

The Congress is trying to win elections with money. A huge amount of money has been dumped in Karimnagar. The Congress admin is following the path of the BRS government. It is a case of old wine in a new bottle.

The Congress is giving Rs 1,000 for every vote and half a bottle of liquor to 15 lakh people. This is trampling asunder rules to buy votes and win. It is killing democracy.

- Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Karimnagar BJP candidate

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'PM has given country's entire wealth to four or five rich people'

NURTURING YOUR BABY'S DELICATE SKIN

Payal's crime investigative thriller Rakshana racing FOR RELEASE

DON'T MISS...

Preparations in full swing...
 Rachakonda Commissioner Tarun Joshi on Sunday inspected the election arrangements at Sainikpuri Bhavans College, Saroornagar Indoor Stadium, Spirit College in Beeramguda and Holy Mary College in Medchal to monitor the security arrangements and election management arrangements at the field level in the context of the Lok Sabha elections to be held on Monday. The security arrangements related to the strongroom, distribution, reception centre...

Female train drivers find...

Female train drivers have opposed the 'embarrassing and unsafe' practice of using walkie-talkies to request a washroom break while on duty. 'If we have to answer the nature's call, we have to tell the male loco pilot who informs the station master, who further conveys it to the control department which manages the running of trains,' a female loco pilot said on Sunday. 'All these conversations happen through walkie-talkies accessible to dozens of other officials...

Education sector sees surge...

Artificial intelligence (AI) is playing a pivotal role in reshaping learning experiences in the rapidly evolving educational landscape, with universities and tech platforms at the forefront of this transformation. Industry leaders report a surge in demand for AI skills, with enrolments skyrocketing and a focus on upskilling individuals across career stages. Educational institutions are swiftly adapting and offering specialised AI courses to cater to the evolving skill...

GT face formidable KKR in must...

Shubman Gill's return to form will provide a big boost to Gujarat Titans as they square off against table-toppers Kolkata Knight Riders in their must-win IPL game here on Monday. Gill roared back into form with his fourth IPL hundred to keep GT's slim playoff hopes alive with a comfortable win against Chennai Super Kings at home in their last outing. Gill and Sai Sudharsan's twin centuries were the cornerstone of the hosts' huge total and their role will be crucial once again as they...

AFTER ELECTRIFYING CAMPAIGN

Stage set for people's decision

Telangana to go for LS polls today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 After a high decibel campaign, including by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and top leaders of Congress and BRS, the stage is now set for polling on Monday to elect 17 Lok Sabha members from the state in a single phase. The Election Commission has also made arrangements to conduct a bypoll for the Secunderabad (Cantonment) Assembly seat to be held tomorrow. A contingent of 73,000 civil police personnel, 500 sections of the state special police, 164 companies of central armed police forces, three companies of Tamil Nadu police, 2,088 officials from other departments and 7,000 home guards have been deployed as part of security measures, the Telangana DGP office said. All vehicles carrying EVMs and VVPATs are fitted with GPS systems and provided invariably with armed security by central forces. As many as 525 candidates, including Union Minister and Telangana BJP president G Kishan Reddy, the party's national general secretary Bandi Sanjay Kumar and senior leader Etala



As many as 525 candidates, including Telangana BJP president G Kishan Reddy, Bandi Sanjay Kumar and senior leader Etala Rajender are among the saffron party candidates while the Congress fielded among others, BRS turncoats Danam Nagender and K Kavya

Over 3.31 crore voters are expected to exercise their franchise in 35,356 polling stations across the state

The former IPS officer RS Praveen Kumar and sitting MP Nama Nageswar Rao, among others, are in the poll fray from former Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao-led BRS

As many as 625 candidates, including Union Minister and Telangana BJP president G Kishan Reddy, the party's national general secretary Bandi Sanjay Kumar and senior leader Etala Rajender are among the saffron party candidates while the Congress fielded among others, BRS turncoats Danam Nagender and K Kavya.

Waisi is seeking re-election from the party's bastion of Hyderabad Lok Sabha constituency and the BJP has fielded a political novice but enthusiastic K Madhavi Latha who has begun

Voters' silence gives jitters to candidates of all parties

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 Political parties have made all-out efforts to attract voters to polling booths to ensure the victory of their candidates during the almost two-month-long Lok Sabha election campaign in Telangana. Political parties as well as their candidates have been waiting for May 13, the polling day, that is, Monday. However, voters are not very expressive this time when compared to the time of Assembly elections. The silence of voters has been giving jitters to political parties as well as their candidates. However, the heads of all parties have put on a brave face and have stated that they will win most seats. There are 525 candidates in the fray in the Telangana Lok Sabha elections. However, the ruling Congress, the main opposition BRS and the BJP are the parties whose candidates strived hard to attract voters. All mainstream political parties are confident that they will win most LS seats in Telangana. The Congress has been saying that it will win 14 seats while the BJP has said that it will win more than 10 seats. The BRS said that it would shock both the Congress and the BJP by winning most LS seats. Telangana has 17 LS constituencies. The leaders are revved up as usual but voters are silent. The silence of the voters is due to the long election process, said a voter named Raj who hails from Karimnagar. All candidates have to cover seven Assembly constituencies and due to this, Lok Sabha candidates can't know the pulse of voters in villages. Candidates have to depend upon the wave their political parties have created.

TG likely to experience thunderstorms till May 17



'If ideology is same, why remain separate?'

Congress, BRS exchange fire on social media

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 With the election campaign ending, political parties are pulling out all stops to lash out at their adversaries. Both the Congress and the BRS are ahead in using social media effectively. On Sunday, the Congress and the BRS lashed out at each other. The Congress tweeted against the BRS, "Has the BRS social media gone into the hands of the BJP? Is the BRS joining the NDA? Did the BRS get an assurance that Kavitha will be protected in the Delhi liquor scam case?" Replying to this, the BRS said, "It is like a thief chasing the police." However, the X war started with a post of the BRS saying, "We will not believe Revanth. Where are the guarantees?" "We are not afraid of bade bhai Modi and chote bhai Revanth."

CM orders collectors of rain-hit dists to be on high alert

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 Chief Minister Revanth Reddy inquired about the damage caused by strong winds, rain and lightning in the districts of Adilabad, Medak and Sangareddy. The Chief Minister ordered the Collectors of the rain-hit districts and officials to be on high alert as the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned of heavy rains. The CM asked officials to take appropriate action in areas which experienced heavy rains. The CM expressed grief over the incident in which two people were killed by lightning in the Pedda Shankarampet mandal of Medak district. The CM said that the government will extend all help to the families of the victims. The Chief Minister also instructed authorities to provide better treatment to the injured hit by lightning. Five people were reportedly injured seriously by lightning in the Gimma village in the Zainath mandal of Adilabad district. The CM assured farmers not to worry if their paddy stocks got wet in the rains at procurement centres. Officials have been told to buy paddy having moisture content which has piled up in purchase centres.

CM plays football with HCU students

Inaugurates football tourney • Netizens ask CM to encourage more kids

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has been busy campaigning for the Lok Sabha polls. The campaign ended on Saturday and elections will be held on Monday. There is a lot of excitement about which party will get the most votes. But the CM is cool without any tension. The CM who is always busy with administration, trips and meetings spent some time playing football.



CM Revanth Reddy playing football with HCU students on Sunday

Balmur Venkat, MP Anil Kumar Yadav, TMRIES President Faheem Qureshi, HCU NSUI unit and HCU students also played football. The CM's Adviser, Vem Narendar Reddy, Government Adviser Harkara Venugopal, Food Corporation Chairman YA Fahim, TSAT CEO

Venugopal Reddy and others also enjoyed the football match. The Chief Minister playing football went viral on social media. Netizens were also happy to see the Chief Minister playing football. Later, the CM posted on his 'X' account, "Until Saturday,

the campaign for the Parliament election was going on. While getting ready for public service from Monday, I played football with some young students at Hyderabad Central University. Telangana youth will be encouraged to take part in sports and raise the Indian flag on international sports platforms." One netizen responded to Revanth's post saying, "Anna, please take the initiative for building a stadium like this in Hyderabad #RevanthAnna? It should be compatible with Champions League standards. Encourage more school kids to play football. You can be the inspiration for football just like how Modiji exposed the world to yoga."

RECALL INDIA'S IMAGE BETWEEN 2004 AND 2014

- Over 12 lakh scams 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



Monday Mirchi

WHAT IS JAWAHAR'S SECRET SAUCE?

The question uppermost in the minds of those in the corridors of power in Andhra Pradesh is: "How did CS Jawahar Reddy escape the wrath of the Election Commission of India". At a time when top officials are being transferred at the drop of a hat, and when even Director-General of Police KV Rajendranath Reddy has been forced out, the Chief Secretary managed to stay put in his place. As reported in this column, Jawahar Reddy has been following the rule book. It is a different matter that it would have angered Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy for various reasons. So, it looks like the Election Commission could go soft on the official. As the CS has been left untouched, there are whispers about the powerful lobby backing him. The ECI has transferred 12 IAS and IPS officers in the last one month, removing them from election duties.

CM KEEPS HIS CARDS CLOSE TO HIS CHEST

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy seems to be keeping his cards close to his chest when it comes to dealing with senior officials who had run-ins with him before the Assembly elections, but who have been allowed to continue in their positions under the new dispensation. For instance, questions have been raised over Navin Mittal continuing as Telangana CCLA Commissioner even under the Congress government. For, Revanth, as Opposition leader before the Assembly polls, had several tussles with Navin. When scribes pointedly asked Revanth about it, the CM did not come up with an answer. All he indicated was that "it's about timing". On Finance Secretary Ramakrishna Rao, who too has been continuing in the same position under the new regime, the CM merely said that the official had been on leave for a long time. However, the corridors of power are abuzz with grapevine that there will be a reshuffle, though it is unlikely that Navin would be pushed into the loop line.

WHAT IS THE BHAVISHYA OF BHAVESH MISHRA?

About a month ago, the Telangana government had sent out signals that an IAS officer is under scanner in a forest land grab case. For newbies, the Supreme Court had found fault with an affidavit filed without official sanction by former Bhupalpally collector in support of the ownership claim of an individual over 106 acres of land in the Kompally forest in the district. The parcel of land, worth Rs 380 crore, was given to the private individual apparently overruling objections raised by the Forest Department. Now, the whispers in the corridors of power are about the bhavishya of Bhavesh Mishra, a 2015 batch officer who had filed the affidavit, post elections.

'CAT' RESCUES A 'LION' JUST IN TIME!

Those who indefatigably pursue their goals in spite of a plethora of obstacles often achieve success. What if their moments of glory

are going to be brief? They do know the value of their short and sweet victory. Senior IPS officer of Andhra cadre AB Venkateswar Rao, who has been under suspension for the last four years under the YSR Congress government, has got a reprieve on the verge of his retirement. The official, who had remarkable clout in the erstwhile Telugu Desam Party regime, had been suspended twice. He launched a legal battle against his suspension. The update on this is that the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) has overturned the suspension of AB Venkateswar Rao (referred to as a 'lion' in official circles for his courage of conviction) and directed the state government to reinstate him with immediate effect. Post elections, the state government may act on the directive from CAT. Meanwhile, official circles are wondering how ABV made it just 20 days before his retirement. He may or may not get a chance to work before that day, but he can surely rest with the satisfaction of winning against the state government and vindicating his position. In cricketing terms, he may be 'retired', but not 'retired hurt'.

WILL LAND TITLING ACT OPEN A CAN OF WORMS?

The political scene in Andhra Pradesh has taken a turn for the worse with opposition leaders cornering the state government on the Land Titling Act (LTA), which, if enforced, could open a can of worms. Matters came to a head after retired IAS officer PV Ramesh posted a message on X (formerly Twitter) that he himself was a victim of LTA even before the Act came into force in Andhra Pradesh. Ramesh, who was a special chief secretary to Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, stated that officials of the Revenue Department had turned down his request for mutation of lands owned by his parents at Vinnakota village in Gudlavalleru Mandal of Krishna district. The RDO simply returned the documents posted by Ramesh without even having a look at them. "My right over the lands owned by my parents was denied before the Act became operative. If this is my position as an IAS officer who has served the State for 36 years, it is not difficult to imagine the plight of common farmers", he observed nailing the prickly Act.

INFORMING EC OR DIRECTING THE POLL BUREAU?

Transfers of officials at the behest of the ECI are common before polls. But what beats official circles is that opposition leaders are not only complaining against officials and seeking their transfers, but also suggesting who should be posted in place of the officials moved out. A little bird told us that the opposition alliance has BJP in the bloc only to get some advantage during the elections by ensuring transfer of officials perceived to be pro-government and that opposition leaders have been successful in their move.

-- Yours truly

Everything ready for elections: CEO Vikas Raj

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Vikas Raj said that everything is ready for conducting elections in the state on May 13.

The CEO inspected the Distribution and Reception Centre (DRC) of the Charminar and Yakutpura Assembly constituencies at the Nampally Exhibition Centre.

"Since the last three days, the temperature has come down. So I am appealing to all voters to come to polling stations with their friends and families and vote on Monday. We are quite hopeful that everything will be done peacefully," Vikas Raj said.

The CEO said that voting would be conducted in 35,809 polling stations across the state.



Around three lakh polling staff and security personnel will be on duty during polling.

Around 160 companies of Central forces, 72,000 state police personnel, 20,000 police personnel from neighbouring states, and 4,000 other uniformed personnel have been deployed to ensure the smooth conduct of elections.

1,05,019 Ballot Units (BU), 44,569 control units (CU) and 48,134 Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines will be available for the polling on May 13, he said.

Elections will be held in 17 Parliament constituencies in the state. The constituencies are Adilabad, Peddapalle, Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Zahirabad, Medak, Malkajgiri, Secunderabad, Hyderabad, Chevella, Mahbubnagar, Nagarkurnool (SC), Nalgonda, Bhongir, Warangal (SC), Mahabubabad and Khammam. The Secunderabad Cantonment (SC) Assembly elections will also be held on May 13.

A total of 525 candidates are contesting for the 17 Lok Sabha seats in the state. Of them, 425

are male and 50 female. There are 286 Independent candidates.

The ECI has allowed 12 documents apart from the voter ID card (EPIC) to establish identity at polling stations.

They are the Aadhaar, MGNREGA card, passbook with photograph issued by post office or bank, identity card issued by MLAs, MPs and MLCs, Health Insurance Smart Card issued by the Ministry of Labour, Driving License, PAN card, Smart Card issued by RGI, Indian Passport, Photographed Pension Sanction Document, Disability Identity Card and Central and State Government PSUs or Public Limited Companies Identity Card.

MIM backs Cong



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AIMIM President Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi said that he is supporting the Congress ahead of polling in Telangana.

In a major shift in stance, Asaduddin asked his party supporters to vote for the Congress in all constituencies except Hyderabad. The AIMIM chief indirectly asked his supporters to vote for the Congress by mentioning candidates and naming select constituencies.

Asaduddin's support for the Congress comes after recent Congress leaders approached him with a proposal to work together with the AIMIM in Telangana, there are 17 Lok Sabha constituencies.

Corruption common character of INDIA bloc parties: Modi

PNS ■ HOWRAH

Alleging that corruption was the common character of INDIA bloc parties, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday accused the TMC of having made it a "full-time business".

Addressing an election rally at Sankrail in Howrah, he alleged the job of TMC leaders is to create unrest in the state.

"Whether the Congress, Left or any other party of the INDIA bloc, all of them have made corruption their common character," Modi alleged.

Tired of campaign, politicians plan for holiday

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

Tired of campaigning for almost one month in the hot summer, the leaders are making plans to go on a summer vacation with their family members to take rest for some days after the polling is over. Polling will be held in Telangana for 17 Lok Sabha seats and in Andhra Pradesh for 175 Assembly and 25 Lok Sabha constituencies on Monday. After the polling the candidates will be busy collecting the data about booth-wise polling details to assess their victory chances. After that the candidates are planning to go for summer vacations with their family members to the

places like Ooty, Kodaikanal and others to chill in the summer.

Some candidates are planning to go to foreign countries where their relatives are staying. To declare the election results there is more than 20 days time. The results will be declared on June 4. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy sought approval to go to London from May 17 for a week. Jagan, who is on conditional bail in the disproportionate assets case registered by CBI requires court's permission to go to foreign countries.

But Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has no such chance to take rest for some days after the polling

in Telangana. Being a national star campaigner of the Congress, he has to campaign in the states where polling is scheduled in the fifth phase. Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bharti Vikramarka and other senior Congress leaders also have to campaign in other states after the completion of polling in Telangana.

BRS President and former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao will take rest at his farm house. There are no plans as of now for TDP supreme and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu. Mainly, the contesting candidates will go with their families to take rest for some days. By the last week of this month, they will return to

their native places and will be busy with selecting the polling agents and others in the counting of votes.

In Telangana in the Lok Sabha elections there is triangular fight between the Congress, BJP and the BRS. According to political sources, in a majority of the Lok Sabha constituencies there will be a tight fight between the Congress and the BJP. In Andhra Pradesh in the Assembly as well as in the Lok Sabha elections, there will be a face to face fight between YSR Congress and the TDP alliance. These elections are likely to decide the political future of BRS in Telangana and TDP in Andhra Pradesh.

Ponnam to officials: Bring voters to polling booths

Drives bike through Vemulawada roads

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Transport Minister Ponnab Prabhakar drove a bike along with Government Whip Adi Srinivas from Vemulawada Thippapur bus stop to Vemulawada Rajanna Temple. With his bike riding skills, Ponnab Prabhakar attracted the people of Vemulawada.

Meanwhile, local MLA Adi Srinivas who was on the pillion waved at the people. Later, they had a cup of tea at a hotel discussing Monday's election.

Earlier, Ponnab participated in a meeting held under his leadership at the Karimnagar Congress office. Karimnagar DCC President Manakondur MLA Kavvampally Sathyanarayana, Karimnagar



Congress candidate Velichala Rajender Rao, former MLAs Koduri Sathyanarayana Goud, Arepally Mohan, corporation councillors and other leaders attended the meeting.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Shashthi:	May 13 02:04 AM to May 14 02:50 AM
Saptami:	May 14 02:50 AM to May 15 04:19 AM
Nakshatram:	
Punarvasu:	May 12 10:26 AM to May 13 11:23 AM
Pushya:	May 13 11:23 AM to May 14 01:05 PM
Rahukalam:	7:24 AM to 9:00 AM
Yamagandam:	10:36 AM to 12:12 PM
Varjyam:	07:57 PM to 09:40 PM
Gulika:	1:48 PM to 3:24 PM
Amritakalam:	08:54 AM to 10:33 AM
Ahijit Muhurtham:	11:46 AM to 12:38 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 35°
Humidity: 53%
Sunrise: 5:45 AM
Sunset: 6:40 PM
Updated: May 12, 2024 5:00 PM

Congress, BRS exchange...

Continued from page 1

The BJP and the Congress are joint thieves and the BRS will fight against the BJP and the Congress," the BRS post said.

"The BRS is not in a position to criticise the BJP.

It is clear that the BRS has sold itself out to the BJP and so it is not posting anything against the BJP on social media.

Stage set for people's...

Continued from page 1

Apart from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, several union ministers including Rajnath Singh and Amit Shah, and Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy canvassed for their respective party candidates. The Congress campaign

centered around reservations for SC, ST and OBC alleging that BJP, if voted to power at the Centre again, will try to abolish quota for the above sections. It also highlighted the implementation of five out of the six Assembly poll guarantees in Telangana by the party-led government.

The BJP focussed mainly on how the grand old party will allegedly try to snatch away

Voters' silence gives jitters...

Continued from page 1

However, this time voters are not as responsive when compared to past elections.

Communist leader Raghu from Rangareddy district said

about the complaints, he said.

Sanjay said that in Karimnagar, the Congress is trying to win with money and that a huge amount of money has been dumped in the constituency.

that the summer heat is one of the reasons for voters' remaining silent. "In general, Lok Sabha elections witness a dull response from voters even though leaders activate their cadres. The distribution of

money and leaders' voter contact are also reasons for voters' silence," Raghu said.

The process of conducting the 18th Lok Sabha elections started on March 16 and will end on June 4 with counting.

BRS gave Rs 1,000 for a vote in Medak, says Raghunandan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP candidate in the Medak Lok Sabha constituency, M. Raghunandan Rao, said the BRS was caught red-handed while distributing money to voters on Sunday.

Speaking to the media on Sunday, Raghunandan said

that the BRS has been distributing money in Siddipet, Dubbaka and Patancheru as per the directions of BRS leader T. Harish Rao. The amounts given ranged from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000.

He said that the police are not taking any action even though BJP leaders com-

plained to them. The police are taking an hour to reach the spot where BRS leaders were distributing money, Raghunandan said.

He said that this shows that the police are supporting the BRS and that Harish should accept moral defeat immediately.

Preparations in full swing for smooth polls today: CP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rachakonda Commissioner Tarun Joshi on Sunday inspected the election arrangements at Sainikpuri Bhavans College, Saroornagar Indoor Stadium, Spirit College in Beeramguda and Holy Mary College in Medchal to monitor the security arrangements and election management arrangements at the field level in the context of the Lok Sabha elections to be held on Monday.

The security arrangements related to the strongroom, distribution, reception centre and counting centres were examined. The officials of strongroom management and security arrangements were given instructions on security measures to be taken on the way from the strongroom to the counting centre and guard system to be set up there.

The officials concerned were asked to establish strong barricades to prevent counting agents and counting officers from meeting. The CP also explained the advantages of the metal barricade system and gave special instructions for



Rachakonda CP giving instructions to the officials on securing arrangements for the Lok Sabha elections

installing them. It was ordered to set up counting tables and reception centres in several rows as per requirement.

The Commissioner was accompanied by LB Nagar DCP Praveen Kumar, Malkajgiri DCP Padmaja, ACPs and other officials.

NAMES OF FAMILY MEMBERS AMONG 2.68 LAKH VOTERS DELETED IN HYD

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

City-based social activist SQ Masood on Sunday alleged that his and 10 other family members' names were among 2.68 lakh voters deleted from the electoral list in Hyderabad.

"I checked the voter list on Saturday and found my name along with 10 of my family members to be missing from it. I have written to the Electoral Registration Officer of Bahadurpura regarding the issue. One of my friends also faced the same issue," said the activist. In his letter to the ERO, Masood mentioned, "Upon my recent attempt to obtain a voter slip from the BLO, I discovered that my name was absent from the electoral list. Subsequently, I was informed that my name had been deleted from the electoral list without a prior notice. I have been residing at the aforementioned address for four decades. It has come to my notice that not only mine but the names of my family members including wife, mother and brothers have also been deleted without prior notice."

The activist urged the ERO to provide reason and ground for deletion of names from the electoral list; name and designation of the officer who took suo moto action in this matter. He further sought to know whether a field inquiry was done before omitting the names and the method adopted to do so. The activist also demanded copies of notices, including remarks and reasons for deleting the names.

TG likely to experience thunderstorms till May 17

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian meteorological Department -Hyderabad (IMD-H) on Sunday predicted that Telangana is likely to experience thunderstorms till May 17.

As per the IMD-H, on May 12, parts of Telangana experienced moderate rainfall and thundershowers. On May 13, Thunderstorm and lightning are predicted in isolated places of districts including Mancherla, Jagtial, Rajanna Sirsilla, Karimnagar, Peddapalli, Jayashankar Bhalapally, Mulugu, Bhadradi Kothagudem, Mahabubabad, Warangal, Hanamkonda, Jangaon, Siddipet, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri, Medchal Malkajgiri, Hyderabad, Rangareddy, Nirmal, Nizamabad and Komaram/Bheem Asifabad.

On May 14, similar conditions are likely to repeat in the aforementioned districts along with Nagarkurnool, Jogulamba Gadwal, Wanaparthy, Narayanpet, Kamareddy, Medak and Mahabubnagar. Similar conditions are likely to



prevail in Telangana till May 17. As per the Telangana State Planning and Development Society (TSDPS) Telangana is likely to experience light to moderate rainfall from May 12 to 15; the maximum temperature during this time is expected to remain between 39-42 degrees Celsius while the minimum temperature is expected to remain between 25-28 degrees Celsius.

Areas under the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) are likely to experience light rainfall from May 13 to 15. The maximum temperature is expected to

remain between 38-40 degrees Celsius; the minimum temperature is expected to remain between 26-28 degrees Celsius.

Among districts, Adilabad recorded the highest maximum temperature (43.3) followed by Jagtial (43.2), Peddapalli (42.8) Nirmal (42.7), Mancherla (42.5) and Karimnagar (42.4). Among areas under the GHMC, Jubilee Hills recorded the highest maximum temperature (39.9) followed by Moosapet (39.8), Yusufguda (39.7), Serilingapally (39.6), RC Puram (39.4) and Khairatabad (38.8).

Special control room in GHMC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

District Election Officer and GHMC Commissioner Ronald Rose said that an arrangement has been set up to update the voting pattern for every hour at the control room in the GHMC head office. This control room is set up to inform the election percentage from time to time. In all, 200 employees work here and they would ensure that no mistakes are made in the polling centres.

There is an opportunity to observe the polling station officer concerned directly whether he or she is performing duties as per the election rules or not in the polling station. If not, the authorities would caution them.

For every segment, six computer operators would work on a shift basis. They will monitor the events happening inside and outside the polling centres through webcasting and inform the District Election Officer from time to time. Then proper instructions are issued to the polling officer.

Meanwhile, the DEO said that the Election Commission of India (ECI) has arranged all the facilities for the voters on poll day. DEO Ronald Rose conducted inspection of the DRC centres set up in Kotla Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy Stadium and Wesley College on Sunday.



DEO Ronald Rose speaking with monitoring team at the GHMC office on Sunday

Secunderabad Cantonment (SC) Assembly by-elections would be held in the district along with the two parliamentary constituencies of Secunderabad and Hyderabad.

Around 45 lakh voters will exercise their right to vote in 3,986 polling stations. There are 1,676 polling locations. The DEO said that tents, drinking water and voter assistant booths have been arranged for voters. For the polling staff, food, juice and butter-milk will be provided on the poll day.

Along with that medical personnel would be there in every polling station in the district. They would be equipped with ORS and other basic medicines for first aid. The medical authorities have arranged 108 ambulances for medical emergency and GHMC control rooms for polling staff.

Ronald Rose said that presiding officers check their identity after they enter the polling station. After a voter shows one of 13 ID cards to the officers, they check the ID card with the electoral roll. Then voters can vote in the polling booths.

Haryana and Tripura Guvs to cast their vote in TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy couple will utilise their franchise at polling station 237 in Kodangal on Monday. On the other hand, former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao would cast his vote in Chintamadaka village in Siddipet district at 11am.

Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya would cast his vote in Ramnagar. Tripura Governor Nallu Indrasena Reddy would cast his vote along with his family members in Salemnagar, Hyderabad.

Telangana BJP president and Secunderabad BJP candidate G Kishan Reddy would cast his vote at Diksha Model High School in Kachiguda in Amberpet Assembly constituency. BJP national general secretary and Karimnagar BJP candidate Bandi Sanjay would cast his vote in Jyothi Nagar Sadhana School in Karimnagar.

BJP Madhya Pradesh incharge P Muralidhar Rao would cast his vote along with his family at DD Colony.

TSRTC increases ticket fares as passengers rush for polls

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) has increased fares as thousands of people are going for elections in the State. Without taking any permission from the government, the corporation can increase the fares for a certain percentage on special days. However, on Saturday the TSRTC earned around Rs 13 crore from the passengers, which is Rs 3 crore more than the usual days.

From Uppal to Thorru destination, the TSRTC has charged Rs 350 per person, before the election fever which was Rs 290. It means around 20 per cent increase from the previous charge.

A passenger named Uday Kiran said, "I did not know till I got into the bus that the charge had been increased. Otherwise, I would have returned to my room, without going to vote. At this time also



Thousands of passengers seen going to the MGBS on Sunday

the government is putting a burden on us. In my opinion this is not correct."

A passenger named Suresh said, "However, for ladies the government has brought 'Mahalakshmi' scheme. With that women are travelling free of cost even on an occasion like this. T fares increased by the TSRTC applied to men only."

Meanwhile the TSRTC has not given leave on May 13 to the conductors, drivers and other staff. They have strict orders that there would be no

leave between May 10 and 13. On poll day, the TSRTC has segregated the staff into two shifts as before 2 pm and after 2 pm. One who completes after 2 pm should vote after that. Another shift is that people have to come for work after voting in the polling station.

A conductor from Barkhatpura said that if a person completes his work by 2 pm, how could they go to their residence in two to three hours. However, the work would not complete by 2 pm sharp.

Walkathon marks World Nursing Day

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

World Nursing Day was observed in Hyderabad on Sunday in which 1,000 nurses participated in a walkathon organised to mark the occasion.

The theme for International Nurses Day 2024, as declared by the International Council of Nurses, was "Our Nurses Our Future, The Economic Power of Care." AIG Hospitals commemorated this day by acknowledging the significant contribution of nurses towards building a healthier tomorrow.

Dr D Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman of AIG Hospitals, expressed gratitude towards the nursing staff, stating, "Nurses

are the backbone of our healthcare system, providing compassionate care and support to patients and their families. Their dedication and expertise are invaluable in ensuring positive health outcomes. We salute their unwavering commitment towards patient care."

Bindu George, Chief of Nursing at AIG Hospitals, emphasised the importance of recognising the economic impact of nursing care, stating, "Nurses play a crucial role not only in providing clinical care but also in driving economic growth for a large section of the society and are instrumental in maintaining the quality of healthcare through their expertise and professionalism. As we celebrate International Nurses Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to supporting and empowering nurses in their vital role."



Nursing staff of the AIG Hospitals participate in a Walkathon

The walkathon served as a platform for nurses to come together, celebrate their profession and raise awareness about the indispensable role they play in healthcare delivery. Participants walked with enthusiasm, carrying banners and posters highlighting the theme of this year's International Nurses Day.

FOR SAFE PASSAGE OF ELECTION STAFF

Niranjan appeals to CEO to alert police

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC senior vice-president G Niranjan appealed to the Chief Electoral Officer Vikasraj to alert the police and disaster management personnel to swing into action for the safe passage of election staff and election material.

On Sunday, Niranjan addressed a letter in this regard to the CEO. In his letter, Niranjan said that the heavy rain and storm is affecting the transportation of polling personnel and material in many parts of the State.

He appealed to the CEO to

alert the police and disaster management personnel to swing into action for the safe passage of personnel and election material. "Please direct the concerned at polling station areas to see that rain water does not enter the polling stations."

He said, "We have taken precautionary measures keeping in view of the summer but this sudden change in the climate warrants us to take steps on war-footing to avoid any inconvenience to the polling personnel, voters and for the safety of EVMs."



CMD of Souther DISCOM Musharraf Farooqui inspecting the damaged 220 KV transmission line at Miyapur sub-station

Probe ordered into Miyapur fire accident

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

There was a major fire mishap in the 220 KV Extra-High-Tension (EHT) sub-station in Miyapur where the Raidurg-Miyapur 220 KV cable line was burnt partially in a suspicious manner on Sunday. Due to this, the supply to Kaitalapur and Miyapur 132/33 KV sub-stations was disrupted for some time. Alert personnel swiftly responded by extinguishing fire and restored supply through an alternate circuit.

Southern Distribution Company (DISCOM) Chief Managing Director (CMD) Musharraf Farooqui, who visited the accident site, said that appropriate measures have been taken to prevent this from affecting the power supply. The staff was directed to be constantly vigilant and ensure that no untoward incident takes place at the sub-stations and other PTRs.

However, TS-Transco and Ts -Genco Chairman and Managing Director SAM Rizvi termed it as 'suspicious' by stating that when the highest demand in the city is over 4350 MW, there is no danger in these cables. The fact that the accident

Southern Distribution Company (DISCOM) Chief Managing Director (CMD) Musharraf Farooqui, who visited the accident site, said that appropriate measures have been taken to prevent this from affecting the power supply.

happened in the morning when the demand is the least raises many suspicions. He ordered a police inquiry into this incident.

According to the authorities, when there is a high pressure demand on the cables, there is a possibility of fire in the end kit and cable joints due to excessive heat. But when the demand is low and the weather is cold, this is not likely to happen. At least 200 megawatts of electricity is supplied through this cable.

Southern DISCOM CMD Musharraf Farooqui, TS-Transco Director of Transmission Jagat Reddy, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Madhapur Zone, Dr Vineeth, and fire officers visited the incident area.



City liquor shops to remain closed till tomorrow

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Commissioner of Police Kothakota Sreenivas Reddy has ordered closure of liquor shops in the city till 6 am on Tuesday.

The order has been issued in view of the Lok Sabha elections to be held in Telangana on Monday. The order is applicable to all restaurants, hotels, bars and other establishments serving liquor in Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

Non-proprietary clubs, star hotels and restaurants must also adhere to the order.

PARENTS AND SCHOOLS THROW BLAME ON EACH OTHER

Drug addiction on rise among students

RASHMI BHUMIREDDY ■ HYDERABAD

Over the years, one can notice a rise in the number of cases of students from top schools in Hyderabad involved in drugs. This has raised concern among parents, how to save their wards, but on the other hand school managements are least bothered on students' future. There is no wonder why Hyderabad ranks among the top places in the usage of drugs. Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had announced that he will be implementing an action plan soon where all schools should appoint psychologists and offer counselling to students who are into drug addiction.

Venkat, a member of Hyderabad Parents Association said, "There is no focus on psychological well-being or development of students. They are only concerned about their academics."

Venkat, a member of Hyderabad Parents Association said, "There is no focus on psychological well-being or development of students. They are only concerned about their academics."



It's parents' responsibility to handle students' well-being, especially from a psychological perspective. Earlier, teachers were trained to understand the psychology of students and take action when they found students involved in drugs. Also, many of the CBSE or ICSE schools were taking health reports or records of students annually and submitting them to the respective boards. But now this is not the case.

Diana Monteiro, a psychologist, said, "It is crucial for every educational institution to have a psychologist on their staff. Young people need guidance and help in their early years as all chronic or long term psychological problems including drug and alcohol abuse begin at a young age."

Dr Anupama, Head of Psychology Department, Osmania University said, "The number of cases for substance

addiction has risen enormously in the past couple of years. Appointment of counsellors in educational institutions has been pending since the past five years. The educational institutions have to mandate awareness programmes through psychologists on various risk behaviors and their consequent effects."

A member of the Telangana Recognised Schools Management Association said, "It came to our notice regarding drug trafficking in schools and colleges. Even though such usage may be minute in primary and secondary education institutions, we condemn such acts. In spite of having counsellors in schools and colleges, the supply of money to children is the first cause to develop the drug culture in their adolescence. I appeal to all parents to keep an eye on the things happening in and around their children after school hours."

Why should there be a change of Constitution?

Can they change the Constitution of India? Why should they change it? Will they destroy democracy and the federal character of our nation? During the current elections, the Constitution of India has been discussed in popular 'narrative', calling for either its retention or removal as the country's basic statute. It was never a 'subject' of campaign with the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress within the INDIA block.

In this context, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on 11th May 2024 said: "If voted to power, the saffron party will change the Constitution". She further said that it was an 'idea' that will be a sin and people of the country would not allow it. In the name of religion, dividing brothers, and sisters is a sin. It is sin to create confusion and mislead people in the name of religion. In the name of religion weakening democracy and people, and saying that they will change the Constitution is a sin. This Constitution was written by our elders with their strug-

gle and blood. This Constitution was not written by Modi. People of this country wrote it".

At least two serious attempts were made to 'destroy' the structure of the Indian Constitution. First it was during the Emergency -- 1975-77, when the then Congress government almost created a 'Mini-Constitution' through a problematic amendment. And, now the BJP is talking about the Constitution and is finding it hard to deny allegations that it is set to change the country's basic statute substantially if the party get 400 seats in the LS elections. So, this has become a major issue before the people of India. They apprehend a danger and see the need to fight to protect our democracy. For voters, this is the agenda now: vote to secure our Bharath Constitution as constructed by Ambedkar's team during 1950.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh questioned recently: "I want to ask the parties promising religion-based reservation, why are you fooling people? I want to ask to Congress and

RJD party that if you have courage then do not do politics by throwing dust in the eyes of the public, do politics by looking the people in their eyes." He has assured people that the BJP government will never change the Constitution or end reservation. He asserted that there was no question of changing the Preamble to the Constitution.

Recently, BJP parliamentarian Anant Kumar Hegde said that the party needs 400 seats to "change the Constitution" and "if the Constitution has to be amended -- the Congress fundamentally distorted the Constitution by forcefully filling unnecessary things in it, especially by bringing in laws that were aimed at suppressing the Hindu society -- if all of this has to be changed; it is not possible with this (current) majority."

Quoting the PM, he said: "Ab ki baar 400 paar, why 400? ... We have two-thirds majority in Lok Sabha, (but) in Rajya Sabha we don't have two-thirds majority. We have a small majority. In state governments,



we do not have an adequate majority". This 'guarantee' has caused a serious controversy and apprehension among voters.

Changing the 'social' part of the Preamble

The 42nd Amendment changed the description of India from a "sovereign democratic republic" to a "sovereign, socialist secular democratic republic", and also changed the



PROF MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR ACHARYULU
Dean, Mahindra University, Hyderabad



After 42nd Amendment

words "unity of the nation" to "unity and integrity of the nation". But it was changed in the 42nd Amendment. They added some more words to the Preamble. It was called a Mini-Constitution.

The 43rd and 44th Amendments repealed the 42nd Amendment's provision that Directive Principles take precedence over Fundamental Rights, and also curbed Parliament's power to legislate

economic structure in the Constitution.

The Supreme Court, on Jan 2008, rejected a PIL plea that sought the removal of the word 'socialist' from the Preamble. In the plea, an NGO wanted the word to be struck off the Constitution, saying that it was not a part of the original Constitution that had been drafted by Dr B R Ambedkar. While rejecting this petition, the then Chief Justice K G Balakrishnan said... "It is a facet of democracy. It has not got any definite meaning. It gets different meanings in different times."

The petition also sought to strike down the RPA (Representation of People Act), according to which political parties were forced to swear fealty to socialism in order to be recognised. The petition also claimed that the addition of the word during the Emergency was tantamount to re-writing the Constitution.

The Parliament was given unrestrained power to amend any parts of the Constitution, without judicial review. This

essentially invalidated the Supreme Court's ruling in *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* in 1973.

People should come to rescue

Whenever dictators sought to destroy the structure of Constitution and worked against democracy, people came to rescue. Now the same need has arisen to fight dictators who have assumed absolute powers.

Justice Chandrachud (senior) said: "In other words, Parliament cannot, under Article 368, expand its amending power so as to acquire for itself the right to repeal or abrogate the Constitution or to destroy its basic and essential features. The donee of a limited power cannot by the exercise of that power convert the limited power into an unlimited one."

Its again the duty of the voters and people of India generally including youth to protect our federation and unity. This is the question before people, voters in India now.



TELUGU TV SERIAL ACTRESS DIES IN CAR CRASH

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a car accident at Seripalli near Bhupur in Mahabubnagar district on Saturday night, Telugu TV actress Pavitra Jayaram died on Sunday. She hailed from Karnataka. The incident took place when she was returning to Hyderabad by a car along with two of her family members. She suffered critical injuries when the car hit an RTC bus after hitting a road divider. She was rushed to the government hospital at Mahabubnagar where doctors declared her to have been brought dead. She became popular through her serial Trinayani and Nimne Pelladuta. Pavitra hailed from Mandya region of Karnataka. She first made debut in Kannada TV serials and worked in serials like 'Robo Family', 'Galipata', 'Radharaman' and 'Vidya Vinayaka' and so on.

All steps taken to facilitate free and fair elections

PNS ■ SIRCILLA

In all 840 security personnel, including the Central security personnel, have been drafted to beef up the security for the Monday's elections in the district. The security forces conducted flag marches in the district to instill confidence among the people.

So far, 1075 persons were bound over. Since the Election Commission issued the election notification the police stepped up the vigil in Vemulawada and Sircilla Assembly segments.

Vigil was stepped up on areas identified as problematic from the law and order perspective and on the polling booths. CCTV cameras have



Polling personnel taking the polling material in Sircilla on Sunday

prepared with the help of the SIs of police stations in the areas geotagged.

Superintendent of Police Akhil Mahajan personally supervised the security for the elections and making surprise checks and taking all measures to ensure that the elections are held in a free and fair manner.

In all, 560 polling booths have been set up in 319 localities. Of them, 48 habitats have been identified as problematic from the law and order perspective.

In all, 1075 persons were bound over. The police have seized 1664.93 liters of liquor. People have surrendered 23 licensed weapons to the police. Over 1,540 personnel have been drafted for security duty.

More than 1 lakh security personnel deployed for polls: DGP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Director General of Police (DGP) Ravi Gupta said that 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, 2,088 other department personnel and from Chhattisgarh and Karnataka and 7,000 home guards have been deployed for elections.

Since March 16, around 9,123 cases have been registered under excise, narcotics, Indian Penal Code (IPC), and Representation of the People Act, 1951. In those cases, 8,231



were booked under the Excise Act. Others have been registered under various Acts and Sections. In the critical locations, where we are anticipating some problems we have deployed para military forces, along with the state police.

"There is Maoist-affect in three districts, which are Kothagudem, Mulugu and Bhupalpally. We have visited them. We will ensure safe and peaceful elections in those

areas also."

Ravi Gupta said that the police have deployed according to the local situations. State Police have seized more than Rs 190 crore worth of cash, liquor, narcotic drugs, precious metals and other freebies since March 16. Check posts are working well.

In all, 428 Fixed Static Teams (FST), 462 Static Surveillance teams (SST), 89 teams for inter-State borders and 173 inter-district check posts have been set up as per the Election Commission of India rules.

The DGP said that a total of 34,526 individuals identified as rowdies and offenders have been bound overed.

Rs 23.84 crore seized by ECI since MCC came into force



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

District Election Officer (DEO) Ronald Rose said that since the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) came into force on March 16, a total of Rs 23.84 crore cash and Rs 26.03 crore of material items were seized in the Hyderabad district. More than 27,715 liters of liquor was seized, 354 cases have been filed and 356 persons were arrested

since the MCC came into force. So far, 472 FIRs have been registered in the State, the DEO said.

From Saturday 6 am to Sunday 6 am, the ECI has seized Rs 65.18 lakh and Rs 5.36 crore worth of material goods have been seized. Around 358 liters of liquor were seized by the police authorities, 27 cases have been filed and 36 persons were arrested.



20 hurt as RTC bus ploughs through fields

PNS ■ BHADRACHALAM

An RTC bus has veered off the road lost control and barged into road side fields before it came to a halt, causing injuries to at least 20 passengers.

The reasons for the mishap could not be ascertained immediately.

The incident took place on the outskirts of Mote village in Burgampahadmanal on Sunday. The locals got the injured admitted to the government hospital at Burgampahad.

The police, on learning about the incident, swung into action and registered the case.



District Collector K Shashanka, along with General Election Observers Rajender Kumar Kataria, at distribution centre Bandari at Gollapally Village

Collector visits election material distribution centre

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

District Election Officer and Collector K Shashanka, along with General Election Observers Rajender Kumar Kataria, visited the distribution centres set up for the Lok Sabha election in Chevella Assembly Constituency.

Inspecting the distribution centre at Bandari Srinivas Institute in Gollapally Village under Chevella mandal, the Collector ensured the smooth distribution of election materials. Facilities such as drink-

ing water, medical camps, breakfast, dining facilities, and others were checked for proper arrangement.

The Collector verified the presence of all teams, including POs, APOs, and OPOs, and observed the demonstration of EVM functioning. He stressed the importance of providing polling materials without shortages or confusion, and instructed officers to monitor the transportation of polling personnel and police personnel to ensure they reach designated polling stations on time.

Police recover Rs 1.50 crore after car turns turtle

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

The police, during the vehicle search operation, seized Rs 1.50 crore from a multi-purpose vehicle after chasing it for a distance of 10 km.

A multi-purpose vehicle proceeding towards Khammam from Hyderabad

sped away thought he police flagged it down at Nayakanandem. The police are searching vehicles near Toll Plaza when the incident took place. According to Khammam police, the police grew suspicious and chased the vehicle for a distance of 10 km. As the driver lost control

of the vehicle and it turned turtle. One of the passengers was injured.

The police, when searched, stumbled on a bunch of currency notes worth Rs 1.50 crore, the police said. The police will send the seized money to the Income Tax Department for further action.

Man kills son after latter lost Rs 2 cr in betting

PNS ■ MEDAK

A man allegedly killed his son after the latter lost Rs 2 crore in cricket betting over two years.

Upset over his son getting addicted to betting, Satyanarayana allegedly hit

his son, Mukesh Kumar (28), with an iron after a bitter argument between them. The incident took place at Bagiarathally in the district. Mukesh died on the spot. He died on the spot.

According to local people, Satyanarayana had tried to

persuade his son to desist from cricket betting, but in. Bitter arguments used to break out between them often.

Mukesh is survived by wife and two children.

Police have registered a case and are investigating.

1 dead, five injured in lightning strike in Adilabad district

PNS ■ ADILABAD

Heavy rain, accompanied by lightning and thunder, lashed Adilabad district on Sunday. The rains wreaked havoc in the district.

A 29-year-farmer Kiran Kumar was struck dead by lightning while he was working in an agriculture field at Gimma village in the district. Five others too were injured.

Heavy rains lashed many parts of the State one day ahead of polling for 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana.

Rain, accompanied by thunder experienced in Adilabad district on Sunday wreaked havoc in the district. The thunder showers completely drenched the paddy being dried at various places.

Five persons in Jainad mandal

were injured on being struck by lightning. The injured were admitted to hospital by the locals. Muktapur of Nagaligidda mandal received 5.1 cm of rainfall, while Mogudampalli received 2.6 cm. Lingayipalli village of Papanapetamandal received 1.9 cm.

In Nizamabad district's Gandhari mandal, strong gales and rains lashing the area damaged a tin-roofed structure belonging to GappaKetawat in Somavaram Thanda causing him a total loss of Rs 50,000. The locals have been demanding the government authorities to take suitable measures to make good the loss to Ketawat.

In Nagireddyptamandal of district, rains, accompanied by hail stones, lashed several villages of the mandal on

Sunday. The rain brought respite to the people suffering from sweltering heat for the past several days. However, the farmers lament that the rains drenched the paddy kept at the paddy procurement centers.

In Kamareddy district, heavy rain has been lashing the town hampering the task of transporting the EVMs, tents and other election material to the polling stations. The poll staff were drenched completely. The tent raised at the government degree college here has been leaking posing problems to the poll staff.

Zaheerabad also has been experiencing heavy rains paralyzing the EVM distribution activity. The poll staff have tough time protecting the EVMs and VVPATs from getting wet due to rain.

ALL SET FOR AP POLLS TODAY

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Chief Electoral Officer, Mukesh Kumar Meena, affirmed that all preparations have been meticulously arranged for the seamless execution of the 2024 general elections across 175 Assembly segments and 25 Parliamentary constituencies in the state. Election materials have been duly received and dispatched to respective

polling stations, with EVMs undergoing thorough scrutiny upon receipt from the election authorities.

Addressing the press on Sunday afternoon, Meena assured that all polling personnel would be stationed at their designated centres by 7 pm. A comprehensive security arrangement, inclusive of police forces from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka alongside central forces, has been mobilized.

Meena highlighted the implementation of webcasting to monitor the situation at polling centres statewide, with specialized applications deployed to track voting percentages in real time. He emphasized that stringent action would be taken against any attempts to impede voters from other locations. Instances of voter manipulation reported through the cVIGIL app have been promptly addressed,

ensuring a fair electoral process. Efforts are underway to encourage urban voters to exercise their franchise, with a concerted drive to achieve maximum voter turnout.

Underlining the Election Commission's (EC) mandate for peaceful elections, Meena disclosed that 74 per cent of polling stations are equipped with webcams for surveillance both inside and outside the premises.



NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

INDIA CORNER

Chhattisgarh policeman shoots himself, critically injured

A 34-year-old constable of Chhattisgarh police was critically wounded after he shot himself with his service rifle in an apparent suicide attempt on Sunday, an official said. Sunny Malakar turned the weapon on himself around noon at his residence located within the limits of the city Kotwalli police station in Raigarh, the official said. He had returned after doing the night shift. The constable, who was attached to the Jutmil police post in the Raigarh district, suffered grievous injuries to the left side of his chest, Raigarh Additional Superintendent of Police Akash Markam said. "After being alerted, the police rushed to the spot and took Malakar to Metro Hospital in Raigarh. Later, he was shifted to Apollo Hospital in neighbouring Bilaspur city," the official added. The injured constable's father Trilochan Malakar is posted.



YouTube 'Savukku' Shankar detained under Goondas Act

YouTube 'Savukku' Shankar, currently lodged in the Coimbatore Central prison, was on Sunday detained under the Goondas Act. Based on the orders of Commissioner of Police, Greater Chennai, Sandeep Rai Rathore, the detention order under the Goondas Act was served on Shankar by a cyber crime (Chennai) police inspector on May 12, Chennai city police said. There are seven cases pending against Shankar in Chennai police's central crime branch/cyber crime out of which three are under investigation, charge sheets have been filed in two and the remaining are pending trial, according to a Chennai police press note. Forty eight-year-old Shankar was arrested by Coimbatore police on May 4 in southern Theni for alleged derogatory statements about women police personnel/police officials in an interview to a YouTube channel.



'Space industry offers opportunity for private players'

ISRO Chairman S Somanath has said the Indian space industry is offering a tremendous opportunity to the private sector in the country as a new area of growth and development. He said the union government envisages the space sector in the country to become a 9 to 10 billion dollar industry in the next 5-10 years from the current levels of 2 billion dollars. Somanath was speaking after unveiling the carbon reduction initiative of SFO Technologies, the flagship company of the NeST Group, in a function here on Saturday, a company release said. He also said that 400 private sector companies have benefited from the technology developed by ISRO for its various missions. Companies like SFO Technologies are well positioned to take further advantage of the new policy initiatives in the space sector by the government of India.



'Govt not averse to a floor test'

FORMER CM KHATTAR DARES OPPOSITION TO PARADE ITS MLAS

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

With opposition parties claiming that the BJP government in Haryana has lost majority, the ruling party on Sunday dared them to parade their MLAs if they have the numbers.

Former chief minister M L Khattar also indicated the BJP government was not averse to a floor test and that six Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) MLAs are with it.

After the withdrawal of support by three Independent MLAs to the BJP government in Haryana, the Congress has demanded the dismissal of the BJP government in the state and fresh assembly elections under the President's rule.

The JJP, which parted ways with the BJP in March, has said it was ready to help the Congress bring down the government.

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said his government had in March secured a vote of confidence. Asking the opposition



to parade its MLAs, Saini said, "In future, when the time comes, we will again secure a vote of confidence".

Khattar, who was replying to questions from reporters in Karnal on the political situation in the state, said the Congress, which has 30 MLAs, should parade them before the governor. He claimed the Congress is not sure whether they have all their MLAs onboard. "And you have seen what is happening in JJP,"

Former chief minister M L Khattar also indicated the BJP government was not averse to a floor test and that six Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) MLAs are with it

Khattar quipped, in an apparent reference to many JJP MLAs in recent weeks indicating their support to the BJP.

"It would have been better had they (opposition) not raised the issue. Now, when they have raised it we are saying let them parade their MLAs (to prove whether they have the numbers on their side)," said Khattar.

"Aur agar aapke (opposition) pass sankhya zyada hai toh Vidhan Sabha ke floor par test bhi hoga, sab hoga (and if they have the numbers, then a floor test will also be held)," Khattar said. He, however, said that Congress is scared that its 30 MLAs are not going to come for a floor test.

Asked how many JJP MLAs have met him in recent days, Khattar quipped, "You know I have talked to many. Six MLAs are with us." At the same time, he said, the Saini government secured the vote of confidence on March 13. Whether another trust vote is needed for six months or not, the matter is in the domain of the Governor and Assembly Speaker.

MERGER OF SMALLER PARTIES INTO CONGRESS

'If ideology is same, why remain separate?'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Sunday appeared amenable to views expressed in certain sections on the potential merger of smaller parties into the Grand Old Party.

"As far as smaller parties aligning or merging with Congress is concerned, I feel if the ideology is the same then what is the need to be separate? Let's see what happens," Tharoor said while addressing



a press conference in Mumbai. Notably, veteran politician Sharad Pawar has predicted

that in the next couple of years, several regional parties will associate more closely with the Congress, or even merge with it. He spoke about the future political landscape during an interview with The Indian Express.

Tharoor described as "meaningless" Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray wherein he has asked them to join Ajit Pawar and Eknath Shinde, respectively.

He also exuded confidence that parties that have not joined the Opposition alliance so far will do so after the results of the Lok Sabha elections are declared.

Addressing a poll campaign rally on Friday, Modi advised the NCP (SP) led by Pawar and Shiv Sena (UBT) led by Uddhav Thackeray to join hands with Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, instead of "dying by merging" with the Congress.

'If you choose AAP on May 25, I won't have to go back to jail'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal during a roadshow in Delhi on Sunday said if people choose Aam Aadmi Party on May 25, he won't have to go back to jail.

Accompanied by his Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Kejriwal held a roadshow in Moti Nagar in support of party's New Delhi Lok Sabha candidate Somnath Bharti.

"I have to go back to jail after 20 days. If you choose jhadu (AAP's symbol), I won't

have to go back to jail," the chief minister said. The AAP national convenor is out on interim bail till June 1. He has to surrender on June 2. "They sent me to jail because I worked for you. The BJP does not want that work of Delhi people are done," he said.

Kejriwal alleged that his insulin injections were stopped for 15 days inside Tihar jail. "If I went back to jail, the BJP would stop your work, free electricity, degrade schools and shut down hospitals and Mohalla Clinics," he charged.

He also asked people to vote for Bharti



since he would be available for people in need even at odd hours.

Dalits, tribals to become slaves again if Modi, Shah get third term: Kharge



PNS ■ DHULE(MAHARASHTRA)

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday asked people to vote for his party, claiming that a third term for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah would mean that the poor, Dalits and tribals would be "treated like slaves".

Addressing a rally in Maharashtra's Dhule constituency, where the Congress has fielded former MLA Shobha Bachhav, Kharge appealed to voters to choose his party to save democracy and the Constitution.

"Before Independence, the

poor, Dalits and tribals were treated like slaves. If you give a third term to Modi and Shah, the same situation will repeat. We will become slaves again," he said.

Dhule in north Maharashtra will go to polls in the fifth phase of the general elections on May 20. Here, the BJP has nominated former Union minister Subhash Bhamre. "You have to vote for your own sake and your own people. We need to save the Constitution. This election will shape the future of the country, thus it is an important election," he said. If there is no Constitution, there will be "no one to save you", he said.

'PM has given country's entire wealth to four or five rich people'

PNS ■ RAEBARELI(UP)

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing him of giving the country's "entire wealth" to "four or five rich people".

Addressing election rallies here in support of her brother and the Congress' Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha seat candidate Rahul Gandhi, she alleged the BJP has not done anything for the public in the last 10 years and was bringing up religion in its poll campaign to divert vot-



ers' attention.

Rahul Gandhi is fighting the Lok Sabha elections from Raebareilly, the seat held by his mother Sonia Gandhi for the last two decades. She recently

moved to the Rajya Sabha. Rahul Gandhi has also been fielded from Wayanad in Kerala. Priyanka Gandhi said, "Privatisation is not bad in itself but if the prime minister gives the entire wealth of the nation to four or five rich people, then that is not right. Today coal, electricity, ports and airports of the country are all with the friends of the prime minister."

"Our prime minister organises big events where you will see many big capitalists but not a single poor person," she said.

BJP, PM Modi not giving free ration from their pockets: Mayawati

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Sunday said the Centre was not giving free ration to the underprivileged from its pocket and asked poor people not to feel obliged to vote for the BJP because of this. She said for the past some time, the BJP-led Centre has been providing small amounts of ration to the poor families.

"During elections, BJP and RSS people visit every village and tell those poor people who are getting this free ration that BJP and the Narendra Modi govern-



ment is providing them free ration," she said addressing an election rally in Haryana's Karnal.

"They ask them to repay the debt by giving their votes to the BJP," Mayawati alleged. She stressed that the poor people should not get misguided by this "as the free ration being provided is not coming from the pockets of Prime Minister Narendra Modi or BJP, but from the taxpayers' money." "I want to tell those poor people who are getting free ration, that BJP or Modi is not giving it out from their pockets."

Sonia spent more than 70 % of MP funds on minorities: Shah

PNS ■ RAEBARELI/PRATHAPGARH(UP)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday launched a blistering attack on senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, accusing her of "spending more than 70 per cent of her MP funds on minorities" and the Gandhi family of being experts in lying.

Rahul Gandhi is fighting the Lok Sabha elections from Raebareilly the seat held by his mother Sonia Gandhi

for the last two decades. She recently moved to the Rajya Sabha. Rahul Gandhi has also been fielded from Wayanad in Kerala.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra addressed a rally in support of her brother Rahul Gandhi in Raebareilly and accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of never visiting any village in his Varanasi constituency. Raebareilly will vote in the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha elections on May 20. Shah also addressed an election rally



in Prathapgarh where he said that Rahul Gandhi can be scared of Pakistan's atom bomb but the BJP is

not; Pakistan-occupied Kashmir belongs to India and "we will take it". He was referring to Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar's remarks on Pakistan having the atom bomb.

At an election rally in Raebareilly, Shah said, "You gave the Gandhi family a chance for years, but no development work has been done... They (Congress) do not believe in development. They do not even come to you in your happiness and sorrows." Asking people to vote for BJP can-

didate Dinesh Pratap Singh, the Union minister said, "We will connect Raebareilly with Modi's development journey."

"The 'shahzada' (prince) has come here to seek votes. You have been voting for many years. Have you received anything from the MP fund? If you have not received it, then where did it go? It went to their vote bank. Sonia Gandhi has spent more than 70 per cent of the MP funds on minorities," Shah claimed.

USE OF WALKIE-TALKIES TO REQUEST FOR WASHROOM BREAKS

Female train drivers find it unsafe, embarrassing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Female train drivers have opposed the "embarrassing and unsafe" practice of using walkie-talkies to request a washroom break while on duty.

"If we have to answer the nature's call, we have to tell the male loco pilot who informs the station master, who further conveys it to the control department which manages the running of trains," a female loco pilot said on Sunday.

"All these conversations happen through walkie-talkies accessible to dozens of other officials in the range. The message spreads everywhere at the station that a woman driver is in the engine and she wants to go to the loo," she said.

The female drivers said this current practice, adopted informally, is embarrassing and compromises their safety.



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According to them, of the over 1700 female train drivers employed with the Indian Railways, 90 per cent are assistant loco pilots who work as an assistant to male loco pilots of passenger or freight trains.

Another female loco pilot said, "I went through the ordeal once when I was on duty with a male driver on a freight

train. In a passenger train, one can go to the washroom in one

of the coaches but in case of a freight train, you have to step out at the station area."

She claimed that when she stepped out of the engine and came to the station, some of the officers, who knew in advance through the walkie-talkie messages, were staring at her and she felt very awkward.

The female loco pilots said that it is also unsafe for them to step out of the engines to use washrooms of smaller stations, which are usually located in deserted areas.

"In the past couple of years, hundreds of new girls have come into the profession of train driving and since they were unaware of these challenges, they are under stress," Ashok Sharma, Assistant General Secretary, National Federation of Indian Railwaymen (NFIR), said.

"Many of them avoid drink-

ing water before the start of their duties and even during duty hours, they refrain from consuming any liquid food items. This causes dehydration and leads to several other lifestyle diseases among them. Their condition is extremely miserable," Sharma said.

Many female loco pilots said that since this summer, a couple of incidents have occurred in which female frontline workers, such as lady guards and drivers, fainted during duty hours or felt uneasy in trains and have requested to be relieved early because they have to work under extreme temperatures that too without water. "We feel lucky if we are allowed to go to the washroom on first request as we are often told to hold it till the next few stations because of important trains coming from behind."

PM still lying about Sandeshkhali: Mamata

Says Modi is silent on molestation allegation against Guv

PNS ■ AMDANGA(WB)

Claiming that PM Narendra Modi was continuing to "peddle lies" about Sandeshkhali, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday questioned why he was maintaining a stoic silence on the allegations of molestation against Governor CV Ananda Bose and not asking him to resign.

Addressing an election rally in North 24 Parganas' Amdanga, which is a part of the Barrackpore Lok Sabha constituency, she said the PM should be ashamed that the "BJP's conspiracy" about Sandeshkhali has become pub-



lic. "The PM is still peddling lies about Sandeshkhali. He should be ashamed as the BJP's conspiracy has now become public," Banerjee said, apparently referring to a purported video in which a local BJP leader was heard saying that over 70

women had received Rs 2,000 each for taking part in protests against TMC strongman Shahjahan Sheikh who is accused of sexual assault and land grab.

In an earlier clip, a man resembling BJP's Sandeshkhali mandal president Gangadhar Kayal was heard saying that the "staged" protests were done at the behest of Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari who was behind the "whole conspiracy".

The PM, who also campaigned in Barrackpore town -- around 20 km away, alleged that TMC goons were threatening the tormented women of Sandeshkhali to protect.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Wild card

The interim bail to Kejriwal for campaigning adds yet another layer to an already intricate election

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who had been under judicial custody for 50-odd days after the Enforcement Directorate named him in the multi-crore liquor scam, has made a wild card entry as a participant in electioneering. Known for his dynamic role as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader, his sudden release from incarceration injects a new fervour into an intense electoral situation, particularly impacting the BJP's strategies and reinvigorating the Opposition campaign. As expected, Kejriwal has come down heavily on the ruling party, accusing it of subverting democracy and misusing law-enforcement agencies to imprison the Opposition leaders on one pretext or the other. Interestingly, he also now claims that the BJP's senior leaders are being sidelined and India is being pushed into a "one nation, one leader" paradigm. The situation is indeed ominous for the BJP; Kejriwal's absence had provided it with a temporary advantage to consolidate its support base without facing the AAP challenge in certain regions where it holds influence and sway. Kejriwal's return, however, resumes the battle in earnest and necessitates a reassessment of campaign strategy.



The BJP must now recalibrate its outreach efforts to counter AAP's influence, especially in Delhi, Punjab and Haryana (The polling in Gujarat has already concluded). The party poses significant challenge to the BJP with its anti-corruption and populist policies. Though he is not the proverbial all-powerful leader, Kejriwal has the ability to galvanise support, particularly among urban voters and the youth, and his presence significantly boosts the prospects of the Opposition's INDIA bloc. With the voting percentage remaining consistently low and several Supreme Court decisions going against it, the BJP must find new ways to take on its challengers. The party leaders have reached out to satraps Sharad Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray in Maharashtra ahead of Phase IV, but the latter have not responded positively to the BJP's overtures. In the light of these developments, the BJP must intensify its efforts to consolidate its support base and mitigate the potential impact of Kejriwal's resurgence. It must rely upon Modi's oratorical skills, aggressive campaigning, targeted messaging and new alliances to win in crucial constituencies. It is time for the BJP to capitalise on its nationalistic agenda and developmental initiatives to appeal to voters, presenting itself as the party best equipped to lead India forward. For the Opposition, Kejriwal's release offers hope and a renewed sense of purpose. By leveraging public dissatisfaction with the status quo, working to heighten the feeling of anti-incumbency among the electorate and raking up issues of public concern such as corruption, inflation and unemployment, the Opposition can cobble up a more cohesive and effective campaign. Given the unpredictable nature of voter preferences, it is hard to tell what resonates with them. They may act emotionally at times but they are not foolish, are they?

of both the PPP and PML-N brought in and 'selected' Imran Khan's PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) as the face of governance, even though the strings were pulled by the Generals from neighbouring Rawalpindi. But what they hadn't bargained for was the seriousness and immaturity with which the vainglorious Pathan from Mianwali would start imagining his own prowess. Imran mistakenly thought he had outgrown the need to remain beholden to the Pakistan 'establishment', and that was to be his undoing. A reluctant, screaming, and shouting Imran Khan was ousted from power and the much discredited and familiar faces from the past, ushered in. It was an important lesson in Pakistani politics. When the tide turns, any political force that appeals to the Generals, can stage a comeback. Except perhaps Imran Khan, who dug his heels and refused to learn from history. His cadre perpetuated the 'May 9' riots and plunder that spared no one - not even the 'no-go' zones of cantonments or residences of Generals. The Pakistani 'establishment' did what it does better - care two-hoots for the popularity of Imran Khan and attacked his party, people and infrastructure. While Imran is arguably

Pakistani military tightens grip

Imran Khan's confrontational stance against the military establishment seems to be leading to his own downfall. Khan's defiance has only served to further isolate him



BHOPIINDER SINGH

American scholar, Stephen Cohen, notes in his article title Pakistan: Army, Society and Security, "There are armies which guard their nation's borders, there are armies which are concerned with protecting their own position in society, and there are armies which defend a cause or an idea. The Pakistan Army does all three". Even though it is a Military that has never won any war (1947-48, 1965, 1971 or 1999) and is struggling miserably to contain elements of religious extremism from across the Durand Line - it remains the last institution that hasn't succumbed to the curse of puritanism that is eating into the already moth-eaten Pakistan. It can be argued that besides the Pakistani Military, the two other pieces of the ruling troika i.e., civilian politicians and the clergy, have failed the sovereign, far more. Counterintuitive as it sounds, the Pakistani 'establishment' (read, Military), despite all its manipulations is still the best bet to protect the Pakistani State from imploding.

Despite vile attempts by unhinged politicians and the clergy to fan divisive passions on the lines of sectarianism, regionalism, or ethnicities - the disciplined and 'monolith' construct of the Pakistani Military inherited from the British Raj integrated its diversities in Balouch Regiment, Frontier Force Regiment, Punjab Regiment, Sindh Regiment et al. Few derelictions like General Zia-ul-Haq or Hamid Gul aside, the institution was relatively westernized, moderate, and inclusive. It zealously protected its ways and interests with disproportionate budgetary allocations and ensuring that it always had the right of the way, formally or informally. It chose dispensations without harbouring any ideological preferences and brazenly chose and dropped those who didn't toe the line. It didn't really care about optics of contradiction and shifting preferences, as it chose between the Bhuttos PPP (Pakistan People's Party) and Sharif's PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz) with impunity. In 2018, the 'establishment' tired



of both the PPP and PML-N brought in and 'selected' Imran Khan's PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) as the face of governance, even though the strings were pulled by the Generals from neighbouring Rawalpindi. But what they hadn't bargained for was the seriousness and immaturity with which the vainglorious Pathan from Mianwali would start imagining his own prowess. Imran mistakenly thought he had outgrown the need to remain beholden to the Pakistan 'establishment', and that was to be his undoing. A reluctant, screaming, and shouting Imran Khan was ousted from power and the much discredited and familiar faces from the past, ushered in. It was an important lesson in Pakistani politics. When the tide turns, any political force that appeals to the Generals, can stage a comeback. Except perhaps Imran Khan, who dug his heels and refused to learn from history. His cadre perpetuated the 'May 9' riots and plunder that spared no one - not even the 'no-go' zones of cantonments or residences of Generals. The Pakistani 'establishment' did what it does better - care two-hoots for the popularity of Imran Khan and attacked his party, people and infrastructure. While Imran is arguably

the most popular leader and the Bhuttos and Sharifs the most despised, it is the latter who are in power, courtesy the Pakistani Military. The obstinate Imran has boxed himself into a corner by pivoting his credentials to grandstanding against the Pakistani Military, and that denies him the realistic chance to return. His only chance to succeed with his current strategy is the Pakistani Military were to become irrelevant, but such a hypothetical situation would also make the survival of Pakistan as a sovereign state, untenable. Faultlines deepen with the Military mouthpiece Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) insisting that dialogue with PTI is only possible if it "earnestly apologises publicly in front of the nation". It added for good measure that PTI must adopt "constructive politics" and avoid, "politics of anarchy". Clearly it would be suicidal for PTI to stoop so low after much theatrical defiance and acceptance of its role would scar PTI with anarchical and unpatriotic attributions (as despite history, Pakistani Military remains the beacon of patriotism, in Pakistani consciousness). This showdown with railing words between the Military and PTI also counters the accusations of 'false-flag operation', as alluded to by the



A RELUCTANT, SCREAMING, AND SHOUTING IMRAN KHAN WAS OUSTED FROM POWER AND THE MUCH DISCREDITED AND FAMILIAR FACES FROM THE PAST, USHERED IN. IT WAS AN IMPORTANT LESSON IN PAKISTANI POLITICS

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PTI. It seems the Pakistani Military is hell bent on making PTI and Imran pay dearly for daring to challenge the 'establishment', and this recent precondition for thawing relationship was meant to harden the divide and make it impossible for PTI/Imran to soften stand.

As if on cue, the Pakistani Military is making efforts to normalise its relations with the historical ally, the United States of America (as the same was specifically targeted by Imran Khan). It also acts as a hedge against Chinese support, and it strengthens equations with Arab Sheikdoms, concurrently. As it is, the bloody battle ensuing currently for the Pakistani Military is with the Afghanistan based Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), on whom Imran Khan or 'Taliban Khan' was particularly accommodative. Clearly there is no upside for the Pakistani State to retain the belligerence and extremist stand as championed by Imran Khan in his hustings, and therefore all such policies, PTI infrastructure, and Imran Khan personally must become the sacrificial goat. Imran has none, but himself to blame for the same.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

PICTALK



India Gate lit in red to raise awareness on World Thalassemia Day, in New Delhi

PTI

Empowering working mothers financially

The crucial role of insurance in hedging uncertainty and financial planning for working women cannot be overstated

Mother's Day is a truly special day to celebrate the amazing women who have played an irreplaceable role in our lives. Amidst the daily balancing act of career aspirations and family responsibilities, the critical need for securing their financial future often takes a back seat. Despite the gradual increase in insurance buyers, the proportion of women availing themselves of this essential protection remains disproportionately low. This underscores not only a gap in workforce demographics but also highlights a pervasive perception among women that life insurance is not a pressing necessity. Mothers be it working professionals or homemakers are the unsung heroes of many households. The working mother adeptly managing both professional commitments and familial duties with grace and resilience while the homemaker juggles varying responsibilities within the home to ensure that their families are taken care off. They serve as pillars of strength, providing unwavering support and love to their



LALITHA BHATIA

families. However, amidst the daily whirlwind of activities, the critical aspect of ensuring financial protection for their loved ones can sometimes be sidelined. In the realm of financial planning, term insurance emerges as a silent yet formidable shield, offering comprehensive protection against life's uncertainties. Unlike other forms of insurance, term insurance provides pure protection coverage, ensuring that in the unfortunate event of the policyholder's demise during the policy term, their beneficiaries receive the predetermined sum assured. Safeguarding the Future: For working mothers, term insurance holds paramount importance in safeguarding the future well-being of their loved ones. It acts as a safety net, ensuring that in the absence of the primary breadwinner, the family's financial needs are adequately met.

Whether it's covering daily expenses, children's education, or servicing outstanding debts, the lump sum payout from a term insurance policy alleviates financial burdens, allowing the family to maintain its standard of living and pursue future aspirations. One of the key advantages of term insurance is its flexibility and customization options, enabling working mothers to tailor their coverage according to their specific needs and financial goals. By accurately assessing their family's lifestyle, expenses, outstanding debts, and long-term aspirations, mothers can determine the optimal sum assured that adequately addresses their loved ones' requirements. Life is inherently unpredictable, and while no one likes to dwell on worst-case scenarios, prudent planning for the unexpected is paramount, especially for working mothers. Term insurance provides peace of mind, knowing that irrespective of life's uncertainties, their family's financial security remains safeguarded. Whether it's ensuring continuity of education, preserving the family

home, or securing a comfortable retirement for aging parents, term insurance empowers working mothers to plan for the future with confidence and assurance. With the constant rise in inflation rates, retirement planning has become increasingly critical, especially for working mothers. It's essential for them to secure their finances before retiring. One effective method is to opt for a term insurance plan with a maturity benefit. This allows them to accumulate a substantial corpus over time, providing a lump sum amount upon maturity, thus ensuring financial stability during retirement. Whether women are achieving greater financial independence or assuming primary roles in caregiving and household management, it's crucial that they recognize the importance of securing their future. They must take proactive measures to align their savings and financial protection with their evolving needs and responsibilities.

(The writer is an insurance professional; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POLITICAL TURMOIL

Madam — Apropos the editorial "Testing Times," published on 11th May, this is my response. In Haryana, politics has become a chess game of checkmates who intend to play foul with one another. Consequent to support withdrawn by three independent MLAs, the ruling BJP Government has turned into a minority. JJP has submitted a letter to the Governor's office seeking the floor test for the Saini-led BJP Government.

In this era of political upheaval, JJP is embroiled in party discord. The news of its three MLAs indirectly supporting the BJP is going viral. In defeating the BJP, the chances of JJP breaking up are becoming stronger. At present, it is not only the time of litmus test for the BJP but the opposition parties are self-indulgent in the dirty game of condemnation and their lust for power has forced them to join hands besides leaving ideological differences aside.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

CENSORSHIP IN CINEMA

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Aamir Khan says he was unsure about censor board passing 'Sarfarosh' over mentions of Pak, ISI," published on May 11, this is my response. Aamir Khan's revelation about the challenges faced during the making of "Sarfarosh" sheds light on the censorship climate of its time. The film's bold portrayal of India-Pakistan tensions, despite concerns, resonated with audiences, earning both critical acclaim and commercial success. Naseeruddin Shah's reminiscence of Pakistani admiration for his role underscores the film's impact beyond borders.

The behind-the-scenes anecdotes, like the censorship of the goat scene, offer intriguing insights into filmmaking challenges. Director John Matthew Matthans secrecy surrounding the film's theme adds to its mystique. Moreover, the actors' reflections highlight the film's significance in their careers, with Sonali Bendre expressing gratitude for a role that show-

Palestine's struggle



highway". Now see, it has been 79 years since the UN was established.

The UN General Assembly's recent resolution advocating Palestine's full membership highlights the international community's ongoing efforts to address the long-standing conflict and ensure the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and statehood, despite the lack of progress in the peace process. The Arab and Palestinian-sponsored resolution, which left the world body with 25 members absent, was approved by the bloc of 143 by 9 votes. The United States, along with Israel, Argentina, Czech Republic, Hungary, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, and New Guinea, competed against Papua and opposed it. The overwhelming majority vote will still deny Palestine full membership. Yes, Palestine will now attend some meetings. In some departments of the UN, its officers can be appointed.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Don't you know that the Palestinians, who were evicted by Israel from their land with the help of America, will not get their own country even in this 21st century? Seeing the suffering and pain of Palestinians, my doubt had changed into belief that, there is no justice anywhere in this world. Be it the United Nations or the International Court of Justice, no one has any right to end injustice. Only one law rules on this earth, and that is 'Might is Right' or 'my way or

casualty. Overall, "Sarfarosh" stands not only as a compelling thriller but also as a testament to cinema's power in addressing complex socio-political issues.

Kiara Sharma | Mumbai

BOUNDLESS HUMAN POTENTIAL

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Traits of a Successful Person," published on May 11, this is my response. Every morning, as I delve into the pages of the newspaper, I find myself drawn to stories that transcend mere information—they ignite a spark within, nudging me to ponder the essence of human existence. The narrative about embracing our fullest potential resonates deeply, reminding me that life is an odyssey from the ordinary to the extraordinary. The analogy of muscles resonates profoundly—the notion that our minds, like muscles, require constant stretching to grow and adapt. It's a call to action, urging us to embrace challenges as catalysts for personal evolution. The tale of Rahul Bajaj's sons repurposing scrap from INS Vikrant for scooters exemplifies this ethos. It's a testament to the power of

audacious ideas and the willingness to venture into the unknown. Moreover, the concept of the Universe conspiring in our favour strikes a chord of optimism. It's a belief in the interconnectedness of all things, where positive thoughts manifest into tangible outcomes. This aligns with the philosophy of shouldering responsibility with a 'YES MIND', fostering synergy and abundance within teams. At its core, it's about cultivating a mindset of abundance, gratitude and unwavering faith in a higher power. Whether we attribute it to divine intervention or the cosmic dance of energy, the essence remains the same: the power of positive thinking shapes our reality. As I set down the paper, I carry with me a renewed sense of purpose—a reminder to harness the boundless potential within and embrace life's journey with open arms. For in the pursuit of greatness lies the true essence of being human.

Kabir Mehra | Hyderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN POLL RHETORIC: ETHICS TAKE A BACKSEAT

Politicians' spiritual claims and secular pledges belie their true motives



VINOD BEHL

In the heat and dust of national elections marked by the fiercest poll slugfest, we are seeing the ugly face of humanity with ethics getting a big hit. On the face of it, politicians of all hues flaunt their spiritual and secular credentials, making rounds of religious shrines and swearing by the secular constitution. But their public discourses in election rallies and conduct are to the contrary as they take to deception and false narratives with truth being a major casualty. With their poisonous outbursts, they display their unholy behaviour as they don't hesitate even to resort to character assassination to run down their opponents. In this digital age, the rampant use of AI makes matters even worse.

Today in the poll arena where money and muscle power have become a byword, we see dignity, honesty, and nobleness giving way to greed, dishonesty, wickedness and immorality. Seeing the ever-increasing trend of 'turncoats' and election engineering by political parties, we find that society is being divided on the lines of caste, community and religion, with impunity.

Truly speaking, the problem with us is that we humans are in a mad race for power and material possessions. This weans us away from spirituality. So overwhelming is the influence of materialism that we even forget our true identity as 'Spiritual Beings' (a constituent of Super soul /Divine Soul- God). Instead, we consider the physical body and all material assets associated with it as our identity. Blinded by the glitter of materialism, our true nature- purity and nobility gets completely overshadowed and we end up embracing sinfulness. And then we don't mind going to any length in selfish-



ness, cheating, corruption and criminality for material gains and to fulfil ulterior motives. Our intoxication of wealth and power leads to moral bankruptcy, robbing us of happiness and peace.

We may have wealth and high positions. But what's its use if it comes at the cost of our moral values and ethics? Such material success is devoid of bliss. Humans are a crown creation among all species on this planet earth and we have been given this rare birth with a mission to know God and become one with Him. The oneness of God leads to the oneness of humanity. Once that self-realization dawns on us, our negative tendencies gradually give way to divine attributes. Maintaining the purity of our soul leads us to become true human beings, real and everlasting happiness and peace come into our lives when we stay connected with One God, the powerhouse of love, happiness and peace and learn to maintain a balance between spirituality and materialism.

In the midst of heated national elections characterized by intense political rivalry, we witness a disturbing erosion of ethics and morality. Despite politicians' outward displays of spiritual and secular values, their actions tell a different story as they resort to deceit and character assassination for electoral gains. As money and power dominate the political landscape, principles like dignity and honesty are overshadowed by greed and immorality. Political tactics based on division along caste, community, and religious lines further fragment society. Fundamentally, humanity's relentless pursuit of power and material wealth has distanced us from our spiritual essence. We often prioritise material possessions over our true identity as spiritual beings, leading to moral degradation and a pursuit of selfish gains at any cost. However, true fulfillment lies in aligning with our spiritual nature and connecting with the divine, which fosters unity and genuine peace.

(The writer is a veteran journalist; views are personal)

AMU breaks the gender barrier

Professor Naima Khatoon's historic appointment as AMU's first woman V-C in over a century represents a significant milestone for gender equality in Indian academia



AKHTARUL WASEY



Fortunately, Professor Naima Khatoon has been appointed as the Vice Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University, a moment long-awaited by the Aligarian community. Professor Khatoon's journey within AMU has been extensive, having served previously as the Principal of the Women's College. Her association with the university spans an impressive 46 years, beginning as an outstanding student who consistently excelled in her examinations. Graduating with a doctorate in Psychology in 1989, Professor Khatoon's rise to the Vice Chancellorship on April 22, 2024, a testament to her dedication and academic prowess.

An interesting facet of her appointment is the transition from her husband, Professor Muhammad Gulrez, who held the position of Acting Vice Chancellor prior. Professor Gulrez is recognised for his significant contributions to West Asian Studies and has displayed exemplary integrity and resilience during his tenure. Professor Khatoon's administrative journey within AMU includes noteworthy positions such as Chairperson of the Department of Psychology and Director General, Superintendent, Provost and more.

Her appointment as Vice Chancellor also holds historical significance, marking her as the second Muslim woman to hold such a position at a Central University. This achievement follows Dr. Najma Akhtar's appointment as the first Muslim lady Vice Chancellor at Jamia Millia Islamia five years prior. The legacy of women's Leadership at AMU traces



HER STRATEGIC APPOINTMENTS, SUCH AS THAT OF PROFESSOR ANWAR MASUD ALAVI AS PRINCIPAL OF THE WOMEN'S COLLEGE, REFLECT HER COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE INSTITUTION.

back to its inception, with Begum Sultan Jahan being the university's first elected Chancellor in December 1920.

Professor Khatoon's contributions to the field of Psychology are well-documented, with six books and 31 papers, earning acclaim both nationally and internationally. Her academic pursuits have taken her across the globe on various academic assignments, enriching her perspective and expertise. Beyond her scholarly achievements, Professor Khatoon's adeptness in administrative roles underscores her capability as a leader to steer AMU towards greater heights of excellence.

Recognising in the evolving landscape of education, there is a pressing need to boost departments offering professional and technical education while also introducing emerging disciplines. Professor Khatoon's leadership is expected to facilitate the successful launch of these new programmes. Additionally, there is a call to establish new centres for regional and area studies, building upon the foundation laid by previous leaders like Professor Abdul Aleem.

Her strategic appointments, such as that of Professor Anwar Masud Alavi as Principal of the Women's College, reflect her commitment to academic excellence and diversity within the institution.

It is anticipated that Professor Naima Khatoon will leverage the expertise of the internationally renowned scholar, Professor Abdur Raheem Kidwai, Honorary Director of the K. A. Nizami Centre for Quranic Studies. Professor Kidwai, besides being a Professor of English, has earned acclaim for his critiques on the translations of the Quran into English and other languages. The Department of Islamic Studies and the Faculty of Theology at AMU hold the potential to evolve into Think Tanks for Muslims worldwide. Aligarh Muslim University, known not only for its academic excellence but also as a centre of Muslim culture and Civilisation can reshape the narrative. Indian Muslim faculty Members specialising in Islamic Studies and Sunni and Shia theology dedicated to nation-building and community welfare. They are well-positioned to provide guidance grounded in scriptures and to serve as beacons of harmony and unity within the Indian Muslim community.

The AMU Jama Masjid stands out as perhaps the only mosque, besides the Kaaba and the Prophet's mosque, where both Sunnis and Shias offer congregational prayers. This model of fraternity should be emulated across India. Nigerians should take the lead in promoting better understanding and unity among

various schools of thought. Aligarians take pride in the fact that the first educational institution to impart modern knowledge was established at Aligarh. The election of a Muslim woman as Vice Chancellor of AMU, following in the footsteps of Professor Najma Akhtar, underscores this legacy. Professor Naima Khatoon, who has recently assumed office, brings with her impeccable academic credentials and a commitment to faith. Her success will undoubtedly bring honour to AMU and our nation. The appointment of the first female Vice Chancellors at both AMU and JMI reflects the evolving landscape of our country. Asrarul Haq Majaz, the author of the AMU Tarana (Anthem), an eminent Urdu poet, had expressed the hope that women would one day be the catalysts for social transformation. This hope is gradually being realised. It is heartening to note that Professor Khatoon, in addition to her academic achievements, embodies this spirit as a practising Muslim woman. We extend our best wishes to Professor Khatoon and fervently pray for her remarkable progress.

(The writer is Professor Emeritus, Jamia Millia Islamia & Former Vice Chancellor, Maulana Azad University, Jodhpur; views are personal)

Indian troop withdrawal marks regional paradigm shift

India's strategic redeployment of troops from the Maldives reflects evolving alliances and diplomatic shifts in the Indian Ocean region

In a move that underscores the evolving dynamics of regional geopolitics, the recent withdrawal of Indian military personnel from the Maldives has sparked discussions about the future of Indo-Maldivian relations. This strategic redeployment, marked by the departure of the final batch of Indian troops stationed in the archipelago, comes amidst shifting alliances and diplomatic recalibrations in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The name "Maldives" is believed to have originated from the Sanskrit words "Mala" (meaning 'garland') and "dvipa" (meaning 'island'). Together, they form "Maladvipa", which translates to 'garland of islands.' This name reflects the unique



SANTOSH MATHEW

geography of the Maldives, which is an archipelago consisting of numerous coral islands grouped in a chain formation in the Indian Ocean. Over time, the name evolved into "Maldives" in English. The Maldives, a nation comprising 1,192 coral islets strategically positioned across key east-west international shipping routes, has historically been a significant partner for India in its maritime

security endeavours. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Neighbourhood First Policy" and the broader framework of "Security and Growth for All in the Region" (SAGAR), India has sought to deepen its engagement with its maritime neighbours, including the Maldives. However, the tenure of President Mohamed Muizzu has witnessed a series of policy shifts, with the Maldives increasingly gravitating towards China while seeking to reduce dependence on India across various sectors, including healthcare, food security and defence cooperation. President Muizzu's "India Out" campaign during the presidential election last year signalled a departure from the traditionally close

ties between the two countries. The concern over the Maldives falling into China's debt trap diplomacy is indeed significant. As the Maldives seeks investments and infrastructure development, it must carefully navigate its relationships with external partners to avoid potential pitfalls. While Chinese investments can offer growth opportunities, they also come with the risk of indebting the nation and compromising its sovereignty. The withdrawal of Indian military personnel, comprising more than 80 troops responsible for operating helicopters and an aircraft gifted by India, symbolizes a tangible manifestation of this evolving relationship. Muizzu's insistence on the

complete repatriation of Indian troops by the May 10 deadline underscores his administration's commitment to reshaping the Maldives' foreign policy orientation. Simultaneously, the Maldives' burgeoning engagement with China, evidenced by recent agreements on military equipment and training, adds a layer of complexity to the regional dynamics. While the Maldives retains its sovereignty to pursue partnerships that align with its national interests, the strategic implications of deepening ties with China amidst heightened Indo-Pacific tensions warrant careful consideration. From India's perspective, the withdrawal of military personnel from the Maldives

reflects a pragmatic response to the evolving geopolitical landscape. The decision to respect the Maldivian Government's request for repatriation underscores India's commitment to upholding the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of its neighbours. Moreover, the withdrawal process, facilitated through four rounds of meetings of the India-Maldives High-Level Core Group, highlights the diplomatic maturity and bilateral dialogue mechanisms that underpin Indo-Maldivian relations. Despite divergent policy trajectories, both countries have demonstrated a willingness to engage constructively and find mutually beneficial solutions.

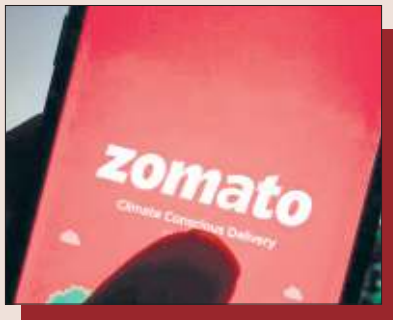
Looking ahead, the recalibration of Indo-Maldivian relations presents opportunities for both countries to reevaluate their strategic priorities and explore avenues for collaboration in areas of mutual interest. Whether it involves maritime security cooperation, economic partnerships, or regional connectivity initiatives, the foundations of the Indo-Maldives relationship remain resilient amidst evolving geopolitical realities. As the Indian military withdrawal from the Maldives marks the closing of one chapter, it also heralds the beginning of a new phase in bilateral relations-one characterized by adaptability, pragmatism and a shared commitment to fostering stability and prosperity in the Indian

Ocean Region. Amidst the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean lies the Maldives, Asia's smallest nation and South Asia's only archipelago. The Maldives' pivot towards China raises concerns, but a shift towards closer ties with India presents a win-win scenario. Embracing India offers strategic stability, economic growth and cultural affinity, fostering a robust Indo-Maldives partnership. By aligning with India, the Maldives secures regional harmony and safeguards its sovereignty while India gains a trusted ally in the Indian Ocean, reinforcing mutual interests and prosperity for both nations. (The writer is an associate professor, views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Auditor of Zomato subsidiaries' resigns

Zomato on Sunday said the auditor of its subsidiaries Zomato Hyperpure and Blink Commerce has resigned with immediate effect, paving the way for the food tech platform's auditor Deloitte Haskins & Sells to be appointed in its place to make the audit process more efficient. Batliboi & Associates, who was appointed as statutory auditors of the two wholly-owned subsidiaries for five years beginning April 1, 2023, till the conclusion of the 13th AGM, resigned w.e.f. May 12, 2024. Zomato said in a regulatory filing. "Further to our various discussions and email dated May 8, 2024, from the Global Controller Finance, Zomato Limited, we understand that the holding company's management wants to align the statutory auditor of the company with the auditors of the holding company responsible for the audit of consol accounts to avoid some duplication and bring some efficiencies in the audit process at group level," Batliboi & Associates stated.



Maruti Suzuki expects over 30% jump in CNG vehicle sales

Maruti Suzuki India expects its CNG car sales to rise over 30 per cent to around 6 lakh units this fiscal, according to a senior company official. The country's largest carmaker also aims to export around 3 lakh units in the ongoing financial year. "So CNG, this year, we did about 4,50,000 (units) in passenger vehicles. We are hoping to do something like 6,00,000 vehicles in FY24-25," Maruti Suzuki India Executive Director Corporate Affairs Rahul Bharti said in an analyst call. The company sells CNG trims across various models like WagonR, Brezza, Dzire, and Ertiga, among others in the domestic market. Bharti said the company's capacity expansion by around 1 lakh units per annum at its Manesar plant, in Haryana largely addresses the Ertiga supply issues. Ertiga CNG demand is huge in the market leading to supply issues, he noted. On overseas shipments, Bharti said the company aims to export about 3 lakh units.



India's coal import rises 8% to 268 MT in FY24

India's coal import rose by 7.7 per cent to 268.24 million tonne (MT) in FY24 driven by softness in seaborne prices and likelihood of increase in power demand during summer. The country's coal import was 249.06 MT in FY23, according to data compiled by B2B e-commerce company mjunction services. Coal import in March FY24 also rose to 23.96 MT, over 21.12 MT in the corresponding month of the previous fiscal. Of the total volume recorded in March 2024, non-coking coal import stood at 15.33 MT, against 13.88 MT in March FY23. Coking coal import in March 2024 was 5.34 MT against 3.96 MT a year ago. During FY24, non-coking coal import was at 175.96 MT, higher than 162.46 MT imported during FY23. Coking coal import was at 57.22 MT in 2023-24, against 54.46 MT in 2022-23.



With neighbour like China, we have to learn to compete

EAM JAISHANKAR ON BOOSTING INDIA'S MANUFACTURING

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Boosting India's domestic manufacturing and the overall economy will provide more resources in its foreign policy toolkit to expand the country's global influence and compete with China on the economic front, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said. In an exclusive interview, Jaishankar said India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been focusing on enhancing domestic manufacturing in the last 10 years as there was a neglect of the sector before 2014 that created many problems for the country. He also suggested that the lack of focus in the past on the manufacturing sector is linked to the upward trajectory in India-China trade notwithstanding New Delhi's approach that normalisation of ties with



He also suggested that the lack of focus in the past on the manufacturing sector is linked to the upward trajectory in India-China trade notwithstanding New Delhi's approach that normalisation of ties with Beijing depends on the resolution of the eastern Ladakh border row

Beijing depends on the resolution of the eastern Ladakh border row. "We need to be confident. I am clear that international politics, and international relations are competitive. I have a neighbour like China. I have to learn to compete," he said. "By my complaining, China is not going to stop doing things. If I do not build up my strength at home, our foreign

policy will be as good as our domestic policy," Jaishankar said. "It is a function of our domestic policy that if I can actually build up my economy if I can build up my manufacturing, if I can create the kind of capabilities which today I am trying to do, I think you are going to find the foreign policy has much more resources and much more tool

in its toolkit to actually influence the world," he added. His response came to a query on why India's bilateral trade volume with China is going up when New Delhi has been insisting that the ties cannot be normal if the border situation is abnormal. Jaishankar suggested that such a scenario has arisen as adequate attention to the manufacturing sector was not given before 2014 in the country. The Indian and Chinese militaries have been locked in a standoff in eastern Ladakh since May 2020 and a full resolution of the border row has not yet been achieved though the two sides have disengaged from several friction points. "I think it is common sense that if there is no peace and tranquility in the border, how can you have a normal relationship," Jaishankar said.

SBI's 85% hires to be engineering grads in FY25

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Eighty-five per cent of about 12,000 freshers set to join the country's largest lender SBI in FY25 are engineering graduates, its chairman Dinesh Khara has said. The bank is in the process of onboarding up to 12,000 freshers in the roles of probationary officers and associates in FY25, and there is no bias towards onboarding engineers in the ranks, Khara said, stressing that this is not by design. After training the over 3,000 POs and over 8,000 associates with some banking knowledge, they will be channelled into various business roles. It can be noted that this comes at a time when the banking sector is increasing its dependency on technology as it looks for newer ways of enthraling the customer, while some players are also grappling with challenges on this front. "We expose them into banking and thereafter, channelise them into various roles in business and IT.

'Govt to give focused attention to promote textiles exports'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government will accord focused attention to promoting India's textiles exports, which declined for the second year in a row in 2023-24, Textiles Secretary Rachna Shah said. The government has set an ambitious target to achieve USD 100 billion export for textile products by 2030. The cumulative exports of textiles and apparel from India during April 2023-March 2024 registered a de-growth of 3.24 per cent at USD 34.4 billion, as compared to USD 35.5 billion in April 2022-March 2023. In 2021-22, outward shipments of textiles and apparel were recorded at over USD 41 billion. "We had challenges like the Red Sea crisis making it slightly more challenging," Shah said on the decline in India's textiles exports in 2023-24. Although geo-political challenges remain, the textiles secretary said some exporters have reported improvement in their order books in the first quarter and the shipments are likely to improve in the coming months. "We will be looking at more focused attention on products which have greater export potential and the production linked incentive (PLI) scheme is focused on those globally traded products," the textiles secretary told PTI. Shah also outlined other measures being looked at to promote exports from the sector, including "possibly looking at newer markets". She said the free trade agreements (FTAs), which India has entered into with other nations "hopefully will open up more opportunities" for the textiles exports.



Sharing the outlook for outward shipments from the textiles sector, Shah said: "We should look at higher exports happening now. The global demand also will start looking better. Already in the first quarter, we have seen some of our exporters report that the order positions for apparel, made-ups, etc, is looking up so that should play out". India has been losing ground in global garments trade to countries like Bangladesh and Vietnam due to their lower labour costs, larger operation footprints, and benefits from free trade agreements.

India needs to focus on market reforms to propel growth: ADB



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India needs to focus on factor market reforms like land and labour to propel India's growth to a double-digit trajectory, ADB Chief Economist Albert Park has said. "There are still concerns that the basic factor markets like land and labour in the formal sector of unemployment in India are still small. So, you want to formalise those," he told PTI in an interview. The factor market reforms include land, labour, energy, and access to credit, among others, which are critical factors for pro-

duction. Labour reforms have been approved by Parliament in 2020, but it has not been implemented. In 2019 and 2020, 29 central labour laws were amalgamated, rationalised and simplified into four labour codes - the Code on Wages, 2019; the Industrial Relations Code, 2020; the Code on Social Security, 2020; and the Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions Code, 2020. Labour is in the Concurrent List of the Constitution. Under the Labour Codes, rules are required to be framed by the central government as well as by the state governments.

Inflation data, global trends to drive stock markets: Analysts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stock markets will be driven by domestic inflation data, ongoing quarterly earnings from corporates and global trends this week, analysts said. News flows around the general election would also be tracked by investors, market experts said. Besides, investors would also take cues from the trading activity of foreign investors, the movement of global oil benchmark Brent crude and the rupee-dollar trend. "Investors will be bombarded with economic data on both domestic and global fronts. Domestically, watch for Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Wholesale Price Index (WPI). Globally, focus will be on the US Producer Price Index (PPI) and Consumer Price Index (CPI) figures." Additionally, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's speech will be a key event to watch. China's industrial production data and Japan's GDP figures round out the important releases for the week," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd. Vinod Nair, Head of



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Research at Geojit Financial Services, said that the current trend in the domestic markets is likely to continue in the short-term due to election-led uncertainties. "In the data-hectic week ahead, investors' attention will be focused on the release of India and US CPI data, Europe and Japan's GDP

releases, and the FED chair speech. Furthermore, the next set of Q4 results will also attract market sentiment," he added. DLF, Zomato, Bharti Airtel and Mahindra & Mahindra are among the major companies scheduled to announce their earnings during the week.



Large PSUs spend Rs 50,200 cr in capex in April

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Large public sector companies have spent a little over Rs 50,200 crore towards capital expenditure in April FY25 alone, which is 6.46 per cent of their full fiscal target of Rs 7.77 lakh crore, an official said. The pace albeit is slower than Rs 54,177 crore capex spent in April FY24, about 7.3 per cent of the full year budget target of Rs 7.42 lakh crore. "The capex spending will pick up going forward. Also, the numbers for April are still provisional and will go up in the revised final numbers," the official told PTI. The capital expenditure during the first month of 2024-25 fiscal was driven by railways, road, and oil and gas sectors.



MoSPI says 449 infra projects hit by cost overrun of Rs 5.01 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 449 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of Rs 150 crore or above, were hit by cost overrun of more than Rs 5.01 lakh crore in March 2024, an official report stated. According to Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), which monitors infrastructure projects worth Rs 150 crore and above, out of 1,873 projects, 449 reported cost overrun and 779 projects were delayed. "Total original cost of implementation of the 1,873 projects was Rs 26,87,535.69 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be Rs

31,88,859.02 crore, which reflects overall cost overrun of Rs 5,01,323.33 crore (18.65 per cent of original cost)," the ministry's latest report for March 2024 said. According to the report, the expenditure incurred on these projects till March 2024 is Rs 17,11,648.99 crore, which is 53.68 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects. However, the number of delayed projects decreased to 567 if delay is calculated on the basis of the latest schedule of completion, it added. Further, it said that for 393 projects neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period has been reported.

Education sector sees surge in AI skill adoption

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Artificial intelligence (AI) is playing a pivotal role in reshaping learning experiences in the rapidly evolving educational landscape, with universities and tech platforms at the forefront of this transformation. Industry leaders report a surge in demand for AI skills, with enrolments skyrocketing and a focus on up-skilling individuals across career stages. Educational institutions are swiftly adapting and offering specialised AI courses to cater to the evolving skill requirements, reflecting a paradigm shift in the educational landscape toward embracing technology. According to a report by industry body Nasscom, India ranks first in AI skill penetration with a score of 3.09, driven by higher-than-average



According to a report by industry body Nasscom, India ranks first in AI skill penetration with a score of 3.09, driven by higher-than-average compensation and growth prospects. Its another report said that

data and AI could add USD 450-500 billion to India's GDP by 2025. upGrad co-founder

enrolment every minute," he added. He further said AI will be both a disruptor and an enabler. "The rapid advancement of Generative AI is reshaping industries and even putting high-skilled jobs at risk of automation. The soaring demand for GenAI courses on Coursera is indicative of the potential this technology can unlock. It's one of those technologies that has the key to address its disruption, revolutionise education and transform not only 'how' but 'what' we all learn," Gupta said. Former finance minister Arun Jaitley, in his budget speech for 2018-19, mandated public policy think tank NITI Aayog to establish the National Program on AI to guide research and development in new and emerging technologies.

FPIs withdraw Rs 17,000 cr from equities on political uncertainty

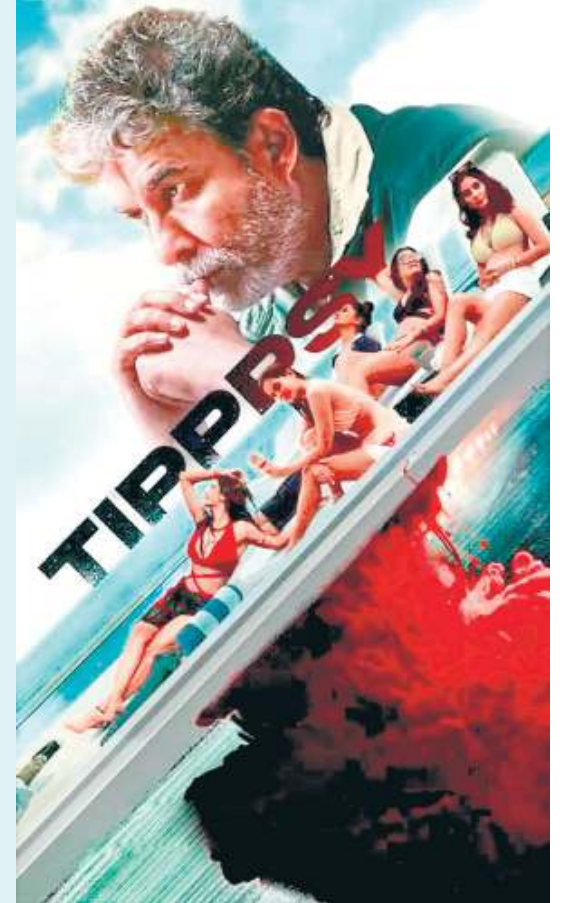
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors pulled out a massive Rs 17,000 crore from Indian equities in the first 10 days of the month owing to the general election and the uncertainty surrounding its outcome coupled with expensive valuations and profit booking. This was higher than a net withdrawal of Rs 8,700 crore in the entire April on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields. Before that, FPIs made a net investment of Rs 35,098 crore in March and Rs 1,539 crore in February. Looking ahead, post-general elections, corporate India's strong financial performance in Q4 FY24 is anticipated to be rewarded. While FPIs



may adopt a cautious stance until the election results are clear, favourable outcomes and established political stability could see their return in significant numbers, Trivesh D, COO at Tradejini, said. According to the data with the depositories, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) experienced a net outflow of Rs 17,083 crore in equities this month (till May 10). There are multiple reasons behind this aggressive selling by FPIs. With the ongoing general election and the uncertainty surrounding its outcome, investors are wary to enter the markets before the election results.

Deepak Tijori: The genuineness of new faces proved advantageous in *Tippsy*



Actor and filmmaker Deepak Tijori, who is currently in talks for the recently released film *Tippsy*, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, sharing some deets about the concept, the challenges of bringing in newbies, and more.

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Deepak Tijori, the star who has always had a sneaky tendency to outdo the leading man with his supporting roles, be it as Balu in *Aashiqui* or Shekhar Malhotra in *Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikander* is currently in news for the recently released *Tippsy*.

"Recognising an underserved audience—women in cities who enjoy bachelorettes just as much as men—I set out to bring their experiences to light in metropolitan regions," begins the star on a brighter note. Instead of a normal Bollywood wedding film, Tijori wanted to make an enjoyable thriller film inspired by classics like *Khuladi* and *Khel Khel Mein*. The idea came from thinking about the difficulties that girls endure at bachelorette parties, which led to the creation of *Tippsy*.

An abbreviation of Tanya, Iris, Pony, Selene, and Yami, where each letter embodies the essence of the main characters, the title captures their unique quirks and backgrounds. The title represents a sense of fun and adventure, which aligns with the bachelorette. Overall, "The title is catchy and profound, establishing the tone for the film's themes of camaraderie, adventure, and urban nightlife exploration."

Turning obstacles into triumphs, despite initial issues, the determined cast overcame them through rigorous workshops and assistance. "One of the primary hurdles we had was the women's minimal experience in significant playing parts, which could impair their ability to handle complex situations and emotions. Kainaat, for instance, went above and beyond by employing Sunita Ji, a well-known instructor, to perfect her portrayal of a *Haryanvi* girl. Working directly with the actresses to increase their confidence and comfort in their roles was critical. Furthermore, utilising the freshness and genuineness of new faces proved advantageous. Highlighting their talents and personalities in advertising materials sparked audience interest and excitement, thanks to the team's inventive marketing methods."

Recognising the practical obstacles of working with newcomers, he revealed that they had scheduled an extensive pre-production period to do rehearsals and

workshops. Throughout the production, "The actresses were given clear advice and support to ensure they understood the filmmaking process and their roles. Creating a supportive and collaborative environment on set was critical. Consider the probable challenges that these new actresses may confront in the production setting, encouragement of open communication and feedback resulted in a smoother production process. To address the need for character development, we scheduled sessions in which the actresses could discuss their characters' motives, backgrounds, and relationships. Providing feedback and constructive criticism helped them improve their performances."

In the film, each character has a backstory; some are resilient or peacemakers, complementing one another and filling the space of each and every emotion. Tanya emerges as the key figure, her complicated backstory turning her into a relatable heroine. Her journey from affluent heiress to encountering unforeseen obstacles explores themes of resilience and progress.

Deepak, as a filmmaker, was looking for spontaneity, and thus, he chose newcomers to bring out their personalities and experiences on screen through the portrayal of their characters. He says, "When casting actresses for the main characters, I focused on finding individuals who could authentically bring the characters to life on screen. I searched for spontaneity in their performances, avoiding actors with preconceived notions or dominant previous roles that could overwhelm the characters. Choosing newbies allowed them to fully embody the spirit of Tanya, Iris, Pony, and Selene, resulting in a true and unfettered portrayal of each character's personality and experiences."

The goal for *Tippsy* was to provide an engaging experience while still conveying an important message to the viewers. "This is a 'Who did it?' thriller about the hazards of nightlife and celebrations. The fundamental concept I want viewers to understand is 'party hard, but be vigilant.' It underlines the significance of remaining cautious while drinking and partying, shedding emphasis on the dangers of being uninformed or influenced by others in such situations. By combining this cautionary story with an exciting thriller plot, my goal is to leave audiences entertained while also making them more aware of their surroundings in similar situations."

Looking ahead, the *Aashiqui* star anticipates excit-

ing advancements in the film industry, particularly in casting and storytelling. As technology and platforms become more accessible, he shares, "The industry is changing to be more inclusive and diverse. This transition is expected to open up additional chances for rising talent, encouraging new voices and viewpoints. Casting will prioritise authenticity, looking for actors that offer distinct attributes to their roles, regardless of background or experience. In storytelling, there will be an increasing desire for new storylines that question norms and appeal to a wide range of viewers. Filmmakers will explore new genres, styles, and forms, pushing boundaries and exploring unknown territory. The future of storytelling will be influenced by technological breakthroughs such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), which provide immersive experiences that blur the barrier between fiction and reality. Overall, the film industry's future seems optimistic, with a focus on originality, diversity, and the discovery of new storytelling routes that fascinate and engage audiences throughout the world."

Nurturing your baby's delicate skin

RASHMI BHUMIREDDY

New mothers, particularly those who have given birth to their first child, are eager to learn about the best items for their newborn. However, due to the varied range of baby care items and the seemingly limitless amount of information, there needs to be more understanding among new mothers, leading to misguided decisions.

To tackle this issue, Dr. Sumanlatha Guntupalli, who has pursued a doctorate in pharmaceuticals, set up a startup called Meechu, which exclusively offers baby care products that are perfect for their skin without the use of any harsh chemicals or ingredients.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*, sharing the inspiration behind starting the baby care brand, she begins on a brighter note: "It is rooted with the primary concern of mothers about their baby's safety and personal care. Many mothers rely on advice from their parents, friends, and neighbours, when selecting these products for their babies. However, the reality is that they don't have clarity on what they want exactly or which of the products is suitable for their baby's skin. Blindly trusting advertisements and international brands, including a well-known brand that promotes the notion that using their soap can lighten a baby's complexion, reveals a widespread tendency. Despite my attraction to such brands, I discovered that the soap promoted is unsuitable for delicate baby skin—it's merely a toilet soap. Many individuals are drawn to premium international brands, only to cease usage when issues arise with the ingredients."

It is an escape from these myths. As a

formulation scientist, she too fell prey to these misconceptions during her first child's upbringing. However, upon entering her second pregnancy, she embarked on thorough research to ensure she provided babies with properly formulated, safe products.

She says they are not organic or ayurvedic; instead, they are meticulously scientifically formulated and rigorously tested to ensure they are suitable for baby skin and maintain the natural built-in texture without adverse effects. "Each product features a pH-5.5-adjusted formulation, matching the pH of our skin for optimal compatibility. Behind each product formulation lies proven scientific research, demonstrating evidence of their harmlessness and absence of adverse reactions, ensuring they are entirely safe for delicate, tender skin. We also prioritise safety by offering FDA-approved and scientifically tested products," she shares, adding, "When we introduced baby wipes and diapers at a renowned nationwide chain of children's specialty hospitals, we began receiving inquiries from parents just two weeks after the launch."

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, Dr. Sumanlatha Guntupalli, a formulation scientist and founder of Meechu, takes us through her inspiration and journey of starting baby-friendly products for your babies' sensitive skin.



Like many startups, she too encountered common challenges such as managing manpower, addressing customer suggestions, and navigating financial constraints. However, in their case, "Additional hurdles arose in the form of transportation and space constraints, which significantly impacted our profit margins. Finally, after tackling various challenges, we have successfully launched a comprehensive baby care range comprising nearly 55 SKUs, including soaps, lotions, and creams."

WE Hub, which has been an aid to many budding entrepreneurs, was so for her too. And sharing her experience, she says, "The *Launch Pad* program at WE-Hub has been immensely valuable. Whenever I have faced branding challenges or needed to connect with industrialists, they have consistently offered exceptional solutions. Additionally, being a part of *Nenu Super Women* through WE-Hub has been a game-changer. Not only has it garnered positive publicity for my venture, but it has also opened doors to potential investments."

On the concluding note, she shares, "My vision is to establish a nationwide presence across every market in India by 2026, ensuring that our products are easily accessible to all parents. Our mission is to provide the best and safest products for babies, prioritising their health and well-being above all else. We aim to become the go-to brand for baby care essentials in every corner of the country."



Debunking myths about WOMEN & AGING

Many individuals develop assumptions about aging, what it's like to be "old," and how being older will affect them. However, as we get older, we must recognise both the benefits and drawbacks of aging. According to research, most people may assist protect their health and mobility as they get older by adopting or maintaining healthy behaviours and lifestyles. But again, there have been number of myths and misconceptions surrounding women and aging:

Myth: Anti-aging products can halt the aging process entirely

Fact: While numerous products endorse anti-aging benefits, it's important to understand their limitations. No product, no treatment, or no procedure can stop aging altogether. Many products promise to do so, but remember that every product has limitations. Though many such products can be effective in making you look younger temporarily by reducing the appearance of aging signs such as wrinkles and fine lines, none of them work long-term. Instead of seeking the miracle cure for aging forever, adopt an integrated approach to skin and body health. That included living a healthy lifestyle, such as eating a balanced diet, drinking enough water, exercising regularly, keeping your stress levels in check, and protecting your skin from sun damage.

Myth: Sunscreen is only necessary during sunny days

Fact: Many people mistakenly believe sunscreen is only necessary on sunny days. However, ultraviolet (UV) radiation can penetrate clouds and reach the Earth's surface, impacting skin even on seemingly overcast days. Regular sun exposure, regardless of the weather, contributes to premature aging and increases your risk of skin cancer. UV rays can

penetrate the deeper layers of your skin, causing damage that accumulates over time. To maintain healthy, youthful skin, consistent sun protection is crucial. Snow reflection and cloud penetration can expose you to harmful UV rays, even in the winter.

Myth: Aging is solely predetermined by genetics

Fact: Genetics plays a major role in aging, but lifestyle choices also significantly impact how we age and feel. What we consume does reflect on the skin. Thus, one should binge on fresh fruits and vegetables, packed with nutrients, to fight free radicals that damage skin cells. Regular exercise is equally crucial. Improved circulation from physical activity delivers nutrients to the skin and removes toxins. Exercise also boosts mood with endorphins, contributing to a youthful appearance and overall well-being.

Myth: Anti-aging products can make you look decades younger

Fact: Anti-aging creams can minimise wrinkles and lines, but it is crucial to understand that aging is a complex process influenced by genetics and lifestyle. These products target visible signs like wrinkles and age spots, not deeper issues like collagen loss or hormone shifts, and have limited control over age reversal.

Myth: Expensive anti-aging products are more effective than affordable ones

Fact: The cost of anti-aging products does not necessarily reflect their effectiveness. While some high-end brands may command premium prices, the true measure of a product's efficacy lies in its ingredients.

(The author is Dr. Shireen Furtado, Senior Consultant, Medical and Cosmetic Dermatology, Aster CMI Hospital.)

what's brewing?

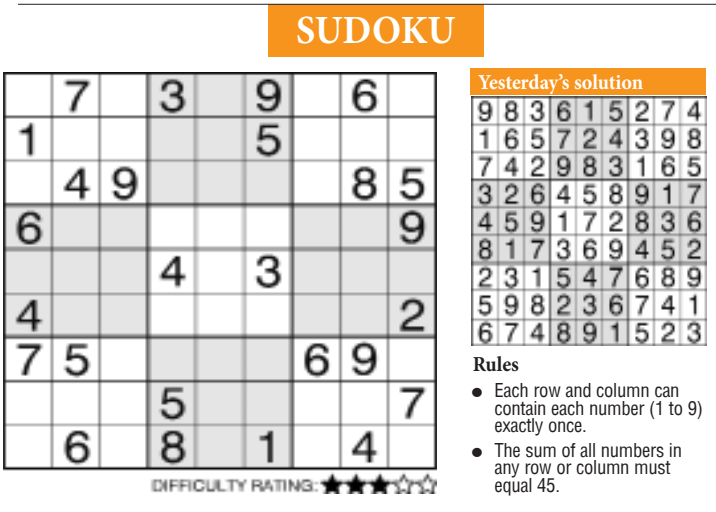
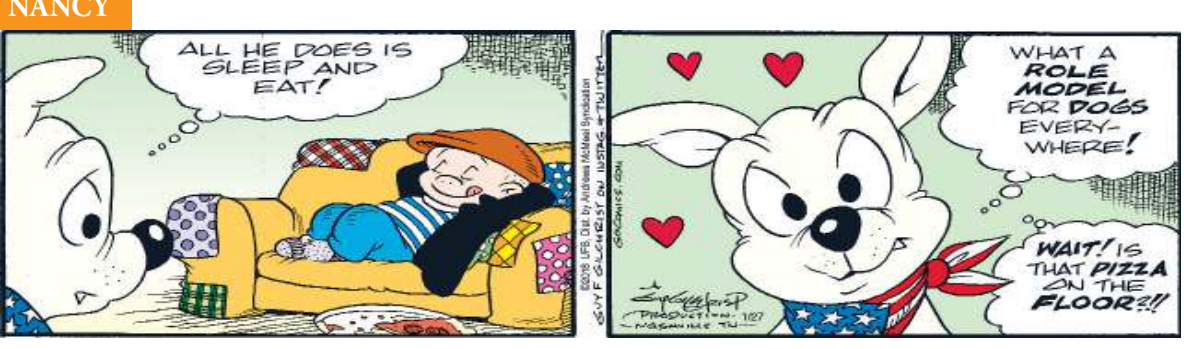
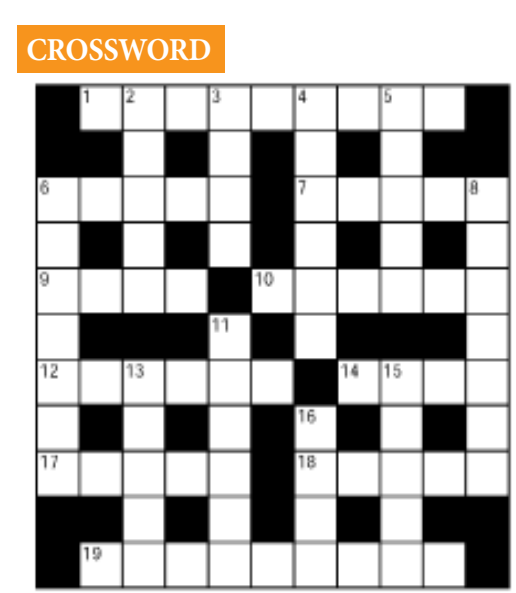
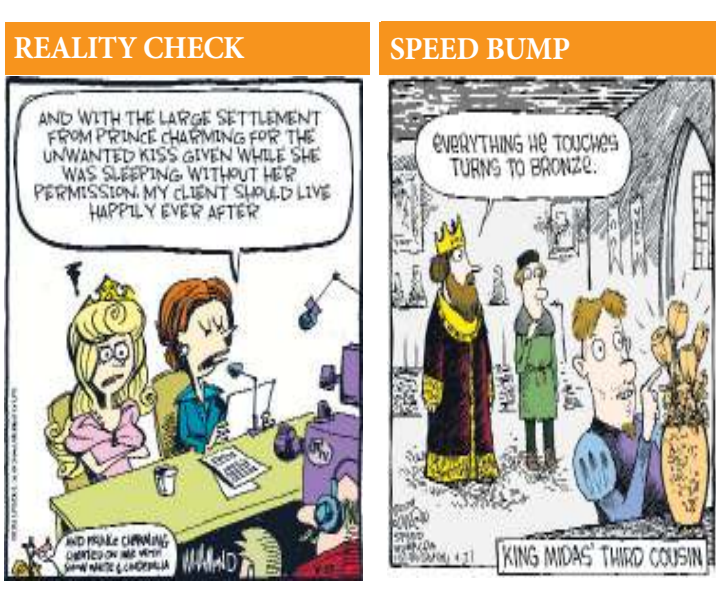


Hyderabad's furnishing scene buzzes as The Curtain Story debuts, attracting the city's discerning residents. Expertly crafted collections and tailored services elevate home décor experiences, sparking excitement among attendees.

West zone traffic ACP Hariprasad, inaugurated the new Andhra Thatibellam Coffee & US fried chicken outlet, in Jubilee Hills Road no. 36. The inaugural event was also attended by Jubilee hills traffic Inspector Praveen Kumar, Sprint Diagnostics Director Dr Bharath Reddy, and Medicovert hospitals CBO Mahesh Degloorkar.

PARTY
Photos by- SV Chary

FUN



VD will play a Rayalaseema rural boy in VD14

Vijay Deverakonda has lately announced two new films, which will be helmed by Rahul Sankrityan and Ravi Kiran Kola. The film, starring Rahul Sankrityan, is set between 1854 and 1878. The freshly unveiled concept poster immediately captured people's attention. Rahul previously collaborated with Vijay Deverakonda on the movie *Taxiwala*.

According to the latest reports, Vijay Deverakonda will play a dual character in this film. It is expected that Vijay will appear as a warrior in one of the parts. According to the concept poster, the film is about the legend of a cursed region. *VD14* is the tentative title!

In an interview, director Rahul revealed that Vijay will appear in a role as a rural boy for the first time. The actor, who has portrayed mostly city characters up to this point, will take on a new avatar. "You'll see Vijay in this with an entirely different avatar—as a person from the countryside, namely from Rayalaseema," said the director.

Allu Arjun lands in legal trouble for violating poll code of conduct!

Thousands of people gathered on the road after Tollywood actor Allu Arjun was arrested by the police in Nandyal, Andhra Pradesh, on Saturday to meet YSRCP MLA Silpa Ravi. For those who are unaware, Silpa Ravi is running for re-election from Nandyal, the same day as Andhra Pradesh's 25 Lok Sabha seats are up for election. On the final day of campaigning, Allu Arjun paid the MLA a visit to express his support. The actor waved to the large throng that was screaming "Pushpa, Pushpa" when he appeared on the balcony alongside his wife Sneha Reddy, Silpa Ravi, and the MLA's family. Many of his admirers congregated outside the mansion as soon as they heard about his arrival in hopes of seeing their idol. A complaint under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code, which deals with disobedience to an order duly promulgated by a public servant, has been filed by the nearby Two Town police station. Since Section 144 of the Election Code and Section 31 of the AP Police Act applied, charges were brought against both the MLA and the actor.

Meanwhile, Allu Arjun dropped a picture from the gathering. The caption on the post read, "Grateful to the people of Nandyal for the warm reception. Thank you, @SilpaRaviReddy garu, for the hospitality. Wishing you the very best in the elections and beyond. You have my unwavering love and support!"

Shivam Bhaje: First look has Ashwin Babu showing his explosive rage

Shivam Bhaje has quite a divine ring to it. And that's the title of Ashwin Babu's upcoming movie, directed by Apsar and produced by Maheswara Reddy of Ganga Entertainments, which is making its debut. The film's first look was released on Saturday. In the title poster, Lord Shiva's imagery is indicated. And now, we see Ashwin Babu in his *raudra* form, baying for the blood of villains. He is seen single-handedly holding a heavy-bodied goon and attempting to cast him away. Seen in the poster is also a trident and the idol of a powerful divine. Action, thrills, and sentiment can be expected from the movie.

Ashwin, who has previously done *Hidimbha* and *Raju Gari Gadhi*, is gearing up for the movie's release in June. *Shivam Bhaje* has already completed its shoot.

Starring Bollywood actor Arbaaz Khan in a key role, the film has Digangana Suryavanshi as the heroine. The makers said that Hyper Aadi, Sai Dheena, Murali Sharma, Brahmaji, and Tulasi have key roles. Devi Prasad, Ayyappa Sharma, and comedian Shakalaka Shankar will also be seen.

Vikas Badisa and Dasaradhi Shivendra of *HanuMan* fame are the film's music director and cinematographer, respectively. The latter recently won the Best Cinematography Award at the Dadasaheb Phalke Film Festival.

KANNAPPA'S INTERESTING UPDATE ON THE WAY



Vishnu Manchu, who is delighted with the way his upcoming movie *Kannappa* is progressing, has now announced that an exciting update is going to be out today. As revealed by Vishnu, each update from *Kannappa* is trending on social media. Particularly, Prabhas' update trended on top on Twitter for nearly 18 hours. He also disclosed that Prabhas picked another character after listening to the story, rather than what he was offered. Vishnu was also content with the decision, and the team made a few changes to the character, keeping the stardom of Prabhas in mind. The actor requested movie buffs stop assuming about the characters of all the actors, as they are planning back-to-back updates.

It is known that the magnum opus *Kannappa*, which is being mounted on a large canvas, stars an ensemble cast, including Prabhas and Akshay Kumar in special roles. Mohan Babu, Mohan Lal, and Sarathkumar will be seen in pivotal roles in the movie produced by Mohan Babu Manchu and directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh.

Kannappa is poised to be a cinematic spectacle, delving into the story of a courageous warrior turned devout follower of Lord Shiva, *Kannappa*, whose unwavering faith continues to inspire across generations. Vishnu Manchu, renowned for his versatility and dedication, embodies this legendary character with fervour and reverence.

Payal's crime investigative thriller Rakshana racing for release

Payal Rajput is renowned for going to any extent to stun all movie lovers with her sensational performances on the big screen. Her recent films speak volumes about her talent. Get ready for an adrenaline-pumping experience as the immensely talented Payal Rajput steps into the shoes of a formidable police officer in the highly anticipated crime thriller *Rakshana*. Known for her bold and captivating performances in films like *RX100* and *Mangalavaaram*, Payal Rajput is all set to mesmerise audiences with her portrayal in this gripping project.

Rakshana promises to be a gripping crime investigative mystery drama that will keep you on the edge of your seat. Inspired by a real-life incident involving a police officer, the film adds an authentic and intense touch to its narrative. Payal Rajput devoted extensive efforts to preparing for her role, portraying a female police officer with natural and realistic finesse.

Joining Payal Rajput in this stellar cast are Roshan and Manas, who play pivotal roles in the film. Director and producer Pradeep Thakore ensures that *Rakshana* maintains unparalleled production values, guaranteeing a visually stunning and immersive experience. The film's title poster, unveiled on the auspicious occasion of Sri Rama Navami, has already generated immense excitement with its intriguing design and Payal Rajput's intense gaze.

Rakshana marks a significant departure from Payal Rajput's previous roles, showcasing her versatility and acting prowess as she tackles the role of a police officer for the first time in her career. The post-production work is currently in progress, and the team is gearing up for a grand release in the near future.

With *Rakshana*, Pradeep Thakore aims to present audiences with a captivating and thrilling cinematic experience, establishing her as a versatile actress in a new light. Movie lovers are waiting eagerly to enjoy Payal Rajput's performance on the big screen in *Rakshana* when the film releases in an extravagant manner!

'diMAAKIKIRIKIRI' teaser update from Double iSmart on May 15

The time has come to ignite the *iSmart* madness with a double impact. Here comes the 'diMAAKIKIRIKIRI' update from the highly anticipated Pan India film *Double iSmart* in the crazy combination of dynamic director Puri Jagannadh and Ustaad Ram Pothineni. The teaser of this explosive mass action *dhamakedhaar* entertainer will be unveiled on May 15, on the special occasion of Ram's birthday.

The teaser announcement poster presents Ram in a power-packed avatar with a face mask on. Dressed in a tiger stripe shirt and torn jeans, Ram is seen holding a cigarette in one hand and firecrackers in another. He is seen giving a stern gaze in the poster, which assures a 'diMAAKIKIRIKIRI' teaser.

The shoot of this high-budget entertainer, which is the second installment of *iSmart Shankar*, recently took place in Mumbai, with the prominent cast participating in it. As the team is planning to release the movie soon, they will come up with back-to-back updates.

Double the action, double the mass, and double the entertainment are guaranteed in the sequel, which is being mounted prestigiously. Ram Pothineni underwent a stylish makeover for the movie, where Sanjay Dutt will be seen in a mighty, powerful role.



Melody Brahma Mani Sharma, who gave some sensational music to Puri Jagannadh in several movies, including *iSmart Shankar*, is scoring the music for *Double iSmart*. The cinematography is handled by Sam K. Naidu and Gianni Gianneli.

Double iSmart, in the deadly combination of Ram and Puri, is being produced by Puri Jagannadh and Charmme Kaur under the banner of Puri Connects.

Double iSmart will be released in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, and Hindi languages.

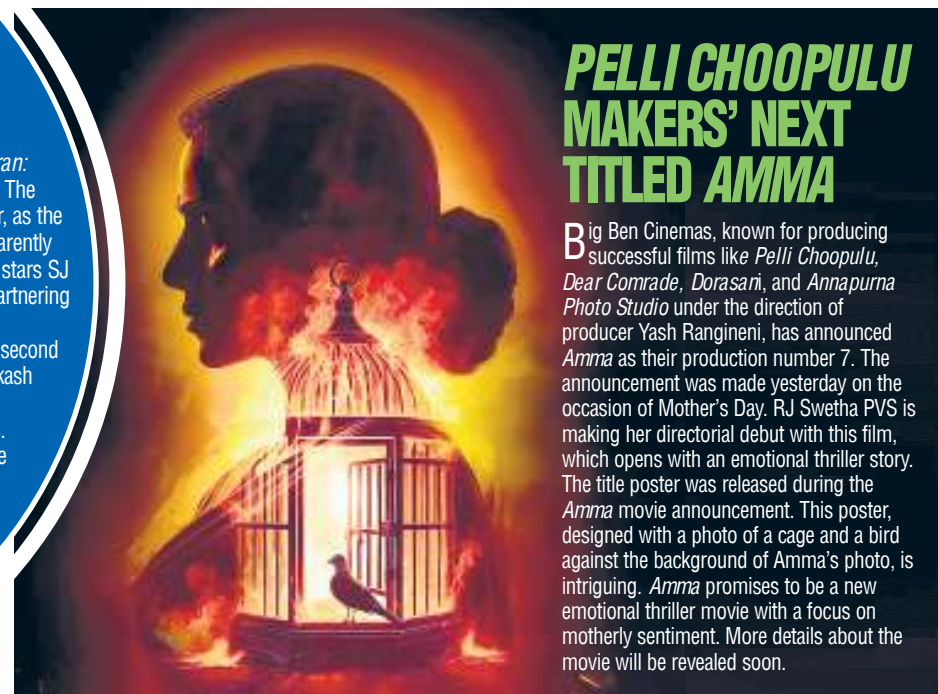
VEERA DHEERA SOORAN TO HAVE A PREQUEL: REPORTS

Actor Vikram has unveiled a new poster for his next film, *Veera Dheera Sooran: Part 2*, which shows him riding a motorcycle alongside Dushara Vijayan. The 62nd film of Vikram's career features the actor as a department store owner, as the poster says. It also mentions that the film is under production. The directors are apparently filming *Veera Dheera Sooran* in Thenkasi. SU Arun Kumar directs the film, which also stars SJ Suryah, Suraj Venjaramoodu, and Siddique. For the first time in his career, Vikram is partnering with Arun Kumar, widely renowned for his work on *Sethupathi* and *Chithira*. Previously, it was reported that the Vikram film would be released in two parts, with the second half hitting theaters before the first. CS Balachander created the art direction, GV Prakash Kumar composed the music, Prasanna GK edited it, and Theni Eswar shot the cinematography. Riya Shibu is producing the picture under the name HR Pictures. So, the teaser and new posters released on the same day both have the phrase "Part-2," implying that the film will also have a prequel.

Chiyaan Vikram was most recently seen on screen in Mani Ratnam's magnum opus, *Ponniyin Selvan-I* and *Ponniyin Selvan - II*. With the release date of Gautham Vasudev Menon's film *Dhurva Natchathiram* remains unknown, the actor's next project is *Thangalaan*.

PELLI CHOOPULU MAKERS' NEXT TITLED AMMA

Big Ben Cinemas, known for producing successful films like *Pelli Choopulu*, *Dear Comrade*, *Dorasani*, and *Annapurma Photo Studio* under the direction of producer Yash Rangineni, has announced *Amma* as their production number 7. The announcement was made yesterday on the occasion of Mother's Day. RJ Swetha PVS is making her directorial debut with this film, which opens with an emotional thriller story. The title poster was released during the *Amma* movie announcement. This poster, designed with a photo of a cage and a bird against the background of Amma's photo, is intriguing. *Amma* promises to be a new emotional thriller movie with a focus on motherly sentiment. More details about the movie will be revealed soon.





GT FACE FORMIDABLE KKR IN MUST WIN IPL GAME

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Shubman Gill's return to form will provide a big boost to Gujarat Titans as they square off against table-toppers Kolkata Knight Riders in their must-win IPL game here on Monday. Gill roared back into form with his fourth IPL hundred to keep GT's slim playoff hopes alive with a comfortable win against Chennai Super Kings at home in their last outing. Gill and Sai Sudharsan's twin centuries were the cornerstone of the hosts' huge total and their role will be crucial once again as they face KKR, which has become the first team to qualify for the playoffs. As many as seven teams are still in the race for the playoffs. While Rajasthan Royals (16) and Sunrisers Hyderabad (14) are well-placed at second and third position, three teams -- CSK, Delhi Capitals and Lucknow Super Giants -- are at 12 points each. GT and Royal Challengers Bengaluru are at 10 points and can reach a maximum of 14 points. With a negative net run-rate, GT's chance are the least and it will take a miracle for the former champions to sneak into the top four. However, one thing is clear,



GT will once again have to play out of their skin and register big wins to keep their mathematical chances alive. GT's bowling has lacked teeth this season with the pacers inconsistent and spinners leaking runs. But the bowlers did manage to snap three CSK wickets in the first three overs in their last outing. Mohit Sharma's variations and knuckle balls were effective and Rashid Khan's

guile also stood out and they would hope for another good outing. But it will again boil down to the top-order batting, which has failed to fire in the last few games before Gill and Sudharsan came up with sensational tons en route a record 210 opening stand. KKR, on the other hand, need just one win in their remaining two games to seal a top-two finish after they

qualified for the playoffs with an 18-run win over Mumbai Indians in a rain-hit game last night. Sunil Narine (461 runs & 15 wickets) has carried the team with his all-round brilliance, while fellow West Indian Andre Russell has been another impactful player with 222 runs and 15 wickets this season. Leg spinner Varun Chakaravathy with 18 wickets in his kitty has been in a good

rhythm. Phil Salt too has gotten the team sensational starts but has been off the boil a bit in the last three innings. Others such as Angkrish Raghuvanshi and Ramandeep Singh have also stepped up when needed as the two-time champions emerged as the most consistent team this season. The venue has proved to be batter-friendly and has witnessed some high-scoring

games. GT has beaten KKR twice in the last three meetings but the hosts can't lower their guard as it was here where Rinku Singh had given them a nightmare when he slammed Yash Dayal for five successive sixes in the final over last year.

Teams (from): **Kolkata Knight Riders:** Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakaravathy, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Gus Atkinson, Allah Ghazanfar and Phil Salt. **Gujarat Titans:** Shubman Gill (c), David Miller, Matthew Wade, Wriddhiman Saha, Kane Williamson, Abhinav Manohar, B. Sai Sudharsan, Darshan Nalkande, Vijay Shankar, Jayant Yadav, Rahul Tewatia, Noor Ahmad, Sai Kishore, Rashid Khan, Joshua Little, Mohit Sharma, Azmatullah Omarzai, Umesh Yadav, Shahrukh Khan, Sushant Mishra, Kartik Tyagi, Manav Suthar, Spencer Johnson, Sandeep Warrier and BR Sharath.



KKR's Varun Chakaravathy made things difficult for MI batters: Brett Lee

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Varun Chakaravathy's ability to be consistently among wickets for Kolkata Knight Riders drew praise from former Australian tearaway bowler Brett Lee, who said he made life difficult for Mumbai Indians batters in a rain-shortened low-scoring game. Chakaravathy bowled miserly and took two wickets for 17 runs as KKR won by 18 runs to become the first team to seal an IPL playoff berth on Saturday. Chakaravathy (18 scalps) is the third-highest wicket-taker so far this season behind MI's Jasprit Bumrah and PBKS's Harshal Patel, both of whom are on 20 wickets. "He bowled beautifully. He made efforts to pick the hard length, he banged the ball short in the wicket which did not allow the batsmen to get underneath the ball and

made the cross-bat shots difficult," Lee told JioCinema on Sunday. Former Royal Challengers Bengaluru high-performance director Mike Hesson said KKR batter Venkatesh Iyer seems to be relishing punishing the Mumbai Indians bowlers. Venkatesh has struck two half centuries this season and came close to striking a third before he was dismissed on 42 (21 balls) as he emerged the highest run-getter on both sides at the Eden Gardens on Saturday. "He seems to love playing against Mumbai Indians. He got hit on the knee earlier but that did not seem to stop him. He timed everything beautifully, batted with a strike rate of over 200 and when everybody else was struggling because of the seaming ball, he played a match-winning hand," said Hesson.

We win together, we lose together: Rana reveals KKR winning mantra

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The key to Kolkata Knight Riders' success this season lies in their players' newfound ability to support each other through highs and lows, something that was "missing" over the past two years, feels the team's vice-captain Nitish Rana. The two-time former champions became the first team to seal the playoff berth with a facile 18-run win over Mumbai Indians in a 16-over rain-interrupted IPL match at Eden Gardens on Saturday. This was the first time since 2021 that KKR made the last four stages. "We win together and we lose together; that's the dressing room environment we have. It's very

important to place hands on each other's shoulders, and I feel it was missing for the last one to two years," Rana said in the post-match media interaction here. With this win, they have consolidated their position atop the standings with 18 points. With two games to go, KKR are now well-placed for a top-two finish. The big reality check for KKR had come against Punjab Kings who smashed South Africa's record of the highest successful run-chase by gunning down 262 with eight balls to spare in an IPL fixture at Eden Gardens on April 26. "We felt really bad that day. I was witness to the dressing room, only three-four ate dinner that night," he recalled.



Rana, who led the side the previous season in regular skipper Shreyas Iyer's absence, made a comeback from a finger injury after missing their last 10 matches. Having scored a crucial 23-ball 33 on his return, the lefthander said he had anxiety pangs and had a sleepless night. "To be honest I was not able to touch the bat for 20-22 days because of the injury. Then slowly it started falling into place. I used to play innings in my mind. "I couldn't sleep the whole night yesterday. It seemed I'm playing the first IPL match of my life. I slept only around 7.30-8 am such was the anxiety. "It seemed I was playing my first match, you have to increase your

hunger to do well. Luckily I had that thing in me," he said. Lacked momentum: Piyush Chawla For Mumbai Indians, who are already out of the playoff race, this was their ninth loss as they end their forgettable season facing Lucknow Super Giants on May 17. Veteran leg-spinner Piyush Chawla blamed it on their lack of momentum this season. "T20 is about momentum, and we didn't get that momentum right from the beginning. Some days we bowled well, but our batting didn't click, and sometimes our batters did well, but the bowlers ended up leaking runs," Chawla said. "As a unit, we have failed in a few games, and we have to accept that

as a team. We have a brilliant lineup, but things didn't fall into place. "Today also, we started off brilliantly, but that spell of (Sunil) Narine and Varun (Chakaravathy) actually made the difference. You have to give credit to their bowlers," he added. The 35-year-old, who has played 191 matches in the IPL in four different franchises including KKR, feels it's not over for him yet. To a query if he would be back in action next season, Chawla gave a cheeky reply. "You tell me, if I should be playing with the way I'm bowling? If you have given your permission, of course I will see you somewhere next time," he signed off.

OTHER SPORTS

We are working to be in best shape possible for Paris: India men hockey captain

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The Indian men's hockey team has identified areas that "needed attention" following its whitewash by Australia in the five-Test series and is ready for the tough European leg of the Pro League, said skipper Harmanpreet Singh on Sunday. Last month, India, the Tokyo Olympics bronze medallists, lost all their matches to the Kookaburras, raising doubts about their preparations for the Paris Games later this year. But drag-flicker Harmanpreet said the squad has done a lot of high-intensity training and the confidence in the side continues to grow. "We are in the last stages of an intense training block right now. The team has worked on the areas we felt needed attention after the tour of Australia," said Harmanpreet in a Hockey India release. "Soon, we will head to Europe to play some essential matches in the Pro League 2023/24 to test ourselves against some tough opponents like Argentina, Belgium, Germany, and Great Britain. "The chemistry in the squad continues to grow and with only 75 days left for the Paris Olympics we are working to be in the best shape possible," he added. India will begin their Olympic campaign against New Zealand on July 27. The other teams in Pool B are Belgium, Australia, Argentina, and Ireland. Pool A comprises the



Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain, Spain, South Africa, and hosts France. India vice-captain Hardik Singh said the experience of stalwarts like goalkeeper PR Sreejesh and former captain Manpreet Singh has come in handy while preparing youngsters for the Summer Games. "The team is leaving no stone unturned in our endeavour to change the colour of our previous medal and clinch gold at the Olympics this time. We have players like PR Sreejesh and Manpreet Singh who could be playing their fourth Olympics along with quite a few players who could be playing their third Olympics, including our captain. "Their experience has been instrumental in moulding some of the younger players we have in the squad right now. Only 75 days remain for the Paris Olympics and we cannot wait to begin our Olympic journey," added Hardik.

Praggnanandhaa beats Carlsen but remains third in Superbet chess

PTI ■ WARSAW

India's R Praggnanandhaa scored yet another victory over world number one Magnus Carlsen of Norway to keep himself afloat even as Wei Yi of China stretched his lead to a massive 2.5 points in the Superbet rapid and blitz chess tournament, a part of the Grand Chess Tour. With nine rounds still to come in the blitz event, Wei Yi has amassed 20.5 points with seven wins on the first day of blitz. Ending the day with 7.5 out of a possible nine, Yi, seems like a man possessed and unless a hurricane hits him, is poised to win the first leg of the Grand Chess Tour.

Carlsen, on 18, is a distant second at this point and the main reason behind that is Praggnanandhaa, who has been beating the world number one often these days in the faster version of the game. Praggnanandhaa, however is far behind the leaders with 14.5 points which makes it literally a two-horse race for the title. In fourth spot is Arjun Erigaisi on 14 points while Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland is right behind him on 13. Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan stands sixth on 12.5, a full point clear of Vincent Keymer of Germany and the eighth spot is now



taken by early leader Kirill Shevchenko of Romania with 11 points. Anish Giri of Holland improved a little to be ninth on 10.5 while the blitz remained a cause for worry

for world championship challenger D. Gukesh who is languishing at the last spot with 9.5 points in the USD 1,75,000 prize money tournament. Carlsen notably mentioned

that his nervous system had collapsed following his second-round loss against Praggnanandhaa and Gukesh, Arjun ensured he remained in contention for a podium finish. Losing to Wei Yi and Carlsen, Arjun scored five wins and two draws in his other games and will be optimistic on the final day of the event. Final results rapid: 1. Wei Yi 20.5; 2. Magnus Carlsen 18; 3. R. Praggnanandhaa 14.5; 4. Arjun Erigaisi 14; 5. Duda Jan-Krzysztof 13; 6. Nodirbek Abdusattorov 12.5; 7. Vincent Keymer 11.5; 8. Kirill Shevchenko 11; 9. Anish Giri 10.5; 10. D.Gukesh 9.5.

Deeksha sets new Indian record

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian track athlete K M Deeksha set a new national record in the women's 1500m while Avinash Sable finished second in men's 5000m event at the Sound Running Track Fest in Los Angeles. The 25-year-old Deeksha finished third in the final on Saturday after running the distance in 4:04.78, bettering the previous record of 4:05.39 set by Harmilan Bains in 2021 at the National Athletics Championships in Warangal. Deeksha's previous personal best was a 4:06.07 set in the final of the National Inter-State Athletics Championships at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar in 2023, where she upstaged Bains to win gold. Deeksha who is from Amroha, UP has been part of the MP Athletics academy for the last five years training



under coach S K Prasad. Parul Chaudhary ran 15:10.69s in the women's 5000m to finish fifth. Parul narrowly missed out on improving her national record while compatriot Ankita ended 10th with a time of 15:28.88. Sable finished second in the men's 5000m with a time of 13:20.37 and not his pet 3000m steeplechase event,

and in the same event, Gulveer Singh ran a 13:31.95. Sable's 5000m national record time is 13:19.30. Kartik Kumar ran the last lap in 62sec in the men's 10000m but that could only fetch him a second-place finish. He clocked 28:07.66s. This is a World Athletics Continental Tour bronze level event.

Messi plays through a scare, Inter Miami rallies past Montreal 3-2 for fifth straight win

AP ■ MONTREAL, (AP)

Lionel Messi played the entire game despite a first-half injury scare, Benjamin Cremaschi broke a tie in the 59th minute and Inter Miami overcame an early two-goal deficit to beat Montreal 3-2 on Saturday night for its fifth consecutive Major League Soccer victory. Luis Suarez got his 11th goal of the season for Inter Miami, and Matias Rojas scored off a free kick. Jules-Anthony Vilsaint and Bryce Duke scored for Montreal (3-5-3). Inter Miami (8-2-3) extended its unbeaten streak to seven matches (5-0-2) despite Messi being held without a goal or an assist for the first time in his nine MLS appearances this season. Inter Miami is 7-0-2 in those nine games; one of its losses came against Montreal in March, a game where Messi didn't play. Playing in Canada

for the first time, Messi briefly left late in the first half after some sort of issue with his left knee after being fouled by defender George Campbell. The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner as the world's best player went down immediately, holding his knee and writhing in pain. Inter Miami's medical staff went onto the field to treat Messi, who got up after about two minutes and walked to the Miami sideline. He was not subbed out, which allowed him a chance to return moments later. And for whatever reason, the match changed in that moment. Inter Miami was down 2-0 when Messi got hurt; it was 2-1 when he returned and tied moments after he got back onto the field. Rojas scored off a free kick - one that Messi would have ordinarily taken - to get Inter Miami on the board, and Suarez tapped in a

goal off a corner kick late in first-half stoppage time. Suarez became the third player in MLS history to score 11 goals in his first 800 minutes of a season, joining Mamadou Diallo (11 in 2000) and Ola Kamara (11 in 2021). The go-ahead goal came when Rojas sent a ball into open space and Cremaschi ran it down - then made a second effort to nudge the ball just clear of two defenders and into the net for a 3-2 lead. Messi had two chances in the final minutes to extend the lead, both narrowly missing. Hundreds of fans greeted Inter Miami when the team arrived at its hotel Friday night and Montreal, in part because of Messi joining Major League Soccer last summer, sold out its 15,000 season tickets for the first time since the club joined MLS in 2012. Messi has scored in 31 countries.