. "Misuse of public transport and private transport will not be allowed for ferrying of voters.

Show inked finger, get discount on food, ticket to Hyd park

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In an attempt to boost voter turnout during Lok Sabha election in Telangana, discounts are offered to those who exercised their franchise.

Swiggy Dineout has offered a 50 per cent discount to customers who show their inked fingers. The discount will be offered at eateries which include Antera Kitchen and Bar, PaPaYa, Air Live, Food Exchange - Novotel, Turquoise - Le Meridien Hyderabad, Red Rhino, Coffee Cup and others.

The initiative highlights Swiggy Dineout's dedication to promoting active citizenship and empowering individuals to make their voices heard through the ballot box. By combining the pleasure of dining out with the responsibility of voting, Swiggy Dineout and the city's restaurants are seeking to elevate the electoral experience and drive higher voter turnout in Hyderabad.

Commenting on the initiative, Swapnil Bajpai, Head of Swiggy Dineout said, "Voting is not just a right; it's a privilege and a responsibility. Hyderabad park for those who vote.



Swiggy Dineout is thrilled to join hands with the city's top restaurants in fostering active citizenship, urging Hyderabadis to turn out in large numbers and vote. And what better way to savor the satisfaction of making your mark at the polls than with a delightful meal at your favorite restaurant. We hope citizens embrace their democratic rights and play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our nation."

Similarly, Wonderla is offering a 20 per cent discount on tickets to its

Hyderabad park for those who vote.

The offer will be applicable for online and offline bookings on May 13, 14 and 15 at the Wonderla Hyderabad park. To avail the offer, an inked finger will be verified at the park entrance.

Commenting on the initiative, Arun Chittilapilly, Managing Director, Wonderla Holidays Ltd said, "As responsible citizens, voting is our duty towards the nation.

At Wonderla, we strongly believe that this initiative is our little step towards encouraging individuals to vote."

Police seize cash, liquor and drugs worth Rs 186 cr: DGP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Director General of Police (DGP) Ravi Gupta said on Saturday that State police seized cash, liquor, narcotic drugs, precious metals, and other freebies worth Rs 186.14 crore since March 16.

The DGP office released a press statement where it mentioned that the police seized Rs 93.94 crore cash, Rs 10.07 crore worth of liquor, Rs 7.86 crore worth of narcotic drugs, Rs 62.77 crore worth of precious metals, and Rs 11.48 crore worth of other freebies have been seized since March 16.

Ravi Gupta said that in view of elections on May 13, a total of 73,414 civil police personnel, 500 units of Telangana State Special Police (TSSP), 164 companies of Central armed police forces, three special companies of Tamil Nadu, 2088 other department personnel, and 7,000 home guards



would be deployed for elections.

As many as 428 Fixed Static Teams (FST), 462 Static Surveillance teams (FST), 89 inter-state borders, 173 inter district check-posts have been set up as the Election Commission of India rules.

The DGP said that a total of 8,863 FIRs were registered under Indian Penal Code (IPC), and Representation of the People Act, 1951. 34,526 individuals identified as rowdies and offenders have been bound over.

The control room in the DGP office would start work

from 7 am on 12 May. It will work till the last Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) reached the strong rooms. He appealed to the citizens to exercise their vote on May 13.

Meanwhile, The Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Tarun Joshi said that in the limits of Rachakonda, the enforcement teams have seized Rs 11.9 crore since the MCC came into force. Along with the money the police seized 12,240 litres of liquor, 245 grams of precious metals, Rs 1.95 crore worth of drugs and Rs 9.26 lakh worth of freebies have been seized.

On Saturday, he held a press meet at CP office in Neredmet, where he said that there are 5 parliament constituencies and 13 assembly segments that either fall fully or partly under Rachakonda commissionerate. There are a total of 3,396 polling stations, 1590 polling locations.

Jubilee Hills Police bust prostitution racket

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's Task Force (West Zone) in coordination with the Jubilee Hills police on Saturday busted a prostitution racket and rescued a minor girl.

The police arrested P Laxmi (38), a junior artiste in the film industry. The accused took to prostitution business due to a financial crunch.

Laxmi operated a brothel at her residence and engaged several girls. The minor victim was raised by the accused since the former was a toddler.

The victim was emotionally blackmailed into it. However, upon her refusal, she endured physical torture. She suffered burn injuries, beating, and even dropped out from school.

LEASE OF LAND AT ARMOUR BUS STATION

Ex-MLA Jeevan Reddy owes Rs 2.51 cr to TSRTC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) has clarified that the corporation has served more than 20 notices in the span of five years to the owners of Jeevan Reddy Mall in Armour and they are liable to pay Rs 2.51 crore to the TSRTC.

On Saturday, the TSRTC released a press statement saying that former MLA Jeevan Reddy was making false allegations that he had not received any notice and he was not paying GST to the government. The TSRTC did serve notice to the former MLA as per the agreement and in accordance with the High Court order.

"TSRTC and Vishnuit Infra Developers Private Limited have signed an agreement in 2013. In that agreement it has mentioned that 7,053 square yards of land at Armour bus stop in Nizamabad district will be given to that company for 33 years", the press



release mentioned.

It further said the company has developed a shopping mall at the allotted place. In 2017, Rajita Reddy, wife of former MLA Jeevan Reddy, took over Vishnuit Infra Developers Private Limited and named the shopping mall as Jeevan Reddy Mall and Multiplex. The stalls in it were leased out to third parties. The company has developed a shopping mall at that place.

It said that in 2017, Rajita Reddy, wife of former MLA Jeevan Reddy, took over Vishnuit Infra Developers Private Limited and named the shopping mall as Jeevan Reddy Mall and Multiplex. The stalls in it

were leased out to third parties.

"Later, the company has not paid rent accordingly. As of October 2015, the company owes Rs.4.30 crore to the TSRTC. With this, the corporation issued the termination order. As a result, they paid Rs. 69 lakhs in two instalment. As of October, 2023, now the company owed Rs 8.65 crore to the TSRTC. After issuing notices again, the company paid Rs 1.50 crores in October. Then another show-cause notices were sent and Rs 2.40 crore was paid in installments in December last year," communique mentioned.

Later, The company approached the High Court challenging the show-cause notice. After the High Court issued an interim order to pay the arrears to TSRTC, Rs 2 crores were paid in installments in January and February this year. On March 27, the High Court gave clear instructions to pay all the dues in this case within a month.

'Atithi Devo Bhava' campaign, cabbies as brand ambassadors on cards

First Experiential Tourism conclave in city from July 27

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The first Experiential Tourism (ETM) conclave will be held in Hyderabad from July 27-30. The Conclave will be organised under the aegis of the Government of Telangana and Telangana Tourism. The Tourism Committee of FTCCI is collaborating with iCONEX, a new Delhi-based international conferences and exhibitions organiser.



Representatives of the FTCCI and ETM at the curtain raiser event in Hyd on Saturday

Vijay Mohan Raj, Advisor of the Tourism Committee said, "The Mercer's Quality of Living (city ranking) for 2023 puts Hyderabad at a ranking of 153 among global cities". The ETM Conclave promotes the city and tourism potential of the Telangana state. 975 nm tourists travelled across the globe from Jan to Sept 2020. Tourism industry globally contributes 7.7 trillion US dollar to the GDP. Tourism is the largest industry

world over. Tourism needs Industry status, he said. We need to work together to ensure that it gets its due recognition by the government. Tourism in India contributed before the covid 3% to the GDP. But it fell to 0.6% during the covid. Now the industry has fully recovered. Rakhi Kankaria, Chairperson of FTCCI Tourism Committee said it will be an annual calendar of events. She highlighted various activities including Atithi

Devo Bhava Campaign, branding auto and cab drivers as brand ambassadors of the city to attract tourists taken up by the Tourism Committee in the past. The auto and cab drivers will also be taught English (a working knowledge of the subject) to deal with their customers/ tourists. We will be releasing an audio book towards the same, she shared. ETM Conclave will be an annual affair here after she declared. "Travel industry is all

about Experience, hence the theme, Experiential Tourism MICE Conclave. The event brings together all the 40 vertices of the Tourism under one roof," she added

Abhimanyu Singh the Director of iCONEX said "Hyderabad needs to compete with globally the best cities like New York and other. ETM helps to position the city among the best in the world."

Various Industries representatives such as HRATS-Hotel and Restaurant Association Telangana; SKAL, Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), TAFI-The Travel Agents Federation of India, TOAT—Tour Operator Association of Telangana, TTAT—Tours and Travel Agents Association of Telangana spoke briefly about their respective organisations and their activities.

Chief Electoral Officer Telangana

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Documents that can be used as Proof of Identity at Polling Stations
Those electors who are not able to produce the EPIC, can carry the following documents.

1. EPIC	2. Aadhaar Card	3. MNREGA Job Card
4. Passbook (Issued by Bank/Post Office with photo)	5. Health Insurance Smart Card (Issued under the scheme of Ministry of Labour)	6. Driving License
7. Pan Card	8. Smart Card (Issued under the scheme of Ministry of Labour)	9. Passport
10. Pension Document With photo	11. Service Identity Card (Issued to employees by Central/State Govt./ Public/ Private/ Limited Companies)	12. Official Identity Card (Issued to MPs/WLAs/WLCs)
13. Unique Disability ID (UDID)		

Please Note : Voter Information Slip and e-EPIC cannot be used as Identity Proof at Polling Station. They are only for guidance. Cell phones and Electronic gadgets will not be allowed in the polling booth.

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Jagadish Reddy predicts utter defeat of NDA

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Defeat is certain for National Democratic Alliance and grand alliance of Opposition parties, headed by Congress, will win in the Lok Sabha elections, predicted former minister G Jagadish Reddy.

Addressing the media here on Saturday, he said that there was no substance in the allegations levelled by Bade Bhai (Modi) and Chote Bhai (Revanth Reddy) former chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao.

The Revanth Reddy government could not do any good to the people, he alleged. Narendra Modi is extending a hand of friendship to insignificant political outfits and parties whose operations are limited to the district would mean that the BJP is certainly getting defeated, he analysed.

The regional parties which

are not party to either INDIA alliance or the NDA are going to wield the authority, he predicted.

The people have realised that Revanth Reddy is not fit to hold the CM post, he said. The statements issued by Modi and Amit Shah are not up to their stature, he felt.

Bade Bhai and Chote Bhai have failed to leave their mark on the electioneering, he remarked.

Revanth Reddy could not do anything good to the state except levelling allegations against the political rivals and spreading Gobelis, he said.

The Congress government is not going to continue the old schemes, leave alone implementing its six guarantees, he said.

He predicted BRS winning majority of the Lok Sabha seats in the elections.



INDIA bloc does not have PM candidate, mocks Shah

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday criticised Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy for claiming that an intelligence failure had led to Pulwama incident. The incident claimed several lives of the police personnel.

Referring to Chief Minister's comments on surgical strikes, he asked, "Revanth Reddy, where did you keep your mind? You kept it in Italy?"

Speaking at a public rally in Vikarabad, Home Minister Amit Shah launched a scathing attack on the opposition INDIA bloc, stating that the alliance has no prime ministerial candidate and cannot match the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Amit Shah accused the INDIA bloc of failing to nominate a consensus candidate for the prime minister's post,



Union Home Minister Amit Shah greeting Chevella Lok Sabha BJP candidate Konda Vishweshwar Reddy in Vikarabad on Saturday

claiming that they have no alternative to Modi. He highlighted their response to a reporter's question, where they stated that their leaders would take turns holding the country's most powerful post.

"Who would be their leader to save us from another pandemic like Covid-19? Who

asserting that Modi is the only leader capable of taking the country forward.

He compared the NDA and INDI alliances, alleging corruption and scams by the opposition when they held top public offices. Shah emphasized Modi's integrity, contrasting it with the alleged corruption of Congress and its allies.

Shah also took a dig at Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, contrasting Modi's dedication to duty with Rahul Gandhi's frequent vacations.

The Home Minister urged voters to choose between the appeasement politics of the INDI alliance and the leadership of the BJP, which he claimed prioritizes the country's interests.

Telangana is gearing up for the fourth phase of the general elections, with voting for all 17 Lok Sabha seats scheduled for May 13.

Shah listed Modi's achievements, including hosting world leaders at the G20 summit and India's space achievements,

Komatireddy asks party workers to remain alert for next 48 hours

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy has called upon the Congress workers to work hard for two days to ensure party victory in Lok Sabha elections.

He predicted that the INDIA bloc is going to come to power in the country. He spoke with important leaders of Nalgonda, Bhongir, and Secunderabad Assembly segments here on Saturday and gave directions for the strategy to be adopted on the polling day.

He asked the Congress workers to remain alert for 48 hours till the completion of the polling and work like soldiers. He asked them to reach out to each and every house and win the hearts and minds of the people and ensure that they all vote for the Congress.

They asked the party workers to see to it that the rural voters living in urban areas go to villages and cast their votes.

The Congress victory is almost certain in Nalgonda, Bhongir and Secunderabad seats.

Further, the party is going to win 14 seats with a thumping victory. At this juncture, he asked the party workers to remain more alert.

He salutes the untiring efforts and fighting spirit of the party workers by virtue of which the minister is able

to serve four crore people of Telangana. In future, he said that he would work with team spirit under leadership of CM A Revanth Reddy to develop the state and fulfill the aspirations of the people.

He appealed to the people to bless the Congress wholeheartedly because it gave statehood to Telangana.



Political parties arrange buses for Telugu states' voters living in other states

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

A single vote may make all the difference in the LS elections and it can change the fate of candidates. So candidates who are contesting in the Telangana Lok Sabha elections and the Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections are not hesitating to spend money to bring in voters.

Many Telugus hailing from both the Telugu states are living in neighbouring states. Some people are working for private companies while some have gone to other states in search of livelihood. Candidates are inquiring with their relatives in their hometowns about who all are working in other states. In Telangana, particularly in GHMC areas, there are a sizeable number of voters belonging to Andhra Pradesh. In Maharashtra, particularly in Mumbai, many Telangana people are working in private firms.

Candidates are now arranging special buses to bring them to their native places so that they can vote. Polling is scheduled for Monday and Saturday



and Sunday are holidays. The government has declared Monday a holiday.

So Telugus who are working in other states have three days continuous holidays. This enables them to spend three days in their native places. In addition to this, political parties are arranging free transport for them to go to their native places and to return to their workplaces. Some candidates are even booking flight tickets to bring voters.

Telugus are working in states like Gujarat and West Bengal too. Except for a few most Telugus who are working in other states have not transferred their votes and they continue to be voters in Telugu states.

A senior political leader

said that there is nothing new in this. During every election political parties are doing the same. He said some political parties are also offering money to daily wage workers who are working in far-off places to come and vote.

From Hyderabad city lakhs of people are going to Andhra Pradesh to vote. Telangana and Andhra Pradesh RTCs and private operators are operating special buses to Andhra Pradesh. Some people are going on their own to Andhra Pradesh in buses and trains.

Usually during festivals like Sankranti and Dasara lakhs of people go to their native places in Andhra Pradesh. For some people, elections have also become a festival, that is, a 'festival of votes'.



BRS campaign evokes good response: Vinod

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

BRS candidate Karimnagar Lok Sabha constituency B Vinod Kumar on Saturday claimed unprecedented response from the voters to the BRS election campaign during the past two months. The people are eager to vote for the pink party to power again.

Addressing the media along with the local MLA Gangula Kamalakar, he said that party MLAs, former MLAs, elected people's representatives and the party functionaries extensively campaigned in all the seven Assembly segments.

The people, who had voted for the Congress in the Assembly elections have now decided to vote for the BRS, he said.

Terrorism will rear its head if Congress comes power: MP Dharmapuri Arvind

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

Local MP Dharmapuri Arvind has predicted that terrorists rule the roost in the country in the event of Congress coming to power after the Lok Sabha elections and felt that there should be perceptible change in the people's perception.

Fielding questions from scribes at the Meet-the-Press held at the local Press Club here on Saturday, he wondered at members of prohibited terrorist organisations have been openly supporting the Congress.

Expressing concern over the national security, Arvind demanded that the Congress spell out its stand on the national security. Coming

down heavily on the Congress, he insisted that the Congress should seek votes only after spelling out its national security policy.

Revanth Government duped the people through the programmes like Kalyana Lakshmi, Maha Lakshmi, hiking Asara pension amount, bonus for paddy and other freebies, he said predicting the collapse of the government for having duped the people.

He described the current Lok Sabha elections as those who are aimed at safeguarding India's tradition and culture. He

called the present election as 'Narendra Modi' elections. The current elections play a significant role in the national safety and security, he opined.

Building Ram Mandir at Ayodhya is included in the BJP manifesto since long. However, the BJP succeeded in getting the temple built at Ram Janmabhoomi after winning the legal battles, he remarked.

Modi government has been specially striving for the welfare of all sections of society without discriminating the Hindus or the Muslims. The Congress Party has affected the

highest number of amendments to the Indian Constitution, he said questioning the rationale behind Congress including the word secular in the Preamble of the Constitution. Some persons have been politicizing the issue, he said.

The Modi government would implement alternative livelihood opportunities to those who are indulged in the work of rolling beedies, he said.

He advised Revanth to stop preaching sermons. He appealed to the election authorities not to allow women sporting veils to exercise their right to franchise. He said he had written to the EC in this regard. He wanted EC to pay special attention to this.



Maoists' posters, pamphlets ask people to boycott elections

PNS ■ MULUGU

The Maoist party called upon the people of Telangana to boycott the Lok Sabha elections. Handbills appeared on Saturday in the region of Telangana-Chhattisgarh border created sensation.

The wall posters and pamphlets, asking people of Telangana to boycott elections, purported to be issued by the Maoists appeared in Jagannadhapuram Y Junction area of Wajedu Mandal of

Mulugu district. The extremists appealed to the voters through the posters and handbills to boycott the elections.

The publicity material was issued in the name of Venkatapuram-Wajedu area committee. The issue of the wall posters and handbills some hours before the commencement of polling have created quite a sensation in the region. This has put the central security forces and police personnel on the highest state

of alertness. The security forces have been deployed in strength in Agency areas. Extensive combing is going on in the nearby villages. Security is being beefed up to ensure free and fair elections on Monday. In areas identified as problematic the elections would conclude by 4 pm.

Meanwhile, the elections for Lok Sabha in Telangana have reached the final phase with curtains coming down on electioneering on Saturday

evening. The public address systems what worked continuously for over 50 days have fallen silent.

The polling is going to be held from 7 am to 6 pm on May 13. However, in the areas identified by EC as problematic the elections would conclude by 4 pm.

Elections are being held for 17 Lok Sabha seats and a lone Assembly seat of Secunderabad Cantonment constituency on Monday. The results will be declared on June 4.

All set for polling on May 13: Collector

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

District Collector K Shashanka has urged every eligible voter to exercise their franchise on May 13 freely. Necessary arrangements for conducting the elections in the seven Assembly constituencies under the Lok Sabha constituency have been completed, he said.

At a press conference held at the Returning Officer's office in Rajender Nagar, the Collector, along with Chevella DCP Srinivas, disclosed details about the arrangements made for polling and counting. They assured that all measures have been taken to ensure that people can cast their votes in a peaceful environment.

Shashanka said that voters can use any one of the 13 types of identity cards prescribed by the Election Commission, even if they don't have a voter card. Polling will take place from 7.00 am to 6.00 pm, with an extension of one hour beyond the usual closing time. He emphasized the importance of



Ranga Reddy Collector K Shashanka addressing a press conference in Ranga Reddy on Saturday

every voter exercising their right and stressed the significance of democracy.

Campaigns and awareness programs have been organised in all constituencies to increase the polling percentage, with special attention given to urban areas where polling was low in previous elections. The distribution of voter information slips to voters has been completed with a success rate of 99.23%.

Security measures have been intensified with surveillance doubled since 72 hours before polling. Campaign activities are prohibited 48 hours before

polling, and permission must be obtained from the MCMC for political advertisements.

A total of 2877 polling stations have been set up within the Parliament segment, each equipped with facilities like tents, toilets, ramps, wheelchairs, drinking water, and fans. Arrangements have been made for problematic polling centers with webcasting and CC camera surveillance. Additionally, 216 micro-observers will serve at critical polling stations.

There are a total of 29,38,370 voters in the Chevella Lok

Sabha constituency, with facilities provided for senior citizens above 85 years of age and disabled voters to vote from home.

Regarding polling logistics, EVMs have been moved to the Assembly Constituency Centers through randomization and secured in strong rooms. A total of 10,757 (reserve) ballot units, 3591 control units, and 4008 VVPats have been allocated.

Security arrangements at polling centers include five-level security, sector officers, police teams, quick response teams, A.C.P. supervision, and monitoring by DCP, CP, and ADG. Prohibited items include bulk SMS, voice messages, recorded voices, and firecrackers.

In light of the polling, Section 144 will be in force at all polling stations, and non-locals are advised to return to their respective areas. Only polling staff and voters are allowed to enter the polling centers, with candidates and agents instructed to follow the rules strictly.

NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

JAGAN TO PITHAPURAM PEOPLE

You elect her, I'll make her Dy CM

CM flays Oppn's manifesto, alleging it would burden the State with Rs 1.65 lakh cr annually

PNS ■ PITHAPURAM

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy assured the residents of the Pithapuram Assembly constituency that YSRCP MLA candidate Vanga Geetha would be appointed as Deputy Chief Minister once the party regains power.

Addressing the final campaign rally in Pithapuram on Saturday before the commencement of the silence period, Jagan Mohan Reddy said, "The Opposition coalition's newly presented manifesto boasts an estimated cost to the government of Rs 1.65 lakh crore annually. However, the people can discern their deceit and betrayal."

CM Jagan remarked, "If Pawan Kalyan is elected, it will only serve Chandrababu Naidu's interests, leading to further disillusionment among women, farmers, and children. Can women place their trust in Pawan Kalyan, given his tumultuous personal life? Moreover, will he remain committed to Pithapuram if elected, or retreat to Hyderabad at the slightest inconvenience?"

In his address during the campaign in Chilakaluripet, CM Jagan urged everyone to understand the machinations of Chandrababu. He emphasized, "Today, we're witnessing a clash of ideologies, not castes—between the impoverished and the capitalists. Just two months ago, the elderly received their pensions at their doorsteps. Yet, the Opposition conspired to obstruct volunteers from delivering these pensions, fearing it would enhance the reputation of the Jagan government."

"While the government's tenure spans 60 months, the opposition's conspiracy-laden tactics have stifled governance for only 57 months. To impede aid delivery to beneficiaries, the opposition colluded with Delhi to postpone benefits until elections," CM Jagan added.

CM Jagan noted the Opposition's dissemination of misinformation regarding the Land Titling Act and registrations. He pointed out,

"Chandrababu's brother-in-law, Nandamuri Balakrishna, acquired lands in Rushikonda, Visakhapatnam, while Pawan Kalyan bought land in Mangalagiri. Were original registered deeds provided, or just photocopies? Nine lakh people registered their lands in the State, all receiving authentic deeds."

"The Opposition's flashy manifestos

during elections are swiftly forgotten

government has launched schemes such as 'Aasara', 'Sunnavaddi', 'Cheyutha', 'Kapu Nestham', 'EBC Nestam', and registered 31 lakh houses under women beneficiaries, with 22 lakh currently under construction, Chief Minister Jagan emphasized.

Highlighting schemes benefiting farmers, CM Jagan mentioned Rythu Bharosa, free crop insurance, input subsidies, and nine hours of free daytime electricity for farmers, along with the implementation of the RBK system by the YSRCP Government.

The Chief Minister also underscored Chandrababu and TDP's unfulfilled promises from their 2014 manifesto, questioning whether any of the pledges were ever realized.



afterwards. In contrast, we've honoured 99% of our manifesto pledges, treating it akin to a sacred text, unlike previous administrations," CM Jagan asserted.

"We've revolutionized government schools by introducing English medium education, digital teaching aids, free tablets for 8th graders, TOEFL classes from 3rd grade, an IB curriculum with specialized subject teachers, and bilingual textbooks. Additionally, we've initiated schemes for fee reimbursement, partnered with international universities for online certified courses, and mandated internships," CM Jagan elaborated.

In a bid to empower women, the

"Chandrababu led the state for 14 years. Can any impoverished person recall a single commendable act under his leadership?"

Enumerating Chandrababu Naidu's broken promises, CM Jagan remarked, "He pledged a farm loan waiver of Rs 87,612 crore, the clearance of savings society loans worth Rs 14,205 crore, and a Rs 25,000 deposit for newborn girls under the Mahalakshmi scheme. Not a single rupee materialized."

"Yet again, Chandrababu is touting 'Super Six' promises. Can we believe him? CM Jagan questioned, urging the electorate to vote for the YSRCP's 'Fan' symbol.

'Congress approach towards terrorism weak and soft'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday attacked the Congress, saying the approach of the party towards terrorism has been "soft".

"You saw it during the ten years of UPA rule led by the Congress how terror attacks were tolerated... proper response was not given," the senior BJP leader said.

"They believed in sending dossiers to Pakistan to the extent that you will recall that handlers of the Mumbai attack are still not punished," she said after an interaction with youths from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana here.

"So, the attitude and approach of the Congress party towards terror has always been weak and soft," Sitharaman said.

Earlier in the day, Prime



Minister Narendra Modi accused the Congress of not taking swift action after the 26/11 terror attacks over fears that their "vote bank" will shift.

He also said the people of Jammu and Kashmir have struggled for decades because of the Congress' "weak mind-

set".

"India will never forget the times when the country used to suffer frequent terrorist attacks and the Congress leaders would sit with the perpetrators of terrorism," he said.

During her interaction with youths, Sitharaman answered

various questions including on her journey to the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and how she could not complete her PhD as she took up a job overseas.

She also talked about the Startup ecosystem in the country and various other initiatives taken by the present BJP government to make India the third-largest economy in the world.

Currently, India is the fifth largest economy, with the highest rate of growth among the world's largest economies.

Saturday was the last day for campaigning in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly election. Voting will take place on Monday, coinciding with polling in all 17 parliamentary seats in Telangana and 25 in Andhra Pradesh.

The counting of votes is on June 4.

Bangladeshi infiltrators posing risk to tribals: Assam CM

PNS ■ RANCHI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday expressed his concerns about infiltration from Bangladesh, particularly highlighting its impact on the safety of women and daughters in Jharkhand.

Addressing a poll rally, Sarma said Bangladeshi infiltrators often acquire land by marrying tribal women and exert control over their rights.

"I've witnessed this firsthand in Assam, where 40 per cent of the population comprises Bangladeshi infiltrators. This situation mirrors that of West Bengal. It's crucial to prevent a similar scenario in Jharkhand to safeguard our future. Additionally, we must speak up against forced conversions in Jharkhand. Electing a BJP government at the Centre is necessary to address these challenges effectively," he said.

PM Modi on 'One nation, One leader' mission: Kejriwal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after his release on interim bail, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal launched a blistering attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alleging he was on a "One nation, One leader" mission to impose "dictatorship" by putting all leaders from opposition behind bars and "politically finishing off" those in the BJP.

Addressing a gathering at the AAP headquarters here on Saturday, the party supremo said that PM Modi is asking for votes for Union Home Minister Amit Shah, claiming that the latter will be Modi's successor after he "retires" on turning 75.

He asserted that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will be part of the next government at the Centre and will get full statehood for Delhi.

"In the last 20 hours after release from jail, I talked to poll



experts and people, and got to know the BJP is not going to form the government," Kejriwal said.

Ahead of restarting his election campaign, Kejriwal along with his wife Sunita and Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann offered prayers at the Hanuman temple in central Delhi's Connaught Place.

On Friday, the Supreme Court granted Kejriwal interim bail in a money laundering case linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam to enable him to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections.

'Corruption' is Kejriwal's ideology: BJP

The BJP on Saturday hit back at AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal who accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of furthering "dictatorship" in the country and said it was Delhi's "misfortune" that it got a chief minister who cannot sign files and go to the Secretariat. Kejriwal, who is out on bail on a bond of Rs 50,000, has started spreading lies, alleged Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva. "A decent behaviour cannot be expected of Kejriwal. It was unfortunate that Delhi has got a chief minister who cannot sign a file or go to the Secretariat now," he told PTI Videos.

BJP will hit four and six in Himachal: Anurag Thakur

PNS ■ HAMIRPUR/SHIMLA

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur on Saturday said the BJP will hit a four and six in Himachal Pradesh by winning all the four Lok Sabha seats and by-polls in six assembly constituencies in the state.

Thakur, the BJP candidate from Hamirpur Lok Sabha seat, said that people were happy with the performance of the BJP-led government at the Centre and wanted to make Narendra Modi the prime minister for the third term.

"We constructed the Ram Mandir. The Congress says it will build a mosque. The opposition parties said that they would crush Sanatan and equated it with HIV Aids and malaria," Thakur said addressing a huge gathering at Gandhi Chowk in Hamirpur.

"Like the Mughals and Britishers came and left, the Congress is also going. Sanatan tha, sanatan hai and sanatan rahega," he added.

Thakur said the Congress says Pakistan has a nuclear bomb, but the truth is that Islamabad is struggling for food as the grand old party is struggling for votes.

"We defeated Pakistan in 1965, 1971 and the Kargil war and if Pakistan would raise eye on India we will not take time to raise it to the ground," said Thakur and dubbed the Congress as Pakistan stating

that it would be defeated again.

"They say that Pakistan is 'not wearing bangles' and let me tell you that our sisters who wear bangles and carry AK-47 rifles have the guts to kill infiltrators," he added.

Thakur said the BJP never changed its ideology and kept its promise.

The BJP leader said the people of the country ousted the 'corrupt' Congress in 2014 and made a tea seller Narendra Modi the country's prime minister.

Launching a scathing attack on the Congress government in the state, Thakur said that 15 months have passed but Rs 1,500 per month as promised by the party on the eve of the last assembly polls has neither been deposited in the banks of the women nor it will be deposited and accused it of cheating the public.

He asked the youth whether they got five lakh jobs as promised or not and whether the Congress government bought milk for Rs 100 per litre and cow dung for Rs 2 per kg or not.

Thakur, the BJP candidate from Hamirpur Lok Sabha seat, said the love of his people is his earning of 20 years.

Former chief ministers Prem Kumar Dhumal and Jai Ram Thakur shared the stage with Thakur along with state BJP chief Rajeev Bindal and state party in-charge Saudan Singh.



Kharge slams Modi for 'luring' Thackeray, Pawar into NDA

PNS ■ PATNA

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday lambasted Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "luring" Maharashtra satraps Uddhav Thackeray and Sharad Pawar into the BJP-led NDA.

Kharge, addressing a press conference here, also claimed that it will be "extremely difficult" for Modi to form the next government in the country.

"In Nandurbar, Modi said Thackeray and Pawar should cross over and all their wishes will be fulfilled. He said it would be better than dying with the Congress. Does a prime minister speak such language?" Kharge said.

The PM had made the remark referring to a statement by Pawar, the founder of the NCP, who had predicted that many smaller parties opposed to the BJP would come close to the

Congress, and some may even "merge".

The Congress chief also claimed that Modi has lost his earlier spark, citing absence of the characteristic "bluster (abhiman) and pride (garvy)" at the PM's rally in Telangana the day before.

"I, too, was in Telangana and adjoining Andhra Pradesh on the same day," stressed Kharge, who spoke in presence of senior party col-

leagues Meira Kumar and Mohan Prakash, besides Bihar allies Dipankar Bhattacharya of the CPI (ML) L and Manoj Jha (RJD).

"After three phases of Lok Sabha polls, I can safely say it is going to be extremely difficult for Modi to become the PM again - a reason why he has given up speaking about achievements of his 10 years in power and is trying to create a Hindu-Muslim divide," Kharge alleged.

He said that there was "tremendous public anger" against the ruling dispensation at the Centre, which has been unable to tackle unemployment and "unbearable inflation".

"Modi, on his part, has been wary of speaking on inflation, and even on unemployment, despite famously promising two crore jobs per year. For 10 years, he has focused all his energies on harassing political opponents through agencies like ED and CBI.

MOLESTATION ALLEGATIONS Governor must explain why he should not resign: Mamata

PNS ■ SAPTAGRAM (WB)

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday slammed Governor C V Ananda Bose over allegations of molestation against him, and said he must explain why he should not step down.

Addressing a poll rally here in support of TMC's Hooghly candidate Rachana Banerjee, the CM asserted she would not step inside the Raj Bhavan till Bose remains the governor.

"The governor says 'digiri' (high-handedness) will not be tolerated...But, I say Mr Governor, your 'dadagiri' will not work anymore," the TMC supremo said.

"Governor please tell what was my fault. Who do you think you are? Why should you torture the woman," she said. "Bose must explain why he



should not resign after such allegations were levelled against him," she said.

A contractual woman employee of Raj Bhavan had last week lodged a complaint with Kolkata Police, alleging that she was molested by Bose in the governor's house on April 24 and May 2.

Bose had screened multiple CCTV footage of the Raj Bhavan on May 9, in a bid to clear the air over allegations of

molestation brought against him.

"The governor had released an edited video. I saw the entire footage and its contents are shocking. The truth is yet to come out. I have got another video... Your conduct is shameful," the chief minister said.

"I am not going to the Raj Bhavan till he is the governor... I prefer to meet him on the streets," she asserted.

Referring to the closure of industries under Left rule, Banerjee said her government had taken initiatives to reopen Dunlop and Jessop, which employed thousands of people but faced roadblocks by the BJP. "We had taken initiatives to reopen Dunlop and Jessop in 2016, but due to the Centre's non-cooperation, no progress could be made.

WB TEACHERS' RECRUITMENT 'SCAM'

TMC MLA withdraws plea from SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Jailed TMC MLA Manik Bhattacharya has withdrawn from the Supreme Court his bail plea in a case related to alleged irregularities in the recruitment of primary school teachers in West Bengal.

A bench comprising justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mishra allowed Bhattacharya to file a fresh plea with some additional documents before the High Court.

"The High Court may consider the petition as filed by the petitioner on merits and as expeditiously as possible. High Court may consider the matter afresh and under the law," the bench said.

INDIA CORNER

Soldier shot dead by his father-in-law over matrimonial dispute



A soldier was gunned down allegedly by his father-in-law over some matrimonial dispute in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district on Saturday, police said. Village Defence Guard (VDG) member Doulat Ram allegedly fired his .303 rifle on his son-in-law Amit Singh,

an army soldier, at Kembal Danga village, causing chest injuries to him, they said. Ram, a resident of Panasa village, had come to meet his son-in-law, who was posted outside and had come on leave to his home, police said. However, he lost control after finding that Singh had thrashed his wife over a long standing matrimonial dispute and in a fit of rage opened fire, causing critical injuries to the soldier, they said. A police party rushed to the scene on getting information about the firing incident and shifted both Singh and his wife, who had suffered injuries due to physical assault, to the hospital. After initial treatment, Singh was referred to the Government Medical College (GMC) hospital but succumbed on way to Jammu, police said. The accused was arrested and further investigation is on, they said.

Basantgarh encounter: Sketches of terrorists released



Jammu and Kashmir Police on Saturday released the sketches of six terrorists, who infiltrated from Pakistan into Basantgarh area of Udhampur district and killed a village defence guard in a gunfight before fleeing deep into the forest, officials said. Udhampur Senior

Superintendent of Police (SSP) Joginder Singh announced the first breakthrough in the case with the arrest of an overground worker, who had helped the terrorists to reach the area after their infiltration from across the border. Singh said the sketches of the six terrorists were prepared based on the inputs from various agencies, the public and questioning of the suspected persons. "We hope the people will come forward and help the security agencies to neutralize the terrorists," he told reporters in Udhampur. Village Defence Guard (VDG) Mohd Sharief was killed in an encounter with the terrorists following a cordon and search operation in Panara village of Basantgarh on April 28. Meanwhile, a massive search operation is going on in the area to flush out the terrorists, who are believed to have crossed into Udhampur from nearby Kathua district after successfully infiltrating from across the border.

Media associations ask EC to hold press meets on polling days



Media associations demanded on Saturday that the Election Commission hold press conferences after every voting phase of the ongoing Lok Sabha polls. Media associations Press Club of India, Indian Women Press

Corps, Press Association, Foreign Correspondents Club and Delhi Union of Journalists also asked the poll authority to release the entire election data, including the absolute number of votes cast in each phase and percentage of voting, by the next day of the polling date. "It should be noted that at press conferences, the journalists get their doubts and confusions, if any, cleared which helps them report and write error-free copy for their readers," the media associations said in a joint statement. They noted that till the 2019 general election, it was normal practice for the EC to hold press conferences after each phase of voting

Naxalites changed clothes, mixed among villagers during encounter in Bijapur: Police

PNS ■ BIJAPUR

Some Naxalites changed into civilian clothes to pose as villagers and misled the police after the first exchange of fire with the security personnel during Friday's encounter in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh, an official said.

According to the police, 12 Naxalites were gunned down by security personnel in a 12-hour operation in the forest near Pidia village under the Gangloor police station limits on Friday.

Their bodies were brought to Bijapur district headquarters on Saturday morning.

"The identity of the deceased has been ascertained. They were



carrying a cumulative reward of Rs 31 lakh on their heads," Bijapur Superintendent of Police Jitendra Kumar Yadav told reporters.

Budhu Oyam and Kallu Punem, both members of military company no. 2, were carrying a reward of Rs 8 lakh each on their head, while Gangaloor

area committee member of Maoists Lakhe Kunjam and member of military platoon no. 12 Bhima Karam were carrying a reward of Rs 5 lakh each on their heads, he said.

The other deceased, militia platoon commander Sannu Lakom and vice head of Janata Sarkar (people's government) Avlam, were carrying a bounty of Rs 2 lakh each, the SP said, adding that six others were lower-run members of the outlawed outfit.

Some Maoists also tried to surround the security forces by laying ambushes at three places, but the attempts were foiled, he said.

"A peculiar thing we noticed

for the first time during this operation was that after the first exchange of fire, some Naxalites changed into civil clothes and mixed with villagers to mislead the police," he said.

Hence, the police have taken several people into custody from the area, and their identities are being ascertained, the official said.

The operation was launched based on the inputs about the presence of special zonal committee members Chaitu, Lengu and Papa Rao, commander of PLGA company no. 2 of Maoists Vella and Gagalar area committee secretary Dinesh Modiyam and 100-150 cadres, in the forest, he said.

'Athletes running a mile in 4 minute outlive general population'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Athletes who run a mile in under four minutes are found to live for about five more years than their predicted life expectancy, according to a new study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine.

Researchers tracked the longevity of the first 200 athletes ever to have run a mile (roughly about a kilometre-and-a-half) in under four minutes.

The athletes' 4-minute mile achievements spanned a period of 20 years from 1954 to

1974 and the runners came from 28 different countries across Europe, North America, Oceania and Africa.

The researchers, including those at the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute in Australia, found that these athletes outlived the general population by several years. On average, they were found to live nearly five years beyond their predicted life expectancy.

Further, the runners whose first successful attempt was in the 1950s were found to outlive the general population by nine years, while the runners having



their first successful attempt in the 1960s and the 1970s were found to live 5.5 years and nearly 3 years longer than the general population, respective-

ly. The analysis also found that the average age of the surviving athletes was 77 years, while the average age of the dead athletes when they died was 73 years. All the 200 athletes were men, born from 1928 to 1955, and were aged about 23 years (on average) when they ran a mile under four minutes for the first time. The times ranged from 3:52.86 and 3:59.9 minutes.

The researchers said it has long been thought that exposing the body to bouts of extreme endurance exercise

may push it too far and shorten life expectancy.

However, the latest findings challenge these notions, they said.

"This finding challenges the upper ends of the U-shaped exercise hypothesis (as it relates to longevity) and, once again, reiterates the benefits of exercise on the lifespan, even at the levels of training required for elite performance," the authors wrote.

They explained that the high aerobic and anaerobic requirements of running a mile necessitate putting in relatively high

training volumes of around 9-12 hours or 120-170 kilometers a week.

While all this can mean pushing the body beyond its limits, particularly from an intensity perspective, this does not seem to affect lifespan, and if anything seems to prolong it, the researchers said.

They also acknowledged that a healthy lifestyle and genes may also have contributed, as 20 sets of brothers, including six sets of twins and father and son combinations, were among the first 200 runners to break the 4-minute mile.

Hinduja group firm gets IRDAI nod on RCAP acquisition

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Insurance sector regulator IRDAI has given conditional approval to Hinduja Group firm IndusInd International Holdings Ltd (IIHL) for the takeover of debt-ridden Reliance Capital.

"We are happy to acknowledge the receipt of approval from IRDAI yesterday (May 10, 2024) on the auspicious occasion of Akshay Tritiya. The approval is subject to certain regulatory, statutory, and judicial clearances/compliances," an IIHL spokesperson said in a statement.

IIHL stands committed to working towards obtaining the same as soon as possible and aims to close this transaction by the NCLT's stipulated date of May 27, 2024, the spokesperson said.

"We take this opportunity to thank all stakeholders includ-

ing regulators and the administrator for their timely support," it said.

IRDAI approval is crucial for the transfer of insurance businesses of Reliance Capital i.e. Reliance General



Insurance and Reliance Nippon Life Insurance, to the IIHL. Reliance Capital is one of the promoters of Reliance General Insurance and Reliance Nippon Life Insurance.

The National Company Law Tribunal on February 27, 2024,

approved Hinduja Group firm IndusInd International Holdings Ltd's Rs 9,650-crore resolution plan for Reliance Capital.

In November 2021, the Reserve Bank superseded the

board of Reliance Capital on governance issues and payment defaults by the Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group company. The central bank had appointed Nageswara Rao Y as the administrator, who invited bids in February 2022 to take over the company.

Reliance Capital had a debt of over Rs 40,000 crore, and four applicants had initially bid with resolution plans. However, the committee of creditors rejected all four plans for lower bid values and a challenge mechanism was initiated in which IIHL and Torrent Investments participated.

In June 2023, the Hinduja Group firm was selected by the committee for its bid of Rs 9,661 crore upfront cash. Reliance Capital's cash balance of an additional Rs 500 crore would also go to the lenders.

The deal to acquire the Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group's financial services arm for Rs 9,650-crore has already received all the other statutory approvals including from the banking and capital markets regulators and also fair play watchdog CCI.

State-owned Union Bank of India on Saturday reported an 18.36 per cent growth in its consolidated net profit for the March quarter to Rs 3,328 crore, helped by lower provisions.

For the fiscal 2023-24, the lender reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 13,797 crore against Rs 8,512 crore in the year-ago period.

Union Bank of India net profit rises 18% on lower provisions

PNS ■ MUMBAI

State-owned Union Bank of India on Saturday reported an 18.36 per cent growth in its consolidated net profit for the March quarter to Rs 3,328 crore, helped by lower provisions.

For the fiscal 2023-24, the lender reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 13,797 crore against Rs 8,512 crore in the year-ago period.

In the quarter under review, its standalone net profit increased to Rs 3,311 crore from Rs 2,782 crore a year ago. The core net interest income grew 14.38 per cent to Rs 9,437 crore on an 11.7 per cent growth in advances and widening of net interest margin to 3.10 per cent from 2.97 per cent in the year-ago period. Its managing director and chief executive A



Manimekhalai told reporters that for FY25, it is aiming for a credit growth of 11-13 per cent and deposit growth to be between 9-11 per cent compared to 9.3 per cent in FY24.

It, however, expects a fall in NIMs to 2.8-3 per cent, she said, adding that the targets will be reviewed midway through the year. The non-interest income declined by over 10 per cent to Rs 4,707 crore, primarily due to halving of recoveries from written off accounts.

For FY25, the bank is targeting the overall recoveries to come at Rs 16,000 crore against over Rs 18,000 crore in FY24.

Sebi bans Varanium Cloud, its promoter from securities markets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has prohibited Varanium Cloud, its promoter and managing director Harshwardhan Hanmant Sabale from the securities market till further orders for mis-utilising the IPO proceeds and manipulating the company's financial statements by recording fictitious sales and purchases.

Also, the regulator restrained Sabale from acting as a director or key managerial personnel of any listed company, any Sebi-registered intermediary or any company which intends to raise money from the public, until further orders.

In its interim order passed on Friday, Sebi said, "The genesis of the prima facie viola-



tions observed in the matter has its roots in the SME IPO of Varanium, which continued through the bonus issue and stock split followed by the rights issue.

It has prima facie emerged that the money raised through the IPO and subsequent rights issue was not used for the intended purpose mentioned in the offer documents.

Instead, the promoter shifted part of the IPO funds to an

entity, BM Traders, and the end use of such funds is not known. In addition, Sabale spun an intricate web of dubious transactions and tried to paint a picture that did not represent the fundamentals of the company.

Further, Sebi noted that the company made public announcements meant to give an impression to the investors that Varanium was a top-notch IT service provider that was entering greenfield areas.

In its effort to present such a picture, Varanium and its promoter entered into transactions that appeared only on paper and nothing was happening on ground as claimed by the company.

NCLAT asks Google, CCI, others to file replies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The appellate tribunal NCLAT on Friday directed tech giant Google and fair trade regulator CCI, among other respondents, to file their responses over the petitions filed against the Play Store billing policy.

A two-member NCLAT bench, after a brief hearing on Friday directed the respondents to file a reply within a week and counter reply, if any, and directed to list the matter on May 24 for the next hearing.

The appellate tribunal's direction came over petitions filed by the Indian Broadcasting and Digital

PLAY STORE BILLING POLICY



Foundation (IBDF), Indian Digital Media Industry Foundation, People Interactive India, which operates the marriage portal Shaadi.com, and Kuku FM operator Mebigo Labs.

They have challenged the order passed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI), which on March

20, 2024, declined to grant interim relief against the Play Store billing policy and restrain Google from collecting fees.

On March 20, CCI dismissed four petitions of Indian app companies filed against Google's new Play Store billing policy to levy an 11 to 26 per cent charge on in-app payments.

Eicher Motors PAT rises to Rs 1,070 cr



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Eicher Motors on Saturday reported an 18 per cent increase in consolidated profit after tax to Rs 1,070 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2024, driven by higher sales.

The company posted a profit after tax of Rs 906 crore in the same period last year.

Its total revenue rose 12 per cent to Rs 4,256 crore in the January-March quarter of FY24 compared to Rs 3,804 crore in the corresponding quarter of 2022-23, Eicher Motors said in a statement.

Royal Enfield, the two-wheeler division of the company, recorded sales of

2,27,925 motorcycles in the fourth quarter, up 6 per cent from 2,14,685 units in the year-ago period. For fiscal 2024, the company reported a 37 per cent rise in PAT to Rs 4,001 crore against Rs 2,914 crore for FY23.

The company's revenue from operations grew 14.5 per cent to Rs 16,536 crore from Rs 14,442 crore recorded in FY23.

During the last fiscal, Royal Enfield's registered sales rose 9 per cent to 9,12,732 units from 8,34,895 units in 2022-23.

The company said its board recommended a final dividend aggregating to Rs 1,396.41 crore at Rs 51 per share for the financial year ended March 31, 2024

Air India appoints SIA Engineering as strategic partner to develop maintenance facilities

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Air India on Saturday announced it has appointed SIA Engineering Company Limited as its strategic partner for the development of its base maintenance facilities here.

As part of the partnership, Air India will work closely with SIA Engineering Company Limited (SIAEC) on the planning, construction, development and operationalisation of its base maintenance facilities here, they said.

In a statement, Air India said, "Projected to be ready in



2026, the facilities will comprise both wide-body and narrow-body hangars, including associated repair shops, to support the growing Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) needs of the aircraft fleet in Air India Group."

"The collaboration with SIA Engineering Company will not only help Air India become more self-reliant for the maintenance of its own fleet but it also reiterates our commitment to strengthen India's aviation infrastructure

by boosting the growth of the country's MRO industry," Campbell Wilson, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, Air India, said.

Air India had earlier announced setting up a state-of-the-art Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facilities at Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru (operated by Bangalore International Airport Ltd) starting with airframe maintenance through the development of wide-body and narrow-body aircraft hangars for all checks.

IMF doubts cash-strapped Pak's repayment capacity

PNS ■ ISLAMABAD

The IMF has said that Pakistan faces major debt-repayment challenges and expressed serious doubts over the cash-strapped country's capacity to repay the global lender, according to a media report on Saturday.

The Washington-based bank's assessment of Pakistan's economy came as an IMF support team reached the country on Friday to hold talks with officials here after Islamabad requested a fresh bailout package under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

"Pakistan's capacity to repay the fund is subject to significant risks and remains critically dependent on policy implementation and timely external financing," Geo News cited the Washington-based lender as saying in its staff report issued earlier this month on Pakistan.

"Exceptionally high risks — notably from delayed adoption of reforms, high public debt and gross financing needs, low gross reserves and the State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) net FX derivative position, a decline in inflows, and sociopolitical factors — could



jeopardise policy implementation and erode repayment capacity and debt sustainability," read the report.

It further said that restoring external viability was critical to ensure Pakistan's capacity to repay the fund, and hinges

on strong policy implementation, including, but not limited to, external asset accumulation and exchange rate flexibility.

Geopolitical instability is an additional source of risk even as uncertainty surrounding global financial conditions has declined somewhat since the last review, it added.

The global lender noted that the country needed gross financing worth US\$ 123 billion during the next five years, adding that Pakistan was expected to seek US\$ 21 billion in fiscal year 2024-25 and US\$ 23 billion in 2025-26.

Property brokerage firm InvestoXpert revenue up 56%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Real estate brokerage firm InvestoXpert's revenue rose 56 per cent in the last fiscal to Rs 56 crore as it facilitated sales of properties valued more than Rs 2,000 crore on strong housing demand.

Its revenue stood at Rs 36 crore in 2022-23. In a statement, Noida-based InvestoXpert said the company facilitated sales amounting to Rs 2,050 crore during the last fiscal, up 95 per



cent year-on-year. The better performance in sales translated into robust revenue growth, it added. Vishal Raheja, Founder & MD of InvestoXpert said, "This achievement underscores our

commitment to excellence and innovation in the real estate sector. As we look ahead, we are confident in our ability to continue this upward trajectory, with ambitious targets set for the upcoming financial year". He said the demand for luxury homes has risen significantly.

Raheja said the second and fourth quarters collectively accounted for almost 70 per cent of the business, underscoring the seasonal variations in the real estate market

MONEY MATTERS

Jaipur-based entrepreneur figures on Fortune's '40 Under 40' list



Jaipur-based entrepreneur Yogesh Chaudhary, the director of Jaipur Rugs, has been included in the list of emerging leaders from India by Fortune, a statement said. Chaudhary has been included in the '40 Under 40' list, an annual list of influential young individuals under the age of 40 who changed the course of business and economy in

India. Isha Ambani, Director, Reliance Retail, Harshad Reddy, Director, Apollo Hospitals, and Akash Ambani, Chairman, Reliance Jio Infocomm, are the other young entrepreneurs who have featured on the list. Chaudhary joined the family business at 19 to assist his father, Nand Kishore Chaudhary. He said that in 2016, Jaipur Rugs forayed into retail and now sells in more than 90 countries. "The company collaborates with designers such as Shantanu Garg and Gauri Khan. The artisanal rugs are a result of 40,000 artisans in 600 villages, out of which 80 per cent are females," he said in a release here

Khanij Bidesh India may acquire lithium asset in Australia



Khanij Bidesh India Ltd (KABIL) hopes to acquire a lithium block in Australia this year, a top official said on Saturday. KABIL, a joint venture of three PSUs to scout for mineral assets overseas, has been working in Australia for the last year, Mines secretary V.L. Kantha Rao said. "KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Ltd) has the responsibility to look at

other countries. We have to increase our efforts in Australia. We will have to ensure that during this financial year, we target one more asset," Rao said at the inauguration of the registered office of KABIL here. KABIL is owned by three public sector undertakings -- National Aluminium Company Ltd (Nalco), Hindustan Copper Ltd (HCL) and Mineral Exploration and Consultancy Ltd (MECL). "I am hoping that it should be Australia because we have been working (there) for the last year," he explained. But unlike Argentina, Australia would be a bit costly so the paid-up capital of KABIL will have to be increased. KABIL has a paid-up capital of Rs 100 crore at present. "We are authorised to go up to Rs 500 crore and I think we have the approval of up to Rs 200 crore," he explained. Rao further said that the target has been set to begin mining in the lithium blocks in Argentina in another two to three years.

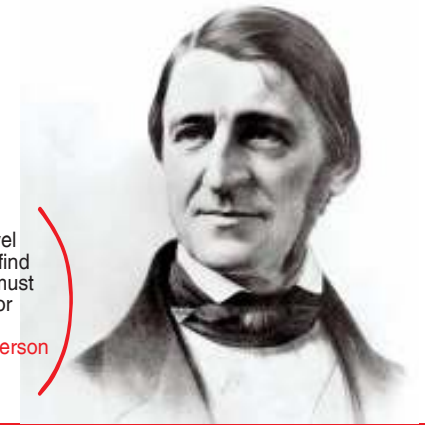
India's cotton exports may rise to 28 lakh bales : CAI



The Cotton Association of India (CAI) on Saturday estimated cotton exports to rise about 27 per cent to 28 lakh bales during 2023-24 crop year ending September. In 2022-23 crop season (October-September), cotton exports were at 22 lakh bales, CAI said. One bale is equal to 170 kilogram. "The demand for Indian cotton

went up as the prices ruled 8-10 per cent lower than the international prices during December 2023 till March 2024. Our cotton is mainly exported to countries like Bangladesh, China and Vietnam," CAI President Atul Ganatra said. Meanwhile, CAI pegged the cotton production for 2023-24 at 309.70 lakh bales, same as estimated in the previous month. The production is however expected to be lower than the previous season's 318.90 lakh bales. The total cotton supply till end of April 2024 is estimated at 315.86 lakh bales, which consists of pressing at 281.96 lakh bales, import of 5 lakh bales and the opening stock of 28.90 lakh bales. The estimated cotton consumption till April 2024 is 192.50 lakh bales while export is pegged at 21.50 lakh bales. The stock at the end of April is estimated at 101.86 lakh bales.

"Though we travel
the world over to find
the beautiful, we must
carry it with us or
we find it not"
— Ralph Waldo Emerson



Of the 150 villages that exist in West Garo Hills of Meghalaya, only 13 to 15 are Songsarek villages. In these, only five or six houses continue to uphold the ancient Garo traditions and follow the rituals related to the animist society. Wangala dance, brewing of Chubitchi being a few, writes **NAVNEET MENDIRATTA**

VIBING TO THE DANCE OF A 100 DRUMS

It is clearly the road less travelled. The West Garo Hills of Meghalaya in Northeast India may not have attracted the fancy of the tourists as their Khasi hills counterparts (yet), but that could well be a blessing in disguise for a region that is holding on to the last bit of ancient Garo traditions — the Songsarek practices. Songsarek is a pre-Christian animist religion that is fast losing out to conversions to Christianity, that spread in the region in the second half of the nineteenth century and intensified throughout the twentieth century. Currently, of the 150 villages that exist in the region, only 13 to 15 are Songsarek villages. In these, only five or six houses continue to actively practise the rituals related to the ancient Garo society.

A narrow hill road leads us to the Songsarek village of Gondenggre. Located in the Rongram subdivision of West Garo Hills district in Meghalaya, the village is located 18 kms from sub-district headquarter Rongram and some 36 kms from district headquarter of Tura. Our entourage comprises a group of nine Royal Enfield bikers and content crew who are here to document the living heritage of the communities in these regions as part of a unique partnership between Royal Enfield and UNESCO.

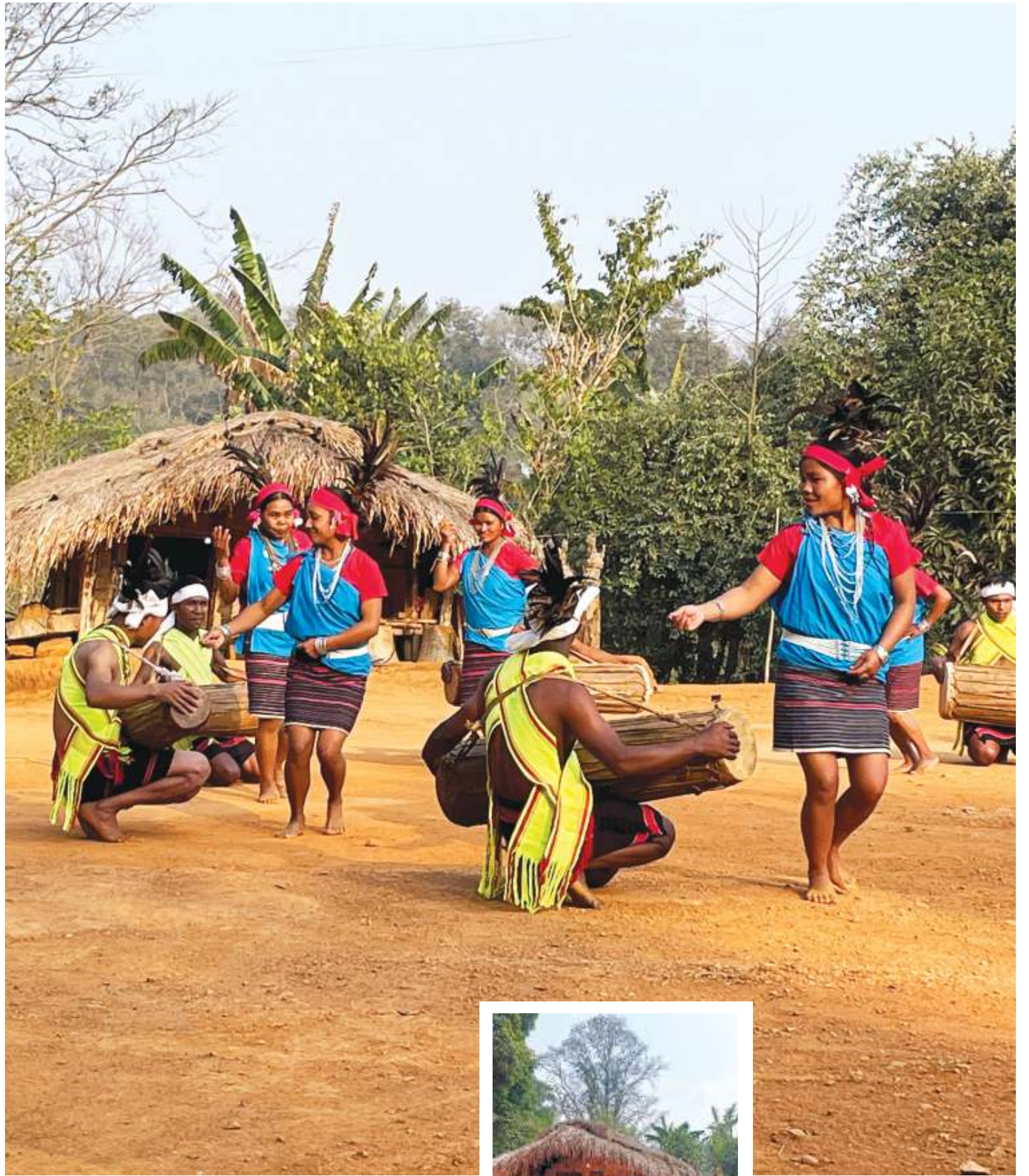
The project titled, The Great Himalayan Exploration, involves engaging with Royal Enfield's motorcycling community and inspiring them to come forward to not just explore the landscape but to help preserve and promote the living heritage of the communities in these regions. Documentation is the first step in this direction.

These practices range from performing arts (dance forms, songs, etc) to tangible crafts (handmade paper from tree bark, specific types of hats, etc), food practices (preservation techniques, culinary cultures), agricultural practices, local medicinal practices, body art and even indigenous spiritual and social systems.

KEEPERS OF THE TRADITION

Upon reaching the village, we are greeted by the Nokma or the village headman with a generous serving of *Chubitchi* or

the traditionally fermented (but weak) alcoholic rice beverage that is poured right into our mouths from an *abet* or a hollowed dried bottle gourd. It is the locals' way of welcoming the guests and must be accepted by them as a mark of honour. *Chubitchi* flows freely in Garo villages. There is no age or stigma attached to its consumption. It is an important part of every Garo celebration — be it religious rituals, meetings, social gatherings, birth, marriage, during *Wangala* (harvest festival) or even a house warming ceremony. It is said that in pre-modern era, the Garos would serve the drink before taking off for a hunt or to fight enemies. The traditional ways of making *Chubitchi* are said to have been passed down orally among the Garos until the arrival of Baptist American Missionaries. In the present day, though the knowledge of brewing *Chubitchi* continues to be shared in the interiors of Garo Hills, it is no longer a preferred practice in urban areas. Songsareks of Gondenggre are friendly albeit private people. Curiously is writ large on their faces as language holds them back from communicating freely with the outsiders. Rakkan M Sangma, Joint Secretary of the 100 Drums Wangala Festival Committee and Secretary of Garo Heritage Village plays interpreter and takes us through the rituals and practices of the villagers. "Song in the local language means village or a native place and *Warek* means houses built in a line. By that definition, *Gondenggre* is a spread out village with houses that are built in a single line," says Sangma. "About 5-7 kms from the village, there exists a strong sacred grove called *A Song Kosi*. It is a special place where outsiders are forbidden from entering. No one is allowed to speak in that forest let alone pluck a single leaf. No one, not even a member of our tribe, can cause any harm to the trees, flowers, or animals there," he shared. Cleanliness is a buzzword in most parts of Meghalaya. Made from bamboo, Garo houses typically last for about four to five years. The kitchen is usually located outside the house. A complete set up comprising kitchen and dining space at the entrance of the village is meant



to be used by the community for celebrations and meetings. The rooms are usually spread out. According to Sangma, a lot of taboos including "untouchability" *vis-a-vis* the outsiders are practiced even today. The outsiders are not allowed to enter or touch anything inside the Garo spaces. Sacrifice remains an inherent part of Songsarek practices. There is a sacrifice to mark everything that is considered important — it could be a wedding or any celebration, a big announcement, to appease the Gods, to ward off evil or even to fight a disease. The blood marks are like trophies in the village. The Songsareks believe in keeping their Gods happy.

DANCING TO A HUNDRED DRUMS

Wangala, the Garo traditional dance dedicated to their main Deity and the God of Sun, crops and fertility, *Misti-Saaljong*, features as an Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) practice. Inspired by the wagtail bird, the dance imitates the bird's behaviour, using musical instruments such as a flute made from buffalo horn and drums. It is a group dance where pairs of men and women wearing wagtail feathers in their headgear line up and move along a circle in short, slow but forceful steps. The dance is led by the Nokma who sings the traditional songs in a high pitch while the rest of the men play the drums. The Garo women folk make traditional dance gestures imitating the bird or even animals and clap. The women wear skirts made from handwoven cloth woven on looms. The typical pattern is that of the eye of the Goddess of wealth, *Susime*, resembling a diamond. Wagtail bird holds a special meaning in the Songsarek beliefs. The villagers closely observe the flight of the bird

“SONG IN THE LOCAL LANGUAGE MEANS VILLAGE OR A NATIVE PLACE AND WAREK MEANS HOUSES BUILT IN A LINE. BY THAT DEFINITION, GONDENGGRE IS A SPREAD OUT VILLAGE WITH HOUSES THAT ARE BUILT IN A SINGLE LINE”

THE GREAT HIMALAYAN EXPLORATION PROJECT

Royal Enfield's partnership project with UNESCO, The Great Himalayan Exploration, draws rider-researchers to document the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Himalayas.

"The aim is to document and safeguard the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Himalayas and thereby, raise awareness about the living treasures that make up the beating heart of India," says Bidisha Dey, Executive Director, Eicher Group Foundation — the CSR and Sustainability arm of Royal Enfield.

According to her, over two editions and 16 curated rides, 119 rider-researchers have already documented 66 practices across the Eastern Himalayan states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, North Bengal, Sikkim and Tripura. "We are now set to extend our exploration to the Western Himalayas in 2024," says Dey.

"We conduct a detailed on-ground reece before rolling out the riders to ensure the assent of the locals and as respect for their privacy. We are especially careful to follow the community protocols on how to approach the community and then conduct capacity building programmes to educate the rider researchers before they set out on their journeys," she shares.

Among the practices recorded are: The black pottery of Tyr Shang village in the West Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya, *Muga* silk threads of Assam, *Mon Shuga*, the ancient art of making paper of Arunachal Pradesh, living roots bridges of Meghalaya, handmade mask art of Majuli island, Assam.

"For us, the partnership is not just about the documentation. It's also about creating awareness about the intangible cultural heritage practices," concludes Dey.

ENCALM'S WARM EMBRACE OF ATITHI DAIVO BHAVA



In an informative tête-à-tête with **SHOBORI GANGULI**, Encalm Hospitality CEO **VIKAS SHARMA** outlines his vision of revolutionising the world of airport hospitality

Possibly never before in history has the global hospitality industry and its ecosystem been as severely hit as it was during the 2021 Pandemic. Not even the two World Wars in the last century left nations gasping for breath as Covid did, with its lethal tentacles paralysing MSMEs, travel and tourism businesses, and their subsidiary industries. Unannounced lockdowns and travel restrictions drilled unparalleled fear into the human psyche, with no end in sight. But, as Charles Dickens put it in *A Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times... It was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair." Clawing back for survival under such adversity, the hospitality industry was quick to innovate. Mr Vikas Sharma, the Chief Executive Officer of Encalm Hospitality, entered this volatile world as a beacon of hope in the year 2021, in a territory unexplored and uncharted and at a time when fear of human contact reigned supreme.

Armed with the vision to infuse fresh life into the business of hospitality, and, of course, with an enviable arsenal of 25 years of experience in the trade, Sharma went about restructuring the landscape of airport hospitality through an unparalleled experience — much like the American Pioneer who wanted "to go where no man has gone before." Air travel, even for those going business class, has its attendant share of anxiety and restlessness. Seeking to ease this, Mr Sharma, through Encalm, concretised a novel definition of airport services. "Hospitality" is the key word in this endeavour, says a proud Sharma.

In a short span of three years, Sharma today heads a 200 plus team which, according to him, is crucial in taking the organisation's long term objectives forward through "strategic thinking and effective communication." At a time when most airlines provide their Business Class passengers with state of the art lounges and customized relaxation plans without overheads, what does



VIKAS sharma, CEO, ENCALM HOSPITALITY PVT LTD

Encalm bring to the table, especially if the passenger has to pay for it? Sharma is quick to enumerate that, "Encalm Hospitality has become synonymous with exceptional hospitality and top-of-the-line services right from Atithya to the

Encalm Lounges and Spa." Available in all three terminals of the Delhi Airport, Encalm Lounges are also available in Hyderabad and Goa. To ensure an "elevated airport experience" Sharma lists out the services the company has on offer.

Penetrating into the luxury realm of a regular lounge and Spa, Encalm's services and hospitality combine a range of assisted services, incorporating basic non-aviation chores such as assistance service, buggy services, and porter assistance. The company's offerings go beyond the aesthetics of bespoke carved lounges and Spas with a personalised "Atithya Meet and Greet" — constructed on the foundation of *Atithi Daivo Bhava* (Guests are equivalent to the Almighty), taking airport experience to another level altogether.

As the Encalm CEO proudly asserts, his knowledge and experiences help synergise the operational and management foundations of the Encalm brand. Needless to add, he has an impressive portfolio having served as the General Manager of Sheraton Hotel and Resorts, Director of Operations at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company and the Director of F&B at Four Seasons Hotel and Resorts. Operations, sales and marketing, finance and revenue management are his core competence. He was felicitated as the General Manager of the Year 2019 award by HOSI in association with Sheraton Hotel and Resorts, and Leadership Excellence Award by Marriott Hotel, again in 2019. An MBA graduate from INSEAD, Sharma has a bachelor's degree from IHM, Gwalior.

Interestingly, Sharma is also an avid cricket follower of cricket and badminton, the former fruitifying into reality when Encalm became the Hospitality partner with the Delhi Capitals for IPL 2024. Talking about the partnership Sharma says, "As a lifelong cricket enthusiast, the sport embodies more than mere competition — it's a fervent passion fostering camaraderie and excitement. Partnering with Delhi Capitals underscores my enduring dedication to cricket and its profound community impact. Through Encalm Hospitality's alliance with this dynamic IPL team, we embrace cricket's essence, engaging with fans authentically and enriching the sport's vibrant legacy."

PAWAN SONI pens down his personal experience at the airport with Encalm's services to provide a 360 degree view of what this innovation brings to the table

The hustle and bustle of travel can often leave one weary and longing for a moment of respite. Gone are the days when travelling was mundane. We are at a time when journeys in fact can be as exhilarating as the destination themselves.

During my recent trip to Italy, while passing through Terminal 3 (T3) International Airport in New Delhi, I stumbled upon the Encalm Prive Lounge — a sanctuary of luxury and comfort that undoubtedly ranks among the world's finest.

With a staggering capacity of over 550 guests, the Encalm Prive Lounge caters exclusively to business travelers, accessible either through business class tickets or higher with various airlines, or by paying an entry fee. Unlike other lounges, complimentary card benefits do not apply here; however, cardholders can access another Encalm lounge, albeit not as lavish as the Prive lounge.

Culinary delights await at the extensive buffet which is rivalling with the leading star hotels selection and offers separate selections for both vegetarians and non-vegetarians. I loved the watermelon cheese as a canape, prawns and garlic cream kebabs, Chicken biryani and even the simple but tasty beetroot halwa. The lounge's leaf-shaped bar is a visual delight, offering a range of complimentary and paid options that cater to every palate. Given current Delhi's excise policy issue, there were many brands including Prosecco that weren't available at the time of my visit.

The lounge boasts of four sleeping pods, providing weary travellers with a private sanctuary to rest and rejuvenate before their next journey. Of course this is a paid facility at ₹1000 plus taxes per hour.

One of the standout features of the Encalm Prive Lounge is its expansive conference room, which doubles as a personal dining room, perfect for business travelers or senior bureaucrats and VIPs looking to conduct meetings or enjoy a meal in a private setting.

For those looking for entertainment, the lounge offers a small gaming zone and a dedicated kids area, ensuring that travellers of all ages have something to enjoy during their visit. The virtual gaming zone and Xbox games comes as a chargeable feature separate from the lounge charge though it can be availed by only the lounge users. A small fitness centre and kids play area comes complimentary along with the lounge facility.

In addition to its luxurious amenities, the Encalm Prive Lounge also offers



excellent spa services. I had the pleasure of trying their 30-minute foot massage, which left me feeling relaxed and rejuvenated, ready to embark on the next leg of my journey. Currently this 30-minute spa came complimentary by using my DreamFolks card; else one will have to shell out ₹1500 for using this facility. Had there been a provision of complimentary foot massage machines and the massage chairs like at Singapore airport, I would have rated Encalm Prive lounge the best in the world without even blinking an eye.

While the lounge service came complimentary with my flight tickets, Encalm has another facility called Atithya Meet and Greet Service. So if you are a first time traveller or just worried about your parents or kids traveling alone, just avail this service from their portal that comes in various options — Silver, Gold and Elite. This service provides you with a guest manager who will escort you from the entrance without having to wait in the queue, help you through check-in and immigration services. They try to help you go through business class immigration service but it depends upon the government official to allow it. And then they help you get the buggy till your boarding gate. If you have a business class ticket or are planning to use the lounge through credit cards, in my opinion, Silver tier option gives you the best value for money.

Overall, my experience at the Encalm Prive Lounge and Atithya Meet and Greet service was nothing short of exceptional. From its elegant ambiance to its impeccable service, the lounge sets a new standard for airport hospitality. Next time you travel, consider experiencing the luxury and comfort of Atithya Meet and Greet Service and Encalm Prive Lounge apart from the usual shopping.

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

Splendid Expedition Across Switzerland

Switzerland calls out to travelers with a taste for stunning mountain views, picturesque landmarks, and unique adventures. Step onto the Grand Train Tour of Switzerland for an incredible voyage through the country's rich culture and breathtaking landscapes. This train journey guarantees an unforgettable encounter with Switzerland's captivating charm

BY **AKANKSHA DEAN**

As travelers, we set off to find new horizons, discover new cultures, savor delicious foods, and create lasting memories. Switzerland is a great choice for explorers, with stunning mountain views and charming villages that become part of every traveler's dream vacation. While Switzerland offers many ways to explore, taking a train journey is a truly magical experience. The Grand Train Tour of Switzerland is an adventure not to be missed. This remarkable trip reveals the beauty of Switzerland's mountains and its rich history. You can start and end your journey wherever you please, with destinations like Zermatt, St. Moritz, Lucerne, and Lugano awaiting your exploration. For those eager to visit every stop on the journey, the Swiss Travel Pass is the perfect solution. This ticket gives you access to all the destinations along the route. Covering 1,280 kilometers, passing by 11 serene lakes, and revealing five UNESCO World Heritage Sites set against the stunning alpine backdrop, this train journey ensures an engaging and unforgettable experience.



MOST POPULAR TRAIN JOURNEYS THAT ARE A PART OF THE GRAND ROUTE
Hop on the Glacier Express, a legendary trip winding through the breathtaking Swiss Alps from Zermatt to St. Moritz. Take a journey on the Bernina Express to discover the Bernina Pass, Bernina Range, and the UNESCO World Heritage Rhaetian Railway. Travel along the Golden Pass Line, linking Lucerne to Montreux through stunning scenery. Enjoy the

Gotthard Panorama Express as it traverses the famous Gotthard Pass. Lastly, ride the Lucerne-Interlaken Express for captivating views of the Jungfrau region.

MUST KNOW
Switzerland presents a rich array of experiences, from enchanting urban centers to tranquil mountain hamlets, crystal-clear lakes to towering peaks, and from ancient vineyards to fine dining destinations. The Swiss Travel

System offers a smooth, comfortable, and upscale way for tourists to discover this enchanting nation. With the Swiss Travel Pass, visitors gain access to Switzerland's comprehensive public transportation network, enabling them to seamlessly traverse the country by train, bus, boat, or mountain railway.

Akanksha Dean is an independent food & travel writer

LET'S GOA...

BY **PAWAN SONI**

Goa remains an ever-popular destination, with its property prices soaring post-COVID and a surge in demand for new eateries and nightspots. Each visit to Goa reveals new experiences, making it a perennial favorite. During a brief 3-day break from work, my wife and I opted for a villa stay over a traditional hotel, choosing the relatively new Villa Heliconia in Siolim.

LOCATION

Villa Heliconia is conveniently located near the MOPA airport, making it easily accessible from most places in North Goa. Situated close to the buzzing spots in North Goa, it even shares a wall with the popular restaurant Hosa, known for its innovative take on traditional South Indian cuisine. I recommend trying Hosa for its exquisite interiors, great cocktails, and inventive dishes. However, ensure you have a reservation to avoid disappointment, as we found ourselves seated at an inconvenient high bar table for the last minute booking.

AMENITIES

The villa is spacious, boasting two large living areas and six rooms, along with a swimming pool and lifts. Ideal for groups of friends or extended families, the private



pool is definitely a highlight. Decent-sized rooms, with at least two rooms featuring personal balconies ensures accommodation for kids and elderly as well.

HOUSEKEEPING

We were impressed by the attentive housekeeper, Shuvendu Kashyap, whose knowledge extended beyond housekeeping to include coffee and a variety of subjects. The entire team was polite and eager to please.

FOOD

One of the highlights was the option to have the staff

FACT SHEET

Villa Heliconia, 9 Ground Floor, Landmark, Plot No Syno.329, Vaddy, near the church, Siolim, Goa
Phone Number: 9350009000

prepare food of your choice, perfect for when you want a break from outside meals. I particularly enjoyed their dal, paneer, and tawa roti. Breakfast offered a variety of options, including eggs,

paranths, cut fruits, poori-aloo, and poha apart from beverages like fresh juice, tea and coffee. During my visit, I discovered that the owner, Abhishek Aggarwal, and I are both from Gurgaon. I reached out to him to share my pleasant experience with the villa. Abhishek, an excellent hospitality professional turned real estate entrepreneur, shared his journey of success. His hard work and good fortune not only led to the opening of Villa Heliconia but also to several upcoming luxury projects in Goa, including a 4-bedroom villa in Morjim, a 5-bedroom super luxury Bali-themed villa in Siolim, and a 10-bedroom boutique property in Calangute, which will be rented out as individual rooms rather than a villa. Villa Heliconia, a dream fulfilled for Abhishek, is a testament to the fact that some dreams do come true.

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

SAVING THE GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD

The Great Indian Bustard critically endangered and integral to India's wildlife heritage, faces multifaceted threats including habitat loss, collisions with infrastructure, and poaching. As efforts to safeguard the species intensify, the imperative to reconcile competing interests between development and conservation grows more urgent



BKP SINHA



ARVIND K JHA

The WII had already identified ten potential locations for GIB breeding centres in 2017, setting the stage for proactive conservation measures. Drawing on expertise beyond borders, the International Fund for Houbara Conservation (IFHC) from Abu Dhabi was enlisted as a technical partner due to its successful track record in breeding other bustard species. The collective efforts resulted in the establishment of two breeding centres in Rajasthan, housing a total of 29 GIBs, bolstering hopes for the species' survival

The Supreme Court of India in *MK Ranjitsinh and Ors vs. Union of India* has constituted a seven-member committee and tasked it with addressing the delicate balance between conservation initiatives for the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) and the installation of renewable energy projects in its habitat. This decision follows the Court's acknowledgement of the challenges posed by its April 2021 directive mandating the burial of all power lines within the GIB habitat, a measure claimed to be expensive and impractical over extensive distances by Power companies and the Central Government. With the complex interplay between development and conservation at the forefront, the committee has to assess primarily the viability of reducing the area banned for overhead powerlines from 80,000 to 13,663 square kilometres. The GIB figures in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, in Appendix I of CITES and is classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List. Included in the National Wildlife Action Plan, it has been earmarked for a recovery program under the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats by the Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India. During the Mughal and British periods, the GIB was one of the top game birds. Historical accounts suggest that tribal Bhils used to set fire to the bushes surrounding their nests to trap females. The species has been facing numerous threats to its survival including occasional poaching, collisions with high-tension electric wires, fast-moving vehicles, and free-ranging dogs in villages. Additionally, habitat loss and alteration due to the diversion of grasslands and scrublands, extensive agricultural expansion, mechanized farming practices, and infrastructural developments such as irrigation systems, roads, and windmills pose significant challenges.

Weighing approximately 15 kilograms each, their bulk poses a challenge when navigating around electricity lines or windmills, often resulting in fatalities or injuries. The dry semi-desert regions where the bustard once thrived, particularly in parts of Rajasthan, have also undergone significant transformation due to irrigation canals, converting the landscape into highly cultivated areas. Present-day threats include further expansion of linear infrastructure such as roads and electric power transmission lines leading to collision-related mortality. The proposed expansion of renewable energy infrastructure, including large-scale deployment of solar panels across desert and grassland areas, further jeopardizes the bird's habitat.

In its historical range, the great Indian bustard once existed across Western India, spanning 11 states, including parts of Pakistan, with strongholds in the Thar desert and the Deccan plateau. Known for its preference for flat, open landscapes with minimal disturbance, it thrives in grasslands. Their numbers, however, have dwindled dramatically, with only around 150 individuals estimated to survive as of 2018, down from around 250 in 2011. Most of the population, estimated at around 120, is concentrated in the arid grasslands of Thar, Rajasthan, particularly in the Desert National Park and the Pokhran Field Firing Range, with smaller populations reportedly scattered elsewhere in the country. In Maharashtra, two individuals had been reported in Nanaj, Solapur district, where the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) is actively involved in conservation efforts. Concerningly, however, the absence of the great Indian bustard in Nanaj in Maharashtra as well as in the Rollopadu Wildlife Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh for the past few years suggests a looming risk of local-level extinctions.

Known for their slow reproductive rate, GIBs lay only a few eggs and invest nearly a year in caring for their chicks. Establishing a founder population requires a minimum of 20 breeding females and 5 to 10 breeding males. In the relatively better populated Thar region, specifically focused upon in the



Supreme Court case, the looming risks of the maze of infrastructural development, food insecurity, conflicts, and climate change-induced impacts exacerbate the challenges faced by them.

As regards actions taken to safeguard the dwindling population of the GIB, the MoEFCC, Rajasthan Forest Department, and Wildlife Institute of India (WII), came together in 2018 to initiate conservation breeding programs and conduct scientific research for GIB's conservation. Notably, the WII had already identified ten potential locations for GIB breeding centres in 2017, setting the stage for proactive conservation measures.

Drawing on expertise beyond borders, the International Fund for Houbara Conservation (IFHC) from Abu Dhabi was enlisted as a technical partner due to its successful track record in breeding other bustard species. The collective efforts resulted in the establishment of two breeding centres in Rajasthan, housing a total of 29 GIBs, bolstering hopes for the species' survival. Further support poured in from WWF-India, which helped in crafting guidelines for a comprehensive State Action Plan for Resident Bustard Recovery Programme and backed future expansion plans in Gujarat. In Karnataka's Siruguppa taluka, the Ballari Forest division proposed a Detailed Project Report with an

investment of INR 24 crores for a research centre dedicated to the GIB cause. In Maharashtra, with GIB sighted in recent years neither in Nanaj of Solapur nor in Warora of Vidarbha region, a proposed collaboration with Rajasthan aims to exchange tigers for GIBs, with plans to establish a breeding centre in Nanaj.

Assessment of the overall strength, budgetary outlay, and position of the MoEFCC and forest departments in decision-making in the Government reflects that the effectiveness of efforts to secure the future of the GIB is just inadequate. The weakening of statutory instruments and establishments related to forest and wildlife conservation in the recent past is quite revealing in this regard. In the case of GIB also, on an uneven field, stakeholders grapple with the urgent need to balance developmental agendas with conservation imperatives, claiming to be providing a sustainable coexistence for this emblematic avian species.

However, amidst endeavours by some professional foresters, a pressing challenge looms large today. About 66,337 sq. km of land for overhead transmission lines are considered despite WII's recommendation that mitigation of powerline-linked mortality required a ban on high tension wires,

undergrounding of <66 kv wires, and retrofitting of existing wires with bird diverters. WII's findings also underscored the perilous predicament, with an estimated 16 GIB fatalities annually due to collisions with high-tension lines in the Thar region alone. Such alarming mortality rates, validated by tagging efforts by WII, are in sharp contrast to the indication of the number of recorded mortality cases as insignificant before the highest court. Using a lower number of collision deaths as a basis for allowing a network of overhead powerlines in GIB habitats will be akin to advocating the discontinuance of medicines in a pandemic situation where due to a reduced number of survivors, deaths per day may be lowered.

An approach of balancing conservation and development by permitting power projects, in a critically endangered species' habitat with just about 140 survivors, currently less polluting than non-renewable resources deserves perhaps a second look. The idea of development and its impact created and sold by the most selfish species on earth pitted against the right to life of a species at the brink of extinction needs to adopt a much wider and multi-sectoral perspective. India's insolation data in many areas, not natural habitats of GIB, presents

similar ranges as in Rajasthan and Gujarat. The Annual Mean Daily Global Solar Radiation (AMDGR) map indicates 6.8 to 5.6 kWh/ m²/ day in different parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat; 6.0 to 5.8 in Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Ladakh; and 5.8 to 5.6 in states like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu.

India's solar power generation capacity having reached about 76 GW in FY24, is concentrated in Rajasthan and Gujarat with 17.8 GW and 10.1 GW. Large states like MP and UR are major disappointments. Authorities should consider the country-wide spread and benefits, site-specific costs on infrastructure, and the capacity utilization factor (CUF) figures reported to be 20 for Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh; 19 for Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, and Madhya Pradesh; and 18 for Gujarat. Considering this scenario, any honest concern for balancing conservation and development must, instead of compromising GIB's future, explore and exploit the potential spread out in the country for solar projects. That would be true climate justice! (The writers are Former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, UP and Maharashtra; views are personal)



SKY-HIGH VANITY

Constructing the world's tallest buildings creates high emissions

Since ancient times, people have built structures that reach for the skies – from the steep spires of medieval towers to the grand domes of ancient cathedrals and mosques.

Today the quest is to build the world's tallest skyscrapers, such as Burj Khalifa in Dubai. Soaring above the rest, its decorative spire accounts for 29 per cent of its total height – 4,000 tonnes of structural steel just for aesthetics.

Burj Khalifa isn't unique in this respect. "Vanity height" – the extra height from a skyscraper's highest occupied floor to its architectural top – shapes city skylines around the globe.

In a world where environmental concerns are paramount, is such architectural vanity justifiable?

The pursuit of "vanity height" makes this a pressing issue. Even a modest spire increases the carbon emissions from the production of materials for a skyscraper's structure by about 15 per cent.

Building tall is not just about architecture; it's big business. Being ranked among the world's tallest buildings can transform an otherwise ordinary skyscraper into a globally recognised icon. This creates an

incentive to add vanity height. Our proposed solution is to rethink the global standard for ranking the world's tallest buildings.

A matter of measurement The way we measure the height of skyscrapers is at the heart of this issue. The Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (CTBUH) is the ultimate authority on skyscraper heights. It bestows the coveted title of "world's tallest building".

Historically, there wasn't much debate over skyscraper heights as early buildings typically had flat roofs. The first significant issue arose in 1929 when the Chrysler Building in New York City installed a last-minute spire, securing the self-proclaimed title of "world's tallest building" over the Bank of Manhattan.

The Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, founded in 1969, established criteria in the early 1970s that included decorative spires. This formalised a practice that would be contentious time and again.

A landmark moment in the council's history was the 1998 showdown between Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur and Sears Tower in Chicago, now known as Willis Tower.

Imagine these two giants side by side: the pointy spires of the Petronas Towers, with 88 floors, and the flat-topped Sears Tower, with 108 floors. But the council uses "height to architectural top", which includes decorative spires.

As a result, it declared Petronas Towers the tallest building in the world, outstripping Sears Tower for the title.

Back in Chicago, this was not a popular verdict. Picture the folks on the 108th floor of the Sears Tower looking down at the celebrations on the 88th floor of the Petronas

Towers, perplexed by how those extra metres of spire made the difference.

The pursuit of "vanity height" makes this a pressing issue. Even a modest spire increases the carbon emissions from the production of materials for a skyscraper's structure by about 15 per cent.



'Adherence to European Standards in cooking oils critical for health'

Health experts have emphasised the need for conformity to European safety standards for glycidyl esters (GE) and 3-monochloropropane-1,2-diol esters (3-MCPD) in cooking oils, contending that their presence poses significant health risks.

The GE and 3-MCPD are contaminants that can be found in improperly processed cooking oils, and Europe has recently set limits on the permissible amount of such contaminants which, experts say, are linked to cardiovascular diseases and can cause cancer and other serious health issues.

Dr Praveen Chandra, Chairman and Head of the Cardiology Department at Medanta, stressed that ensuring the safety of cooking oils is paramount.

"The presence of GE and 3-MCPD poses significant health risks, particularly for heart health. These contaminants have been linked to cardiovascular diseases and other serious health issues.

The recent EU regulation, which sets maximum levels for these contaminants in food, is a crucial step toward protecting consumers."

Consumers should choose cooking

oils that comply with these regulations to safeguard their heart health and overall well-being, Dr Chandra said.

As Codex classifies these contaminants as potentially carcinogenic, India's oncologists are also urging government bodies and manufacturers to ensure compliance with European safety standards for GE and

the long run.

"With the rising cancer rates in India and the widespread use of cooking oils, relevant government bodies and FSSAI should take steps to implement these regulations in our country. Mandatory display of compliance with GE and 3-MCPD limits according to European regulations on labels is essential," Dr Bhargava said.

Dr AR Sharma, Founder and Chairman of AP Organics Ltd, Dhuri, stated, "While Europe has been at the forefront of implementing stringent regulations on GE and 3-MCPD, Indian regulatory bodies are also working to establish limits for these contaminants which could be present in improperly processed oils.

"Due to our stringent processing conditions, our processed and packed brands of rice bran oil are trans-fat-free and also fully compliant with the new EU Food Safety Regulations regarding GE and 3-MCPD contaminants. This shows our dedication to consumer health and safety," he said.

In collaboration with A P Organics Limited, Dhuri said, other industry leaders, including Vestige, a direct-selling company, have updated their labels to show compliance with European safety standards for GE and 3-MCPD on their brands



compliance on the label itself.

Dr Rahul Bhargava, Principal Director of the Department of Oncology at Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram, emphasised that with increasing cancer rates in the country, there is an urgent need to address carcinogenic contaminants like GE and 3-MCPD in cooking oils.

These contaminants, present in all types of cooking oils, can lead to cancer in

Lack of sleep in children linked to risk of psychosis in adulthood

Children experiencing a chronic lack of sleep since infancy could be at an increased risk of having psychosis in early adulthood, a new study has found.

Analysing the sleep durations of nearly 12,400 children from when they were aged 6 months to 7 years, researchers found that those persistently sleeping fewer hours were more than twice as likely to develop a psychotic disorder in early adulthood.

These children were also found to be nearly four times as likely to have a psychotic episode, in which one loses touch with reality and can experience hallucinations.

While a persistent or chronic lack of sleep as a child may not directly cause psychosis when they become an adult, it could be a contributing factor and parents can help address it, according to lead author Isabel Morales-Muñoz from the University of Birmingham, UK.

The researchers also said that while previous studies have linked sleep problems with psychosis, this is the first study to show that

chronic lack of sleep can be a strong predictor for an individual to experience psychosis. The findings are published in The Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) Psychiatry.

"It's entirely normal for children to suffer from sleep problems at different points in their childhood, but it's also important to know when it might be time to seek help. Sometimes sleep can become a persistent and chronic problem, and this is where we see links with psychiatric illness in adulthood," said Morales-Muñoz.

The researchers also analysed data of about 4,000 adults when they were 24 years old.

While the team found a robust link between persistent lack of sleep as a child and experiencing psychosis as an adult, they said they have not proven a causal relationship and that other associated factors need to be examined.



Strong solar storm hits Earth, could disrupt communications and produce northern lights

An unusual strong solar storm hitting Earth could produce northern lights in the US this weekend and potentially disrupt power and communications.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued a rare severe geomagnetic storm warning when a solar outburst reached Earth on Friday afternoon, hours sooner than anticipated. The effects were due to last through the weekend and possibly into next week.

NOAA alerted operators of power plants and spacecraft in orbit to take precautions, as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency. "For most people here on planet Earth, they won't have to do any-

thing," said Rob Steenburgh, a scientist with NOAA's Space Weather Prediction Centre.

The storm could produce northern lights as far south in the US as Alabama and Northern California, according to NOAA. But it was hard to predict and experts stressed it would not be the dramatic curtains of colour normally associated with northern lights, but more like splashes of greenish hues.

"That's really the gift from space weather – the aurora," said Steenburgh. He and his colleagues said the best aurora views may come from phone cameras, which are better at capturing light than the naked eye.

Snap a picture of the sky and "there might be actually a nice little treat there for you," said Mike Bettwy, operations chief for the prediction centre.

The most intense solar storm in recorded history, in 1859, prompted auroras in central America and possibly even Hawaii. "We are

not anticipating that" but it could come close, said NOAA space weather forecaster Shawn Dahl.

This storm poses a risk for high-voltage transmission lines for power grids, not the electrical lines ordinarily found in people's homes, Dahl told reporters. Satellites also could be affected, which in turn could disrupt navigation and communication services here on Earth.

An extreme geomagnetic storm in 2003, for example, took out power in Sweden and damaged power transformers in South Africa.

Even when the storm is over, signals between GPS satellites and ground receivers could be scrambled or lost, according to NOAA. But there are so many navigation satellites that any outages should not last long, Steenburgh noted.

The sun has produced strong solar flares since Wednesday, resulting in at least seven outbursts of plasma. Each eruption – known as a coronal mass ejection – can contain billions of tons of plasma and magnetic field from the sun's outer atmosphere, or corona.

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'Sea surface temperatures of Indian Ocean could help predict dengue outbreaks globally'

Abnormal trends in sea surface temperatures of the Indian Ocean could help predict trends in global dengue epidemics, including case numbers and how they might change with time, according to new research.

Scientists said that these observed abnormal temperatures, which are a 'climate indicator', could help enhance the forecasting and planning for outbreak responses.

Currently, precipitation and temperature are some of the climate indicators that are being used as early warning systems to forecast disease trends such

as dengue, they said. The team, including researchers from Beijing Normal University, China, explained that, for example, events associated with warmer sea surface temperatures, driven by El Nino, are known to influence how dengue is transmitted around the world by affecting mosquito breeding.

Being able to predict the risk of outbreaks and prepare for them can be crucial for many regions, especially those where the mosqui-

to-borne disease is endemic, or constantly present.

However, the authors said there



were gaps in our understanding of long-distance climate drivers of dengue outbreaks. Their findings are published in the journal Science. In this study, the researchers used data on yearly dengue cases reported from across each of the 46 Southeast Asian and American countries from 1990-2019. Data of monthly cases from 24 of these countries reported from 2014-19 was also used for analysis.

Through modelling, the team drew associations between changes in climate

patterns around the world and those in seasonal and yearly case numbers during dengue epidemics. They found that dengue epidemics around the world were "closely" linked with abnormalities in sea surface temperatures of the tropical Indian Ocean.

"We identify a distinct indicator, the Indian Ocean basin-wide (IOBW) index, as representing the regional average of sea surface temperature anomalies in the tropical Indian Ocean. IOBW is closely associated with dengue epidemics for both the Northern and Southern hemispheres," the authors wrote.

WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

Citizens hold protest to save Navi Mumbai's DPS flamingo lake



Nature lovers and environmentalists in Navi Mumbai marked World Migratory Bird Day on Saturday by holding a human chain protest to get authorities to increase efforts to protect wetlands used by flamingos.

Holding huge banners with #SaveDPSFlamingoLake emblazoned on them, participants in the protest said the 30-acre waterbody in Nerul, which attracts thousands of migratory flamingos every year, was getting "killed" due to blocking of tidal water by vested interests in violation of a Bombay High Court judgment.

The main channel on the south side of the lake has been buried due to the construction of the Nerul jetty as part of the state government's water transport project, alleged NatConnect Foundation's director BN Kumar.

"Over a period of time 10 flamingos died and five were injured after getting disorient-

ed due to such developments. We have been raising this issue for the past one month. The government must restore the lake," he said.

In response to a letter sent by NatConnect Foundation, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC) and the Maharashtra CMO had ordered a probe into the blocking of water to the lake but no action is being seen on the ground, Kumar claimed.

Officials from Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation, CIDCO and state forest department have visited the area and it is hoped rectifica-

tion measures will be taken quickly, said Anjali Agrawal of Save Flamingos and Mangroves Forum.

Sandip Sareen from Navi Mumbai Environment Preservation Society (NMEPS) said his organisation was consulting legal teams since the developments related to the lake are "a clear cut case of contempt of court".

Activists Vishnu Joshi and Hemant Katkar also condemned the authorities for their attitude on the issue and said they are duty bound to protect the area, which is part of Navi Mumbai's environmental heritage.

