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Telangana

**72.48** PER CENT

Hyderabad parliamentary constituency Records lowest poll percentage

**39.17** PER CENT

Number of LS Seats:

Candidates in fray: 525

### BJP will not get even 15 to 20 seats in South India: CM



PNS HYDERABAD

Declaring that INDIA will form the government this time, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said the BJP will not even get 15 to 20 seats in South India.

Addressing the media after voting in Kodangal on Monday, the CM said the Congress will get more votes than it got in the Assembly election. The Congress bagged 39.5 per cent votes in the Telangana

Assembly election.

The CM said that the LS elections are a referendum on the 100-day rule of the Congress government in Telangana. The BJP has also been saying that the LS elections are a referendum

on Modi's governance. As Modi will cross 75 years on September 17, 2025, Revanth said the BJP should reveal who will be the Prime Minister if the BJP





he pione

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Telangana voters eagerly casting their votes on Monday in Lok Sabha elections

### **TELANGANA STATE**

# Lok Sabha polling 61.54%

### The response from voters was very good, CEO Vikas Raj

PNS HYDERABAD

A voter turnout of 61.54 per cent was registered in the election to 17 Lok Sabha constituencies in Telangana on Monday, which went off peacefully.

HYDFRABAD, TUFSDAY, MAY 14, 2024; PAGIS 12 ₹4

The polling was held from 7 AM to 6 PM, except Left Wing Extremismaffected constituencies where the process concluded by 4 PM.

The polling process in Telangana was peaceful, DGP Ravi Gupta said in a release. Notably, polling in Naxalaffected areas concluded without any incident by 4 pm, he sai

State Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Vikas Raj said the response from voters was good.

"We have got very good response right from morning. Weather was also supportive. So we had good turnout. There was no problem on law order side also," Vikas Raj told reporters.

Out of the total 35,809 polling stations, voting was going on in about 1,400 booths at 6 PM.

The final polling percentage would be known after tabulation on Tuesday, the

The approximate voter turnout in the state was 62 per cent, according to an Election Commission app on voter

While Zahirabad Lok Sabha con- per cent, the lowest poll percentage of



While Zahirabad Lok Sabha constituency witnessed the highest poll percentage (as per provisonal data) of 72.48 per cent, the lowest poll percentage of 39.17 was seen in Hyderabad parliamentary constituency. The CEO also said 38 FIRs were filed today for various reasons.

stituency witnessed the highest poll percentage (as per provisonal data) of 72.48

39.17 was seen in Hyderabad parliamentary constituency. The CEO also said 38 FIRs were filed

today for various reasons. However, the BJP is winning in the

Hyderabad parliamentary seat, she asserted. Former Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya, his Tripura counterpart N Indrasena Reddy, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy,

Union Minister and Telangana BJP oresident G Kishan Reddy, former CM K Chandrasekhar Rao and AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi were among senior leaders who cast their vote in Telangana.

Chiranjeevi, Mahesh Babu, Ram Charan, Allu Arjun, Junior NTR and ace director SS Rajamouli of 'RRR' fame, also exercised their franchise here.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, who cast his vote in his Assembly constituency of Kodangal in Vikarabad district, alleged that the BJP is trying to "polarise Muslim votes to make (AIMIM's) Asaduddin Owaisi win".

He also alleged that the BJP is misusing central agencies for electoral benefit. On the case registered by Delhi police in connection with a doctored video of Union Home Minister Amit Shah on social media, he wondered how the Delhi police could issue notices to him when he was not aware of its content.

### Hyd constituency records lowest poll per cent again



PNS HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad parliamentary constituency has poor poll turnout in the till 5.30 pm on Monday. The lowest turnout in Hyderabad was recorded in 1957 elections with

The polling percentage of Hyderabad recorded at 9 am was 5.6 per cent, at 11 am it was 10.70 per cent, at 1 pm it was 19.37 per cent, at 3 pm it was 29.47 per cent, at 5:31 pm it was 39.17 per cent.

Among the 16 parliamentary elections in the 1980 it was 63.4%, in Hyderabad constituency, the highest was recorded

in 1991 with 77.1%. In that election, around 12,96,145 voters were there but 9,99,602 voters once again recorded a cast their vote. Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi of 45.5% of votes and Baddam Bal Reddy of the BJP got 41.5% votes in the 1991 election.

> after Independence, in 1952 the poll percentage of Hyderabad parliamentary constituency was 43 per cent. After that in 1957 it was 41.1%, in 1962 it was 55.6%, in 1967 it was 57.7%, in 1971 it was 49.4%, in 1977 it was 59.9%, in 1984 it was 76.8%,

In the first elections

## KTR thinks Jagan likely to win in AP

PNS HYDERABAD

Winning Confidence

Quotes

**Declaring that INDIA** will form

the government this time, Chief

**Revanth Reddy** said the BJP will not even get 15 to 20 seats in South India.

Saying that the

Reddy said that

**BRS** president K

Chandrasekhar

Rao on Monday

claimed that

would play a

key role post

the Lok Sabha

elections.

Minister

that YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has the edge in Andhra Pradesh.

Government for arranging generators to ensure that there are no power five months ago has also been rout- and exercise our franchise so that we outages. He said he voted for a leader ed. The Prime Minister has been can have the kind of government we who won Telangana. After voting, campaigning across the country but

BRS leader KT Rama Rao thinks LS seats and this time we are hoping for more. The big man who

KTR said, "We are very confident he has been dishing out step-mothand hopeful. Our best tally was 11 erly treatment to Telangana with no Central university, and no AIIMS." "Come out, vote and show that we dge in Andhra Pradesh. cheated India 10 years ago has been are responsible citizens. In a democ-tompletely routed. The small man racy, when politics decides everyhere in Telangana who cheated us thing, I think we must understand want. I hope you voted for progress.



### **AMIT SHAH FAKE VIDEO CASE** Court grants bail to accused

PNS NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Monday granted bail to a Congress member arrested in connection with a fake video of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's speech, noting that he has cooperated in the probe and his further custodial interrogation is not

required. Arun Reddy, who was arrested on May 3, handles the 'Spirit of Congress' account on 'X',

according to officials. Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Nabeela Wali noted that the prime allegation against the accused on the basis of which he was arrested was being the 'Admin'



A Delhi court is likely to con-

sider on Tuesday a fresh charge

sheet filed by the Enforcement

Directorate in the Delhi excise

policy-linked money laundering case naming BRS leader K Kavitha and four others as

Special Judge for ED and CBI

PNS NEW DELHI

accused.

# SC trashes plea for Keiriwal's removal as CM

### SAYS IT IS UP TO DELHI LG TO ACT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed a plea seeking removal of Arvind Kejriwal as the Delhi chief minister after his arrest in a money laundering case, holding that the petitioner had no legal right to seek his ouster.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said resignation in such circumstances is a matter of propriety but there is no legal right

chief minister following his arrest.
"What is the legal right? On propriety you may certainly have some-



to seek removal of Kejriwal as the thing to say, but there is no legal right. It's up to the LG (Lieutenant Governor) to take action if he

# 'Every vote costs Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000 in TG'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Elections continue to be costly in Telangana with each vote costing around Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000. For the first time in Secunderabad and Malkajgiri Rs 2,000 was given for a vote. Locals said that this is the highest ever paid in this con-

While a candidate paid Rs 1,000 his opponent paid Rs 1,500 and Rs 2,000 in some areas. In rural areas, it is Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,500 per vote along with a bottle of alcohol.

A voter said that they got Rs 1,000 and liquor in Karimnagar from a party. Rs 2,000 was also given for a vote in some other districts. Across the state, every party has kept a minimum of Rs 500 for a vote in all districts.

A leader said that people are also demanding money. "Electioneering more than the previous election. No paid and a biryani was given for another party activist.

#### **PNS** ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP has filed a complaint against Chief Minister Revanth Reddy over Model Code of Conduct violations on polling

In the complaint filed with Chief Electoral Officer Vikas Raj, the State BJP General Secretary, Bangaru Shruthi, said that the CM after casting his vote in Kodangal in Mahbubnagar LS

years and only the rich can contest.

These rates were never seen in the

city earlier. It is almost four times

constituency held a press confer- CM said, "People have decided ence regarding the elections which was telecasted live on Telugu TV news channels. This is strictly prohibited by the silent period rule of Section 126 of the Representation of Peoples Act and is a violation of the Model Code of Conduct.

BJP files complaint against CM for violating MCC

The BJP said that Revanth Reddy made some comments which went against the MCC.

is going to be very costly after five one wants to take Rs 500 now," said each rally. "Even booth committee

a local leader on condition of

The complaint said that the complaint said.

substantially." The above comments violate the Model Code of Conduct and warrant immediate action," the

maintenance costs have gone up

During the campaign, Rs 500 was in 2019. Now it is very high," said

reportedly. It was around Rs 75,000

not to vote for the BJP," "I urge all

voters to vote for the Congress in

Mahbubnagar and that the magic

figure is a dream for the BJP,"

"Modi, ED combination is not

going to work in Telangana," and

the "Graph of the BJP has fallen

cases, Kaveri Baweja, who was likely to take up the charge sheet for cognisance on Monday, adjourned the matter for May 14. The ED on Friday filed the nearly 200-page prosecution complaint (charge sheet) along

with annexures under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).



### BJP's Madhavi Latha booked for checking voter IDs of Muslim women

PNS HYDERABAD

The Malakpet Police on Monday booked the BJP's Lok Sabha candidate, Kompella Madhavi Latha, for harassing women voters.

In a viral video, the BJP candidate was seen checking the voter IDs of Muslim women and asking them to unveil to check their identities.

District Election Officer Ronald Rose took note of the issue and asked the Malakpet Police to register a case against the candidate.

After the video went viral, the Collector took to X and said, "A case has been registered at the Malakpet Police Station against BJP candidate Madhavi Latha under Sections 171C, 186, and 505 (1) (c) of IPC and Section 132 of the Representation of the People Act."



In another incident, Madhavi Latha and two BJP workers were booked by the Mangalhat Police for using dummy Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) and manipulating votes.

Goshamahal ACP K. Venkat Reddy said, "Initially, the two BJP workers were booked for manipulating voters by using

the EVMs and were taken into custody. Then Madhavi Latha arrived at the police station along with her supporters. After an argument with the police, she managed to free the accused and took the EVMs away. A case has been booked against the BJP candidate regarding this incident for blocking the police."

### No elections in future if Modi wins this time: Kharge

PNS HAZSRIBAG/LATEHER

Alleging that the Constitution and democracy were under threat, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday claimed that no elections will be held in the future if Prime Minister Narendra Modi wins the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Addressing an election rally in

Jharkhand's Hazaribag, Kharge also attacked the PM over the arrest of former CM Hemant Soren, and dared him to arrest "Adani and Ambani". "The Constitution and democracy are in danger, and people are in danger. If you don't have fundamental rights, you will be slaves. No elections will be held in the future if Modi wins



'You arrested Hemant Soren, why aren't you arresting Adani and Ambani?" he said, hitting back at the prime minister who earlier alleged that the Congress received "tempo loads of cash" from the two businessmen for its leader Rahul Gandhi to stop "abus-

# Regional parties will play key role post LS polls: KCR

PNS HYDERABAD

president Chandrasekhar Rao on Monday claimed that regional parties would play a key role post the Lok Sabha elections.

Speaking to reporters after voting at his native village Chintamadaka in Siddipet district in Telangana, he said according to the BJP's own rule, no leader in the party would take up any position after attaining the age of 75.
"Accordingly, Mr Modi has to step down. It is up to the BJP people to think," he told reporters. "There is nothing like a bloc. Now, the regional



parties will be the power in Ìndia," he said.

Polling was underway on Monday for the 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on May 11 hit out at Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for his claim that Prime Minister Narendra

Modi was seeking votes for Shah as his successor due to the 75 years age 'rule' in the BJP, and told him that there was "no need for you to be happy" as Modi will continue to lead the country post-2024 Lok Sabha polls.

There was nothing written in the BJP's constitution on any such age ceiling, and there was no confusion in the party over the matter, Shah had told reporters at a press conference here. Shah's comments came in response to Kejriwal's remarks that Modi was seeking votes for the Union Home Minister to make him PM as the Prime

# Telangana villagers stood by Modi in LS polls: Kishan

PNS HYDERABAD

Declaring that the BJP received a favourable response in all constituencies, Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy said that rural people stood by Prime Minister

Modi irrespective of political He said that people who voted

for other parties in the 2023 TG Assembly elections voted for the BJP in the Lok Sabha elec-

Kishan said that polling percentage decreased in urban areas but the polled votes were for the

He said that there were many reasons for the decline in voting percentage. One of the reasons is that many Hyderabad residents went to vote in the Andhra Pradesh elec-

Kishan said that the Congress tried to proattempts of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and

He said that Congress MLAs and their supporters didn't take the words of Revanth Reddy and Rahul Gandhi.

There is no problem for the BJP if Rahul Gandhi continues as head of the Congress,"

> He said the BJP is going to get good results although the Congress and the BRS engaged in a campaign of lies against the

The BJP will be a new political force in Telangana after the polling that took place on Monday, Kishan said.

Criticising Revanth Reddy for challenging the PM for every-thing he said that it is ridiculous to question Modi as their own leader is unsta-

ble. One should know who is what on June 4. People won't be happy if money is spent on campaigns of lies, he said.

"We came to know how to speak but we have Instead of speaking lies, implement your assurances first," Kishan said.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said Monday his family has always worked for the people of the Rae Bareli parliamentary constituency, unlike Prime Minister Narendra Modi who works in the "interest of Adani and Ambani".

Addressing his first election meeting in the constituency after his nomination, Gandhi said he was contesting the Lok Sabha election from the seat because his family has deep links with the people

Hitting out at the Modi government, he claimed that loans amounting to Rs 16 lakh crore, which is equal to 24 years of money allotted under the MGNREGA, have been waived for 22-25 top industri-

Rahul Gandhi said his grandmother Indira Gandhi, his father Rajiv Gandhi and his worked to improve the lives of people in Rae Bareli.



Considered a Gandhi family bastion, the Rae Bareli seat had been represented by senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi since 2004. The constituency was earlier represented by former prime minister Indira

In his address, Rahul Gandhi also accused the media of not showing the problems faced by farmers and unemployed youngsters and instead giving prominence to wedding functions in top industrialists' families. He said if the INDIA bloc comes to power, a list of the armed forces with pension poor families would be com- provisions.

piled and Rs 1 lakh annually or Rs 8,500 per month --transferred in the bank account of one woman in each such family. Gandhi also said an INDIA

bloc government would waive the loans of small farmers and legalised common minimum support price would be provided to them. He reiterated that the Agniveer scheme of shortduration recruitment in the defence forces would be done away and youngsters would be

### Rahul didn't visit Ram temple for fear of losing vote bank: Amit Shah

PNS MUMBAI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi did not visit the Ram temple in Ayodhya as he feared losing his vote bank.

Addressing a rally in Maharashtra's Dhule district, Shah also said Gandhi opposed the abrogation of Article 370, which provided special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and sought to know the views of Shiv Sena (UBT) head Uddhav Thackeray on the Congress leader's stand.

The Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and the Sharad Pawarled NCP (SP) are constituents of the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in the state and the INDIA alliance at the national level.

The consecration of Lord am's idol was he Ayodhya temple in January



Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi not only helped in the resolution of the Ram temple issue but also facilitated its construction.

"Rahul Gandhi was invited (for the Ram temple inauguration), but he did not visit because he feared losing his vote bank. The BJP does not have any such fear," he said.

The Congress did not remove Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir because politics, the senior BJP

#### AMIT SHAH FAKE VIDEO CASE...

Continued on Page 1

of the WhatsApp group on which the alleged fake video was first posted for circula-

However, there are no allegations of the accused having posted/ circulated the said video on any forum, the judge noted.

He noted that the accused was in custody since May 3 and the investigating agency had already taken his police remand. "Further, the applicant/ accused, as per reply of

the investigating officer (IO) has co-operated with the investigating agency and has disclosed the name of his associates/ other investigation. Also, it is an admitted position that no further police custody is required," the judge said. The court said that the other suspects in the present case have been granted protection from coercive action by the High Court of Telangana. "In the opinion of this court, further custodial interrogation of the accused is not required.

### 'INDIA bloc leaders scared of Pakistan's nuclear power:PM

MUZAFFARPUR/HAJIPUR/SARA N(BIHAR)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday attacked the opposition INDIA bloc, calling its leaders "cowards" who were "scared of Pakistan's nuclear power" and asserted that India would make the neighbouring country wear bangles if it was

not wearing any.
Addressing three back-toback rallies in Bihar's Hajipur, Muzaffarpur and Saran Lok

Sabha constituencies, Modi made an apparent reference to a recent statement of National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah that Pakistan has atom bombs and was not wearing bangles. "The INDIA bloc has leaders who are scared of Pakistan and have nightmares of its nuclear power...They (leaders) say that Pakistan is not wearing bangles, we will make that country wear bangles. Now they (Pakistan) need atta' (flour). They also don't have electricity. I didn't know

that they do not even have an adequate supply of bangles," the PM asserted while taking a jibe at the opposition leaders.

"We must look carefully at the opposition that seems to be full of cowards and timid people. Some give a clean chit to Pakistan on terrorism and others raise doubts on surgical strikes...Their Left allies even want our nuclear arsenal to be dismantled," he

Modi also claimed that the INDIA bloc had worked out a formula, which would allow five of its leaders, if the coalition came to power, to enjoy

a year of premiership each. "Just imagine what type of a mess we would get to see if the bloc's plan to have a different PM, every year, for five years, succeeds. However, they are a motley group that is bound to fail," he said. "The current elections are

for having a government that will give a further boost to the standing and clout enjoyed by the country," the PM said.

### BJP will win 12 Lok Sabha seats in TG: Eatala

PNS HYDERABAD

Malkajgiri BJP candidate Eatala Rajender said the BJP is going to win 12 LS seats in Telangana. He said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's words show his ignorance and that he will pay a heavy price.

Addressing the media on

Monday after the polling, Eatala said that the BJP will win more than 12 LS seats as Union Home Minister Amit

Shah said in his first meeting. He said that Revanth has been speaking violating the election code and that he spoke in frustration knowing that the BJP is going to win the Lok Sabha elections.

#### TODAY **ALMANAC** Sukla Paksh Tithi: Saptami: May 14 02:50 AM to May 15 04:19 AM Ashtami May 15 04:19 AM to May 16 06:23 AM Nakshatram

May 13 11:23 AM Pushya: to May 14 01:05 PM Ashlesha to May 15 03:25 PM Rahukalam: 3:24 PM to 5:00 PM 9:00 AM to 10:36 AM Yamaqandam: 03:08 AM to 04:53 AM Varjyam: 12:12 PM to 1:48 PM

06:14 AM to 07:57 AM

HYDERABAD WEATHER Forecast: Scattered clouds **Temp**: 35<sup>∞</sup>

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:46 AM to 12:38 PM

Amritakalam

Humidity: 52% Sunrise: 5:48 AM

Sunset: 6:36 PM

**Updated:** May 13, 2024 5:00 PM

### Telangana...

Continued on Page 1

Referring to leaders, including Ajit Pawar, Kumaraswamy and others of JD(S) joining hands with BJP, he claimed that PM Modi does not have the moral right to talk about

Referring to Modi's allegation that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was not talking about 'Adani-Ambani', he said the PM can send ED, IT and CBI to "raid Adani-Ambani residence and office places".

"When they are sending truck loads of money to the Congress party, why are you not taking action against Adani - Ambani?" he asked.

The BJP complained to the Chief Electoral Officer

alleging that Revanth Reddy conducted a press conference after casting his vote and levelled certain allegations against the saffron party in violation of the Model Code of Conduct.

Addressing reporters, Kishan Reddy said the BJP has received positive response from people in the Lok Sabha polls. Though voter turnout

was low in urban areas, the votes polled were in favour of BJP, he claimed. There were several reasons for the low voting, including many voters

going to neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, he added. Meanwhile, polling was also held in Secunderabad Cantonment assembly constituency here.

### Hyd constituency...

Continued on Page 1

in 1989 it was 71.3 %, in 1991 it was 77.1%, in 1996 it was 63.4%, in 1998 it was 73.2 %, in 1999 it was 69.2%, in 2004 it was 55.7%, in 2009 it was 52.4%, in 2014 it was 53.3%, in the last elections in 2019, poll percentage was 45.8% in Hyderabad parliamentary

constituency. For the Hyderabad seat in 2024 elections, sitting MP and AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi is facing BJP's Madhavi Latha, Congress's Mohammad Waliullah Sameer and BRS's Gaddam Srinivas Yadav.

The Hyderabad parliamentary seat has been with the AIMIM for the last four decades. Asaduddin Owaisi has won the seat four terms since 2004. Before him, his father Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi represented.

# SC trashes...

Continued on Page 1

We are not inclined to entertain this (petition)," the bench told petitioner Kant Bhati's counsel.

The bench, while dismissing the appeal challenging the April 10 order of the Delhi High Court said, "When the matter (Kejriwal's petition against arrest) was being heard, we had posed the same question to them. Ultimately, t is a matter of propriety and there is no legal right."

It pointed out that several petitions on the issue have been dismissed by the high On April 10, the high court

had expressed its displeasure over repeated filing of petitions seeking Kejriwal's removal. The court said once it had

dealt with the issue and opined

that it fell within the executive

not a "James Bond movie that will have sequels". It had pulled up petitioner Sandeep Kumar, a former AAP MLA, who sought

Kejriwal's ouster from the

domain, there should not be

any "repeat litigation" as it was

office, for trying to involve the court in a "political thicket" and said it will impose costs of Rs 50,000 on him. On March 28, the court had dismissed another PIL for Kejriwal's removal, saying that while the petitioner had failed to show any legal bar that prohibited the arrested chief minister from holding office, there was also no scope for judicial

State to consider the issue. Another similar PIL was dismissed by the high court on April 4, saying it was Kejriwal's personal choice to continue.

interference in such cases as it

was for the other organs of the

#### **EXCISE CASE...** Continued on Page 1

Kavitha, an MLC of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) party, three employees of a company that handled AAP's Goa campaign (Chariot

Productions Media Pvt Ltd) -- Damodar Sharma, Prince Kumar and Chanpreet Singh -- and a former employee of India Ahead news channel Arvind Singh have been named as accused in the latest charge sheet, sources said.

The federal agency had arrested 46-year-old Kavitha, the daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao, from her Banjara Hills residence in Hyderabad on March 15.

Chanpreet was arrested on April 15 and it was alleged by the agency that he "managed" cash funds for AAP's 2022 Goa assembly campaign. The three Chariot Productions employees too had alleged

role in the movement and handling of "bribe" funds paid by the 'South Group' through 'Angadiyas' and hawala route

for the party's Goa campaign. Arvind Singh, the commercial head and production controller of India Ahead, was arrested by the CBI in this case in May last year for alleged transfer of these funds that have been called "kickbacks" of

This is the seventh charge sheet filed by the ED in this case in which it has arrested 18 people so far, including Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who was given interim bail by the Supreme Court on Friday. The ED has alleged that Kavitha was a key member of the 'South Group' that has been accused of paying the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) alleged kickbacks of Rs 100 crore in return for a big share of liquor licences in the national capital.

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# Polling held peacefully in Hyd, says DEO Ronald Rose

District Election Officer (DEO) Ronald Rose said that the parliamentary elections in Hyderabad district have concluded peacefully on Monday. The voting process started in all the polling booths within the limits of Hyderabad, Secunderabad Parliamentary constituencies and Secun derabad Cantonment Assembly Constituency at the scheduled time. The polling staff have rectified some problems during the mock polls.

Ronald Rose, along with his family members exercised their right to vote at the polling centre of Venkateswara Fine Arts College, Madhapur. later, the election process was monitored through webcasting from the control room set up in the District Election Officer's

In all, 45,91,201 voters were enrolled in 3,986 polling centres in the entire Hyderabad district. There were 22,17,9054 voters in 1,944 polling centres in Hyderabad parliamentary constituency, 21,20,401 voters



Secunderabad parliamentary constituency and 2,53,706 voters in 232 polling centres in Secunderabad Cantonment by-

Ronald Rose said that after the completion of polling, the polling staff, along with the EVMs reached the reception centre set up in that con-stituency safely along with the sectoral officers.

Meanwhile, Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Tarun Joshi supervised the preparations for the Lok Sabha elec-

in 1,810 polling centres in tions held on Monday. He visited many polling centres in Maheshwaram, LB Nagar, Malkajgiri and Bhongir and examined the election pattern there. He said that the polling process was peaceful, without any problems. In all, 6,000 police personnel related to Rachakonda, along with 2,500 additional Central forces joint-

ly carried out security duties. He said that due to the security measures taken in advance, there were no untoward incidents. The social media accounts were managed by the Ronald Rose said that after the completion of polling, the polling staff, along with the EVMs reached the reception centre set up in that constituency safely along with the sectoral officers

Rachakonda IT cell. Everyone who has the right to vote was called upon to voluntarily exercise their right to vote. The police officials worked with the election officials to conduct the election process objectively without any hassles.

The Commissioner was accompanied by DCPs of the Yadadri\Bhuvanagiri DCP Rajesh Chandra, LB Nagar Praveen Kumar, Malkajgiri DCP Padmaja, Maheshwaram DCP Sunitha, ACPs and other officials.

# Some people couldn't cast vote as their names go missing

Despite the voter turnout in Telangana being 61.16 per cent , many voters couldn't cast their vote as their names went missing in the voting list, missing of voter IDs, malfunctioning of EVMs, lack of interest towards voting and other personal reasons.

In regard to voters whose names went missing or deleted from the list, they complained to the authorities, especially in Secunderabad Cantonment, Malkajgiri and Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri con-

stituencies.
A special drive was conducted in all the constituencies that allowed voters to add their names back in the electoral rolls and provided them with new EPIC cards, but still some voters found their names went missing. Interestingly, a few voters from Malkajgiri found their names in two different polling stations.

"I was surprised to see my name missing from the list. Names were included during the latest survey but I did not receive the card. Now, my vote has disappeared from the rolls," said Navya, a resident of



Secunderabad cantonment constituency.

"I was so excited, as this is my first time voting but today when I enquired, I found that my name was not there in the list. Recently through the enrolment drive, I have registered my name. However, my name disappeared from the list," said Rashmi Rao, a resident of Secunderabad cantonment constituency

In regards to people who didn't cast their votes, Leo Augustine said, "I got ready to vote, but the happenings in Hyderabad parliamentary constituency, where political leaders ask Muslim women to remove Hijab, EVM problems, etc) in the case of Muslims, dalits and tribals in Kamareddy and elsewhere, I was disgusted. I boycotted the ballot for

the first time in my life.' Neeharika, a college student from Malkajgiri constituency said, "I didn't cast my vote because I don't know whom I am voting for. Moreover, I lack interest in pol-

Another student from Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri constituency said, "I have lost my voter ID. Hence I didn't cast my vote."

### Rs 32.67 cr seized in Hyd since MCC announced

PNS HYDERABAD

District Election Officer Ronald Rose said that since moral code of conduct was announced for the Parliament elections on March 16, a total of Rs 23.87 crore cash and Rs 26.06 crores of material items were seized in the Hyderabad district. On the day before the polling from 6 am on Sunday to 6 am on Monday, the enforcement department has seized Rs 2.70 lakh in cash and Rs 2.98 lakh of other inducements have been

seized from the people. Since the MCC came into force, the ECI seized 28,150 liters of illegal liquor, cases have been filed against 380 people and about 383 people were arrested. On day one before the poll, 434 liters of liquor was seized, 26 cases have been filed and 27 people have been arrested.

Ronald Rose said that so far 755 complaints have been received regarding the elections and all of them have been resolved. He said that 499 FIRs have been regis-

#### **GLIMPSES OF POLL SCENE IN CITY**



Women exercise their franchise in Hyderabad on Monday



A physically challenged woman being taken to cast her vote in city on Monday

# EVMs now hold the verdict

**SNCN ACHARYULU** 

Amidst claims and counterclaims by political parties about victory, the fate of the candidates and the verdict of the Telugu people were sealed in the EVMs on Monday. Polling was held on Monday for the 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana and the 175 Assembly and 25 Lok Sabha seats in Åndhra Pradesh.

Candidates have to wait for 21 days to know the winner. The counting of votes will be taken up on June 4 and results will be declared on the same

Ín the Lok Sabha elections in Telangana, the main contest was between the Congress and the BJP. In Andhra Pradesh, in the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, the main fight was between the YSR Congress and the TDP alliance.

Candidates are now collecting details about the voting at the ground level from their party activists to assess their not be any big political changes in Telangana due to the elec-



tion results as polls were held only to the Lok Sabha.

But the situation in Andhra Pradesh is different as in AP elections were held to the Assembly also along with the Lok Sabha elections. Politics can change depending on the results of the Assembly election in Andhra Pradesh.

It appears that the ruling YSR Congress and the opposition alliance headed by the TDP are in a tight race in Assembly elections. The YSR Telangana and in the TDP in Congress is confident of retain-

ing power. At the same time, the TDP is also confident about regaining its old glory.

In Telangana, major political parties like the Congress, the BJP and the BRS are confident about winning most of the LS seats. But whichever party may win the LS elections there will be no change in the state government.

However, the LS election results may bring about changes in Andhra Pradesh.

### 1.50 cr passengers travelled in **TSRTC** buses in just 2 days

**PNS** ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Road Corporation Transport (TSRTC) Managing Director VC Sajjanar said that 1.50 crore passengers have travelled to vote in their native places. The number of passengers has created a record in the

The corporation released a press note on Monday, where it mentioned that the corporation arranged the buses and other facilities for the return-

Śajjanar said that the TSRTC has arranged special buses for those going to their hometowns for voting in the State and other states.

Sajjanar cast his vote along with his family members in Kondapur on Monday. After casting his vote, he said that the Constitution of India has provided an opportunity to exercise the right to vote equally to everyone irrespective of caste, creed and com-



# Newly recruited cops excited to work on poll day in State

PNS HYDERABAD

The newly recruited police constables, who are at the training centres, have been posted at polling booths for security during the parliamentary elections on Monday. Stipendiary Cadet Trainee (SCT) police constables or trainee constables are saying that when a first-time voter goes to a polling booth to vote, he or she feels one of the greatest moments in life. "In the same way, we as first-time police personnel working at the polling stations are also much more excited than that."

A XVth battalion SCT, named Umesh said that he was feeling proud to work in one of the biggest democra-



cies in the world. "I am very excited to work in a polling station in Khammam parliamentary constituency. For the first time, I am working at a polling station with a police

lathi. I am incharge of a polling booth in Kusumanchi. I have to control the voters and maintain the queue at the station. Thurukagudem village where I worked, polled around 99 per cent in my constituency, which makes me feel proud."

More than 12,000 Stipendiary Cadet Trainee (SCT) police constables have been recruited in the State for security at the polling stations.

A Chellapura training centre SCT, named Saroja said, "For the first time I am working at a polling station in Jagathgirigutta, which is under Malkajgiri constituency. For the first time I am wearing a police khaki uniform and working at a polling booth. Though this is my first job, I never felt scared. This is one of the proudest moments in my life," she mentioned.

Trainee constables have been trained in the first week of May for the poll duty. The officials have trained briefly about the poll duty and explained the do's and don'ts by the officials.

An SCT who works at Nizamabad constituency said that he has to do cell-phone checking, maintain the queue line at the polling booth and maintain tranquility at the centre. "To check every voter's pockets for phones or other items is not an easy task. But I enjoyed to work for the elections," he said.



### True democracy lies in voting; **State Election Commissioner**

**PNS** ■ HYDERABAD

State Election Commissioner C Partha Saradhi said, "Our vote is like life support for democracv. We must remember that only a vote will decide our future in five years. At present, the youth is losing interest in voting due to various reasons. Many people think, what if I don't vote for

If all the drops of water come together, it becomes an ocean. And only when everyone votes,

Girls surpass boys in CBSE

it becomes a true democracy. Moreover, your vote is your voice. A great opportunity to make your voice heard is through your vote. Voting should be considered as your responsibility and right. Election Day is not a holiday to be enjoyed but it is a golden oppor-

tunity to cast a valuable vote. The officer, along with his family members exercised their right to vote in the polling booth set up at Delhi Public School in Banjara Hills.

### **TMREIS** school principal dies on poll duty

**PNS** ■ HYDERABAD

In an incident reported from Red Hills, Telangana Residential Minorities **Educational Institutions** Society (TMREIS) school principal died while on election duty.

The deceased was identified as S Narasimha who was deployed at booth number 151 in the Secunderabad Lok Sabha segment. He complained of uneasiness in the chest and collapsed on the

# Senior living market to grow 5x times to touch US\$ 12 billion by 2030

PNS HYDERABAD

The Indian senior living market has the potential to grow 5x times from current levels to touch US\$ 12 billion by 2030 as per the UN World Population Prospects. Over the next three decades, India would account for a 17 per cent share indicating a significant demand growth for senior care, including housing in the

With the rise in ageing population, the demand for senior

living services including medical, insurance, housing etc. has been steadily increasing. Factors like rising life expectancy, nuclearisation of families, higher income levels, increasing importance of a stable post-retirement life and changing lifestyle are driving the demand for senior living, especially in urban areas. Colliers, a global real estate services firm, estimates the current demand for senior housing at 18-20 lakh units, which is likely to increase significantly in the next five-six years. Badal Yagnik, Chief Executive Officer, Colliers

India, said, "Like most emerging market economies, the demographic pattern of India is undergoing a steady yet def-inite shift. The current nascent senior living market presents a lucrative opportunity for private organised developers to capitalise on the untapped market. With rising interest from institutional players and leading real estate developers, senior housing in the country

is set to be almost 5x times by 2030, compared to current levels.

Senior living in India currently is being offered by private developers through apartments ranging from 1 to 3 BHK or villas, in two formats - independent living and assisted living. A significant portion of the supply side is concentrated in southern cities, especially in Hyderabad, leaving substantial room for growth and development in other parts of the country.

# Class X and XII exams

**PNS** ■ HYDERABAD

Girls surpassed boys with a pass percentage of 99.64 while boys secured pass percentage of 99.48 in Class XII in the CBSE exams the results of which were declared by the

board on Monday. In Class XII, Trivandrum secured 99.91 per cent, whereas Vijayawada region (that includes Andhra Pradesh and Telangana) secured 99.04 per cent. Girls scored 91.25 per cent and boys scored 85.21 per

cent. The same follows for the Class X examination. Trivandrum secured 99.75 per cent while Vijayawada region secured 99.60 per cent.

A total of 45,669 students, including 25,010 boys and 20,659 girls, appeared for the CBSE Class X examination. In terms of pass percentage, boys scored 99.48 and girls 99.64. Compared to last year, the overall pass percentage of Class XII students increased by 0.65 per cent as against 87.33 per cent last year.

Meanwhile, most of the CBSE-affiliated schools in Telangana have reportedly secured 100 percentile. A senior officer of Kendriya

Vidyalaya, said, "Around 119 students appeared for Class XII exam and all the students passed. In Class X, around 241 students appeared and all students passed. Riya Danish secured the first position by securing 96.8 per cent in Class 12. Most of the girls secured more marks than boys, dominating all streams.

# Modi coming to power again is on the cards

The Opposition camp argues that the BJP is ▲ not going to repeat its 2019 performance in the 2014 elections. Pseudo intelligentsia also subscribe to the view. But, there is no substance in their contention because the popularity of the Modi-led BJP is on the rise since 2014 and there was no

since 2014 and there was no instance in it waning.

The BJP is growing with each passing day, whereas the Congress is on the way out. The confidence of the people in Modi is increasing day by day. Many still did not understand that his face run understand that his fans run into several millions. At the same time, the BJP, during the past 10 years, became stronger and expanded to every nook and corner of the country. But the antagonists of the BJP are not realising

In UP, the double-engine government is working powerfully. In UP, women did not dare go out alone. Mafia and goondagiri prevailed every-where in the State in the past. But, under the leadership of Modi-Yogi, several infrastructural development projects worth several crores of rupees are being implemented. Several thousands of crores of funds are trickling down to the people directly into their bank accounts under various welfare schemes.

The law and order improved by 100%. The people are heaving a big sigh of relief. Ram temple building in Ayodhya, Kasi Corridor development and such other measures helped the govern-ment value the religious sentiments of millions of Indians. Under such a situation, in the name of castes and minorities, several vested interests joined forces. Does it mean BJP's majority is diminishing in UP? The BJP is certain to win many more LS seats this time, compared to the past.

Not only in UP, the BJP wave will sweep across the double engine government states of MP, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Assam,

The law and order improved by 100%. The people are heaving a big sigh of relief. Ram temple building in Ayodhya, Kasi Corridor development and such other measures helped the government value the religious sentiments of millions of Indians. Under such a situation, in the name of castes and minorities, several vested interests joined forces. Does it mean BJP's majority is diminishing in UP? The BJP is certain to win many more LS seats this time, compared to the past.

Uttarakhand, Haryana and Gujarat.

In AP too, Modi joined hands with N Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan, leading to multiply the interest among the people towards the BJP. The YSRCP camp is left disturbed gauzing the heightened awareness among the voters. In Telangana, there is a strong undercurrent for the BJP. People are taking the BJP under their wings. The people are sure that soon

double engine government

will be formed in Telangana shortly.

There are many reasons for the BJP's success in polls. The people consider the Modi-led BJP as the party that is very close to their lives and ideas.

The country became stronger in the past 10 years under Modi. Anyone can say confidently that the implementation of welfare and development programmes is excellent. The people observed Modi taking on the **Y SATYA KUMAR** 

**BJP National Secretary** 

rivals confidently and enhancing the country's image in the world eyes. That is why, the BJP built its elec-tion campaign with Modi as nucleus. It is everyone's knowledge that Modi fulfils promises and his skill in delivering impressive speeches. People also know that there is no greater speaker or leader than Modi. His clean image as a non-corrupt politician and protecting the national interests made his leadership unparalleled. Why

did Pakistan, which rorism into India, TRULY D is in a defensive **SPEAKING** position? People believe that Modi regime, unlike the previous regimes, would not tolerate the misdeeds of Pakistan and will not hesitate to cross the border to teach a lesson to the Pak rulers. It is attributed to the success achieved by Modi regime in

explaining facts to world.

Individual toilets, LPG connections, PM Awas Yojna, distribution of food grains, financial assistance to farmers, Mudra loans and health insurance are giving excellent results. That is why, the BJP is able to reach out to the beneficiaries of these schemes confidently. The Opposition argument that the unified minorities will defeat the BJP is totally wrong. In 2019, such contention was made, yet BJP achieved tremendous success.

In fact, the opposition parties should put a question to themselves, "Why should the people give credence to them?" If they put the question, their condition would have improved some-

what. It is a mistake that the people will not compare with the six-and-a-half decade rule of the opposition with the 10-year rule of Modi. The people are not ready to

buy the promises made by Rahul Gandhi to deliver social justice. What happened to the social justice during the Congress regime? In the last elections, Rahul Gandhi promised guaranteed minimum income to the people mum income to the people, but voters did not believe in him. Will the voters believe in his promises on delivering social justice and safeguarding the Constitution? If the Congress warns the people of impending amendment to Constitution by the BJP in case of being voted to power, who will believe it?

During the Cong regime, the Constitution was set aside to impose Emergency; times. The Congress had insulted architect of Constitution Dr BR Ambedkar. Are the people ignorant about it? The Congress and the Opposition parties have no other agenda

except slinging mud on Modi.
That is why, PM Modi exudes confidence that the BJP will win more than 400 seats and declared so after the conclusion of the fourth phase of the elections. Rahul Gandhi, running away from Amethi in UP, and contesting from Raibarely, his mother's constituency, Congress depending on the mercy of Samajwadi Party, Aam Admi Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal, NCP, Shiv Sena for contesting seats, continuing Trinamool Congress in the alliance INDIA in spite of its unwillingness to continue in it are the signs of weakness of the Congress. Modi predicting Congress winning not even 50 seats will ring in true on

# Polling in few places delayed as villagers threaten to boycott polls

The officials in Bhadradri Kothagudem, however, were able to dissuade voters to withdraw boycott threat

PNS KOTHAGUDEM/KOLLAPUR

Polling in a few places was delayed in the State as people in rural areas threatened to boycott the polls. The officials, however, swung into action, and dissuaded the voters not to boycott the

Lachagudem under Yellandu mandal in under Kothagudem district announced their decision to boycott the polls. They took the decision to register their protest over the alleged fail-

ure the government to address their grievances.

Deputy Collector Kasaiah visited the village and persuaded the people to withdraw the boycott of polls. On the directions of Bhadradri District Collector Priyanka Ala, the officials visited the Regalla village also and ensured that

they participated in the polls. Similarly at Rayamadaram village of Enkoor mandal in Khammam district the villagers boycotted polls demanding that the authorities address their grievances.

They demanded construction of a bridge across NSP canal at the village. Leaders of political parties failed to address their problem for the past 40 years, they complained.



Villagers in Enkoor mandal of Khammam district staging a protest on Monday

The official, however, suc- ing the villagers to demonceeded in dissuading the villagers to withdraw the boycott threat. Meanwhile, in a tribal hamlet ir Kollapur constituency on Monday boycotted the polls as power supply was shut down to their habitat for the past 72 hours.

They protested in the village and threatened to boycott the polls till power supply is restored. As the polling booth in the village wore a deserted look, the election authorities had no work.

In Nagarkurnool district, Kollapurmandal, the Chenchu Habitat of Amaragiri did not get power for the past three days forc-

They lamented that no politician or bureaucrat paid ttention to their prob which included lack of road infrastructure, drinking water. They also demanded ration cards.

Because the tribal hamlet is located in the Nallamala forest region, snakes are often found straying into their habitats. Lack of power supply makes them susceptible to snake bites, they

The electricity department officials are keen to collect power bills but not ready to provide power supply, they said in a rather angry tone.

### Voters in Tanda refuse to cast their votes

PNS RANGA REDDY

Residents of Kodicherla Tanda of Kothur Mandal in Rangareddy district staged a protest and boycotted polls due to the absence of polling booths in their respective

In Tanda, a separate Gram Panchayat, residents expressed their frustration over the lack of a nearby polling booth. They highlighted that the designated polling booth was situated 4 km away from the joint village panchayat, with no available bus facility. Despite raising the issue with authorities previously, they saw no action was taken, leading them to believe that voting was pointless. However, after police and election officials intervened and promised to set up a polling booth for the next election, the residents called off their protest.

# Niranjan complains to EC against Kishan Reddy, KTR and Eatala

TPCC senior vice president G Niranjan alleged that Telangana BJP unit president and Secunderabad BJP candidate G Kishan Reddy violated Model Code of Conduct by chanting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's name, while speaking to the media. Niranjan lodged a complaint with the Election Commission

in this regard.

In his complaint, Niranjan said as per the rules of the Election Commission no one should make comments at polling stations to influence the voters after his / her vot-

Anyone who makes comments to influence the voters will be booked and action will

be taken against them. They should not reveal If disclosed, not only a case will be registered but also their vote will be treated as an

invalid vote.
Today Kishan Reddy, Etela
Rajender and KT Rama Rao committed violations

Complaints were sent to ECI and CEO Telangana in mail and requested to take action against them and to

# Two voters die at polling stations

**PNS** SIDDIPET

A 75-year-old woman, I Sarojana, died of a heart attack while leaving the polling station after casting her votes at Cheriyal district on Monday. She was as resident of Peddamma Gadda.

She visited the polling station with the help of her family

members. According to her family members, she complained of pain in the chest after exercising her franchise. She insisted on exercising her franchise braving scorching son. Her family members said

she insisted on casting her vote though it was very hot. Cheriyal town falls under the Jangaon assembly segment, which is part of the Bhuvanagiri Lok Sabha Constituency.

At Aswaraopet in Bhadradri Kothagudem district, an officials drafted for election duties died of a heart attack. The polling was suspended for a brief time. The official who died of a heart attack identified as Krishna.

### Political VIPs lead voting in Chevella constituency

PNS RANGA REDDY

On Monday, political VIPs lead the voting in Chevella constituency. Among those who voted were candidates for Lok Sabha constituency. They include BJP candidate Konda Vishweshwar Reddy and BRS nominee Ranjith Reddy. Former minister and Maheshwaram MLA Sabita Indra Reddy, Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar, Ibrahimpatnam MLA Malla Reddy Rangareddy, Shadnagar

former MLA Pratap Reddy, and others.

The presence of these influential leaders at the polling booths not only set an example for the electorate but also emphasises the importance of active participation in the democratic process. They urged voters to turn out in large numbers and cast their ballots, emphasising that it was their fundamental right and duty as citizens.

Speaking after casting his vote, Vishweshwar Reddy

expressed optimism about the electoral process and urged voters to make informed decisions for the betterment of the constituency. Similarly, Ranjith Reddy emphasised the significance of each vote in shaping

the future of the region. Maheswaram MLA Sabita Indra Reddy, Shadnagar MLA Verrlapalli Ibrahimpatnam MLA Malreddy Rangareddy, and Shadnagar Ex-MLA Pratap Reddy expressed similar

#### IT company distributes umbrellas to voters

PNS HYDERABAD

fortably.

As voters headed to the polling booths, Hyderabadbased IT company, Ray Business Technologies, took a step to provide relief from the scorching heat. They distributed umbrellas to voters in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, ensuring that voters could cast their ballots com-

Despite serpentine queues at many polling stations, the afternoon sun posed a challenge for voters. However, the shade provided by the umbrellas left voters feeling happy and rejuvenated. This initiative aimed to make the voting process more accessible, especially for women and the elderly, who are particularly affected by extreme weather conditions. Ajay Gupta, CEO, Ray Business Technologies, explained, "Our initiative focuses on removing barriers to voting. With the current heatwave being a significant obstacle, providing umbrellas ensures that voters can stay comfortable and have their voices heard without the sun beating down on them."

ABOUT RAY BUSINESS

Ray Business Technologies is a global Information Technology (IT) Solutions company. RBT offers comprehensive end-to-end IT Solutions in Gen-AI, Enterprise Collaboration Solutions, Web Applications, Cloud Computing and IT Infrastructure Management to Retail, Banking & Finance, Healthcare, Media and Broadcasting, Agritech, Pharma & Life Science verticals. RBT is having their offices in India, USA, Australia, Canada and Philippines.

Nalgonda District Collector Dasari Hari Chandana inspecting control room at Anisette Duppalapalli in Nalgonda district on Monday

# Officials told to improve illumination at counting centres

PNS NALGONDA

District Collector Dasari Hari Chandana has directed district officials to improve the illumination at the counting center premises and ensure that there are no problems at the EVM reception centre at Anisette Duppalapalli

She inspected the counting centre at Anisetty Duppalapalli near here on Monday.

Besides improving the illumination, adequate security

personnel should be posted there, besides erecting tents to provide shelter to the security personnel there. While receiving the EVMs,

take alls measures to ensure their safety. She also inspected the EVM strong rooms, counting cen-

the sectoral officials should

ters and accommodation provided for poll observers.

Panchayat Raj executive engineer Bhumanna and others accompanied her.

# **AP polls peaceful amid minor incidents**

Women, senior citizens and first-time voters throng poll centres

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Electoral Officer of Andhra Pradesh, Mukesh Kumar Meena, has affirmed the peaceful conduct of the State's general elections in 2024, dismissing the necessity for re-polling at any polling centres across the state.

Speaking to the media following the conclusion of polling, Meena noted that the reported polling percentage stood at 68% by 5 pm, with expectations of further increase due to the additional hour allocated for voting and inclusion of late arrivals. Notably, there were no complaints received regarding the voter list.

Acknowledging isolated incidents of violence, primarily in regions such as Palnadu, Tenali, and Macherla constituencies, Meena assured prompt action had been taken. Some technical glitches were reported concerning Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in a few booths, prompt-ing proactive measures with 20,000 additional machines deployed to address such issues.

Preemptive intelligence indicated the likelihood of sporadic vio-

lence, prompting heightened secu-

centres, obviating the need for repolling. Despite delays in approximate-

rity arrangements across identified notable turnout of senior citizens,

ly 3,000 polling centres, attributed to various reasons, Meena emphasized a significant increase in polling percentages during the current election cycle. Notably, the final polling details are pending completion of the entire polling process. Monday morning witnessed the commencement of polling across Andhra Pradesh, marked by a generally peaceful atmosphere, punctuated by sporadic incidents of violence in localized areas. Encouragingly, a

underscored active civic participa

age, such as in Macherla, were swiftly addressed with data retrieval efforts and the replace-With a total voter count of ment of affected machines at select

4,14,01,887, inclusive of 2,03,39,851 men, 2,10,58,615 women, and 3,421 transgenders, the electorate will determine the fate of 454 candidates vying for 25 parliamentary seats and 2,387 candidates contesting 175 assembly seats. Robust security measures were implemented across identified sensitive polling centres, ensuring vigilant monitoring for a peaceful electoral process.

Despite minor incidents of violence, including an unfortunate incident in Punganur and disruptions in various districts, the prompt response of election officials and security personnel ensured the swift resolution of issues, with no loss of hotspots. Instances of EVM dam- women, and first-time voters life reported.

## Guv Nazeer, CEO Meena cast exercise franchise in V'wada

PNS VIJAYAWADA

In the ongoing elections, numerous notable figures and candidates have exercised their franchise across various polling stations in Vijayawada, as well as in other parts of the NTR and Krishna districts. Governor SA Nazeer and Chief Electoral Officer Mukhesh Kumar Meena were among those who cast their votes at the Railway Function Hall in Vijayawada.

Governor Nazeer, accompanied by his wife, voted in the Vijayawada Central Constituency, while CEO Meena also participated in the electoral process within the same constituency.

NTR district collector Dr S Dilli Rao and his wife, along with IAS officer P Prashanti, exercised their franchise at the Railway Function Hall in Vijayawada. Likewise, YSRCP's Vijayawada Lok Sabha candidate Kesineni Srinivas, also known as Nani, exercised his voting right constituency.





alongside his family members in the Vijayawada East

#### HYDERABAD | TUESDAY | MAY 14, 2024

### **Odisha CEO directs police to arrest** polling staff for 'dereliction of duty'

disha's Chief Electoral Officer Nikunja Bihari Dhal on Monday suspended three polling officials and directed the police to arrest two of them for "serious dereliction of duty" Speaking to reporters, Dhal said, "We have directed the Ganjam collector to suspend three presiding officers of three polling booths and arrest two of them for serious dereliction of duty." The presiding officer of polling booth number 193 in Gopalpur

assembly constituency has been put under suspension while the presiding officers of booth numbers 27 and 163 in Chatrapur assembly segment in Ganjam district have been suspended and police were directed to arrest them, he said. Earlier in the day, the CEO suspended one polling official in Narla assembly constituency in Kalahandi district and another in Chikiti assembly seat in Ganjam district. So far, five polling officials have been suspended after they were engaged in senior misconduct during the election, officials said



### **Another NEET aspirant goes missing** from Kota's coaching hub

early a week after a NEET aspirant left his PG room here with Rs 8,000 in his pocket, another 19-year-old preparing for the medical entrance exam in Kota has gone missing. Bihar native Aman Kumar Singh, who had been preparing for the entrance exam in the coaching hub for the last two years, left his paying guest room in Swarn Vihar colony on the intervening night of May 11 and 12, police said.

Singh left a note behind in which he said that he couldn't do well in the NEET exam and won't be able to crack it, they said. On May 6, Rajasthan native Rajendra Prasad Meena (19) went missing from his PG room here. He sent a text message to his parents saying that he did not want to study any further and was leaving home for five years. Meena wrote that he had Rs 8,000 with him and would contact his family or other relatives if need be



### **Recklessly driven Delhi Police vehicle** mows down man, cop held

58-year-old man was mowed down allegedly by a recklessly driven Delhi Police vehicle in Sarojini Nagar area here on Monday, police said. A PCR call regarding the Avenicie in Sarojini Nagar alea ilele un Montagy, police station, Deputy incident was received at 3.27 am, at Sarojini Nagar police station, Deputy Commissioner of Police (southwest) Rohit Meena said. We got information that a Delhi Police vehicle was involved in the accident and one person was seriously injured, Meena

Bhikaji Cama Place Metro Station where they found a Delhi Police vehicle in a damaged condition, he said. The man killed in the accident was later identified as Baijnath. "An FIR was registered and the driver of the offending vehicle, constable Pardeep Kumar, posted at Rajinder police station, has been arrested," the DCP said. Further investigation into the matter has been started, police said, adding that Baijnath is a resident of Trilokpuri.



# FM: Is Cong aware of cost of Rahul's 'Khata Khat' schemes?

PNS NEW DELHI

BJP leader and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday wondered whether the Congress is aware of the cost of implementing the social welfare schemes, including giving Rs 1 lakh to women belonging to below poverty line families

A lot has been said in recent times about the fiscal management (especially on debt) of our government under PM Modi's leadership, Sitharaman said in a post on X.

"Many times, absolute numbers have been compared without considering the GDP growth on which we base the debt calculation. I would like to put out a clear picture, unlike @INCIndia, which hides behind lofty promises that are non-transparent and disconnected from reality," it

"Has @INCIndia considered the cost of the lofty promises

made in their manifesto? Have they calculated how much the 'Khata Khat' schemes will cost fiscally? Will they borrow substantially for them, or will they raise taxes to fund them?"

She wondered how many welfare schemes would Rahul Gandhi shut down to accommodate the fiscal cost of the khata khat' schemes.

Last month, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi while address-

ing a poll rally made a poll promise saying that the party will transfer Rs 1 lakh in the account of one woman from every poor household in the country if they win the elec-

"Would @RahulGandhi care to answer these real questions and explain how their gigantic schemes of fiscal splurge would work without increasing taxes or borrowing heavily and running down the economy?

Here's a challenge to him to answer these questions for the people of India," she said.

The truth is that the BJP government's fiscal management is much better than that of the UPA, despite facing Covid-19 pandemic in which substantial resources were used for relief efforts, the FM said.

During the UPA rule from FY04 to FY14, she said, central government debt, including external debt at current values, grew about 3.2 times, from Rs 18.74 lakh crore in March 2004 to Rs 58.59 lakh crore in March 2014.

This increase was much greater than the 2.9 times growth from Rs 58.59 lakh crore in FY14 to Rs 172.37 lakh crore in FY24 (RE), she said, adding, this lower increase between FY 2014 and FY 2024 occurred despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, where the Centre borrowed to provide relief to those in need even

### Don't play with self-respect of Bengal's women, Mamata to Modi

PNS ■ BONGAON (WB)

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi not to play with the self-respect and dignity of women of the state by making "false claims" about atrocities.

Addressing an election meeting at Bongaon, the TMC supremo said Modi should keep in mind that the situation of West Bengal is not like BJP-ruled states.

"Don't play with the selfrespect of women, don't hatch conspiracy by playing with the dignity of our mothers and sisters," she said.

The prime minister in his public meetings on Sunday alleged that the TMC was trying to hide its past misdeeds in Sandeshkhali where TMC leaders were accused of sexual assault and land grab.

However, in a recently surfaced purported video, a BJP leader of Sandeshkhali was heard saying that the protests

# India looking for additional sites for Russian N-reactors'

PNS MUMBAI

India is looking for additional sites for Russian nuclear reactors, while the discussion with the French on the proposed Jaitapur nuclear power plant project is underway, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Monday.

Responding to a question on nuclear collaboration with foreign countries not taking off as expected, Jaishankar said the manner in which the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act 2010, was framed required a lot of interaction with foreign suppliers to see how their concerns could be addressed.

"This has taken some time and that applies to some countries," he said in an apparent reference to the US companies, at a press conference in Mumbai.

He said with regard to some other countries where the liability issue is better understood or they don't have the same degree of concern, because the nature of their



industry is very different.

'We have discussions underway where Kudankulam (by the Russians) has progressed. We are actually looking at additional sites for Russian reactors. With regards to the French we have ongoing discussions with them," Jaishankar said.

The External Affairs Minister was in Russia last December when the two sides signed some "very important" agreements related to the construction of the future powergenerating units of the Kudankulam nuclear power

Russia has built four nuclear power plants of 1,000 MW each at Kudankulam and two more reactors of the same capacity are being built. It is the largest nuclear park in the country.

India signed nuclear deals with the US and French in 2008. Post these agreements, Mithi Virdhi and Kovadda were earmarked for the US and Jaitapur for the French.

However, the projects did not take off as expected due to several factors one of which was the stringent clauses of the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damages Act 2010.

## Plea in SC seeks review of **EVM VVPAT verdict**

PNS NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking review of its April 26 judgement by which it had rejected the paper ballot system and the complete cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with a Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT).

The review petition was filed by Arun Kumar Agrawal, who had filed the PIL on the issue earlier, through lawyer Neha Rathi. The review plea filed on May 10 said, "There are mistakes and errors apparent on the face of the impugned order..., and as such there are sufficient reasons which require review of the impugned order/judgment...

The petitioner respectfully seeks review on the following



issues as have been dealt with in judgment dated April 26, 2024: i) Feasibility of counting of all VVPAT paper slips in terms of time to be taken and additional manpower, ii) Vulnerability of SLU (symbol loading units) and iii) Percentage of VVPAT slips counted for tallying with EVM votes after Chandrababu

Naidu...Judgment."

Balance to be struck to ensure

vehicles comply with PUC: SC

sibility of counting of all VVPAT paper slips in terms of time to be taken and additional manpower and referred to the relevant portion of the judgement.

ing, it was suggested that instead of physically counting the VVPAT slips, they can be counted by a counting machine. This suggestion, including the suggestion that bar-coding of the symbols loaded in the VVPATs may be helpful in machine counting, may be examined by the ECI," the top court had said in the judgement.

Seeking physical counting, the plea said the counting of all VVPAT slips can be done "accurately with a fraction of the employees and at a fraction of cost and within five to eight

The plea dealt with the fea-

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday accused the Narendra Modiled central government of being "anti-MSME" and alleged that thousands of small businesses have shut down in the past 10 years.

Congress leader Jairam claimed that the vita MSME sector accounts for 30 per cent of GDP, 40 per cent of exports and employs 12 crore

"However, the small businesses of India have spent 10 years suffering in this 'anyay kaal' through neglect or through malicious anti-MSME policies. It is a well-established fact that Narendra Modi has spent the last decade working

friends," he said in a series of posts on X.

"As a result, MSMEs have contributed to the lowest fraction of GDP in decades, face the highest tax rates in decades. and are dealing with severe job losses and price rise. Thousands of MSMEs have been shutting down," he added

The Congress general secretary pointed to six major issues relating to "Modi-made MSME mismanagement", which include demonetisation that, he said, affected MSMEs the most and "shoddy" implementation of the GST regime.

Citing reasons for small businesses shutting down, Ramesh alleged that policies



conceived Income Tax 45-day payment rule", uncontrolled captured by "BJP cronies".

per cent of MSMEs have been stagnant since the past five

dumping of Chinese goods, and the MSME board being His remarks came after reports citing a survey said 72

Elaborating further, the Congress leader claimed that eight years after demonetisation, "it has become clear that demonetisation did nothing to curb black money or counterfeit currency in İndia".

"Unable to pay employees or repay their debts, many small businesses were forced to close. from smaller firms to bigger, more organised players. An RBI study has shown that MSMEs were the worst affected by demonetisation," he added.

"Overall growth cratered after demonetisation and has not recovered since then. Even before the pandemic, India's GDP growth rate was at a 10year low in 2019. This policy

blunder shows the BJP's misplaced priorities and lack of concern for small businesses, he alleged.

The implementation of GST was another instance where the BIP failed to consider how policv changes would impact MSMEs, Ramesh said.

The Congress leader said espite the various issues faced by the MSME sector, policies are made only for "crony industrialists". Ramesh alleged the electoral bonds "scam" also affected MSMEs and said, "Having taken Rs 8,000 crore from large corporates as electoral bonds 'chanda (donation)', the BJP's quid-pro-quo only extends to those large corporates who can afford to pay

### '*Ab jaldi karni padegi*,' Rahul Gandhi replies to question on marriage

PNS ■ RAE BARELI (UP)

Addressing a rally in Rae Bareli parliamentary constituency for the first time after his nomination, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday faced a familiar query. When is he getting married? Soon, he assured.

As he ended his speech, Gandhi called his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to the front of the dais.

Putting his hand on her shoulders and fondly touching her face, Gandhi expressed his appreciation for her efforts in the Rae Bareli campaign. "I am touring different parts of the country in the election



Priyanka Gandhi then told him to answer the question somebody from the crowd had asked. He asked what the

question was. "Shaadi kab karoge (When will you marry)," somebody asked. Rahul, who will be 54 next month, assured it will have to

### **Chhattisgarh: 14 Naxalites** arrested in Bijapur district

Fourteen Naxalites, including 11 carrying a cumulative bounty of Rs 41 lakh on their heads, were arrested in Chhattigarh's Bijapur district, a police official said on Monday. These ultras, comprising six women and eight men, were part of the outlawed Left Wing movement's 'military company number 2' and 'Gangaloor area committee', the official said.

They were held on Sunday from forests of Mutvendi and Pidia villages under Gangaloor police station limits by a joint team of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and district police, a statement from Bijapur police said. "Eleven of the 14 Naxalites

were carrying cumulative reward of Rs 41 lakh. These include Renu Kovasi, a member of military company number 2, and Mangli Avlam of Gangaloor area committee with reward of Rs 8 lakh each," the release said.

"Gangaloor area committee members Bichchem Uika, Sharmila Kursam and Lakshmi Tati were carrying rewards of Rs 5 lakh each. Four cadres were having bounties of Rs 2 lakh each and two had rewards of Rs 1 lakh each," it added. Based on their questioning, four tiffin bombs, two cooker bombs, detonators, cordex wire, gelatin sticks, firecrackers and other Maoistsrelated materials concealed by them were recovered, the release

#### The observation by a bench of Justices A S apex court as an amicus curiae in the pollution Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan came while hearing an matter, said this issue can be referred to the application seeking modification of the apex Commission of Air Quality Management court's August 10, 2017 order, which said the (CAQM), an expert body. insurance companies will not insure a vehicle unless it has a valid PUC certificate on the

date of renewal of insurance Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the General Insurance Council, said under sections 146 and 147 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, it was compulsory to have a third party

insurance. While section 146 of the Act deals with necessity for insurance against third party risk, section 147 pertains to

requirements of policies and limits of liability. Mehta said the apex court in August 2017 had said that unless there was a PUC certificate, third party insurance will not be given by insur-

The Supreme Court on Monday said prima facie

a right balance will have to be struck for ensur-

ing that vehicles remain compliant with pollu-

tion under control (PUC) norms and, at the

same time, have third party insurance.

ance companies.
"What happens is, for want of PUC, 55 per cent vehicles as per our survey are uninsured," Mehta said, adding, "55 per cent of the vehicles, as per the survey conducted by the Government of India, are uninsured meaning thereby if they

meet with an accident, the victim do not get the compensation".

He said PUC norms must be complied with and strictest possible norms should be put in, for example if the vehicle does not have PUC, don't give petrol. Senior advocate Aparajita Singh, assisting the

'A balance has to be struck between both," the bench said, adding, "One is that there has to be pollution control and secondly, if so many vehicles remain without third party insurance, in

> ous problem". Mehta said, in case of an accident, the owner of a vehicle may not have the money to pay even if the suit is decreed while in case of an insurance company, the firm is bound.

case of accident, there is a seri-

The bench noted it has been pointed out by Mehta that in view of the court's August 2017 direction, a large number of vehicles are not taking third party insurance and, in the event of accidents, the claimants are finding it difficult to get compensation.

Prima facie, we are of the view that a right balance will have to be struck for ensuring that vehicles remain compliant with PUC norms but, at the same time, all vehicles must have third party insurance," the bench said.



here, a big thanks to her for this," he said.

be soon now. "Ab jaldi karni padegi," he said in Hindi.

# India-France military exercise Shakti begins

PNS NEW DELHI

The seventh edition of the 'Exercise Shakti' between India and France began in Meghalaya on Monday with an aim to enhance joint military capability of both sides to undertake multi-domain operations in a sub-conventional scenario, the defence ministry

The joint military exercise also seeks to enhance the level of defence cooperation between the two friendly nations and boost their bilat-

Exercise Shakti, being held from May 13-26, will enable the two sides to share their best practices in tactics, techniques and procedures of conducting joint operations, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement.

Tactical drills to be practiced during the exercise will include response to a terrorist action of capturing a defined territory, setting up of a joint command post, establishment of an intelligence and surveillance centre, securing a helipad or landing site, small team insertion and



operations besides employment of drones and counterdrone systems among others, it

Exercise Shakti is a biennial training event conducted alternatively in India and France. The last edition was

November 2021.

The seventh edition of the exercise commenced on Monday at Umroi, in a fully developed and modern foreign training node in Meghalaya.

"The joint exercise will facilitate developing inter-operability, bonhomie and camaraderie between armed forces personnel of the two countries. This will also enhance the level of defence cooperation, further fostering bilateral relations between the two friendly nations," the statement said.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

## **Frenemies**

India seeks to neutralise China's economic hold but it beats US to become India's biggest trading partner

n the realm of global economics, the dynamics of trade relationships often override geopolitics. India's growing trade affinity with China is a living example of that: China has become India's largest trading partner in 2023-24. This development brings little joy to the nation aspiring to become an alternative to China and striving to bolster its manufacturing sector, with the Prime Minister's 'Make in India' call. Despite the Indian Government's rhetoric urging caution in dealings with China, economic imperatives seem to be reshaping the contours of bilateral trade. Their trade relationship has long been characterised by a mix of competition and cooperation. Both nations are regional powerhouses with vast consumer markets and burgeoning manufacturing sectors, though China is much ahead of India in terms of economy and infrastructure size. Over the years, China has emerged as a crucial supplier of goods to the world, including India, ranging from electronics and machinery to pharmaceuticals and textiles. Concurrently, India



has also found a receptive market for its exports in China, particularly in sectors like raw materials, agricultural products and IT services. But the real problem is the lopsidedness of the trade. We are a net importer of Chinese goods, that too at the cost of our local industry.

Most traders take the easy import route, often substandard but cheap, and make decent profits. This leads to job losses and closure of several MSME manufacturing units. Besides, the nations are not the best of neighbours; relying on China in this scenario is indeed fraught with danger. But where wealth flows, interests follow and that explains India's rising trade ties with

China. The trajectory of bilateral trade has been influenced by several factors. One, the sheer size and harmony of their economies create natural synergies to drive trade volumes. Despite occasional border disputes and geopolitical issues, economic pragmatism often prevails, fostering trade ties. Two, China's manufacturing prowess and cost competitiveness have made it an attractive destination for Indian importers, especially in sectors where domestic production struggles to meet demand. Moreover, the persistent trade deficit with China underscores India's reliance on their goods and highlights the challenges in achieving more equitable trade ties. The geopolitical dimension of India-China trade cannot be overlooked either. The Indian Government must emphasise the need for strategic autonomy and self-reliance in key sectors. Initiatives such as 'Make in India' and Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) must be given further fillip. Additionally, efforts to diversify trade partnerships by nurturing ties with countries like the US, Japan and Australia must be accorded priority and a diversified trade portfolio maintained. Achieving a fundamental rebalancing of India-China trade dynamics is a multifaceted challenge that requires nuanced handling and necessitates a calibrated and pragmatic policy approach.



Flamingoes at the Thol Bird Sanctuary in Mehsana district

Regime change on cards in Nepal?

ASHOK K MEHTA



Amid strained India-Nepal relations, speculation swirls around a potential regime change in Nepal

epal's late Foreign Minister Rishikesh Shah would say that Kathmandu is the rumour capital of the world and also the fount of speculation. Our own Madhuri Dikshit once hailed Nepal as a beautiful country adding: "We're lucky it is part of India". This created a furore but the story appeared with tasteful embellishments in Nepal. Delhi's Chief Minister Madan Lal Khurana waxed eloquent about the sterling qualities of Nepalis working in India and what great servants they made. This led to fireworks in Nepal and bush telegraphy produced several ugly distortions. Hrithik Roshan never said he did not like Nepalese but Indian films were banned and other collateral damage followed. India is usually at the receiving end of Nepal's woes and wrath.

China has begun to feature negatively only recently. India-bashing was at its peak following the economic blockade in 2015 and the rekindling of border dispute when Kalapani, LipuLekh and Limpiyadhura were incorporated into Nepal's map after India included Kalapani in a new map. Chinese Ambassador Hou Yanxi who made her mark rough-shodding Nepalese politicians was targeted by the Indian media. Yanxi became central to a duel between Indian and Nepalese media. How poorly informed political class. celebrities and even the media about Nepal were apparent. This longish backgrounder is a necessary prelude to describe last week's rumour and speculation about another attempt at regime change in Nepal. The report about the split in JSP (N) took place when its supremo, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Health and Population Upendra Yadav was visiting the US. The story goes that NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba attempted to topple the Left coalition led by Prachanda by drawing out Yaday (12 lawmak ers) and Madhav Nepal of Unified Socialists (10 lawmakers). 20 plus lawmakers are necessary for the NC-led Democratic Alliance to make a comeback. The attempt failed as UML's KP Oli preempted the plan by splitting JSP(N) by



getting former colleague and lawmaker Ashok Rai to walk away from Yadav with seven of 12 lawmakers. The inside story is different: Yadav had plans to overwhelm numerically the Hill Nepalese with Madhesis in the approaching party national convention. This upset the Hill and Madhesis members unhappy with Yadav. Rai approached the Election Commission and registered a new party JSP sans N for Nepal. Yadav has decided to fight the Rai faction in court. Rai has pledged support for Prachanda. Reports about Deuba's deal vary: offering Yadav Premiership and/or a shared term with Madhav Nepal. This deal too fizzled out as Unified Socialists were already divided between two former PMs, Nepal and Ihalanath Khanal. India figured in the regime change as Deuba. Operation Topple requires either RSP (21 lawmakers) or JSP(N) and Unified

COUNTRIES AS UNILATERALISM HAS CREPT **NEIGHBOURHOOD** Socialists together to desert the DIPLOMACY. ruling dispensation. The kingmaker for this great game is the WHILE NEPAL HAS CPN Maoists with 31 lawmak-DONE A TIT-FOR-TAT ers that both NC and UMI. would need to stay in power. OVER THE MAP, The threat to the Prachandaled coalition will lurk in the CHINA HAS nooks and corners of UNILATERALLY Parliament posed by parties with double-digit strength.

It has been blocking parliamentary proceedings for more than a month over the cooperative fund fraud in which Home Lamichhane, RSP is involved. It has demanded a parliamentary probe into the alleged wrongdoings of Lamichhane. Prachanda has agreed to an enquiry in which others involved in the scam are also investigated. Parliament resumed after a short recess but NC is not allowing it to function. The budget has to be India too it is time for regime change but through the world's

IN BOTH but India is regarded as a friend by the people. Later, he

MIND GAMES

**PLAYED** 

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CHANGED THE LAC

licking its wounds but will not declare a truce to infuse a modicum of political stability. Minister Rabi passed shortly and maybe the government will be forced to take the ordinance route.In longest election process. The BJP excels in toppling opposi-tion governments with Operation Lotus. India has played a pivotal role in introducing democracy and its restoration in Nepal. Foreign Minister Jaishankar who has become a rock star in the election campaign is sharing pearls of wisdom on every conceivchanged the LAC with India able subject, especially India's (The writer, a retired Major Neighbourhood First Policy. He said that politics may go up or down in the neighbourhood

- it's part of the game. The latest setback in India-Nepal relations is the resurfacing of the festering border dispute. Having incorporated it in its state emblem the government has ordered the new map to be printed on Rs 100 bank notes about which Jaishankar observed that Nepal unilaterally took some measures but they can't change reality on the ground, adding 'discussions are ongoing through an established platform. As far as is known, no discussion has taken place. For Prachanda and Oli, nationalism is the magic mantra. When Prachanda came to India on an official visit last June during the joint press statement, PM Modi said that the border dispute would be resolved through a joint mechanism. Strangely this fact was not mentioned in the press release of the joint statement. Mind games are regularly played in both countries as unilateralism has crept into neighbourhood diplomacy. While Nepal has done a tit-for-tat over the map, China has unilaterally

General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are

# SC judgments have strengthened democracy



Democratic spectacle owes its strength and boldness to a series of landmark legal judgments that have fortified its foundations

¬ lections, serving as the cornerstone of democracy, offer a platform for citizens to voice their opinions, hold leaders accountable, and actively engage in shaping the future of their nation. In India, elections transcend mere political proceedings; they evolve into grand festivals, embodying the collective will and aspirations of over a billion people. India's electoral odyssey, marked by its vast scale, diversity, and intricacy, has been fortified by a series of seminal legal rulings. These decisions have been instrumental in shaping and reinforcing the democratic framework of India, ensuring fairness, transparency, and inclusivity in the electoral process. Among the plethora of cases that demonstrate the resilience of the legal system, five stand out as pillars that have fortified India's electoral journey.

**Fundamental Right to Vote:** At the core of India's electoral democracy lies the fundamental right to vote, enshrined in the Constitution. Over time, the judiciary has steadfastly upheld and safeguarded this right through



ments. In the landmark 1977 case of Mohinder Singh Gill v. The Chief Election Commissioner, the Supreme Court of India unequivocally affirmed that the right to vote is sacrosanct and any arbitrary deprivation of this right is unconstitutional.

The crux of this case revolved around assessing the constitutional validity of electoral laws that might encroach upon the fundamental right

Electoral Reforms and Transparency: Ensuring transparency and accountability in the electoral process has been an ongoing endeavour, guided by judicial interventions aimed at curbing malpractices and fostering electoral integrity. The 2002 case of Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India marked a significant milestone in this journey. This case presented the chal-

lenge of reconciling the right marginalised communities to privacy of political candidates with the public's right to information, necessitating a delicate balance between transparency in electoral processes and individual priacy rights.

Inclusive Representation and Minority Rights: The diverse social fabric of India underscores the necessity for inclusive representation and safeguarding minority rights in the electoral arena. Legal judgments have played a pivotal role in upholding these principles and ensuring equitable participation for all segments of society. The 1991 case of Indra Sawhney v. Union of India, commonly known as the Mandal Commission case, stands as a testament to this commit-

ment. This case grappled with the challenge of affirmative action and reservation policies, striking a balance between equitable representation of marginalised communities and the principles of meritocracy enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The landmark judgment underscored the commitment to inclusive representation, empowering

and fostering social justice in the electoral process.

**Effective Electoral Disputes** Resolution: Efficient resolution of electoral disputes is indispensable for upholding the sanctity of elections and fostering public trust in the democratic process. This judgment bolstered the credibility of the electoral process, ensuring expeditious and impartial resolution of dis-

putes. Safeguarding Electoral Rights and Freedoms: Preserving electoral rights and freedoms is paramount for the integrity of the electoral process. Legal judgments have been instrumental in protecting these rights and holding authorities accountable for any infringements. The 2015 case of Mohd. Sattar v. State of Rajasthan serves as a poignant example. The judgment reaffirmed the principle of universal suffrage, ensuring that every citizen's voice s heard.

(The writer is corporate and legal advisor and founder of AU Corporate Advisory and Legal Services; views are personal)

### **ELECTION GUARANTEES**

NC, the single-largest party is

Madam — This election season in India is filled with a plethora of extended guarantees from different political parties and their renowned leaders. Initially, it was only PM Narendra Modi who extended oral guarantees termed as 'Modi ki Guarantee'. Now, to compete with him, recently released Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal has also presented his list of 10 guarantees to script a 'new India'. However, Mr. Arvind made it clear that he didn't want to be the Prime Minister of India. Nevertheless, his support for the INDIA bloc has grown stronger, especially after he was sentenced to Tihar Jail by the apex court.

Elections have a historic relationship with political guarantees and promises. But we all already know how many of these guarantees are actually fulfilled. The irony is that people don't need guarantees to survive and ensure their well-being; instead, we need commitment and actions for the actual general welfare of every section of our society.Since Mr. Kejriwal is on interim bail until June 1st, considering the short duration of time he is outside the jail, he is trying his best to reach out to the maximum public with his statements, social media posts, press conference conversations, and other personal interactions with the countrymen to challenge the BJP in general and PM Modi in particular for his arrest during this peculiar time of elections. Now that it is a fight between the guarantees of the two biggest political parties, it is up to the people to decide whom they will choose in the tough fight of the Lok Sabha elec-

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

#### **CONTROVERSIAL CONTEST**

Madam — The Eurovision Western Music Contest has been held in various countries across Europe for the last 68 years. The youth there enjoy this competition, and spectators and music lovers are often seen in a dancing mood throughout the event. However, this year's event, which concluded late on Saturday night, can be termed as the most political, controversial, chaot-

admitted that in diplomacy as

in business there are setbacks

E EDITO



midst the dynamic political landscape, where elections have been completed in some places and others are still pending, it's crucial to acknowledge that not all leaders hoist the banner of public welfare. Merely casting a ballot doesn't guarantee the orchestration of effective governance. Instead of succumbing to the illusion that voting alone resolves everything, let's dispel such notions. The real-

ic, discriminatory, and tense event in its history. For this, we have to thank the security personnel of Sweden and the officials of Malmö city, who were ultimately successful in bringing this event to its destination. As a result, Swiss singer Nemo was declared the winner for his song

'The Code'. Otherwise, as soon as people came to know that Israeli singer Eden Golan had also been included in this competition, a round of protests started in the

It seemed as if Malmö, Sweden's thirdlargest city, had been divided into two parts, with 70 percent of people against Israel and 30 percent in favor of the Israeli singer. In the context of the ongoing war in Gaza, Dutch singer and contender Joost Klein was expelled from the competition due to a backstage dispute.

The world seems to be deeply divided due to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Russian attack on Ukraine. England's daily 'The Telegraph' rightly ran the headline 'This is the most poisonous Eurovision

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

### **Every vote counts** ity often reveals a different narrative, where

power dynamics favour those with deep pockets and questionable tactics, leaving trust and resources in disarray. If you're still clinging to the belief that all politicians are solely motivated by altruism, it's a precarious innocence to maintain. However, rather than consigning voting to oblivion, let's approach it with discernment. Let's seek out candidates who sway to the tune of integrity and genuinely prioritize the welfare of the people. And let's not overlook the importance of advocating for electoral reforms, weaving a fabric of transparency, accountability, and fairness in the political sphere. Your vote, fellow citizens, carries weight, especially when interwoven with others who aspire to a more

contributes to a brighter future for us all **Imdadullah** | Hyderabad

just and equitable society. Remember, in the

intricate tapestry of democracy, every thread

#### **KEJRIWAL'S ELECTIONEERING**

Madam — This is wtih reference to your Editorial "Wild card" (May 13). The national convenor of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Arvind Kejriwal will campaign in favour of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) candidates across the country, Sandeep Pathak, the party's national general secretary said in a statement on Sunday, 12 May. Kejriwal will campaign in Lucknow on May 15, in Jamshedpur on May 16 and in Mumbai on May 17, he added. Kejriwal, who came out of Tihar Jail earlier this week, said he will work tirelessly and campaign across the country to end the "dictatorship" of the Modi government at the Centre. All the INDIA bloc constituents want Kejriwal to visit their states and campaign for them.

The Supreme Court has granted interim bail to the AAP leader to participate in the

Lok Sabha poll campaigning. Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

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### **FIRST COLUMN** THE RISE OF **ROBOTS**

Robots are emerging as the next frontier, but can they replace humans?



SHAINY SHARMA

arious research and studies have shown that the next frontier in Artificial intelligence is the Robots. Much more added to it are the big names- Jeff Bezos, Microsoft and many others who are investing in human robots according to people with knowledge of the situation, as part of a scramble to find new applications for the so-called Al Technology. Undoubtedly, robots have increasingly become an integral part of our lives in this century, impacting various aspects of society, industry and everyday activities. The robots have revolutionized in many key sectors be it industrial, healthcare, agricultural, transportation or any other. The science of robots is revolutionizing day by day and scientists are making innovations in robots. Research studies show that by 2050, robots will overcome human beings as they will develop strong intel-

Many developing nations are involving the use of robots. In the industrial sector robots are performing the tasks such as assembling, welding, painting and packaging in factories thereby increasing efficiency, precision and productivity. In the healthcare sector, robots can perform tasks such as surgery, patient care, rehabilitation and medication dispensing with great precision and even provide support and assistance to elderly or disabled individuals. Talking about the automobile industry, autonomous vehicles- including cars, drones and delivery robots, are transforming transportation and logistics while self-driven car makers are promising to make transportation safer, more efficient and accessible to people who are unable to drive. In the agricultural sector, agricultural robots such as drones



and automated harvesters can help optimise farming practices by monitoring crops, applying fertilizers and pesticides precisely and thereby harvesting crops efficiently which ultimately improves yields, reduces labour costs and minimizes environmental impact. Not only these but the robots are doing jobs and servings in restaurants too. The robots have taken down the responsibility of the pizza boy in pizza shops and even are performing tasks such as customer service, cleaning, and inventory management. They enhance opera-

tional efficiency and provide novel experiences for customers. Robots are indeed reshaping various aspects of everyone's lives, from how individuals work to how they interact with technology and each other. Today, educational robots are gaining an advantage in classrooms over teachers, engineering, and other STEM concepts in a hands-on manner.

Overall, robots are transforming the way we live, work and interact with the world around us. With advancements in robotics technology continuing to expand their capabilities and applications, the question of whether robots will replace humans in various tasks and roles is a complex one. While robots and automation have the potential to replace humans in some repetitive and routine tasks, they also create new opportunities and roles for humans in other areas. However, many tasks and roles require human creativity, empathy, and problem-solving skills, which are difficult for robots

There is no denying the fact that the evolution of robots will profoundly impact society, offering new opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and improving quality of life. However, it will also raise the important ethical, social and economic considerations that must be carefully addressed with time. As robotics technology continues to advance, it will further transform society and open new possibilities for innovation and human-machine collaboration.

(The writer is an educator, views are personal)

# The plight of unwed mothers of Kolam tribe



The stigmatisation of 'Kumari Matas' in the Kolam tribe highlights their struggle for social acceptance and economic empowerment



olam, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) of the Dravidian race is known for its unique culture, language, indigenous knowledge and matrilineal society. They reside predominantly in the Yavatmal, Chandrapur, some parts of Amravati, Wardha and Nanded districts of Maharashtra and in some parts of Adilabad of Telangana. They have historical roots in Andhra Pradesh and later migrated to the regions of Vidarbha and Marathwada. This Proto- Australoid tribe is often highlighted for its unwed mothers. As per the reports of The Marathwada TRIBE, CLASSIFIED MAS A Indian Express, there are at least 45 registered unwed mothers and over 450 unregistered unwed mothers only in the three blocks named Maregaon, Pandarkawada and JhariJamini of Yavatmal. Being a matriarchal society, the Kolams of Yavatmalhave always celebrated womanhood. They celebrate the first mensuration of girls they worship "Gabhuri", the mother Goddess as their main deity to uphold their matriarchal societal roots. However, the situation is changing.

Though the unwed mothers have been renamed as the "KumariMaata" due to their assimilation with mainstream society yet due to their rising inclination towards the male-dominated society, patriarchal tenets are growing in these traditions. Therefore, the position of women is also declining consequently and those unwed mothers who used to live a normal life previously are now considered "Bad character women". There are various case studies and stories of women of the Kolam tribe where the elite in the society or financially stronger like contractors, outsiders visit the areas for work purposes, establish physical interactions with the women in their communities and refuse to marry them when they are expecting a child. Women are frequently conned by marriage promises because they are socially, emotionally and economically vulnerable. The woman is held liable for the premarital pregnancy, whereas the responsible males are exclud-



PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUP

A SIGNIFICANT ISSUE OF UNWED MOTHERS, EMPHASISING THE **URGENCY FOR** INTERVENTIONS TO TACKLE THEIR COMPLEX SOCIO-**ECONOMIC AND** CULTURAL

ed from this process. Most of these Kolam women work

as agricultural labourers, construction labourers and other low-wage activities due to which it becomes very easy for the traders and other outsiders to abuse them physically. For example, according to Deshpande (2016) "border districts of Maharashtra, such as Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Bhandara, Buldhana, Amravati, Nagpur and Gondia too have unwed mothers, the numbers in Yavatmal are higher because of its proximity to the chilli fields of AS A Telangana, where work (for the poor) is available throughout the year. A number of unwed mothers say they were lured by neighbouring state's men who promise marriage but left when they became pregnant."

GRAPPLING WITH being a minor whereas others are due to their backwardness. Though in most tribal societies, giving birth to a child is a biological phenomenon and hence considered pious but yet due to the assimilation with the conventional societies they are also recognizing childbirth as a structural process where the consent of society, kin and kith is necessarv. These structural changes are pushing unwed mothers toward various other socio-cultural and economic problems.

The most important among these is that unwed mothers are not accepted within the community nor do they find any other groom, STRUGGLES as they are considered obscene. As a result, for the entire period of life, they serve as a single mother due to which the pressure of childbearing increases among them. The problems are more serious as being unwed mothers they often face disgrace in the newly constructed norms of patriarchal

leave the village and stay in the outskirts whereas in many cases the other women are not allowed to talk to them or join them for any occasion, as they are believed to be malignant due to their pre-marital physical relations. The consequences are economic and occupational also. As a daily wage labourer, their leisure time is very little but being single mothers they need breaks for breastfeeding and childcare due to which they face pay cuts. Sometimes they need to pay a fine to the panchayats also

for their "misconduct". These unknown pregnancies among the women of Kolam are a crucial issue.

These indicate the lack of awareness about contraceptive measures, education, economic weakness and social vulnerability that Some of them get pregnant while often attract these women to fake marriage conversations and other luring proposals. As per the report of Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University (2018-2019) in Yavatmal, "28.84 per cent Kumari Matas are in the age range of 26 30 years.36

centKumariMatas having education up to Fourth standard, 67.30 per cent Kumari Matas are belonging to 'Kolam' caste, 82.69 per cent are homeless. 51.09 per cent are pregnant due to outsiders, 82.07 per cent children of Kumari Matas are admitted in the school by furnishing the name of mother only, 92.30 per cent had delivery at home,61.63 per cent getting help from Government schemes'

The subject is more critical as many of them are uncounted because most of them do not come forward to speak due to socio-cultural stigma and thus their stories remain untold. This has again a negative impact on them as their complete family details are not mentioned in the Government society. Sometimes they need to records like ration cards, Aadhar

cards, etc. which deprives them of getting the benefits of many Government schemes that can make their life easier.

As per the report of Pune Times Mirror, "a survey of such victims is conducted every year by a woman and child development (WCD) officer with the help of Anganwadi workers and a junior protection officer at the taluka level." Further, the Anganwadi workers help these unwed mothers by teaching them the methods of nutrition and hygiene. The Bombay High Court has already directed the state to the need for the rehabilitation of young unwed mothers among the Kolam tribe. The Government of Kerala is also running a similar kind of scheme called "Snehasparsham" which offers unwed mothers ?1000/per month to lessen the financial urden of these economically vulnerable unwed mothers. The need of the hour is to initiate some projects and schemes for them so the Kumari Matas of Yavatmala can be included in the parameters of Government benefits at a large

The infrastructural facilities like schools and primary health care centres, are the basic needs of these regions. Endeavours should also be taken to open basic schools and training centres for vocational courses like sewing, beautician, etc. The awareness about Self-Self-help groups can make them financially independent through various micro-level businesses like horticulture, bee-keeping, jelly-making etc. Further, documentation of unwed mothers can give them a social identity and make them live a life of dignity and self-respect.

(The writer is Vice Chancellor, Central Tribal University of Andhra Pradesh; views are personal)

# Kejriwal's bail: Unveiling political prophecies post-release

The Delhi CM's release sparks controversy with ominous predictions and bold political statements, fuelling nationwide debate on democracy's future

Persons accused of criminal cases getting arrested and the courts granting them bail is nothing new. Even if the person happens to be the reigning chief minister of a State or a former union minister of finance, the bail does not absolve the accused of the charges. The Supreme Court order that released the Delhi Chief Minister on bail from the custody of the Enforcement Directorate says it is a provisional arrangement so that he could participate in the election campaign as the Lok Sabha poll comes once in

five years. So far, so good. But what came after the Delhi Chief Minister was released on bail needs to be analyzed threadbare. On Saturday, he wor-shipped at Lord Anjaneya as the next Prime Minister as in the process of electing their representatives. It is good to see



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Temple and addressed a press meeting. What he said during the press meeting is shocking and capable of causing fear in the minds of the people. He said if the BJP wins the 2024 Lok Sabha election and comes back to power, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will send all Opposition leaders to jail. Kejriwal also claimed that Amit Shah is being groomed when he turns 75. Yet another disclosure made by the Delhi Chief Minister was that Yogi Adityanath would be removed as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh within two months of the BJP coming back to power.

The national and international media are celebrating Kejriwal's bail and his prophecies. A major section of the media forgot the fact that they were the ones to give running commentaries of Live events without joining the game as players. The media in Kerala and Tamil Nadu are on Cloud Nine reporting that there is going to be a change of Government at the Centre after 4 June 2024. Well, let's leave it to the voters who are in the process of electing their

that doubts about tampering the electronic voting machines have taken a stage and the Opposition leaders have started working on the modalities of Government formation. Saturday's press meeting by the Delhi Chief Minister took one

to 2019 when the same had claimed that if the BJP wins the General Election and returns to power, there would not be any more elections in India. "The 2019 General Election would be the last poll the country will see if Narendra Modi returns to power," these were the words of Kejriwal in

After the 2019 general election, Narendra Modi returned to power with a larger majority and the country saw regular elections to all the State assemblies that completed their

mandatory five-year tenure. Though the claim fell flat on all fours, neither the media that flashed Kejriwal's warning about the "last" general elections nor our political pundits remembered the same.

Once the results were announced and the BJP was returned to power, that became the news, and everything else was forgotten (at least till 2024).

Yet another battlefront has been opened by the Opposition and that is the One Nation, One Leader concept, the brand new slogan coined by Kejriwal. Wasn't it George Santayana, the Spanish-American philosopher who said in 1863 that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it"? Narendra Modi, I am sure

does know this adage quite well and hence there is no possibility of following the slogan coined by Kejriwal.

The entire media in the country is unanimous in their opinion that elections are the festivals of democracy. But the festivals will certainly lose their charm if they are fueled by half-lies and full lies. One is at a loss to understand the logic behind the claim by certain leaders that the BJP government would subvert the

Who derailed the Constitution much against the order of the Supreme Court that the basic structure of the Constitution should never be tampered with. It was in 1976 that then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi altered the preamble of the Constitution by incorporating

the words secularism, socialism etc. India survived as a nation from 1947 to 1976 without the terms secularism and socialism in its Constitution. B R Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution, was totally against the inclusion of these terms when it was drafted for the first time. It was after the introduction of these terms that communal riots and terrorism peaked in India.

Accusations and allegations are fine because they add to the intensity of the campaigning. But baseless allegations rob the beauty of the election process. Interestingly, the leaders named by the Delhi chief minister as potential victims of the Modi regime are not saints or beatified ones. Reports from Delhi say that Kejriwal

times by the ED for questioning in connection with money laundering. The Chief Minister chose to ignore the same with contempt. He might not know the truth that the reigning Prime Minister cooperated with the Supreme Court-appointed Special Investigation Team under the chairmanship of R K Raghavan, a former CBI director to grill him about the Gujarat riots. For 19 hours, the then Gujarat Chief Minister sat through the grilling and answered all the queries they asked. That is what we call honesty and integrity. People still hope that Kejriwal too is honest.

(The writer is special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

### **Gold falls Rs 100; silver slumps** Rs 300 amid weak global cues

old prices fell Rs 100 to Rs 73,150 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday Gamid a decline in precious metal rates in the international markets, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had closed at Rs 73,250 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver prices were also slumped Rs 300 to Rs 85,200 per kg. In the previous close, it had settled at Rs 85,500 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 73,150 per 10 grams, down by Rs 100 against the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

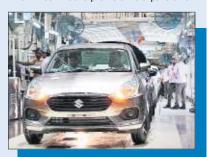
In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at US\$ 2,347 per ounce, down US\$ 13 from the previous close. "Gold resumed trading on a weaker note as traders trimmed their positions ahead of the crucial US inflation report. "The US producer price index (PPI) is set to be released on Tuesday, followed by the consumer price index (CPI) on Wednesday, which will further provide more insights for the precious metal prices," Gandhi said.



### Suzuki says will continue to expand SUV portfolio in India

apanese car maker Suzuki Motor Corporation on Monday said it will continue to expand SUV portfolio in India to recover its overall market share in the passenger vehicle segment. The company, which currently has around 58 per cent stake in Maruti Suzuki India, said its net sales increased by 732.6 billion yen (15.8 per cent) year-on-year to 5,374.3 billion yen for the last financial year. Operating profit increased by 115 billion yen (32.8 per cent) YoY to 465.6 billion yen. "We will continue to promote the expansion of

our SUV models (in India) and aim to recover our total passenger car share, Suzuki Motor Corporation said in a statement. Currently, Maruti Suzuki sells SUV (sport utility vehicle) models like Brezza, Jimny and Grand Vitara in the domestic market. The company's market share has come down to around 42 per cent from over 50 per cent a couple of years back in the domestic passenger vehicle segment on account of limited options in the SUV segment.



### **Piramal Group arm invests Rs 600 cr** in microlender Annapurna Fin

iramal Alternatives on Monday announced a Rs 600 crore investment for an Pundisclosed stake in microfinance company Annapurna Finance. The investment includes a secondary stake buy from an existing shareholder and also providing includes a secondary stake buy from an existing shareholder and also providing it with the non-core tier-II capital, a company statement said. It did not specify the stake bought or share a break-up of how the Rs 600 crore investment amount is divided. The "structured

capital solution" is aimed at fuelling the riskcalibrated growth in Annapurna's assets under management, the statement said. Odishaheadquartered Annapurna had an AUM of US\$ 1.25 billion as of March 31, 2024. It has a presence through 1,372 branches in 20 states and also lends to small micro, small and medium businesses. "Microfinance as a retail asset class has grown at a CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 32 per cent over the last decade and is expected to continue the high growth trajectory," Kalpesh Kikani, the chief executive officer of Piramal Alternatives, said



#### **CHABAHAR PORT OPERATION**

# India, Iran sign long term bilateral contract

PNS NEW DELHI

India and Iran on Monday signed a 10-year contract for the operation of a terminal at the strategically important Chabahar port in Iran, a move that will boost regional connectivity as well as trade ties.

This is the first time India will take over the management of an overseas port that will also have a multiplier effect on trade among India, Iran and Afghanistan as efforts continue to directly tap the potential in Central Asia, bypassing neighbouring Pakistan.

According to an official statement, the contract was



signed by India Ports Global Ltd (IPGL) and Iran's Port & Maritime Organisation (PMO), in the presence of Shipping and ays Minister Waterways

Sarbananda Sonowal.
"The long-term bilateral

Operation was signed between Indian Ports Global Limited (IPGL) of India and the Port & Maritime Organisation (PMO) of Iran, enabling operation of Shahid-Beheshti in Chabahar Port Development Project for a period of 10 years," the state-

### Port will connect India to Central Asia: Jaishankar

PNS MUMBAI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday said Chabahar Port will definitely see more investments and connectivity linkages coming out of it after India and Iran signed a longterm contract for the operation of its Shahid Beheshti Port terminal.

He also said the Port will help connect India and Central
Asia better. "Right now the port has not grown. If you don't have a long-term agreement it is difficult to invest in a port. So the very clear expectation is that part of the Chabahar that we are involved in will definitely see

more investments, it will see more connectivity linkages coming out of that port," Jaishankar said.

"We believe today that connectivity is a big issue in that part. Chabahar will connect us with Central Asia," he added.

The contract was

signed in Tehran by India Ports Global Ltd and the Ports and Maritime Organisation of Iran in the presence of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, according to a series of posts on X by the

Indian Embassy in Iran. This is the first time India will take over the management of an overseas port.

#### **GST REGISTRATION**

## Five states show interest in Aadhaar-based authentication

PNS NEW DELHI

states, including Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana, have shown interest in rolling out Aadhaar-based authentication for GST registration, an official said on Monday.

The biometric-based authentication was discussed at the third National Co-ordination Meeting of senior Central and State GST officers earlier this month. Currently, two states, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, and the Territory Union Puducherry have launched the Aadhaar authentication

of taxpayers on a pilot basis. "Around five states, including Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and THENTICATION FOR 65T EGESTRATION

Telangana, have shown interest in implementing Aadhaar-based authentication for GST

registration," an official said. The official further said that these states wanted to assess the cost involved, the infrastructure and manpower requirement for implementing the requirement of biometric authentication for registration.

The data has been provided to them and based on the assessment, these states will have to

put the proposal up before the state Cabinets for approval.

Goods and Services Tax (GST) authorities have so far been using OTP-based Aadhaar authentication to establish the identity of the applicants, seeking registration.

However, with instances coming to light wherein other people's identity was misused to create bogus firms for claiming input tax credit (ITC), the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) had decided to move towards biometric authentication under which in certain suspicious cases, the person seeking registration will be asked to go to an Aadhaar centre to have his

# India extend US\$ 50 million budgetary support to Maldives as goodwill gesture

In a goodwill gesture, India has decided to extend vital budgetary support to the Maldives with the rollover of a US\$ 50 million Treasury Bill for another year at the Maldivian government's special request, it was announced on Monday.

The State Bank of India has subscribed for one more year to the US\$ 50 million Government Treasury Bill, issued by the Ministry of Finance of Maldives. upon maturity of the previous subthe High Commission of India said in a brief statement on Monday.

The Indian government took this decision despite the



bulence since Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, a office six months back.

These Government Treasury Bills are subscribed by SBI under government-to-government, a unique arrangement at zero cost (interest-free) to the

bilateral ties experiencing tur- Government of Maldives.

The continuation of subscription has been made at the Government of Maldives to secure budgetary support from the Government of India, the statement said.

Under the terms of special government-to-government

subscribing to these government treasury bills at zero cost to the Maldives government. This means the Maldives incurs no interest expense on the borrowed amount, the Edition.mv news portal reported.

The first treasury bill, valued at US\$ 50 million, matured in January 2024, which the Maldives had repaid. The second treasury bill, also valued at US\$ 50 million, is set to mature in May 2024. In response to a special request Maldives, SBI has opted to extend its subscription for another year.

The third treasury bill is due to mature in September, the report said.

### Ola CEO shuns Microsoft, says India needs its own tech platforms

PNS NEW DELHI

Rebuking Microsoft and its subsidiary LinkedIn, Ola CEO Bhavish Aggarwal in a post said India needs to establish its own tech platforms to shun the chances of being "culturally subsumed" and "governed" by western big tech monopolies.

Boycotting Microsoft, Aggarwal said Ola -- an exist-ing customer of Microsoft Azure -- will no longer avail of its services, and will shift its entire workload to its home-Krutrim cloud

The backlash comes after LinkedIn removed the CEO's post that called out LinkedIn's AI for "imposing a political ideology on Indian users".



He had shared a screenshot from a generative AI response that used "they/their" pronouns to describe Aggarwal.

Berating the "pronoun illness", he had said he hopes the practise doesn't reach India

...the pronouns issue I wrote about is a woke political ideology of entitlement which doesn't belong in India. I wouldn't have waded into this debate but clearly LinkedIn has

nave pronouns in our life, and that we can't criticise it. They will bully us into agreeing with them or cancel us out," he

Aggarwal called out to the Indian developer community to build a DPI (digital public infrastructure) social media framework. Lauding Indian DPIs like UPI, ONDC, and Aadhaar, he said the only community guidelines should be the Indian law.

"No corporate person should able to decide banned. Data should be owned by the creators instead of being owned by the corporates who make money using our data and then lecture us on 'community guidelines'," he said.

### Retail inflation eases to 4.83%

PNS NEW DELHI

biometrics verified.

Retail inflation eased to 4.83 per cent in April as prices of some kitchen items declined, according to gov-ernment data released on Monday.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based retail inflation was 4.85 per cent in March. It was 4.7 per cent in April

Inflation in the food basket was at 8.70 per cent in April, marginally up from 8.52 per cent in March, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO).

government has tasked the Reserve Bank to ensure inflation remains at 4 per cent, with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

# Stock markets rebound on last-hour buying

PNS MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex and Nifty staged a dramatic rebound on Monday to settle higher following buying in HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and Tata Consultancy Services.

Helped by buying at the fag-end, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed higher by 111.66 points or 0.15 per cent at 72,776.13. The index opened lower and plummetted further 798.46 points or 1.09 per cent to hit a low of 71,866.01 in day trade.

The NSE Nifty rose by 48.85 points or 0.22 per cent to 22,104.05. The 50-issue

rebounded around 310 points from the day's low of 21,821.05 and hit a high of 22,131.65.

From the Sensex basket, Asian Paints, Sun Pharma, HDFC Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Axis Bank, Tata Steel, JSW Steel, Larsen & Toubro, ICICI Bank and Power Grid were the major gainers. Tata Motors dropped over 8 per cent despite reporting over three-fold jump in consolidated net profit at Rs 17,528.59 crore for the fourth

quarter ended March 31, 2024. NTPC, Bharti Airtel, Titan, State Bank of India and Nestle were the other major laggards.

# Govt plans to make anti-fake review rules mandatory for e-commerce firms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is considering to make it mandatory for ecommerce companies to comply with quality norms for consumer reviews after a voluntary push failed to effectively curb fake reviews, a top official said on Monday.

The government issued the new quality norms for e-tailers a year ago, prohibiting them from publishing paid reviews and demanding disclosure of such promotional content.

But fake reviews of products and services on e-commerce platforms are still slipping through, said Nidhi Khare,



"It's been more than one year that the voluntary standard on 'online reviews' was notified. Some entities claim that they are complying with it. However, fake reviews are still getting published," Khare said.

Secretary at the Consumer Affairs Ministry.

"It's been more than one year that the voluntary standard on 'online reviews' was notified. Some entities claim that they are complying with it. However, fake reviews are still getting published," Khare

'To safeguard the consumer interest, now we want to make these standards mandatory," she said, adding that the ministry has scheduled a meeting with e-commerce firms and consumer organisations on May 15 to discuss the proposed

The ministry's Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) that

formulated and issued the new standard for "Online Consumer Reviews" in November 2022, barred publishing of reviews "purchased and/or written by individuals employed for that purpose by the supplier or third party concerned".

With no chance to physically inspect products, consumers heavily rely on online reviews while making purchases. Misleading reviews and ratings can lead them to purchase goods or services based on incorrect information.

### Coromandel to acquire additional 7% stake in Dhaksha

PNS NEW DELHI

Coromandel International Ltd on Monday announced the acquisition of an additional 7 per cent stake in Chennai-based drone manufacturing firm Dhaksha Unmanned Systems with an investment of Rs 150 crore. The proceeds from this fundraise will help Dhaksha in strengthening its research and development efforts, cater to servicing large orders and meeting its working capital needs, the

company said in a statement. With this, the company's overall stake in Dhaksha will increase to 58 per cent. The stake will be acquired through the subsidiary firm Coromanel

Technology Ltd, it added. "This investment in Dhaksha aligns with Coromandel's vision of diversifying in technology spaces and promoting technology adoption across various spheres, Coromandel International Ltd Executive Chairman Arun

Alagappan said. "Coromandel will invest Rs 150 crore through fresh issue of shares to increase its overall shareholding in Dhaksha to 58 per cent," the company said. Alagappan said Coromandel has been associated with Dhaksha right from its early startup stage and has been supporting the company on talent acquisition, R&D, and production scale-up.

# 51.40 cr person-years employment generated during 2014-24: SKOCH

PNS NEW DELHI

regime.

A SKOCH report on Monday claimed that 51.40 crore person years of employment was generated between 2014 and 2024 during the Modi government

A man-year or person-year is a unit of measurement for the amount of work done by an individual throughout the entire year expressed in hours.

The report titled, Employment Generative Impact of ModiNomics: The Paradigm Shifts, is based on 80



case studies covering borrowers who took multiple loans and data of various government schemes..

"Over a period between 2014-24, a total of 51.40 crore employment has been generated. Out of which 19.79 crore employment has been generated by governance-led interventions. The rest, 31.61 crore, has been contributed by credit-led interventions," a rélease said.

SKOCH Group is India's think tank dealing with socio-economic issues, focusing on inclusive growth since 1997.. The current study also finds that micro-loans are being used to generate employment that is steady and stable, it stated.

"We have documented 80 case studies from our field visits covering borrowers who A Billion Dreams

have taken multiple loans and the average direct employment per loan amount stands at 6.6 jobs," said author of the report Sameer Kochhar, Chairman, SKOCH Group.

These were the findings of a SKOCH study of Bandhan Bank's ecosystem visiting hundreds of small loan beneficiaries across four states, the release stated..

According to the release this is a part of SKOCH's ongoing study on employment generation titled A Hundred Voices,

# 'Skilled Indian nurses seek overseas opportunities despite domestic demand'

PNS MUMBAI

Demand for skilled nurses is projected to grow by 17-18 per cent by 2027 in the country but a large number of trained ones are seeking opportunities abroad, drawn by enhanced remuneration packages and facilitative family visa programmes, digital talent solutions provider NLB Services said in a report.

The report said that in India, the demand for skilled nursing talent is on a steadfast trajectory, projected to increase by 17-18 per cent by 2027, and the



demand for nursing roles spans across regions including Kerala, Tamil Nadu and

ranging between Rs 2,50,000 (entry-level) to Rs 7,00,000

Andhra Pradesh. The nursing profile currently commands annual earnings

female representation, there is a noticeable increase in male nurses as well, it added.

However, the ecosystem also faces concerns with regard to the availability of skilled talent, as there are 1.7 nurses per

(mid-senior level), and employ-

ers seek candidates with diverse

skill sets including compassion-

While the majority of the workforce still has higher

ate and competent care.

influencing the talent supply

1,000 people in the country instead of 3, the report noted. Another interesting trend steadily, and is projected to increase by almost 100 per cent in 6-7 years, it added.

The demand for nurses globally has witnessed a

for Indian nursing talent

The demand for Indian

nurses abroad is growing

abroad, said the report.

notable surge over the past 3 years, recording a 14-15 per cent y-o-y increase in employment opportunities primarily influenced by the growth in the healthcare industry and early career retirement patterns in the nursing ecosystem, the gap is the increased demand report noted

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Tuesday May 14, 2024

# Saiyami could feel her character 'racked with pain' in 8 A.M. Metro

SHIKHA DUGGAL

ecent box-office success Ghoomar's renowned fame, Saiyami Kher, returns once again with 8 A.M. Metro-the adaptation Andamaina Jeevitam

Actress Saiyami

Kher, currently

basking on the

love she's been

receiving for her

streamed on Zee

with *The Pioneer* 

speaking of her

"suffering" in the

shooting in real

locations, and

film, preps for

5, gets candid

exclusively

character

the same,

more.

film *8 A. M.* 

*Metro*, being

⊾into a Hindi film that displays her dedication to pushing boundaries and delivering essential storylines to a larger audience. The film may have been released in 2023. but now is the moment for it to find its rightful place on a national stage, generating greater appreciation. So, in order to learn more about the popularity of this simple yet uplifting story, we had a call with the lead actress, and here's how it

Without hesitation, she dives right into her characterisation in the film, saying, "As everyone already knows, my character is dealing with mental health concerns. So, as soon as I noticed the phrase 'mental health' in my readings, I was determined to bring this essential topic back to the forefront. Not that others haven't talked about it; they have, but our plot was slightly slanted toward lyrical lines. I wouldn't call it a complex character, but my character is "suffering" in the movie. The gravity of the character gradually became apparent to me, and I am not lying when I say that I could

Okay, let's not call it complex, as Saiyami stated! But may sensitive be the correct word? Taking note of

this, we were curious about the preps that went into portraying this "sensitive" role on-screen. She added, "I had never had a panic attack, but I know some of my close friends and family members who had. Unfortunately, I have witnessed it. I got into the persona after meeting a few psychiatrists

and therapists! It was critical for me to comprehend what occurs during a panic attack, even in a bodily sense. Even my co-star told me later on in the filming, 'Saiyami, do you know? When exposed to panic attack, some people appear to experience a heart attack. That startled me!" So such professional data was useful to her, includ-

ing, "The videos that I watched online to see what kinds of reactions they get. And they differed greatly! So I had to show on screen that I'm sweating and unable to breathe. The psychologist emphasised the significance of these minor details.

The well-known actress from Mirzya told us how she brought out the nuances of the unlikely friendship on-screen, stating, "This script also reminded me of one of my most favourite films that I tend to watch on a loop. This movie isn't only about a romantic angle but also about the serendipity of the friendship that's coming alive. And this is a real possibility; it might happen in our lives at any time! In my personal life, I've had several similar experiences. That stranger made me a better person, but one must be open to that type of contact! Another example is filming with your co-stars; they are usually strangers to you if you are matched for the first time on screen, yet they bring out the chemistry in vou." This dynamic has been very prevalent in the film industry for her. Fortunately, Gulshan is not one of them (she giggles). "We've worked together before. And I couldn't wait to continue working with him from where we left off! I was unprepared

for our last collaboration; therefore, this was my turn to shine alongside Gulshan in this film. And I must say, it worked out really well." Hammering deeper into the ongoing discussions on the film, she explains, "The best and worst reactions come to us through social media these days, so I've seen times when a few users were

way too brutal to me online. But by God's grace, I've had incredible reactions to my back-to-back releases. I am receiving DMs in which a few people are telling me about their real-life experiences. I believe I restarted the conversation about it! I recognise that my film is on a tiny scale, but if it reaches a huge number of people, I consider it successful." Another appealing aspect of this film is its use of poetry and literature, which piques our interest in the actress' personal relationship to it and how poetry enhances the plot. Oh, she had a personal story to share with us! "I'm a huge fan of poetry, owing to Gulzar Sahab, who wrote my debut movie. Since I met him, he has made me fall in love with poetry. Javed Akhtar Sahab could be another powerful influence in inspiring me to fall in love with poetry. I have looked up to him since I was a child! So I'm used to writing poetry at home for personal gratification, but this film provided me the opportunity to bring it into the spotlight. It's literally the central strand of our film! I could draw inspiration from Farhan Akhtar's portrayal in ZNMD, which made both my character and the film more artistic than commercial. What helped the movie even more was the fact that the makers did not use poetry for superfluous ends.' And how could we miss the lead actors filming a few important sequences in the metro, all through the lens of commuting while in it? She

revealed interesting facts about it, saying, "It was a low-budget film, so all of the locations were real, including the scenes shot in the metro. It's Anurag Kashyap's way of shooting! This movie contained a lot of exterior scenes, which boosted my excitement. And my biggest takeaway from this film is the renewed public discourse about the importance of consulting psychologists for mental wellness. Because I've been advised by a few industry professionals not to choose roles that appear older or less glamorous—but to me, they're just noise because I do what my heart finds rewarding."





# **CELEBRATING**

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

or the second consecutive year, Walkers & Co. made its triumphant return to the ■ Festival De Cannes, showcasing Indian filmmakers through collaborative efforts. In regards to this, an exclusive virtual round table discussion was organised featuring film critic Anupama Chopra, alongside emerging film-makers Ambiecka Pandit and Akshay Parvatkar, mentored by Guneet Monga.

To begin with, Ruchira Jaitley, Diageo's CMO

shared, "The essence is to foster progress through collective storytelling. In today's rapidly changing society, the celebration of individuals making a positive impact is paramount, and the film serves as a medium for proactive narratives. Cannes is the epitome of this creativity, offering a platform for learning and inspiration. *The Walkers Project* aims to support young filmmakers, expanding the Indian presence at Cannes and guiding emerging talents to experience the magic of the festival."

Ambiecka reflects on the incredible opportunity presented by the project, emphasising the challenging selection process and the chance to articulate the significance of cinema. For her and Akshay, being nominated is not just an honour but also a transformative journey, opening minds to new possibilities in filmmaking. Akshay said, "I am honoured to be part of the fellowship, and it gave me confidence in whatever I have made; short films and conversations

with film critics have already been fruitful."

The selection process for the project spanned four months, and explaining the same, Anupama explained, "It involved three curators who also doubled as film critics and companions. Sonia, from the Mumbai Film Festival, was among them. They deliberated and eventually presented six names for consideration in The Walkers Project. Deepti DCunha, the director of the Mumbai Film Festival, was impressed by the incredible short films, which sparked lengthy discussions. Eventually, it was agreed that two individuals stood out as the best fit for one of the project."

The ethos is centered around expanding perspectives, amplifying voices, and fostering inclusion, progression, and community change. These guiding principles inspire young filmmakers to create impactful stories that resonate deeply with audiences. Ambiecka expresses her anticipation of further developing her voice and honour it through her work.

Akshay shared his excitement upon learning of his selection, feeling an immediate connection with the ethos, which aligns closely with his own beliefs. He spoke of his commitment to inclusion in his films and recognised the platform as a significant opportunity to authentically express his voice while making meaningful contributions to the film industry!

Anupama put a spotlight on the significance of seizing every opportunity, highlighting mentors like Guneet's invaluable support for young filmmakers. Reflecting on her experiences at Cannes,

she shares practical advice, underscoring the importance of comfortable shoes amidst the bustling environment. Anupama urges, "Filmmakers should prioritise comfort over fashion, considering the extensive walking and standing involved." With thousands of attendees immersed in cinema over ten days, she describes Cannes as both hectic and enchanting, emphasising the need for relentless energy, hydration, and seizing every chance to eat.

"These may seem mundane tips, but they're indispensable for navigating the festival's whirlwind atmosphere." She also encouraged filmmakers to be proactive in networking, shedding any shyness

to make meaningful connections! After absorbing Anupama's experiences, Ambiecka too acknowledged the demanding nature of festivals, recognising the mix of networking, standing, and walking involved. She appreciated the insights gained from Anupama, providing valuable expectations for the festival. Ambiecka found the workshops engaging, particularly in understanding the film ecosystem. Through discussions with curators, the young filmmakers learned invaluable tips on navigating the festival terrain, gaining new perspectives, and delving into topics like co-production. A session with Guneet addressed lingering doubts, offering clarity and guidance. Initial conversations about festival essentials such as food and attire proved instrumental, setting a practical tone for their festival

# Managing lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) in men

impact the lower urinary tract's ability to man—Examples include finasteride and age and produce high-quality micturition. Both men and women can be affected by LUTS, albeit males are more likely to present with them and their frequency increases with age. According to estimates, nearly 50% of males over 50 experience LUTS.

Lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) in men can be classified into two broad categories:

Storage symptoms: These include urgency, frequency, nocturia, and urgency incontinence. They indicate problems with storing urine in the bladder.

Voiding symptoms: These encompass hesitancy, weak stream, straining, and incomplete emptying. They suggest difficulties in evacuating urine from the bladder.

The management of lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) in men typically involves addressing both storage and voiding symptoms, as well as identifying and treating the underlying cause. Here's a general overview of management strategies:

**1. Lifestyle modifications:** Encouraging lifestyle changes such as reducing fluid intake before bedtime, avoiding caffeine and alcohol, and maintaining a healthy weight can help improve symptoms.

2. Behavioural therapies: Techniques such as bladder training, pelvic floor exercises (Kegel exercises), and timed voiding can help manage symptoms, particularly in cases of overactive bladder or urge incontinence.

3. Medications:

• Alpha-blockers: These relax the muscles in the prostate and bladder neck, improving urine flow and reducing symptoms of bladder outlet obstruction. Examples include tamsulosin, alfuzosin, and

• 5-alpha reductase inhibitors: These medications

The term "lower urinary tract symptoms" can reduce the size of the prostate gland, particularly in cases of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH).

• Antimuscarinics: Used primarily for overactive bladder symptoms to reduce urgency and frequency. Examples include oxybutynin, tolterodine, and solifenacin.

• Beta-3 agonists: Drugs like mirabegron can relax the bladder muscle, increasing bladder capacity and reducing symptoms of overactive bladder.

• Phosphodiesterase-5 inhibitors: Sometimes used to improve symptoms of BPH and erectile dvsfunction, such as tadalafil.

• Antibiotics: If symptoms are due to a urinary tract infection or prostatitis.

4. Minimally invasive therapies: For men who don't respond well to medications, minimally invasive procedures such as transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP), laser prostate surgery (such as HoLEP) or prostatic urethral lift (UroLift) may be considered.

**5. Combination therapy:** Sometimes, a combination of medications or therapies may be more effective, especially in cases where symptoms are mul-

**6. Follow-up and monitoring:** Regular follow-up with the urologist is essential to monitor symptoms, adjust medications if necessary, and address any complications or changes in condition.

Ultimately, the choice of treatment depends on the individual patient's symptoms, underlying cause, overall health, and preferences, and should be decided in consultation with a healthcare provider. Additionally, considering age-related factors and potential comorbidities is important in tailoring the management approach.

(The author, Dr. Vikas Jain, is the HOD and Consultant - Urology, at Manipal Hospital.)



# what's brewing?



# Sakshi Tanwar replaces Mallika **Sherawat** in *The Royals*

left The Royals owing to creative differences. She had been cast to play Ishaan Khatter's mother in Pritish Nandy's forthcoming production, The Royals. Since then, it has been verified that Mallika Sherawat has been replaced by actress Sakshi Tanwar.

Sakshi Tanwar is currently filming The Royals, which stars Bhumi Pednekar and Ishaan Khatter in the key roles, according to reports. However, neither the production crew nor the makers have released an official statement.

Zeenat Aman, Bhumi Pednekar, and Ishaan Khatter star in the upcoming series The Royals, which Netflix has reportedly accepted, according to reports. The show, which is produced by Rangita and Ishita Pritish Nandy, offers an engrossing look into the extravagant lifestyles of Indian nobili-



ty. The Royals, according to the portal, combine invented and true tales from the vast history of numerous Rajasthani royal families rather than focusing on just one.

The narrative of the series will alternate between the present day and past decades, featuring Pednekar as a prominent entrepreneur. "Like The Crown, it is being made on a grand scale," a source shared. "The desert state has seen generations of royal families, from Jaipur to Mewar and Alsisar. Bits and pieces have been taken from the lives of these families, marrying them with a generous dose of fiction," added the

The source elaborated, "At its core, *The Royals* is a romantic comedy that will delve into the style, politics, and fabulous lives of the aristocrats. Four More Shots Please!'s success showed that the producers have a finger on the audience's pulse, and this time, they are putting out a stylish and emotional



L'Oréal Paris celebrated a spectacular convergence of women empowerment and art in partnership with Kommune, Art & Culture organisation at Spoken Evening at TATA Theatre. The evening was a vibrant showcase of the Power of Women's Stories with "Coping Hearts CHS", a theatrical showcase that featured a line-up of talented women like Sayani Gupta, Shikha Talsania, Sriti Jha, Dolly Singh and Sanjeeta Bhattacharya.

#### **Cutting-edge curriculum by NIIT**

stablished with a vision to bring about innovation in higher education and learning in emerging areas of the knowledge society, the University of the Future, NIIT University (NU), announced the opening of admissions for the academic year 2024. As an institution, NU is committed to nurturing future data experts. Recognising the demand, they have added the BTech programme in Artificial Intelligence and Data Science this year. This programme caters to the needs of the contemporary business landscape, offering interdisciplinary expertise to our students. Admissions are now open to new-age programmes such as BTech in Cyber Security, and BTech in Artificial Intelligence and Data Science that have been designed to provide students with skill sets aligned to the future world of work. Students can also opt for BTech in Computer Science & Engineering, BTech in Electronics & Communication Engineering, BTech in Biotechnology, 3-year BBA and 4-year integrated Masters in Business Administration (iMBA) programmes after class 12. For more information on admissions and placements please log on to: https://niituniversity.in/admissions

#### **Driving progress**

Apollo Tyres celebrates the ongoing success of its 'Apollo Virat'
tyre, tailored to meet the evolving needs of contemporary farmers
Apollo Virat tyres promise unparalleled efficiency and durability,
poised to redefine agricultural norms. Boasting advanced Double Grip Technology and a revolutionary Lug Design, Apollo Virat tyres offer unmatched traction, capable of withstanding diverse farming conditions. These innovative features not only elevate the tyre's longevity but also ensure optimal performance, empowering farmers achieve superior yields and foster sustainable agricultural practices. Apollo Tyres presents a captivating television commercial showcasing Apollo Virat tyre as a trusted companion of today's progressive farmers. The narrative follows a spirited journalist embarking on a quest to uncover the secret behind 'Virat,' symbolising the pioneering essence of modern agriculture. As she traverses the landscape of modern farms, witnessing an array of cutting-edge techniques, from drone-assisted crop monitoring to state-of-the-art irrigation systems

#### **Just Appetite's Summer Workshop Extravaganza**

s summer vacations start and the sun casts its golden glow, Just Appetite—India's only vegetarian and egg-free culinary school—invites you to explore a vibrant array of workshops designed to ignite your passion for vegetarian cuisine and beyond. Whether you're a culinary enthusiast eager to expand your repertoire or a novice yearning to unleash your inner chef, our summer extravaganza promises an unforgettable blend of flavor, fun, and learning. From mastering the art of cooking to crafting delectable baked treats and refreshing mixology concoctions, let Just Appetite make your summer a season to savor and remember. Teen Baking and Cooking Extravaganza Date: Ongoing till May 17.

#### **Celebrating 75** Saalon Ka Pyaar

TK Prestige, a pioneer in kitchen appliances, celebrates a remarkable milestone as it completes 75 years of its iconic
Prestige Pressure Cooker. To commemorate this significant moment in the company's history, the brand has launched a heartwarming television commercial titled "Celebrating 75 Saalon Ka Pvaar." Through this TVC, the brand aims to highlight the legacy of the Prestige Pressure Cooker in Indian households encapsulating 75 years of love, trust and the symbol of keeping

#### Haldiram's expands its culinary legacy in Nallagandla

Aldiram's Nagpur has launched its new quick-service restaurant in Hyderabad, Telangana. Located at Survey No. 301, Sri Krishna Colony, Kanchi Gachibowli Road, next to Citizens Speciality Hospital, Nallagandla, Hyderabad, Telangana 500019, the new outlet is set to become a go-to destination for food enthusiasts in the area.

#### **Suryoday Small Finance** net profit soars 56%

uryoday Small Finance Bank Limited reported a 56.4% yearon-year rise in March quarter net profit at Rs 61 crore against Rs 39 crore in the year-ago period, backed by 29% expansion of net interest income at Rs 271 crore. The growth is driven by continued focus on key businesses, i.e., Inclusive Finance, Commercial Vehicle, and LAP. The Vikas Loan portfolio has surpassed an AUM of Rs 2,600 crore, demonstrating a growth of over 118% over the previous financial year. Vikas Loan, which in effect is the individual loan product for graduating group loan customers, now constitutes over 53% of the Inclusive Finance portfolio. The Bank's disbursement increased from ?5,083 crore in FY23 to ?6,919 crore in FY24, a growth of 36.1% on a YoY basis, with Vikas Loan and Commercial Vehicle Loans contributing

#### **GE Aerospace launches GE Aerospace Foundation**

E Aerospace announced the launch of the GE Aerospace Foundation, celebrating a new chapter that builds on the more than 100 year-legacy of the previous GE Foundation. The GE Aerospace Foundation's philanthropic strategy and programs will help fulfill the company's purpose to "lift people up" in GE Aerospace communities, with a focus on workforce development, disaster relief and amplifying the efforts of GE Aerospace employees. In South Asia, GE Aerospace Foundation will continue to work with local partners to support disaster relief, education and healthcare for underprivileged communities. South Asia has received US \$ 1.2 million in total Foundation related giving over the past 10 years which includes grants and related programming. These have benefited affected communities in Bangalore, Pune and

#### **Crystal Crop Protection Ltd** launches scholarship programme

rystal Crop Protection Limited announced its commitment to Support the advancement of agricultural education and increasing women's participation. In a collaboration with the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS), the brand has announced the launch of its progressive scholarship program tailored specifically for girl students who are pursuing higher studies in agriculture. NAAS, is a Delhi-based National Academy dedicated to Agricultural sciences. The initiative, launched in the honour of Mr Ankur Aggarwal's late mother Smt. Kanak Aggarwal. reflecting the commitment of Crystal Crop Protection Limited's MD, who was eager to extend the benefit of the scholarship to girl students pursuing agriculture courses. This special initiative promotes and encourages aspirations of next generation students by providing financial support and a plethora of opportunities to young women who are passionate about making a difference in the field of agriculture. The scholarship program will offer financial assistance to 21 girl students for pursuing graduation program in 1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year and 4th year making a total of 84

#### **Stahl offers innovative** cooking solutions

he range features triply stainless steel cookware with a HexaRidge technology making it non-stick, easy-to-handle, 100% toxin-free, and PFOA-free. Stahl, India's fastest growing cookware brand, is revolutionising cooking experiences with its contemporary range of products called the Artisan Hybrid series, featuring the fusion of two key cookware materials: triply stainless steel and non-stick coating. With this product range, Stahl is yet again striving to offer robust, versatile, easy-to-use, and easy-toclean cookware with its stylish designs that are must-haves in the modern kitchen. The product range includes cookware for a versatile range of functions including a tawa, roti tawa, kadhai, tasla, wok and fry pan.

PARTY

#### **ARCHIE**







#### **CALVIN AND HOBBES** WE HAVE TO GIVE OUR





SPEED BUMP





### GARFIELD



It's been a long time since I've been up this

since thre been

hill, and sat

on Three Rocks

by this tree.



BUSHMILLER.

HILL -

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to God. I

He notices

where I talk

get close so





hill I just Thank

Him. Then, 2

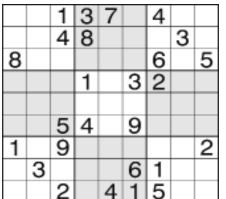
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#### REALITY CHECK





#### **SUDOKU**

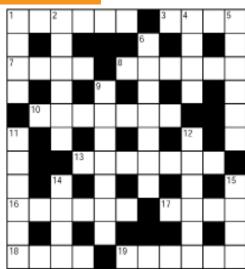


DIFFICULTY RATING: \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

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- exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row of equal 45.

### **CROSSWORD**



#### ACROSS

- 1 A season 3 Strike with an open hand
- 11 Concealed from view 7 Jump over 12 Shouted 14 Gown
- 8 Having a sharp sour taste
- 10 Applauded 13 Bumped

DOWN

1 Not sick

2 Just about

5 A talking pet bird

4 Overdue

- 16 Sleepy
- 17 A biting, jumping insect
- 18 Require 19 Something built over a river



6 A permit to drive

15 A strong box for

storing valuables

9 The language of Spain

#### **GINGER MEGGS**







Hyderabad | Tuesday May 14, 2024



# tollywood



latest update comes as a promising move from the actress, making it obvious

Meanwhile, the actress is expecting her first child with Ranveer Singh and has

to draw the Kannada-speaking fans to witness the film in cinemas

been busy with the shooting of her upcoming films.





### Ranveer Singh, Prasanth Varma's mega collaboration soon to be made official

n a highly anticipated collab-oration, Bollywood power-house Ranveer Singh and acclaimed director Prasanth Varma seem to be official soon. The news, initially hinted at a few weeks ago, is being confirmed by sources, sparking excitement among fans and

cinephiles alike. Renowned for his dynamic performances and bold film choices, Ranveer Singh's admiration for Prasanth Varma's work, particularly the Telugu hit HanuMan, starring Teja Sajja, served as the catalyst for this collaboration. While official details were initially shrouded in secrecy, recent reports shed light on the project's development.

According to a report, Ranveer Singh and Prasanth Varma have formally launched their ambitious project, signaling the beginning of an epic cinematic journey. With a staggering budget of Rs 300 crore, the film promises to be a cinematic

spectacle of grand proportions.

Described as a period drama with a pan-India appeal, the project has been shrouded in anticipation. After meticulous deliberation, the duo has reportdeliberation, the duo has reportedly settled on the title *Brahma Rakshasa*, signifying a blend of mythological intrigue and contemporary storytelling.

Set for a multi-lingual release, *Brahma Rakshasa* is poised to

captivate audiences across the nation with its compelling narrative and visual splendour. While the official announcement from the actor and director is eagerly awaited, the unveiling of the film's title has already ignited fervent anticipation among fans, setting the stage for a cinematic event of epic proportions.

# for Suriya's *Vaadivaasal*,' reveals director

For the village action drama Vaadivaasal, which was announced several months ago, actor Suriya and director Vetrimaaran have paired up. The film has regained attention while still in pre-production. Vetrimaaran revealed in a recent interview that he only has 20 days left to finish filming Viduthalai: Part 2, his next production that stars Vijay Sethupathi and Soori in pivotal parts He added that he will start filming Vaadivaasal within the next three months. More updates are highly anticipated by fans! The music for this film, which Kalaipuli S Thanu produced under the V Creations banner, will be composed by Prakash Kumar. In this movie, Andrea Jeremiah is probably going to be paired opposite Suriya.





## Dhanush donates ₹1 crore to Actor Sangam building construction



Jr NTR

wraps up

schedule

Hrithik Roshan.

on May 12.

*War 2's* first

Actor Jr NTR has wrapped up the first schedule of his upcoming film *War 2* starring

A source revealed that the actor

wrapped up the first schedule

"Jr NTR wrapped the first schedule of *War 2* on May 12.

He shot for some extensive

before heading back to Hyderabad," said the source.

mother Shalini to cast their

votes at the polling center at Obul Reddy School in Jubilee

Talking about *War 2*, the film is

the sequel to the 2019 film War

directed by Siddharth Anand.

The film marks the return of

The second installment also

stars Kiara Advani and is

directed by Ayan Mukerji

Hrithik as Major Kabir.

Jr NTR was pictured casting his vote in Hyderabad on Monday. The *RRR* star was joined by his wife Lakshmi Pranathi and

action sequences over a schedule of 30 days in Mumbai

Renowned actor Dhanush K.
Raja has once again
demonstrated his philanthropic spirit by generously donating Rs 1 crore towards the

construction of the Actor Sangam building. The contribution comes as a significant boost to the ongoing efforts to estab-lish a dedicated space for the

welfare and development of actors within the industry.

Dhanush, known for his versatile performances and compassionate nature, made the gener-ous donation from his personal funds, reaffirming his commit-ment to supporting initiatives aimed at the betterment of the entertainment community.

The Actor Sangam, also known as the South Indian Artistes' Association, plays a crucial role in advocating for the rights and welfare of actors across various film industries in South India. The construction of a dedicated building serves as a testament to the

organisation's mission to provide a conducive environment for actors to thrive professionally and personally.

Dhanush's contribution underscores the importance of solidarity and mutual support within the entertainment fraternity, setting a commendable example for fellow actors and industry stakeholders to follow.

As the construction of the Actor Sangam building progresses with the support of individuals like Dhannak, it symbolices als like Dhanush, it symbolises not only a physical structure but also a beacon of hope and unity for actors across South India.

# Trisha winds up shooting for *identity*



# T-TOWN COMES IN FULL SWING TO EXERCISE THEIR RIGHT!





ollywood celebrities, much like citizens across the nation, exercised their democratic rights by casting their votes during elections. Beyond the glitz and glamour of the silver screen, these stars actively participate in shaping the political landscape of their state and country.

When election season arrives, Tollywood's finest, from actors to directors and producers, step out of their reel personas to fulfill their civic duty. With their influence and popularity, they often serve as role models, encouraging their fans and followers to participate in the democratic process.

Their presence at polling booths not only underscores the importance of voting but also sends a powerful message about civic responsibility. It's a reminder that, irrespective of their celebrity status, they are first and foremost citizens committed to contributing to the democratic fabric of society.

From Chiranjeevi to Allu Arjun to Rajamouli, here are some pictures of celebrities casting their votes.











# Focus on KL Rahul as LSG face DC in playoff battle

Pocus will be on skipper KL Rahul as a struggling Lucknow Super Giants look to keep their slim IPL playoff chances alive when they face an equally desperate Delhi Capitals in a must-win game here on Tuesday.

Delhi Capitals in a must-win game here on Tuesday.

There has been a lot of speculations about Rahul's future as LSG skipper after his "public reprimand" by team owner Sanjiv Goenka following their 10-wicket hammering by Sunrisers Hyderabad last Wednesday.

Speculations are rife that Rahul

Speculations are rife that Rahul may step down as captain or perhaps he will do his duties for the remaining two games before leaving LSG. In either case, the India batter would look to answer with his bat and end things on a high.

Rahul hasn't been in the best of form and it's not only cost him a place in India's T20 squad but also left LSG at the seventh spot with 12 points with RCB

sixth respectively.

Five days is a lot of time to introspect and Rahul and Co.

Will look to come out all guns blazing when they face DC, who are also on 12 points and are coming into the match after a loss against RCB on Sunday night. Besides Rahul, Quinton De Kock's poor form this season has left LSG struggling in the powerplay, putting pressure on the likes of Marcus Stoinis and Nicholas Pooran, who haven't got the freedom to unleash their big shots.

Although Pooran and Ayush Badoni managed to rescue the team in the last match, the bowlers failed miserably against the formidable SRH pair of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma, who racked up 167 in 9.4 overs, a T20I

record by any team.
The loss of tearaway pacer
Mayank Yadav to injury has
left a big hole which Yash Thakur and Naveen-ul-Haq haven't been able to fill. Also



Mohsin Khan picked up an injury and didn't play last

The spin duo of Krunal Pandva and Ravi Bishnoi too have been to do a lot of soul

searching after being punished by SRH. Delhi Capitals, on the other hand, will hope the return of skipper Rishabh Pant after a one-match suspension due to slow overrate against

Rajasthan Royals will help them to end things on a high. Delhi sans Pant paid the price for their fielding lapses as those drop catches and misfields came back to haunt them

While the bowlers let RCB off the hook after a good start, the batting once again came unstuck as they lost four wickets inside 4 overs to be bowled out for their lowest innings score this IPL.

But this is the same team which scored four 200 plus totals this season and they will

totals this season and they will have to find their mark in their last game to salvage any slim hopes of a top four. Jack Fraser-McGurk, with 330 runs from seven matches at an impressive strike-rate of 237.41, has been their most impactful batter. While Abhishek Porel (269, 156.39), Pant (413, 156.43) and Tristan Stubbs (321, 185.54) too have Stubbs (321, 185.54) too have been among runs this season. In the bowling department, the spin duo of Kuldeep Yadav (15) and Axar Patel (10) have shared 25 wickets, while pacers Khaleel Ahmed (16 wickets) and Mukesh Kumar (16) too them



### Going forward, players will be selected in playing XI on basis of impact and not averages: Miller

For someone who has the ability to deliver maximum impact, South African batter David Miller reckons averages in T20 cricket will gradually lose relevance and strike rate will be the only barometer of success. Over the past couple of years, Miller has performed the finisher's role with distinction both for Gujarat Titans and his national team. With seven scores in excess of 250 plus this IPL season, the batters have taken the power game to the next level, fuelling

game to the next level, fuelling the strike rate debate. "We've seen some high scores this year. And it's been incredible batting by a few teams and few individual players in this IPL. And look, I always see everyone judges a batter on the average," Miller told PTI Videos.

"But in T20 cricket, it can be difficult to judge someone purely on that. The top three batters, definitely you can because of the number of overs they get to bat. When it comes to the middle order, it has always been the strike rates and what kind of impact the batter has had in the game. "I suppose as we move forward, it becomes more and more about impact. How impactful are you in the game? Depending on the situation. If we're needing 15 an over, can you do it? And that's, I think, what guys are going to have to select teams on their match-winning ability," said the 34-year-old. Talking about the T20 World Cup next month, Miller is looking forward to intense battles with likes of Jasprit Bumrah.

batter facing the bowlers, Bumrah is bowling well at the moment. And he has been a world-class bowler for many years. He's a threat to me, as well as every other batter in the World Cup," said the southpaw. He also showered praise on fellow Titans' batter Sai Sudharsan, who is in the middle of his most productive season in the IPL.

"He's an incredibly talented player. Still got a long career ahead of him. I've enjoyed watching him play. I love the way that he preps. And just the build-up to games and how he goes about it. He's a very level-headed young boy that's got a lot of talent," said Miller. The World Cup in the Americas will provide Miller and South African opportunity.

and South African opportunity to get their hands on an elusive global trophy. The hard-hitting batter is excited about the challenge.

"This team that we have at the moment has played a lot of cricket together the last couple of years and has a lot of confidence and a lot of success. "We've got a lot of experience, guys that have been under pressure before and come through successfully. So, putting all the individuals together in a T20 World Cup, I have no doubt that we most certainly going to give it our best shot. We have the players to do it, the skill to do it."

On his own performances in ICC events, Miller added: "I love World Cups, I must be honest. I feel like I've done well at World Cups, personally. And I just want to continue the momentum.

"For you to say, finally, Killer Miller coming to life, I think "There are so many good I've done pretty well at Indian players. But me being a previous World Cups."

### RCB have demonstrated ability to deliver when it counts: Moody

PTI NEW DELHI

Challengers  $R_{\text{Bengaluru have shown the}}^{\text{oyal}}$ ability to perform when it matters most, said former Australian all-rounder Tom Moody after their fifth straight win in the IPL.

Languishing at the bottom of the points table 10 days ago, Virat Kohli and Co have found their mojo back. Their winning streak has given them a fighting chance to make the knockout stage.

knockout stage.
"Once again, RCB has demonstrated their ability to deliver when it counts, setting the stage for what promises to be a thrilling encounter between the two teams," Moody said on Star Sports. They will take on MS Dhoni's

Chennai Super Kings, who are also in contention for a playoff berth, in their final league game at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium on Saturday.
"It's iconic for the entire IPL,

truly. You've got two colossal names in cricket here in India and in world cricket-Dhoni



and Kohli. "They're both dominant figures, leaving a huge legacy wherever they've been. And the interesting thing is anything can still happen on that table.

Barring Kolkata Kinght Riders, who have already qualified, as many as seven teams are still in contention for a playoffs berth.

"After the weekend, I was assuming that a couple of results will sort of fall the way." they should fall and then we'll have a clear idea who's going to end up in that top four.

"Yet, it's still anyone's game. Any team could clinch a spot

in that coveted top four," Moody said. After a sedate start to the season, RCB batter Rajat

Patidar has found his groove, scoring five fifties in the last seven innings at a quick pace. "Patidar, in particular, has been a revelation in the past five or six games, notching up several quick-fire half-centuries.

"His aggressive approach has consistently put pressure on the opposition's bowling attack, making it incredibly making challenging for them to get back into the contest," Moody

### PBKS' Livingstone returns to England to address knee niggle ahead of T20 WC

 $\begin{array}{ccc} P_{\text{Liam}}^{\text{unjab}} & \text{Kings' all-rounder} \\ \text{Liam} & \text{Livingstone} & \text{on} \\ \text{Monday returned to England} \end{array}$ from the ongoing IPL to undergo a knee recuperation ahead of the next month's T20 World Cup.

The Kings are already eliminated from this IPL after managing just four wins from 12 matches and they are currently at the bottom of the table with eight points.

"IPL done for another year, had to get my knee sorted for the upcoming World Cup," Livingstone wrote on his Instagram wall.

"Thanks once again to the Punjab Kings fans for all their love and support. Disappointing season as a team and personally, but as always, I loved every minute of playing in the IPL," he added. Hence I ivingstone will not be Hence, Livingstone will not be available for PBKS' last two matches of the tournament against Rajasthan Royals (Mav 15) and Sunrisers Hyderabad



The injury is not of serious nature but the England management, ESPNCricinfo, decided to give him more time to get it treated prior to their home T20I series against Pakistan, beginning on May 22.

After that series, the defending champions will travel to the West Indies for their T20 World Cup engagements, starting on June 4 against Scotland in Bridgetown, Barbados

Livingstone had a lean IPL this season, scoring 111 runs from seven matches and took just three wickets.

Meanwhile, other England players in the IPL who are part of their World Cup squad — Moeen Ali (CSK), Sam Curran, Jonny Bairstow (PBKS), Jos Buttler (RR), Will Jacks, Reece Topley (RCB) and Phil Salt (KKR) - will be homebound the coming weekend

# We have switched on the attacking mode: RCB pacer Dayal

Pace bowler Yash Dayal attributed the renaissance of Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the second half of the IPL to them "switching on the attacking After six consecutive defeats, Royal

Challengers won five matches on the bounce to remain in contention for a playoff berth.

In the last game, RCB defeated Delhi Capitals by 47 runs here on Sunday to leap to fifth spot on the table with 12

points from 13 matches.
"Our performances have markedly improved in the last few matches. I think we have switched on that attacking mode in the last few matches. It has been a big positive for us," said Dayal, who took three for 20 against DC, during the post-

The left-arm quick said even while RCB were going through a losing streak, the dressing room remained a thickly-knit

"When you lose matches continuously, like it happened with us, morale will come down a bit. But we took it in our stride and bounced back well.

"But even when we were losing, fingers were not pointed at anyone. We have remained positive throughout the season," he added. The resurgence of RCB is directly linked

with the improved performance of their bowling unit, which was all over the place in the first half of the season. Daval credited team bowling coach

Adam Griffith for that turnaround. "The credit goes to our bowling coach. He engages us in specific drills,



visualising particular opposition batsmen and we discuss this a lot. When I go out to bowl, I just think about how to get the batter out or save some runs. All of us think the same way," he added.

"GAVE TOO MANY RUNS": James Hopes, the DC bowling coach, said dropped catches allowed RCB to add a few more runs and reach an over-par total.

Rajat Patidar, who made a quick fifty, and Will Jacks, who scored a fluent 41, were dropped multiple times on Sunday. "They got one too many and we dropped

four catches and had we taken them we could have probably restricted them to "But that's fine and if you are not going to

tournament," said Hopes. The Delhi side now has 12 points from

13 matches and it now needs a massive win over Lucknow Super Giants on Tuesday to keep their playoff hopes alive. The former Australian all-rounder was confident of achieving it in their home ground.

We have to win big now. But fortunately, we are going back to Delhi where big scores have been the norm for the season. "So, we are going to ask them to put a big score on the board and keep them a fair way below us to have any chance to advance in this tournament," he said. However, Hopes rued the missed opportunity against RCB.

But today was our chance to really get into the mix for playing finals, and now we've left it up to fight, which you don't really want to do in this tournament."

### **OTHER SPORTS**

## Satwik, Chirag look to regain competitive edge as Thailand Open begins

**PTI** ■ BANGKOK

Star shuttlers Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will look to regain their competitive edge as they spearhead the Indian challenge at the Thailand Open Super 500 tournament, beginning here on Tuesday.

The top seeded Indian pair, who are one of the favourites to win a gold at the Paris Olympics, found it a tad difficult to negotiate the variety of serves dished out by the Indonesians and Chinese at the Thomas Cup.
Both shuttlers will look to address the

slight drop in their level this week when they begin their campaign against Malaysia's Nur Mohd Azriyn Ayub

Azriyn and Tan Wee Kiong.
With the Olympic-bound shuttlers looking to fine-tune their skills ahead of the Paris Games, the BWF world tour events will offer the perfect platform for them to test those new strokes or tweaks that they make to their games.

India's top player in singles, HS Prannoy, a world championships and



Asian Games bronze medallist, too will have to find his best footing after being troubled by health issues this season. His win over Indonesia's Anthony Ginting was a confidence booster but the loss against China's Shi Yuqi will

trouble him as he needs to close out such narrow games to get into the best mental shape ahead of the Olympics. Kiran George and Sathish Kumar Karunakaran are also in fray, while Lakshya Sen and PV Sindhu had pulled

out before the draw was announced last week. While Kiran will face China's Australia Open winner Weng Hong Yang, Sathish, who had claimed the Odisha Masters title last December, takes on a qualifier in their respective opening matches. In Sindhu's absence, Ashmita Chaliha, Malvika Bansod and Aakarshi Kashyap will look to keep India's flag fluttering with a solid show in women's singles.

The Guwahati shuttler will be squaring off against Indonesia's Ester Nurumi Tri Wardoyo, while Malvika faces top seed Chinese Han Yue and Aakarshi is pitted against Busanan Ongbamrungphan of Thailand.

Young Unnati Hooda and Imad Farooqui Samiya will also hope to produce a good show when they take on Belgium's Lianne Tan and China's Goa Fang Jie.

In women's doubles, fourth seeded Indian pair of Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa, who has qualified for the Paris games, will also be in the fray but will begin campaign in second round after receiving a bye.

### Atletico Madrid moves closer to securing Champions League spot after beating Celta Vigo

**AP** MADRID

Atletico Madrid moved closer to securing the fourth and final Champions League spot with a 1-0 win over Celta Vigo in the Spanish league.

Rodrigo De Paul scored an 84th-minute winner for Atletico, which opened an eight-point gap to fifth-place Athletic Bilbao with three rounds remaining. Athletic

was held at home to a 2-2 draw with Osasuna on Saturday.

"You know me, we have to keep improving until the end," Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone said. "We have to keep fighting no matter what." It was the third win in a row for Atletico, which is three points behind third-place Barcelona. The Catalan club hosts seventh-place Real Sociedad on Monday.

Celta, which has lost three of its last five games, dropped to 17th place and five points above the relegation zone. Rayo Vallecano moved to 16th, also five points from danger, after a 0-0 draw at eighth-place Valencia.



Almeria 3-2 at home to move to sixth place and strengthen its hold on the European qualifying spots.
Pablo Fornals, Isco and

Ayoze Pérez scored for Betis, which has won four of its last five matches.

Almeria was coming off only its second win of the season in the league, at Rayo Vallecano. CADIZ HOPEFUL: Cadiz,

sitting in 18th place, kept alive its hopes of escaping demotion with a 1-0 win against midtable Getafe. Rubén Alcaraz scored the winner for the hosts

by converting a 35th-minute penalty kick. It was Cadiz's first win after a run of three losses and a draw. REAL MADRID CELEBRATES: Real Madrid,

which clinched its 36th league title last weekend, won 4-0 at Granada on Saturday. The Spanish powerhouse celebrated on Sunday by parading through the city.

The celebrations did not take place last weekend because Madrid played Bayern Munich on Wednesday in the second leg of the Champions BETIS WINS: Real Betis beat last-place League semifinals