

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
 The pioneer

**KTR means Kalvakuntla Third Class Rama Rao. How can Nama Nageshwar Rao become Union Minister if he wins from the BRS? One can understand the connection between the BRS and the BJP. The BRS is a party built on a foundation of lies. KCR and KTR are true liars.**

**- Velichela Rajender Rao, Congress Karimnagar MP candidate**

**Shah's statement on bail to Kejrival objectionable: Kapil**

**'AS A SOLO TRAVELLER, I ENCOUNTERED EVE-TEASING IN KERALA'**

**Kajal confident about Satyabhama's universal APPEAL**

**DON'T MISS...**  
**X chromosome gene TEX13B vital...**  
 With the rise in infertility among men across the world, Dr. K Thangaraj in collaboration with his colleagues Dr. P. Chandra Shekar and Dr. Swasti Raychaudhuri at the CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad identified the gene TEX13B which is essential for sperm cell development and male fertility in a multi-institutional study. The study has been published in the journal Human Reproduction. Approximately, one in every seven couples are infertile worldwide. The male factors...



**Heavy rains lash Hyd**  
 Play spoilsport in IPL match

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 Heavy rains lashed Hyderabad on Thursday playing spoilsport before the Indian Premier League (IPL) match between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Gujarat Titans. The match scheduled to be played at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Uppal was delayed due to bad weather. Steps were taken to prevent water logging on the field. In the GHMC area, Khairatabad recorded the highest rainfall of 51.3 mm, followed by Qutubullapur at 44.3 mm and Serilingampally at 40.8 mm. Malkajgiri got 40.5 mm of rains. Almost all parts of the city received more than 20 mm rains. The districts of Medchal, Siddipet, Medak, Vikarabad, Kamareddy, Sircilla, Rangareddy and Sangareddy received around 30 mm of rains on Thursday. Waterlogging was reported from many city areas like the NTR Stadium near Naini Narasimha Reddy Steel Bridge. The DRF is trying to clear the water. Another team was deployed at Tolichowki where waterlogging disrupted traffic. The Indian Meteorological Department - Hyderabad (IMD-H) issued a yellow alert across Telangana and predicted moderate thunderstorms in Rangareddy, Hyderabad, Medchal Malkajgiri, Vikarabad, Sangareddy, Medak, Mahbubnagar, Nagarkurnool, Wanaparthy, Narayanpet, Jogulamba Gadwal, Komaram Bheem Asifabad, Mancherial, Peddapalli, Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Bhadradi Kothagudem.

**Boost up TG revenue: CM**

**Directs officials to set monthly revenue targets**

- Unhappy over not achieving revenue targets
- Warns of strict action against GST evaders
- Says huge gap between market values & sale prices of lands
- Officials told to study market value of lands and to revise them
- New advanced sub registrar offices soon

Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy and Jupalli Krishna Rao held a meeting with officials of Commercial Taxes, Stamps and Registration, Excise and Mining departments at the secretariat on Thursday. The Chief Minister expressed displeasure over not achieving revenue targets in the last fiscal. The CM asked officials to hold a review meeting on tax revenues and collections every month from now on. The officials were asked to set monthly targets and to work hard to achieve the targets. The CM discussed GST evasion with officials and asked them to take strict measures as GST is the one of the state's main revenue



**CM Revanth along with Ministers Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy and Jupalli Krishna Rao held a meeting with officials of Commercial Taxes, Stamps and Registration, Excise and Mining departments at the Secretariat on Thursday.**

**'Over a fifth of excess deaths...**

More than 1.53 lakh deaths a year were associated with heatwaves around the world, with over a fifth of these deaths - the greatest share - coming from India, according to new research looking at data over 30 years since 1990. India was followed by China and Russia, with each experiencing roughly 14 per cent and 8 per cent of these heatwave-linked excess deaths, respectively. The study, led by Monash University, Australia, found that heatwave-linked excess deaths accounted for about a third of all heat-related ...

**Odisha FPOs tap global markets...**

In a significant boost to farm exports from Odisha, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) in the state have marked their foray into the global markets with the first commercial shipment of fresh mangoes and vegetables. This feat was made possible through a strategic collaboration between the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), the state Directorate of Horticulture and Palladium which is the technical support unit for the 'Promotion and Stabilisation ...

**Mumbai Indians, Lucknow...**

Out of reckoning from the IPL playoffs, Mumbai Indians and Lucknow Super Giants will look to end their campaign on a winning note when they clash at the Wankhede Stadium here on Friday. While Mumbai Indians were knocked out of the playoffs race long ago, Lucknow Super Giant's chances of making the last-four are extremely bleak even if they win their last IPL game here by a huge margin. Three consecutive defeats have not only denied LSG crucial points, they have also battered...

**Cong high command may appoint new TPCC chief soon**

Jagga, Yashki, Sampath Kumar, Bhatti, Shabbir Ali and Raj Gopal in the race

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 The TPCC President post issue has come to the fore again after the completion of the Lok Sabha elections in Telangana. TPCC Working President MLC B. Mahesh Kumar Goud said on Thursday that he is in the race for the TPCC President post as he is a senior party activist. He said that every Congress activist has a right to contest to the TPCC chief post and that the high command can give the TPCC chief post to any leader depending on qualifications.



It is learnt that TPCC Working President T. Jagga Reddy, TPCC Campaign Committee Chairman Madhu Yashki Goud, Government Advisor (SCs, STs, BCs & minorities) Shabbir Ali, Munugode MLA Komatireddy Raj Gopal Reddy, AICC Secretary SA Sampath Kumar, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and some others too are in the race along with B. Mahesh Kumar Goud for the TPCC President post. **Continued on Page 2**

**Crop insurance scheme from Kharif**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwar Rao held a review meeting on Kharif preparedness and gave directions on crop insurance procedures effective from Kharif 2024 onwards. The Minister asked officials to check the conditions mentioned in the tenders, the qualifications of the companies coming forward and to ensure that the insurance scheme supports farmers in case of crop loss. It was suggested that for implementing the scheme, meetings should be held with the representatives of farmers and farmers' associations on erstwhile district basis.



**Pay bonus to all paddy farmers, demands BRS**

**Stages protests all over TG**  
**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 Congress came to power by making many promises to the public, but has now gone back on them. BRS leaders said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has betrayed farmers by going back on the promise to pay Rs 500 as a bonus for every quintal of paddy. KCR had asked BRS activists to organise protests across Telangana. The BRS staged protests across Telangana demanding that the Congress government should pay bonuses to all paddy farmers irrespective of the paddy varieties produced by them as promised by it during the Assembly elections. BRS leaders led protests in all Assembly constituencies as per a call given by the party President K. Chandrasekhar Rao. Raising slogans against the 'anti-farmer' moves of the government, the BRS protesters blocked roads at various places. They demanded that the government should procure paddy at the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and pay Rs 500 per quintal as a bonus for coarse rice too. The protesters pointed out that the

**Cong in TG & K'taka use abusive words against UP**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 Prime Minister Narendra Modi alleged that INDIA bloc parties used abusive language and humiliated the people of Uttar Pradesh while the alliance leaders sought votes in South India states. Modi addressing an election rally organised at Jaunpur in Uttar Pradesh said, "This game of the Shehzade (referring to Rahul Gandhi) is dangerous. They (INDIA bloc) seek votes here and while in

**Modi rakes up North-South divide**

South India they abuse and humiliate the people of Uttar Pradesh and use absurd language for the people of UP. Their partners DMK, Left in Kerala, Congress in Karnataka and Telangana use abusive words against the people of Uttar Pradesh. Will you forgive and vote for the people of the INDI Alliance who shower abuse against the people of Uttar Pradesh? He said on Thursday that this Lok Sabha election is an opportunity for the country to choose a leader who can run a strong government which "makes the world aware of India's strength".



**Emergency pumping from Sagar going on**

**Will avoid drinking water shortage: HMWSSB**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 The MD of HMWSSB, Sudarshan Reddy, checked out the emergency pumping being carried out at the Nagarjuna Sagar dam. He visited Nagarjuna Sagar along with senior HMWSSB officials on Thursday. The MD said that water is being pumped from Nagarjuna Sagar reservoir so that the residents of Hyderabad do not face drinking water shortage. The pumping will continue without any problems. He said that if the water level in Nagarjuna Sagar falls further the second stage of pumping will start and drinking water will be provided through it.

**Healthcare privatisation linked with worse outcomes, higher profits: Lancet Study**

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
 Privatisation of healthcare was found to have a positive effect on the quality of care rarely, and was associated with higher profits, according to research that reviewed previous studies of high-income countries (HICs) such as the US, Germany, Canada, and South Korea has claimed. Researchers said the findings, published in The Lancet Public Health journal, challenged the theory that privatisation can improve the quality of healthcare through increased market competition, and by enabling a more flexible and patient-centred approach. In their analysis, the researchers, led by those at the University of



**Higher levels of hospital privatisation were linked to higher rates of avoidable deaths, the authors found in some of the studies they reviewed.**  
 Oxford, UK, included long-term studies looking at an increase in private providers and measuring quality of care, eventually affecting health outcomes. The researchers also found that the higher profits at hospitals, con-

verting from publicly owned to privately-owned, mainly came from reducing staff and lowering the number of patients having limited health insurance coverage. Higher levels of hospital privatisation were linked to higher rates

**Congress pooh-poohs BRS dharna**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 Describing the BRS's dharnas regarding paddy procurement as a gimmick K. Chandrasekhar Rao, TPCC Working President B. Mahesh Kumar Goud asked BRS leaders whether they don't feel ashamed to stage dharnas regarding paddy procurement. He asked BRS leaders to reveal what steps they had taken to ensure the welfare of farmers in the last 10 years. BRS leaders think that farmers have no memory, he said. "We saw how farmers were treated by the KCR government. Khammam mirchi farmers were handcuffed, beaten and jailed. The farmers were attacked by the sand mafia as per KTR's directions. The BRS admin's representatives never visited farmers when crops were lost. BRS leaders think that farmers will support them if they stage dharnas. KCR said farmers would be hanged if they cultivated paddy. Didn't he cultivate paddy in his farmhouse?" Mahesh said. **Continued on Page 2**

# KCR functioning under Modi's close supervision, says Congress

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS is now at the feet of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensure its survival, the Congress's in-charge in Sircilla, KK Mahender Reddy said. BRS leaders have themselves asked voters to vote for the BJP in the LS polls, he added.



said. Speaking to the media at the Gandhi Bhavan on Thursday along with Congress candidate in Karimnagar, Velichala Rajender Rao, he said that one can understand the Fevicol bond between KCR and Modi who said the KCR had requested him to make KTR the CM.

Nageshwara Rao will become Union Minister if he wins in Khammam. How can Nama Nageshwara Rao become Union Minister? One can understand the connection between the BRS and the BJP. KCR and KTR are liars. BRS is a party standing on a foundation of lies. Mahender and I worked hard during the Telangana movement," he said.

polls in TG. He asked KTR to tell whether he will resign his MLA post if the BRS is pushed to the third slot in LS polls.

Termining KTR as Kalvakuntla Third Class Rama Rao, he said that KTR is a non-local leader in Sircilla and that KTR is the reason for the deaths of many handloom weavers. He said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy released arrears owed to handloom weavers immediately after taking over.

He said that KCR helped the BJP so that his daughter MLC Kavitha could get bail and added that he has evidence

regarding this. KCR is now functioning under Modi's close supervision, Mahender

## Justice Narasimha commission's public notice draws flak

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Concerns have been raised over the public notice issued by the Justice L. Narasimha Reddy Commission, which is inquiring into the construction of the Yadadri, Bhadradi thermal power plants and the power purchase deals with Chhattisgarh. The impugned public notice invites individuals or organisations that have an understanding of the issues to give their views on the matter.

The commission said in its notice, "Everyone should ensure that no political issues, or attacks on individuals should figure in their representations.

## 39% candidates are crorepatris, average assets Rs 6.81 crore: ADR

### 6TH PHASE OF LS POLLS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

About 39 per cent of candidates contesting in the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha polls are crorepatris with average assets of Rs 6.21 crore, according to poll rights body ADR. Among the candidates contesting in the sixth phase on May 25, the highest assets have been declared by BJP candidates from Kurukshetra Naveen Jindal at Rs 1,241 crore followed by Sanjiv Misra at Rs 482 crore and Sushil Gupta at Rs 169 crore, the analysis by Association of Democratic Reforms said.



contesting the Lok Sabha polls, 338 (39 per cent) are crorepatris and the average assets per candidate contesting in the Lok Sabha phase VI election is Rs 6.21 crore.

Among the lowest asset declaration is Master Randhir Singh, an independent candidate from Rohtak, who declared Rs 2 worth of assets followed by Ram Kumar Yadav, a candidate from SUCI(C) in Pratapgarh, who declared assets worth Rs 1,686.

## 11 killed in lightning strikes in Bengal

PNS ■ MALDA

At least 11 people were killed on Thursday afternoon after being struck by lightning in different places across Malda district of West Bengal, a government official said.

The district administration has announced a compensation of Rs 2 lakh each for the families of the deceased, he said. "So far, 11 people have been killed due to lightning strikes. A number of injured people are being treated at various hospitals. Some of the injured are in critical condition," the official told PTI.

Three persons — Chandan

## Cong high...

Continued from page 1

It is learnt that the Congress high command will appoint a new TPCC President only after completion of the Lok Sabha elections. However, many leaders are making all-out efforts to win the high command's heart.

It may be recalled that the high command has been continuing Chief Minister Revanth Reddy as the TPCC chief in view of the Lok Sabha elections. The party may free the Chief Minister from the TPCC chief's post after the election results come out.

It is known that T. Jagga Reddy has been trying for the TPCC chief post as he was an MLA. But the other leaders are trying to grab the post secretly.

The interesting factor here is that Munugode MLA Raj Gopal Reddy is also in the race. It is interesting as Raj Gopal had been expecting the Home Minister post.

It is learnt that the party may give a chance to Raj Gopal to become the TPCC President his brother Komatireddy Venkat Reddy is in the Revanth Reddy cabinet.

It is a million-dollar question whether the high command will give two minister posts to a family. If the high command doesn't want to give a Minister post to Rajagopal then it may give him the TPCC chief's post, it is learnt.

## Pay bonus to all paddy...

Continued from page 1

He lashed out at the CM for going back on his promise to pay bonuses to all paddy farmers and for stating that it would apply only to farmers producing fine paddy varieties.

He said the government took a U-turn on its promise to pay a bonus to all farmers after the Lok Sabha elections.

The BRS chief said that before the Lok Sabha elections,

the Chief Minister had assured that the bonus would be paid to all paddy farmers but now he is saying that the bonus will be paid only for fine varieties of paddy.

"If this restriction had been announced before elections people would have taught the Congress a lesson. Now as elections are over, the Congress is back to its deceitful ways," he said.

KCR said that farmers are unhappy with the Congress

government as Rythu Bandhu funds have not been disbursed. He said that farmers are feeling deceived by the government's recent decisions.

He pointed out that nearly 90 per cent of farmers in Telangana cultivate only coarse rice varieties and accused the Congress of exploiting farmers for political gains. KCR accused the Congress of misleading farmers without fulfilling its promises.

## Crop insurance...

Continued from page 1

As the first tranche of crop loss compensation of Rs 15 crore has been completed, instructions for the submission of details of crop loss in the second tranche (in April) and third tranche (in May) were given.

The Minister also discussed loan waiver and the formulation of procedures for the subsidised supply of vegetable seeds. He directed TG seeds officials to start supply immediately and to ensure that there is no shortfall in supply.

He said that based on the capacity of soil testing centres, plans should be made to collect soil samples from farmers' fields immediately after a request for that is made by

farmers and to provide results by the end of the next month.

He asked officials to educate farmers on a war footing not to burn paddy stubble and to coordinate with authorities. He warned that fines would be imposed if farmers burnt stubble.

Tummala gave orders to speed up the procurement of maize, sorghum and sunflower through Mark Fed and to complete it by the end of May. The Minister also asked officials to take up the responsibility for raising orchards using modern technology on lands allocated by the Horticulture Department.

e also asked officials to prepare proposals for the release of matching grant for Central schemes.

**TODAY ALMANAC**

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha  
Tithi: Navami: May 16 06:23 AM to May 17 08:49 AM  
Dashami: May 17 08:49 AM to May 18 11:23 AM

Nakshatram:  
Purva Phalguni: May 16 06:14 PM to May 17 09:18 PM  
Uttara Phalguni: May 17 09:18 PM to May 19 12:23 AM

Rahukalam: 10:36 AM to 12:12 PM  
Vayagandam: 3:25 PM to 5:01 PM  
Varjyam: 05:25 AM to 07:14 AM  
Gulika: 7:23 AM to 8:59 AM  
Amritakalam: 02:05 PM to 03:53 PM  
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:46 AM to 12:38 PM

**HYDERABAD WEATHER**

Forecast: Scattered Thunderstorms  
Temp: 32°  
Humidity: 65%  
Sunrise: 5:43 AM  
Sunset: 6:42 PM

Updated: May 16, 2024 5:00 PM

## Boost up TG...

Continued from page 1

The CM asked traders to pay GST timely and warned tax evaders to pay up honestly.

The CM warned officials not to repeat the mistakes committed in the past in the commercial tax wing and to ensure that there is no corruption and irregularities while filing GST returns.

Revanth questioned officials for not achieving revenue targets despite high liquor sales during the election season in the last fiscal. The CM ordered officials to crack the whip against liquor smugglers and tax evaders.

The CM also discussed the increasing land and

property prices in Hyderabad as well as in other parts of the state. The Chief Minister also enquired about the low revenues generated via property registrations.

The officials brought to the CM's attention the missing link between the land's market value and actual prices.

The BRS government increased land market value and registration charges in 2021. There is still a huge difference between the market value of land and selling price in many places.

According to rules, the market value of the land has to be revised every year. The Chief Minister ordered officials to revise land prices as per their market value.

## Claims of victory by both ruling and Oppn parties in T-states

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

The increased poll percentage in the recently concluded elections in the both Telugu states has created hope in the ruling and opposition parties over their victory. The increased poll percentage is a positive or a negative sign will be known after the announcement of results.

However, both the ruling and opposition parties are claiming in the both Telugu states that the people have voted in their favour. Elections were held for 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana and 25 Lok Sabha and 175 Assembly seats in Andhra Pradesh. In Telangana, overall poll percentage was 3% more than 2019 Lok Sabha elections. However it was lesser compared to Assembly elections which were held in December last. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the polling was 62.77% and in the recent Lok Sabha elections it

crossed 65%. But in the recent Assembly elections the polling was 71%.

Regarding Andhra Pradesh, it has created a record with highest polling percentage in the simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and the Assembly. The total polling percentage was 81.86%. In 2019 it was 79.77% and in 2014 it was 78.14%.

Meanwhile, the ruling parties in Telangana and in Andhra Pradesh, the Congress and the YSR Congress respectively are claiming that the people have voted in their favour due to the welfare schemes implemented by their governments. The Congress hopes that it will win majority seats due to positive votes. In the same way in Andhra Pradesh, the ruling YSR Congress is confident of retaining power. The YSR Congress says that women, aged people and weaker sections, including minorities have voted in large number in their favour.

In Telangana the opposition parties, the BJP and the BRS claim that the people have turned against the Congress government just within 100 days. The people have shown their anger on the Congress government by voting against the Congress. In Andhra Pradesh, the opposition TDP alliance is also claiming that people have voted against the YSR Congress government in the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. The TDP leaders say that they did not expect this much anger in the people on the YSR Congress government.

According to poll experts, usually in the elections, the theory is the less voting percentage is advantageous to the ruling parties and the highest voting percentage is advantageous to the opposition. But this theory is may not be correct always. The theory is different from practice. The results in the both Telugu states may prove this.

## BJP struggling to attain 200 seats: Kharage



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Asserting that INDIA bloc will form the next government at the Centre, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday said the BJP and its partners are struggling to get 200 seats as people are opposed to their policies.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's claim that the NDA will secure 400-plus seats this time, Kharge asked, "From where the BJP will get these seats? You (Modi) are nowhere in sight in South India. In the rest of the country, seats will come down by half. BJP will not form the government at the Centre. It will struggle to secure 200 seats." Addressing a press conference, he pointed out that the NDA partners are facing difficulties in Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. "You are also facing problems in Odisha as people are in a mood to vote for the Congress as they are fed up with both the BJP and the BJD,"

Kharge added. Lambasting both the BJD and BJP, the Congress president claimed that the Naveen Patnaik government will be voted out and the Congress will come to power in the state.

## Cong leaders queue up to campaign for Rahul

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former AICC President Rahul Gandhi worked hard for the victory of Congress candidates in the just concluded Lok Sabha elections in Telangana by addressing many public meetings and by participating in roadshows. Now Telangana Congress leaders are queuing up to campaign for Rahul in Raebareli.

Rahul is contesting from the Raebareli Lok Sabha constituency in Uttar Pradesh apart from Wayanad in Kerala. Telangana Congress leaders are now going to Raebareli to appeal to voters to vote for Rahul. Senior Congress leader V. Hanumantha Rao campaigned for two days in Raebareli and is now in Amethi Lok Sabha constituency. Panchayat Raj Minister Seethakka is also campaigning in Raebareli since three days.

On Thursday, Congress leaders from Mahabubnagar went to Raebareli. The leaders who went to Raebareli are



Nagarkurnool Lok Sabha candidate Mallu Ravi, Achampet MLA Dr Chikkudu Vamsi Krishna, Nagarkurnool MLA Rajesh Reddy, Wanaparthy MLA Megha Reddy, Gadwala district ZP Chairperson Saritha, Nagarkurnool LS constituency in-charge Madhusudhan Reddy, Nagarkurnool district OBC Cell president Girivardhan Goud and Gadwal district leader Tirupathaiah.

It is now learnt that some more Congress leaders are getting ready to go to Raebareli from Telangana. The election in Raebareli will be held in the fifth phase on May 20.

## Congress pooh-poohs BRS...

Continued from page 1

He said that the BRS government deceived farmers by luring them during elections with bogus assurances.

He said the Congress government opened IKP centres in March and procured more paddy than the BRS government. The Congress government has procured 30 lakh tons of paddy till now. The Congress government is procuring wet paddy at MSP, he said, making it clear that the Congress government will not give impossible assurances.

People are happy during the last four months of Congress rule. However, BRS leaders are staging dharnas shamelessly, he said.

Mahesh said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy would tell farmers good news soon and that the BRS is going to get washed out in Parliament elections. He said the state was second in suicides when the BRS was in power.

## Emergency pumping from...

Continued from page 1

Arrangements will be made to supply water through submersible pumps and they were reviewed by higher officials, he added.

The MD, Sudarshan Reddy, said the supply of drinking water has increased after extending HMWSSB services to ORR limits. He said that 580 MGD of water was supplied to Hyderabad city this summer and that 20 MGD more water than last year was provided to city residents. He added that this is the highest quantity supplied so far.

Later, the MD visited the Sunkishala project and officials were asked about the project's progress. The MD inspected the work on the pipelines of the project. At present, civil, tunnel, electrical and pipe line works are going on, he said. The work

on the tunnel and electrical work have reached the final stage. Civil works are going on. He said the project would be completed quickly and made available by September. The Nagarjuna Sagar reservoir has 25,941 TMCs of dead storage and 510 feet of water is available for use.

The Telangana government took up construction of the Sunkishala project to avoid drinking water shortage in summer. Even if the water level in Nagarjuna Sagar falls to dead storage, drinking water can be provided to the city through this project.

Technical Director Ravi Kumar, Project Director Sudarshan, Transmission CGM Dasharath Reddy, GM Sridhar Reddy, project and transmission officials and representatives of construction companies attended the programme.

## Cong in TG & K'taka use abusive words...

Continued from page 1

Modi was addressing an election rally organised at a college ground here in support of BJP candidates Kripashankar Singh from the Jaunpur parliamentary constituency and B P Saroj from the Machhlisahr (reserved) seat.

"This election is an opportunity to choose the prime minister of the country. Such a prime minister who runs a strong government which cannot be dominated by the world but which makes the world

aware of India's strength," he said.

"Therefore, when you vote for our Kripashankar ji from Jaunpur, B P Saroj ji from Machhlisahr, your vote forms a strong government. The votes given to them will go directly into Modi's account," the prime minister said.

Amid slogans of 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Har Har Modi', the prime minister said, "Your enthusiasm shows that you have made it difficult for the INDI alliance to win even a single seat in Uttar Pradesh."

"We got the Ram temple after a wait of 500 years. The entire country is happy. Every Indian living across the world is happy. But these parivarvadis (dynasts) are hurling abuses. The shehzade (prince) of the SP and his uncle call the Ram temple useless (bekar)."

Modi was apparently referring to a recent statement of Samajwadi Party (SP) general secretary Ram Gopal Yadav who had said the Ram temple has not been built in a useless manner but as per 'Vaastu'. Attacking SP chief Akhilesh

Yadav, Modi said, "SP's shehzade also makes fun of Kashi. They are crossing every limit to please their vote bank. I am surprised that it is the 21st century and they are roaming around with the flag of triple talaq." Accusing the leaders of the INDIA bloc of advocating reservation on the basis of religion, Modi said, "They advocate reservation on the basis of religion. They want to take away the right of reservation of the SCs, STs and OBCs by changing the Constitution of the country."

## Heavy rains...

Continued from page 1

Khammam, Nalgonda, Suryapet, Mahabubabad, Warangal, Hanamkonda, Jangaon and Yadadri Bhuvangiri districts.

Sunrisers Hyderabad vs Gujarat Titans match abandoned due to rain in Hyderabad. Each team got 1 point each. With this Sunrisers Hyderabad qualify for IPL 2024 playoffs. The details of the ticket refund will be shared on the mobile number used during purchase, the authorities said.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

# X chromosome gene TEX13B vital for male fertility: Study

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the rise in infertility among men across the world, Dr. K. Thangaraj in collaboration with his colleagues Dr. P. Chandra Shekar and Dr. Swasti Raychaudhuri at the CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad identified the gene TEX13B which is essential for sperm cell development and male fertility in a multi-institutional study. The study has been published in the journal Human Reproduction.



Approximately, one in every seven couples are infertile worldwide. The male factors account for 50 per cent of the total infertility due to abnormal semen parameters, such as complete absence of sperm in semen ejaculate, low sperm count, abnormal motility of sperm, abnormal sperm shape

and size. One of the important factors behind the above causes is the genetic factor.

"Using next generation sequencing, we compared all gene coding regions (exons) between infertile and fertile males. We found two causative mutations in the TEX13B gene, of which one was exclusively found in infertile men and other one is found much more frequently in infertile men compared to fertile control

men," said Dr Umesh Kumar, the first author who was a PhD student of CCMB and presently a post-doctoral researcher at University of Michigan, USA.

The researchers have developed a cell culture model of mouse sperm-producing cells by knocking out the Tex13b gene using CRISPR-Cas9 technology. They found that the loss of the Tex13b gene reduces respiratory ability of the cells. They also found that Tex13b

controls energy metabolism in the sperm-producing cells. Together, they argue that this affects the formation of new sperm cells.

"The findings of this study would be useful for screening infertile males with spermatogenic failure and counselling them before the implementation of assisted reproduction technique(s)," said Dr Vinay Kumar Nandicoori, Director, CCMB.

"This study reminds us how genetic trait transmissions can be more complex, and more nuanced than what we superficially think.

"The TEX13B is present on the X chromosome, which all males receive only from their mothers, and not from their fathers! It means that the mother who carries the faulty TEX13B is fertile (as she carries two X chromosomes).

## Three held for snatching phone; mobile, bike seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Tukaram Gate Police on Thursday arrested three persons involved in phone snatching and seized a mobile phone and an Activa from them.

The accused was identified as Nakkala Vignesh (23), a delivery boy and resident of Shastrri Nagar.

He was previously involved in a bodily offence under the Tukaram Gate police station limits; S Krinathi Kumar(28), a driver and a resident of Shastrri Nagar and Suvurna. Manikanta (17), a first year intermediate student

The accused snatched a phone from pedestrian near the St. John's Church High School at 4 am .

They were arrested under Section 392 of the Indian Penal Code.

## EXPIRED FOOD ITEMS FOUND

# Food safety official issues notices to 3 pubs, bars

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner of Food Safety, conducted inspections at three separate locations in Jubilee Hills on Thursday and found expired food items.

Among these inspections, the team visited 36 Downtown Brew Pub, where they discovered expired food items, including Sneha chicken, Done's Button mushroom, Hoisin sauce and Knorr chicken saucing powder worth Rs 4,000 and they were quickly discarded.

The officials also found semi-prepared food items stored in the refrigerator without proper labeling and covering. Notices were issued regarding open dustbins found without lids, and the absence of medical fitness certificates for food handlers with the Food Business Operator (FBO).



The Task Force also conducted inspections at Makau Kitchen & Bar in Jubilee Hills, where expired food items, such as Sneha chicken, Bull Dog veg and fruit sauce, Mala's orange marmalade, Tigaros fish sauce, Kewpie mayonnaise, misbranded cashew packets and

fungus-infected cashews worth Rs 4,970 were discovered in the storeroom and thrown away. Additionally, both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food items were found stored together in a single fridge without proper labeling and lids. The officials issued notices concerning live cockroaches found in the storage area, and to fix the broken tiles near the roti-making bhathi area.

The officials also inspected Naturals Icecream in Jubilee Hills, where icecream stored in steel containers inside the refrigerator lacked proper labeling. Additionally, icecream cones stored in steel containers also lacked proper labeling along with medical fitness certificates for food handlers were also unavailable. A notice was issued, as the FSSAI licence was not displayed inside the premises during the inspection.



HMWSSB staff seen training the residents and plumbers

## HMWSSB trains 30 people in building rainwater harvesting pits

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) organised a one-day training programme on water harvesting pits construction for city residents and plumbers. The training session took place at the Rain Water Harvesting Theme Park in Jubilee Hills on Thursday. The Water Board has already conducted a three-day training session last month on the construction of water harvesting pits. However, individuals who were unable to attend then had the option to register online. Approximately 30 such registrants received the training.

Special Officer of Rainwater Harvesting, Jala Satyanarayana, mentioned that the training is being coordinated by the Water Board, GHMC, HMDA and the CDMA. He said, representatives from various voluntary organisations underwent training last month, and since then, they have been conducting awareness programmes in several areas.

He also said, the participants were provided with instructions into the structure, importance and value of water harvesting pits through a power-point presentation. All plumbers have pledged to ensure proper installation of pits in their future works.

## Five held for attacking family over pet dog

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Madhuranagar Police arrested five persons for attacking a family in Rahmatnagar after being chased by a pet dog.

The incident occurred on May 8 when Madhu's family was on their way to cast votes via postal ballots; and the husky accompanied them. Dhanunjay's family claimed that the dog attacked them.

An argument ensued between the two parties after which a complaint was filed. On May 14, Dhanunjay's family spotted as Srinath, Swapna and Rajeshwari and attacked them. The victims were admitted to a hospital and are undergoing treatment.

The accused were arrested under Section 148,147, 307 read with 34 of the Indian Penal Code.



# IIITH announces product management summer school

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The International Institute of Information Technology Hyderabad (IIITH) on Thursday announced the launch of a month-long Product Management Summer School, in collaboration with the Product Leaders Forum (PLF) and Hyderabad Software Enterprises Association (Hysea). Registrations are open; The summer school starts on May 25.

IIITH's summer programme targets product managers, development managers/architects, aspiring product managers and startup founders. Participants will understand the nuances of product management and get equipped with the latest techniques and tools. They will also be exposed to the research world related to product design and management.

Prof Raghu Reddy, Chair of the MTech programme in Product Design & Management said, "This is a unique opportunity for the product management community to converge and delib-



erate on the trends in technology product management. A chance also to bring together academic research and industry leadership."

The innovative curriculum comprises four engaging workshops covering design thinking, product management fit, AI for programme managers, and programme managers for AI products. Participants will delve into hands-on activities, guided by expert faculty and assignments for effective learning experience. It will conclude in the fifth week with a research

seminar, showcasing faculty and industry leaders insights on cutting-edge topics such as wearables, no-code/low-code systems, and more.

The Product Leaders Forum (PLF) is an active community of product managers and leaders across multiple cities. PLF and Hysea bring in the industry perspective, along with IIITH bringing in the academic research perspective. Group registrations of mid-level engineering leaders and PMs are encouraged alongside individual registrations.

# Uproar as TMREIS seeks to replace dupatta with sadri

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Minority Residential School Society (TMREIS) which plans to introduce a new uniform code of introducing sadri for girls has been subjected to mixed response by netizens on the Twitter.

Naseer Gias, a journalist, stated on the Twitter that TMREIS has replaced dupatta with sadri for female students. Many people believe that it is not appropriate to remove dupatta as it is against our culture, especially in the case of Muslim female students.

Many netizens are against the idea of replacing dupatta with sadri by stating that it is going against Telangana customs. Some also suggested including dupatta along with sadri in the uniform code for female students.

However, one of the netizens stated, "We are living in a modern world and let the organisations do their duty. Let the students study peacefully."

An TMREIS official said, "The idea of implementing sadri in the new uniform code for female students is still in the preliminary phase.

Please don't jump into conclusions as we haven't finalised yet. We didn't take the decision of removing dupattas."

Tafseer Iqbal, Secretary of the Minority Welfare Department in Telangana, clarified that they are not removing the dupatta from the TMREIS uniform. They are planning to introduce a modern uniform which may include a jacket, but this does not mean that the dupatta will be removed. He also mentioned that the dupattas are ordered separately.



# Three officials in ACB net for accepting bribe

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Anti-Corruption Bureau has nabbed three officers, including two electricity department employees and one from the agriculture office.

On May 16, at 12:45 pm, accused Officer B Anil Kumar, Mandal Agricultural Officer, Narsapur mandal, Medak district was caught red handed when he demanded and accepted a bribe amount of Rs 30,000 from the complainant Vanga Naren for showing official favour i.e., to process the application and to forward the same for issuance of trade licence on the name of M/s Shiva Shakti Agro Agencies, Narsapur.

Anil Kumar was arrested and produced before the Addl. Special Judge for SPE and



ACB Cases Court at Hyderabad. The case is under investigation. In another case, on May 16, accused officer Nadimpally VenuKumar, artisan (Grade-II), TSSPDCL, Mallareddipally, Chinthapally, Nalgonda district was caught red-handed when he demanded and accepted a bribe amount of Rs 20,000 from complainant Ravi Suryanarayana to provide single phase domestic electricity connection to the house and to erect two poles for the purpose of agri-

cultural bore and also to give electricity connection by laying cables.

In another case, on May 16, at 6:20 pm, accused officer Daravath Sharath Kumar, Assistant Engineer, Operation Section Office, TSNPDCL, Aswaraopeta, Bhadradi Kothagudem district, was caught red-handed at Jangareddygudem Road, Aswardopet by the ACB officials when he demanded and accepted an amount of Rs 1,00,000 as bribe from the complainant Konakalla Aditya to process the sanction of new transformer for the complainant's father's agricultural land and also to install it. The bribe amount of Rs 1,00,000 was recovered from the possession of the officer at his instance.

## Acid attack on female student in ICAFI creates panic

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A tragic incident that occurred in the Indian Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts (ICFAI) sent shockwaves on the campus, where a hostel student was attacked with acid by unknown persons on Thursday.

The victim, Lekhya, a B Tech student (22), went to the washroom to freshen up. Prior to her going to the washroom, some unknown students poured acid in her bucket. The victim, who was not aware of it, poured the acid water on herself and screamed in pain. On hearing her screams, the other



students along with the college authorities rushed to the place and admitted her to the hospital. The female student sustained serious burn injuries due to hot acid water. It was so intense that her skin was peeled off at her back, legs and hands.

Upon hearing the incident, many students began demanding justice for the victim. On credible information, Mokolika police officials inspected the incident site. They have taken testimony from the victim and are investigating the case. They also stated that they will take action on the culprits who were behind the attack.

# DCA seizes shilajit tablets over misleading advertisements

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Drug Control Administration (DCA) on Thursday seized shilajit tablets from a medical store in Sirsilla over misleading advertisements.

The label of the product bears a misleading claim stating that it is indicated for the treatment of 'kidney stones' and that it 'reduces body weight'.

The said medicine was detected by DCA officials at a medical shop in Sirsilla. Stocks were seized during the raid.

The advertisement of a medicine for the treatment of kidney stones and obesity is prohibited under the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertise



ments) Act, 1954. LRD Bhavani, Drugs Inspector, Sirsilla, carried out the raid under the supervision of Dr J Raju, Assistant Director, Siddipet.

Further investigation shall be carried out and action shall be taken as per the law against all offenders.

seized a stock of medicines worth Rs 36,000. The accused was identified K Rajesh Kumar. Forty-nine varieties of medicines, including antibiotics, steroids, anti-ulcer drugs, anti-hypertensives and others were found stocked for sale at the premises.

Dr G Rajyalakshmi, Assistant Director, Warangal, A Balakrishna, Drugs Inspector, Jangaon and M Aravind Kumar, Drugs Inspector, Warangal, are among the officers who carried out the raid.

DCA officers collected samples for analysis. Further investigation will be conducted, and appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the law against all offenders involved.

## Five accused nabbed, 26 kg of ganja seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Excise Enforcement Police seized an illegal shipment of 26 kg of ganja worth Rs 10 lakh from Barissa to Hyderabad and other places in the train on Thursday morning.

According to the police officials, they were checking the general carriage of Konark Express from Bhubaneswar to Mumbai, when, they found five accused persons who possessed illegally transported ganja in two suitcases. The accused persons were apprehended and the officials seized 26 kg of ganja. Mostly, ganja moves from

Orissa to Hyderabad via Khammam and Bhadrachalam. In this order, more than 300 kg of ganja was seized in various excise police stations in Khammam district.

Enforcement Commissioner Ganesh and Deputy Commissioner Janardhan Reddy examined the seized cannabis as part of the inspections on the Konark train.

The officials registered a case against them. Circle inspector (CI) CH Srinivas, Constables Vindhur, Harish and Venkatesham were among those who caught the culprits with ganja on the train.

## TS to TG aims to enhance regulator clarity: Govt

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TG replaces TS as State code in Telangana vehicle registration plates. A gazette notification to this effect was published by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

The registration number plates of vehicles in Telangana henceforth will bear the State code as TG replacing TS. As per the notification, the registration mark on vehicles for States and Union Territories, under serial number 29-A, TS stands amended as TG. As per the press communique from Special Commissioner, I&PR Department, Telangana government, "This change aims to enhance regulatory clarity and effectiveness."

# 92% of Indian knowledge workers utilise AI in workplace: Study

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Microsoft and LinkedIn have unveiled the India findings of the 2024 Work Trend Index, explaining on the state of AI in the workplace. The report shows, around 92% of knowledge workers in the country utilize AI at work, surpassing the global average of 75%.

With a title, "AI at work is here. Now comes the hard part," the report demonstrates how AI has rapidly influenced work dynamics within a year, impacting workstyles, leadership, and hiring practices. The study also highlights the employees keen interest in AI integration at work, the career

growth opportunities it presents, and the exposure of AI power users shaping the future of work.

According to the report, this collaboration between Microsoft and LinkedIn for the fourth Work Trend Index offers a complete perspective on AI's transformative role in work environments. Drawing information from a survey of 31,000 individuals across 31 countries, LinkedIn's labor and hiring trends, trillions of Microsoft 365 productivity signals, and research with Fortune 500 clients, the report delivers crucial information for leaders and professionals.

Some of the key highlights from the report include, Employees need for AI in India, where 92% of knowledge workers embrace AI at work, surpassing the global average of 75%. They view AI as a tool to increase productivity, creativity, and focus.

While 91% of Indian leaders recognize the necessity of AI adoption for competitiveness, 54% express concerns about the absence of a clear implementation plan.

The report also reveals about the AI's Impact on Career Growth, where connection between AI mentions in LinkedIn job posts and a 17% increase in response rates. Organizations prioritizing AI

empowerment attract top talent, while professionals acquiring AI skills gain a competitive edge. In India, 75% of leaders prioritize hiring candidates with AI skills over experience.

The report also shows the emergence of AI Power Users, where the research identifies four categories of AI users, from skeptics to power users. Indian AI power users, manipulating AI extensively, have transformed their work routines.

They are 20% more likely to receive AI training and actively seek guidance from colleagues along with substantial communication from organizational leadership on AI.

## Makeup artist murdered in Borabanda

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In an incident reported from Borabanda on May 14, a makeup artist was stabbed to death. The victim was identified as Chukka Chennaih, a resident of Venkatagiri. The police said Chennaih went for work in the evening on May 14 and his body was found at a secluded place in Borabanda.

The police deployed a clues team and sniffer dogs in order to get clues regarding the incident. The police are examining the CCTV footage in the vicinity to identify the assailants. A case has been registered under Section 302 (murder) and further investigation is on.

# Election buzz grips villages as local bodies' polls loom

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

As the dust settles on the Lok Sabha elections, the focus now shifts to the impending local body elections, stirring up excitement and speculation in villages across the State. Reports circulating on the social media suggest that the State government is gearing up to hold elections for gram panchayats, mandal parishad territorial constituencies (MPTC) and zilla parishad territorial constituencies (ZPTC) in late June.

Even before the Lok Sabha election results are declared, leaders from major political parties including Congress, BRS, BJP, and independent candidates have been actively canvassing door-to-door for support in the villages. Many of these aspirants have been laying the groundwork for their local body election bids long before the national polls concluded.

In Ibrahimpatnam con-



**Even before the Lok Sabha election results are declared, leaders from major political parties including Congress, BRS, BJP, and independent candidates have been actively canvassing**

stituency, encompassing villages like Yacharam, Manchala and Abdullahpurmet, politicians and village heads are on high alert following rumours of the government's plan to conduct elections for sarpanch, MPTC and ZPTC posts. They expressed confidence in their ability to contest and emerge victorious this time around.

Amidst this anticipation, there is suspense over the reservation of local bodies. With the recent change in

government in Telangana, questions arise regarding whether the reservations implemented by the previous administration in 2019 will remain intact for two terms as promised by the former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao.

The incoming Congress-led government has sparked a debate over potential changes in these reservations, leading to increased caste mobilisation efforts by various parties. Leaders aspiring to contest

for sarpanch, ward members, MPTCs and ZPTCs have begun consultations with their followers in preparation for the local body elections. Many have been actively involved in grassroots campaigning since the Lok Sabha elections, expressing their commitment to the local struggle. They strategise to be competitive and are ready to stand for election if the reservations are in their favour, while others aim to consolidate their control over their respective areas.

# Eatala confident of BJP winning 12 seats in TG

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Former minister and the BJP candidate for Malkajgiri Lok Sabha constituency Eatala Rajender has said that BJP alone is capable of ruling the people of the country and maintained that the BJP is not limited to any specific region but all over the nation the party has been giving a tough fight to the political rivals.

He predicted that the BJP would win at least 12 seats in Telangana. The people depending on the situation would become dynamic and never permanently settle with any particular party, he observed.

Telangana is not the fiefdom of any particular party, he said, and added that the BJP has grown to have 370 seats in the Lok Sabha, first having just two seats.

Addressing the media at the BJP office here on Thursday, he said people voted to the BJP with the notion that it should win all 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana. The intelligentsia have been extending its sup-



port to the BJP. The mobile phone revolution is helping news faster, he said, adding that IT employees, government servants and youth voted for the BJP.

Further, he appealed to the graduate voters of Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda graduates' constituency to ensure the electoral victory of party candidate Gujjula Premender Reddy as he has complete understanding of the people's problems.

He called the Congress as the party that was rejected by the people in a relatively short period. Everyone knows the history of the Congress. The people voted for Congress to defeat KCR, he analysed.

Fused motor pumpssets and dried irrigation canals, which are the characteristic feature of united AP, can be seen now in Telangana, he said.

He said that he would speak to graduates in all districts and seek their votes explaining them what the BJP would do to them. He quoted the examples of BJP's success like abrogation of Article 370 and doing away with triple talaq. Modi says all are equal, but the Congress begs to differ, he said.

Premender Reddy has the record of fighting on the problems of students right from his student days. He sailed with the BJP during the past 40 years through thick and thin, he added.

# Govt must provide clarity on waiving farm loans: NVSS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP's state Vice-President, NVSS Prabhakar, on Thursday, said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has been neglecting farmers after coming to power and that farmers have lost their crops due to various reasons.

The Revanth government had assured that it would help farmers but didn't do it, Prabhakar said and added that the government had not started buying paddy in many mandals. Recalling that former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao had adopted delaying tactics for 10 years stating that he will waive farm loans, he said that even now many farmers are facing problems due to the non-clearance of their loans.

He pointed out that the government is not speaking about bonus now.

He said the Revanth Reddy government has been stating that it will set up a corporation to waive the loans of farmers and that the government is trying to take over the loans.

# 7 lakh packets of cotton seeds needed for Asifabad farmers

PNS ■ ASIFABAD

The district has prepared an action plan to raise various crops during the forthcoming kharif season in an extent of 4.5-lakh acres. The agriculture department officials have submitted a report to the government seeking 7 lakh cotton seeds packets and 85,816 tons of fertilizers.

The farmers are preparing to raise the kharif crops as the Met office predicted the arrival of monsoons during June. According to a plan prepared by agriculture department officials, the farmers are likely to cultivate crops in more area of land under various crops during the kharif.

The farmers have been preparing the land for the kharif tilling and keeping ready seeds and fertilisers from now onwards much before the occurrence of the Rohini Karte, marking the entry of Sun into the star Rohini.

The agriculture officials



have been preparing lists of requirement of seeds and fertilisers by each village.

The farmers have been practising only the rain-fed agriculture as irrigation projects in the district require completion, non-availability of irrigation facility. Therefore, the farmers are inclined to cultivate only the cotton cultivation which is cultivated depending on the monsoons. The officials say that the cotton crop occupies the one-third area of land under various crops during the current season.

In fact, the farmers are keen to raise cotton crops in 3.5 lakh acres requiring over 7 lakh cotton seeds packets. The area under paddy is going to be 59000 acres, requiring the supply of 14,803 quintals of seeds.

The officials put the requirement of urea for the district at 45,060 tons, while 11,265 tons of the DAP is needed for the district. The district also requires Potash and complex fertilisers. They put the total requirement of fertilisers of the district at 85,816 tons.

Meanwhile, DAO of Asifabad Srividya said that the department is taking all measures to make available necessary seeds and fertilisers to the farmers. Therefore, they should buy seeds from the licensed traders only. They should desist from buying spurious seeds. He asked them to follow the suggestions of agriculture officials and collect their bills at the time of buying seeds and fertilisers.

# Tammineni pays tributes to Comrade Anji Reddy

PNS ■ NALGONDA

CPM State secretary Tammineni Veerabhadram paid glowing tributes to Comrade Nannuri Anji Reddy at a condolence meeting held here on Thursday and described death of Anji Reddy, who relentlessly worked for the rights of the poor, caused a void to the people's movements.

Highlighting the presence of Communists in all spheres of activity worldwide, he expressed concern over the major corporation company leaders entered the politics and polluted the scenario.

The common man is not able to live in the contemporary society with education and health being controlled by private individuals. Moreover, there was shortage of jobs and wages are inadequate, he said calling for building an egalitarian society that provides equal opportunities to

receive education and health treatment.

The political leaders became corrupt and inducing the people with their money power, alcohol and on the lines of caste and religion. Upon getting voted to power, the politicians have been hiking prices of essential commodities and not providing employment to the people.

He appreciated Anji Reddy for donating his body for the purpose of education of medical students.

Anji Reddy was active in farmers and agricultural workers' association during the past 40 years. He worked for increasing the wages of the agricultural workers. He recalled how he served the poor by converting his house as the CPM office. He appealed to the one and all to work for fulfilling his objectives.

CPM district secretary Mudireddy Sudhakar Reddy presided.



# Two Kamareddy officials held on charge of sexual harassment

PNS ■ KAMAREDDY

The Devunipalli Police on Thursday took into custody Kamareddy District Medical and Health Officer Lakshman Singh and his office superintendent Srinivas Naik on complaints received against them from lady medical officers of various Primary Health Centres.

They alleged that the two officials had been harassing them for over one year in the name of inspection of the PHCs and maintained that there were instances of speaking to them on phones employing a language that did not suit their demeanour.

In a span of just 10 days, 21 lady medical officers lodged complaints of sexual harassment with the police against the two officials.

Of late, some lady medical officers working in PHCs complained against the two officials with the police. The police registered cases against Sections 354 (assault or use of criminal



force towards any woman, intending to outrage or knowing it to be likely that he will there by outrage her modesty), Sections 354 D (the offence of stalking) and 509 (intention to insult modesty of any woman) of the IPC and took them into custody.

The DMHO, who visits the PHCs on the pretext of inspection, would sit beside them and put different questions to them and pose problems to them with his gestures. He used to call up to enquire them how their life is going on.

On learning about it, local MLA Venkata Ramana Reddy spoke to the affected women, who took the objectionable

conduct of the DMHO and office superintendent to the notice of the MLA.

Some others gave vent to their utter dissatisfaction over the irregularities taking place in the recruitment in the health department.

Responding on the issue, additional director of health Dr Amar Singh took a serious view of the conduct of the DMHO and other employees. The lady medical officers complained that they have been enduring the sexual harassment for the past 18 months.

Devunipalli police took the DMHO and his office superintendent into custody for questioning.

# Mother, son electrocuted in Medak district

PNS ■ MEDAK

In a tragic incident, a woman received electric shock while trying to dry clothes at her residence in Usirikapalli village of Sivvampetamandal of Medak district on Thursday and died also her son who tried to save her from electrocuted.

Her daughter who also tried to rescue her has been hospitalized with severe injuries.

She was identified as Manemma, 45, and her son Prasad. However, her daughter Srilata has been hospitalized.

The mishap occurred

because electricity is passing through the iron wire meant for drying the clothes.

Srilata was immediately rushed to the Government Hospital in Topran. A pall of gloom has descended on the village following the twin deaths due to electrocution. Relatives of the family have been weeping inconsolably for their near and dear.

People have been advised to take precautions while drying the clothes as there is a chance of iron wires accidentally coming into contact with electric wires during the current rainy season leading to electricity passing through the wire.



# BJP leader held for posting fake video, alleging rigging

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cybercrime unit of the Hyderabad Police on Thursday arrested a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader for posting a fake video on social media and alleging rigging in the election process.

The accused was identified as Sravan who was nabbed by the police from the BJP office at Anandbagh.

Sravan posted the video claiming that there was rigging at a polling booth in Bahadurpura.

The video posted by the accused was from West Bengal and the incident occurred in 2022.

# Minority votes a decisive factor in Nizamabad

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

Votes of the minorities have become a deciding factor in the Nizamabad Lok Sabha constituency. Hitherto, the minorities voted for the BRS. But in this election, in view of the changed political scenario in the State, the minorities are understood to have voted for the Congress.

This change is seen clearly in rural areas. BRS candidate Bajireddy Goverdhan entered the fray pinning a lot of hopes to win the minority votes. The minorities votes were split among various candidates on the day of polling, he observed.

Congress candidate T Jeavan Reddy says that the changed political scenario made

minorities to incline towards the Congress. He exudes confidence of receiving at least 90% of the votes of the minorities. The Congress pinned hopes on over 3 lakh votes of the minorities.

In Nizamabad constituency, 5,52,465 males and 6,73,629 females voted. The BJP feels that it efforts to woo the DWCR women to its fold have borne fruit. The Congress feels that the free bus travel for women helped them to win their votes. Similarly, supply of LPG cylinder for Rs 500 and free supply of power up to 200 units would help them to get their votes.

BRS candidate Bajireddy Goverdhan said that the implementation of Kalyana Lakshmi

and Shadi Mubarak implemented under the BRS regime, helped him get the women's votes.

BJP candidate Dharmapuri Arvind did not have expectations to get the votes of the minorities.

Meanwhile, the contestants were worried over the cross-voting in the constituency and hence got themselves busy in collecting statistics from each and every booth.

The new voters in the constituency are put at 50,963. The number of voters below the age of 29 years is put at 3,69,439 and those who are below 39 years are put at 4,17,862. The candidate securing votes of these age group voters is sure to win the elections.

# NGOs question reason for growing debt of Discoms

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Gazetted and Non-gazetted Government Employees Federation on Thursday questioned the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) regarding Rs 1,63,583 crore debt of Telangana power companies.

In a meeting held at the Press Club, the Federation said, "Like never before in the past history, each party has taken to the social media to spread false propaganda against the power companies in the matter of supply, causing mental distress to the power officials and staff. Those who ruled the State for almost 10 years spread lies that there was no interruption in power supply. For example, in the meetings held by them in Suryapet and Mahbubnagar, the leaders said that there was no interruption in power supply. The false propaganda made by them was refuted by the government with appropriate technical evidence."

During the last nine years, the leaders of the electricity workers' unions, who did not do anything good for the employees, staged dharnas

against the then Lok Sabha members and the present Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, for the approval of the then government leaders. If you look at the behavior of some leaders now, it seems that even now they are working for the approval of the leaders of the previous government. Those leaders can answer the following points.

"Who is responsible for the downgrading of power transmission companies from A grade before 2014 to C grade in the grading given by the Ministry of Power? Who is responsible for government dues of Discoms, which were nominal before 2014, have now reached Rs 41,000 crore?," the federation asked.

Before 2014, who was the reason for the situation where the employees who used to get a monthly salary, are now waiting for their salaries? Some forces are trying in various ways to trouble the government and the owners who are working hard to fix the electricity system which has been severely damaged during the last nine years. We request the government to pay special attention to such people.



# JAGAN SEES A TSUNAMI OF SUPPORT FOR YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy exuded confidence on Thursday as he declared that the YSRCP was poised to secure a victory in Andhra Pradesh once again, following the conclusion of vote counting on June 4.

Addressing members of the I-PAC team at their office in Benz Circle, Vijayawada, the CM recalled the unexpected triumph of the YSRCP, which won 151 Assembly seats in the 2019 elections, defying expectations. He asserted the party's determination to surpass that accomplishment this time, aiming for a higher count of seats, alongside securing 22 MP seats. "We are set to surpass our 2019 record, capturing the attention of the entire nation during the election results on June 4," CM Jagan confidently stated.

Acknowledging the instrumental role of the YSRCP government's efficient administration and the sustained efforts of the I-PAC team over the past 18 months, CM Jagan emphasised the invaluable contributions of the team. "The services rendered by the I-PAC team are immeasurable," he remarked, drawing enthusiastic applause from the team members. This interaction mirrored similar engagements following the 2019 elections.

Highlighting the services of the I-PAC, CM Jagan affirmed the commitment of the YSRCP government to enhance the welfare of the people over the next five years. He expressed his intent to continue the journey of collaboration between YSRCP and IPAC in the future.

Recalling his remarks during the 2019 swearing-in ceremony, CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy emphasised the importance of the



government's positive impact on the people, driving the party's campaign for votes in the 2024 elections. True to his word, the CM swiftly implemented welfare and development initiatives upon assuming office, benefiting the people of Andhra Pradesh.

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the YSRCP government successfully

implemented welfare schemes and spearheaded development initiatives, setting a benchmark nationwide. Following two years of pandemic-induced devastation, the government's swift recovery surprised many.

The YSRCP government stands out as the only administration in the country to disburse over Rs 2.70 lakh crore through DBT without

discrimination, equivalent to almost a year's state budget. Fulfilling 99% of the promises outlined in its manifesto, the CM Jagan-led government generated 2.31 lakh employment opportunities during its tenure.

Post-pandemic, CM Jagan initiated the 'Gadapa Gadapa Ku Mana Prabuthavam' (Mass public interaction programme), urging legislative colleagues, ministers, and leaders to visit every household to address the citizens' concerns. This sustained engagement, along with extensive outreach efforts like 'Siddham' meetings and the 'Memantha Siddham Yatra', bolstered the party's connection with the people.

Despite facing adversity, including an attack during the bus yatra in Vijayawada that left him injured, CM Jagan persisted and concluded the campaign successfully.

INDIA CORNER

14th century temple to be rebuilt in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar

A 14th century Shiva temple that was dismantled during the construction of the Jayakwadi dam 52 years ago is set to be rebuilt here, an official of the Maharashtra archaeology department said on Thursday.



Doctor suspended after wrong surgery performed on child at Kerala hospital

A doctor has been suspended after the wrong surgery was performed on a four-year-old girl at the Government Medical College Hospital here on Thursday.



Delhi court discards U-turn of 12-yr-old, convicts man for raping her

In an unusual verdict, a Delhi court has convicted a man for raping a 12-year-old girl nearly 10 years ago despite the survivor turning hostile, saying 'conclusive evidence' like DNA and FSL results nailed the accused.



PoK belongs to India, we will take it back at any cost: Shah

PNS ■ SITAMARHI/MADHUBANI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday asserted that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) belongs to India and the country will take it back 'at any cost'.



Nepal, is considered the birthplace of Goddess Sita. 'I wish to declare from the birthplace of Goddess Sita that Bharat and its 140 crore people fear no one.'

give Modi ji a third term. But, can you tell me who will be the INDIA bloc's PM candidate? They are not coming to power at any cost... but in case... will Mamata Banerjee become the PM or MK Stalin or Lalu Prasad? They have decided to rotate the PM's chair among themselves if they form the government,' he said.

'Tax money for free ration but BJP trying to take credit'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supreme Mayawati hit out at 'BJP and company' on Thursday, saying they want to take credit for providing free rations to the country's poor.

Will soon file prosecution complaint against Kejriwal

AAP IN EXCISE POLICY CASE: ED TO SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In potential trouble for Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the Enforcement Directorate on Thursday told the Supreme Court it will soon file a prosecution complaint against him and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise policy scam.



show that Kejriwal demanded Rs 100 crore bribe which was used by AAP in the Goa assembly poll campaign. 'We have direct evidence that Kejriwal stayed in a seven-star hotel, whose bills were partly paid by an accused in the case,' Raju submitted, adding Kejriwal played a key role in the formulation of the now scrapped Delhi excise policy.

alleged scam. Kejriwal, despite being the chief minister, does not hold any departmental portfolio. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who also appeared for the ED, questioned the maintainability of the petition, saying that barring the first two occasions when Kejriwal opposed the remand orders, he virtually 'consented' to judicial custody.

400 properties of terrorists attached by NIA since 2019

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over 400 properties, including multiple bank accounts and cash worth crores, have been attached by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) across the country since 2019, most of them belonging to terrorists, Naxals, separatists and their supporters, officials said on Thursday.



and their supporters were attached, forfeited or confiscated by the Jammu branch of the NIA, they said. The Chandigarh branch of the anti-terror probe agency has attached 33 properties belonging to separatists and their supporters, the officials said, adding that in addition to these 'two properties

belonging to banned Khalistani leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun have been confiscated.' These properties were attached or confiscated during 2019 and May 16, 2024 by the NIA have helped in dismantling the network and infrastructure of terror and Naxal outfits, they said. The properties belonging to the workers and supporters of banned outfit Popular Front of India (PFI) have also been attached or confiscated by the NIA, the officials said. As many as 22 properties have been attached by the New Delhi branch of the NIA, 27 (including eight confiscated ones) by the Kochi branch, five by Mumbai, four by Hyderabad, three by Chennai and one by Lucknow branch, they added.

Shah's statement on bail to Kejriwal objectionable: Kapil

Says it questions intention of SC judges

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Thursday hit out at Home Minister Amit Shah over his reported 'special treatment' remarks on the interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, saying it was an 'objectionable statement' that questioned the intention of the Supreme Court judges.

Thursday steered clear of the political talk about it having made an exception for Kejriwal in granting him interim bail for campaigning in the Lok Sabha polls but said 'critical analysis of the judgement is welcome'.



'He (Shah) has said 'people are saying'... If people are saying and you don't believe in it, then why say it? If people say and you believe it, then only you

have made the statement,' said Sibal, who is also a senior advocate. Sibal said it is important to spell out the laws in light of the statement. 'If someone is convicted but gets a stay from the court, he or she can file a nomination and get elected. If there is a charge sheet against anyone, a person can campaign and also file a nomination, like Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh is doing,' the Rajya Sabha MP said.

at Shah. He probably does not have knowledge of the law, otherwise he would not have made the statement, Sibal said. Slamming Shah, Sibal said, 'He (Shah) says if we win 400 seats, we will take back PoK. What if you don't get that many seats, won't you take back PoK? We want you to take it back. Firstly, you should take back those 4,000 kilometres that China has taken away...' Asked about the alleged assault on AAP MP Swati Maliwal at Kejriwal's residence, Sibal said, 'Why is he (Shah) worried about this (Maliwal assault case)?

'Over 30% of Covaxin takers reported adverse events'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly one-third of 926 individuals who received Bharat Biotech's anti-Covid vaccine Covaxin reported 'adverse events of special interest,' or AESI, according to a one-year follow-up study conducted by a team of researchers at BHU.

who received the BBV152 vaccine. Published in the journal Springer Nature recently, the study comes against the backdrop of UK pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca admitting its Covid vaccine can cause rare side effects of blood clotting and lowering of platelet count in a UK court. 'Close to one-third of the individuals developed AESIs. New-onset skin and subcutaneous disorders, general disorders, and nervous system disorders were the three most common disorders observed in adolescents after receiving the vaccine,' the study said. The participants were interviewed telephonically about long-term adverse events of special interest after one year of vaccination. New-onset skin and subcutaneous disorders (10.5 per cent), general disorders (10.2 per cent), and nervous system disorders (4.7 per cent) were the common AESIs in adolescents. General disorders (8.9), musculoskeletal disorders (5.8 per cent), and nervous system disorders (5.5 per cent) were the common AESIs in adults. Menstrual abnormalities were noticed in 4.6 per cent of female participants. Ocular abnormalities and hypothyroidism were observed in 2.7 per cent and 0.6 per cent of participants.



Woman strangles son over dirtied clothes, missing school books in Gurugram

PNS ■ GURUGRAM

The woman who was arrested for allegedly killing her 8-year-old son revealed that she committed the crime in a fit of rage when he returned home from school in dirtied clothes and two of his books were missing, police said on Thursday.



'During the police interrogation, Devi revealed that on Monday, when her 8-year-old son Karthik returned from school, his clothes were smeared with wall putty and he had also lost two books. In a fit of rage, she first removed his

clothes and made him stand outside their house,' Assistant Commissioner of Police Varun Dahiya said. 'When he insisted on going to some shop, she strangled him with her 'chunni',' ACP Dahiya said. The matter came to light on Monday when the police received a call from a private hospital regarding the death of a child, police said. The victim's father, Arvind Kumar, who works as a labourer, spotted injury marks on the neck of his and claimed that he was murdered. Following this, he filed a complaint at the Sector 18 police station, police said.

Country faced identity crisis during Cong rule: Adityanath

PNS ■ AZAMGARH/KAUSHAMBI (UP)

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday claimed that the country faced an identity crisis while every citizen's security was under threat during the previous Congress-led government at the Centre. 'Earlier, whenever a terrorist incident took place in the country and the world, its links were invariably established with Azamgarh, defaming the district for no fault of its own,' he said, adding that those who defamed Azamgarh stand completely exposed today.

The chief minister was addressing a rally in the Lalgarh Lok Sabha constituency in Azamgarh in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to seek votes for BJP's Azamgarh candidate Dinesh Lal Yadav Nirahua and Lalgarh nominee Neelam Sonkar. Continuing his attack on the opposition, Adityanath said, 'The country faced an identity crisis while every individual's security was under threat in the previous Congress governments. Development activities had come to a grinding halt because the Congress-led government was mired in corruption.'

'Over a fifth of excess deaths linked to heatwaves'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 1.53 lakh deaths a year were associated with heatwaves around the world, with over a fifth of these deaths - the greatest share - coming from India, according to new research looking at data over 30 years since 1990.

University, Australia, found that heatwave-linked excess deaths accounted for about a third of all heat-related deaths and 1 per cent of total deaths globally. Researchers also found that of the overall 1.53 lakh excess deaths occurring every summer, close to half came from Asia and more than 30 per cent from Europe. Further, the largest estimated death rates (deaths per population) were seen in regions with dry climates and lower-middle incomes. The findings are published in PLoS Medicine. 'During the warm seasons from 1990 to 2019, heatwave-related excess deaths accounted for 153,078 deaths per year,



a total of 236 deaths per ten million residents or 1 per cent of global deaths,' the authors wrote. For the study, the researchers used data from the UK-based Multi-Country Multi-City (MCC) Collaborative Research Network that included daily deaths and temperatures from 750 locations across 43 countries. Comparing the decade up to 2019 with that up to 1999, the duration of heat waves each year was found to have extended from 13.4 to 13.7 days on

average around the world, with average ambient temperature warming by 0.35 degrees Celsius every decade. The researchers said that while previous studies have quantified excess deaths due to heatwaves locally, they have not compared these estimates across the globe over a prolonged duration. 'Heatwaves are associated with substantial mortality burden that varies spatiotemporally (with space and time) over the globe in the past 30 years,' the authors wrote.

## Unifying Paradise

Pointing to people's anger and civil unrest in PoK, Amit Shah says it will be reclaimed as part of India

As peace and tranquility envelop the sylvan slopes of Kashmir Valley in perfect harmony but civil unrest recoils with its squirming populace across the LoC in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK), India's Home Minister Amit Shah has iterated that the region "belongs to India and we will reclaim it". Nothing new there, but the comment has reignited discussions on the disputed region and its intricate history, fraught as it is with serious ramifications. Following Partition, the princely State of Jammu and Kashmir, like other such States, had the option to accede to either India or Pakistan. Maharaja Hari Singh, then ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, initially sought to remain independent but, amid invasion by tribal militias supported by Pakistan, opted to accede to India in October 1947. It led to the first India-Pakistan War, which saw a United Nations-brokered ceasefire and establishment of the LoC, which divided the region into the Indian J&K and PoK. While India gained control over most of the territory, Pakistan retained approximately its one-third, which it named Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan. Therefore, from an Indian perspective, PoK is an integral part of J&K and its inclusion in India's territorial claims is based on historical, legal and moral grounds. However, the timing and practicality of the Home Minister's claim are debatable: Bringing up such critical matters in public sphere, especially during elections and when they involve a neighbouring nuclear power, is not the best of ideas.



For its part, Pakistan considers PoK as a "liberated territory" pending a plebiscite promised by the UN.

In this given situation, the status quo maintained for over seven decades keeps the two countries from going to war. The larger question is, do we want to go to war with Pakistan and can we afford it when we have so much to sort out domestically? Should not the Home Minister be more cautious in raking up such contentious issues during elections? It is true that despite Pakistan's hollow assertions, PoK has witnessed internal dissent and unrest over the years. The region has been marred by allegations of human rights abuses, lack of democratic freedoms and marginalisation of local voices by the Pakistani establishment. Civil society movements, such as the Gilgit-Baltistan Movement, have been advocating for the recognition of their rights and the restoration of genuine autonomy. If Amit Shah's recent declaration reaffirming India's claim over PoK is not a standalone Statement but reflects a broader strategic shift in India's approach, it must be well articulated and a clear roadmap must be laid to approach the matter diplomatically or otherwise. If that is not the case, then it would pass off as another poll rhetoric or 'jumla'. Indeed, diplomatic endeavours are most effectively conducted behind closed doors rather than at public rallies.

## The rising significance of skills in learning

The new educational landscape must integrate skill-based learning into formal education systems, fostering a holistic approach to learning and livelihood



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

Each generation does make its contribution to the vocabulary of the language it uses. The vocabulary represents its understanding of the current emotions and fancied expressions of sentiments, which are at times as old as the human race. This may be of joy, glee, or sheer 'inaction'.

At times serious sentiments are involved and led by a prominent person of the time; they acquire fancied importance. Many will recall the time when the Department of Education in the Government of India was declared the 'Department of HRD' during the time of the Prime Ministership of Rajiv Gandhi and overnight many departments of personnel of corporate enterprises declared themselves to be the departments of human resource development. Nothing in the content had changed nor had even the approach, but still the fashion had got its new draping.

Each time somebody important in a current scenario projects a concept, there are a lot of people who follow the trail. Nothing wrong with that. The important thing is to understand how human nature moves and what the significance of words is in the larger context of those particular times. It is best to do an analysis without making a value judgement. Having said that, one can come to the present times and notice how the emphasis of the present dispensation in the national arena on 'skill' has brought the word skill to the center of the focus in learning. There are attempts to offer degrees for certain types of skill formation. Some decades ago, skill was not such a happy word. No vice chancellor of a university would have talked of a degree in 'skills'. Education was supposed to be a grand concept, which indeed it is. The confusion with skill was, albeit, reducing its significance of the grandeur of the process of education. To enter that debate may not be helpful at this stage. The fact of the matter is that times have now changed and skills have acquired the level of an elevated pursuit. As mentioned earlier, there are attempts to offer



degrees in skill formation. Perhaps this is a recognition of the emphasis on doable learning. Anything which can be performed in action is now getting more valued. By itself, it may or may not be a good thing, but it does show a tendency to reduce action largely to an operational front. The neglect, therefore, of concepts and ideas is proportional. By itself, the subject matter may be debated, but that remains, as the expression goes, 'another matter'. This is inevitable and leads to some reflections. Skill by itself is important and perhaps far more important than the value attached to it in everyday parleys. Skill is the foundation of all relationships. If one is attracted towards anyone else, it is only on the basis of that person's skills. That skill may be in singing, cooking, speaking or dancing and the list can be endless. The truth is, nobody was drawn to anybody else, if that other person had no skills. Even a parent is drawn to a child, only at some action of the child, even if it was just a smile. That is how important a skill is. Without a smile, the child would draw no attention. Any adult sees a child seeks to establish some communication with that child and that child's response is the core of the attention it gets from anyone



LIKE ANY OTHER DEGREE, A DEGREE IN SKILLS CAN LEAD TO EARNINGS AND A LIVELIHOOD. THIS IS NEW TO THE LANDSCAPE. THERE IS MORE TO EARN AND MORE WAYS TO EARN WITH IT THAN BEFORE. THIS HAS WIDENED AND DEEPEMED THE NATURE OF LEARNING, WHICH BY POPULAR PARLEYS HAS BEEN ADDRESSED AS 'EDUCATION'

around him. Later, that kind of interaction becomes the root of learning communication and more. This seminal position of skill in human relationships has not often been noticed, either with analytical fervor or poetic exuberance. If that had been done, there would have been greater recognition that nothing, not even emotional bonding, takes place without some skill being the foundation of it. Be that as it may, it is an additional dimension of playfulness, friendship and relationships and from there it goes on to earning and livelihood. What is happening today is the induction of this skill formation into a standardised format like education leading to a degree. Today even skill in laying bricks in construction can get the status of a degree. A degree is indeed nothing but the benchmarking of standards. Similarly, there is even a proposition on degree in acting and more. In other words, like any other degree, a degree in skills can lead to earnings and a livelihood. This is new on the landscape. There is more to earn and more ways to earn with it than before. This has widened and deepened the nature of learning, which by popular parleys has been addressed as 'education'. The industry, if one might say so, of education has its own components, which are widely understood but not equally commonly categorised in our operational terms. Such being the case, a time may have come to categorise different types of learning and different types of skills. It is this component of education which needs greater thought and analysis than has been done so far for 'education' leading to a degree. It may, therefore, be a fit proposition to submit that to understand 'skills' as a part of learning, one needs to begin the overhaul of the learning process with an overhaul of the learning process of degree in 'education' itself. Operationally this could mean, to begin with, the review of the curriculum of the B.Ed. and M.Ed degree. It is generally agreed that conceptual reflection to be converted into operational reality requires a fulcrum point of intervention. In the text above, the philosophical reflection on skill has been sought to be combined with the world of action and research. This could be a point to be seriously taken on board for further discussion and action.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

### PICTALK



Devotees at the Kedarnath temple during the 'Char Dham Yatra', in Rudraprayag

PTI

## Modi filing nomination boosts BJP morale

Varanasi electrified as Narendra Modi filed papers, underscoring UP's centrality and Modi-Yogi alliance's lasting impact on national politics

Varanasi recently witnessed a surge of excitement as Prime Minister Modi filed his nomination papers for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. This event not only underscored the significance of Uttar Pradesh in shaping national politics but also highlighted the enduring influence of the Modi-Yogi partnership in the State's political landscape. The ancient city of Varanasi buzzed with excitement as Prime Minister Narendra Modi submitted his nomination papers for the Lok Sabha polls once again last Tuesday. Accompanied by his trusted ally, UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and a host of supporters, Modi's presence electrified the streets during a massive roadshow prior to filing his papers. The atmosphere in the holy city exuded confidence among leaders and workers of the saffron party, indicating a strong belief in their impending triumph in the Lok Sabha polls. The significance of Uttar Pradesh (UP) in determining the fate of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the BJP, cannot be overstated, especially as they



strive for a third consecutive term in power. With 80 Lok Sabha seats at stake, UP holds considerable sway over Indian politics, both present and future. The adage that the road to Delhi's throne runs through UP rings true, emphasising the pivotal role the State plays in shaping the country's political landscape. Consequently, political parties are sparing no effort in vying for victory in UP in the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Despite political manoeuvres, analysts predict a familiar outcome in UP this time around, with the BJP poised to replicate its 2019 electoral success. The formidable duo of Modi and Yogi is expected to deliver another commanding performance, cementing their status as unbeatable political forces. The Modi-Yogi partnership has become synonymous with victory, casting a shadow of doubt

over the opposition's prospects. The BJP's ambitious goal of securing all 80 Lok Sabha seats in UP is buoyed by the confidence placed in this dynamic duo. Modi has lauded Yogi's development initiatives on numerous occasions, underscoring their collective vision for UP's progress. This sentiment was echoed during Modi's recent rally in Amroha, where he expressed optimism about surpassing previous electoral records under Yogi's leadership, thereby making history in UP. The 2014 Lok Sabha elections marked a turning point in UP's political landscape, ending the BJP's electoral drought in the State. Securing a staggering 71 out of 80 seats, the BJP emerged victorious without any significant opposition alliance. The subsequent 2019 elections saw the BJP leverage the Modi wave and Yogi's governance to further consolidate its position, despite facing a united opposition front. Yogi's proactive stance on law and order issues resonated with voters, contributing to the BJP's resounding victory. Yogi's tenure as Chief Minister

has been characterised by a crackdown on criminal elements, instilling a sense of security among the populace. Under his leadership, UP has witnessed a significant decline in crime rates, marking a departure from the lawlessness of the past. Central Government support for development initiatives has further bolstered UP's economy, with the Gross State Domestic Product witnessing substantial growth. As the 2024 elections unfold, the BJP finds itself in a favourable position in UP, owing to the combined successes of the Modi Government at the centre and Yogi's governance model. The tangible improvements in governance and economic indicators serve as testaments to their administration's efficacy, instilling confidence among voters. While the outcome of the elections remains uncertain, one thing is clear: the Modi-Yogi alliance continues to enjoy unwavering support from the people of UP.

(The writer is a senior journalist and author of two books; his views are personal)



VIVEK SHUKLA

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### AAP'S CANDID ADMISION

Madam — This relates to the news story "AAP admits to assault," which was published on May 15. While the action of the CM's PS Bibhav Kumar is condemnable, to say the least, the very admission of the act by the AAP's leader Sanjay Singh is a rare instance of admission of guilt. It is reassuring to note that the party has promised to take strict action against its own. Contrast this with how a well-entrenched party (the BJP), which hopes for a "chaar so paar" score in the LS polls, stood by Brij Bhushan Saran Singh, despite a barrage of sexual allegations against him, only to give the LS sabbha ticket to his son, as some kind of saving grace. Though AAP has not yet acted on its promise, the admission of wrongdoing has, by itself, lessons for all other parties that choose to look the other way when such incidents involve their party folk. For now, at least, it is the AAP and not the BJP, which is walking the talk on "Beti bachao".

Vinayshil Godbole | Deswal

#### DIGNIFIED CAMPAIGNING

Madam — Apropos the editorial "Bitter ballot battle," published on May 15, the ongoing Lok Sabha elections may go down as the most bitterly fought yet, in the history of independent India. Senior citizens like this writer cannot help but recall a time when politicians were dignified in fighting opponents during election campaigning. For instance, during the 1969, assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, when the Congress stalwart Kamaraj thundered that he would win from Virudhunagar constituency 'lying down', Rajaji retorted, "His lying down is a certainty, but winning is difficult". Rajaji's Swatantra party and the DMK fought that election in alliance, resulting in the Congress defeat and the DMK forming Government. Differences cropped up between Rajaji and Anna. Said a disillusioned Rajaji in a press meet — "The honeymoon between the Swatantra party and the DMK is over"! When Annadurai heard this, he quipped — "Yes, the honeymoon is over and fam-

#### Ageing gracefully



Apropos the news article "Embracing the joys and wisdom of age," published on 16 May, this is my response. Reflecting on the passage of time and the shifting perspectives it brings, one can't help but marvel at the journey of life. The writer's experience in the mountains, juxtaposed with encounters that touch upon age, paints a poignant picture of acceptance and

growth. The narrative resonates with the universal theme of ageing, gracefully navigating the transition from youth to seniority. Initially resistant to notions of age, the writer's attitude evolves, finding solace and even pride in the title of 'old'. The seismic impact of the pandemic serves as a sobering reminder of life's fragility, prompting a deeper appreciation for each passing year. Amidst reflections on personal experiences, there's a poignant call to action - a reminder of the responsibilities that accompany ageing. It's a testament to the profound impact one can have on others, echoing Frank Lloyd Wright's sentiment that life's beauty amplifies with age. In a world often fixated on youth, this narrative serves as a gentle reminder of the richness that comes with embracing the journey of ageing, with all its complexities and rewards.

Khirabdi | Noida

ily life has begun"! Again, in 1976, Loknayak J P Narayan, who was arrested during the emergency, campaigned relentlessly for the Janata Party. But soon thereafter, one of the first persons to call on the vanquished Mrs Gandhi was JP. After the meeting, when press reporters sought a Statement from him, JP said "I wish Mrs. Indira Gandhi, a brighter future than her bright past!" We have had leaders like Rajaji, Kamaraj and JP, who fought their political opponents with might, but without ever hating them, indulging in personal vilification or mudslinging. Will we ever see their likes again?

V Jayaraman | Chennai

#### NEPAL'S CURRENCY NOTE ISSUE

Madam — India-Nepal relationship has had its highs and lows. Being a demographically close neighbour, the tiny Himalayan country has always been wary about India's might. Though India has been quick to respond to the devastating earthquakes that rock Nepal with frightening frequencies, Kathmandu was sore with the insensitive reporting of ground realities by some

television channels during a major earthquake. The Madhesi agitation had further strained bilateral relations resulting in Nepal's outreach to China. Overall, New Delhi's inability to keep up the tempo of goodwill has irked Kathmandu. The recent decision of the Pushpa Kamal Dahal Government to depict the controversial India-Nepal-China tri-junction on its currency notes has raised eyebrows in Indian diplomatic circles. It is widely felt that apart from traditional issues, Kathmandu's unhappiness with New Delhi over a few crucial projects not taking off, or not being maintained after being inked, could be among the few triggers for its currency notes step. Both countries should display maturity to ensure that the negative influence of Beijing does not cast a shadow on mutual friendship. The currency note issue should be resolved soon after the elections for peace and stability in the region.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN INDIA AND IRAN SIGN CHABAHAR PORT PACT

A significant step for connecting the Indian Ocean to Europe and beyond



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

India and Iran finally managed to put a long-term contract closure for one of the most stretched flagship projects in the bilateral relationship between the countries. India managed to sign a ten-year Long-term Contract for the development of Shahid Beheshti Port Terminal, Chabahar. It was no surprise that, despite being in the middle of elections, Union Minister of Ports Shipping and Waterways Sarabandona Sonowal visited Chabahar port to witness the signing of this crucial bilateral agreement.

Chabahar is a deep water port, located nearest to India, which is crucial for India's access to central Asia and vice versa for the States in the region into the Indian Ocean. The Chabahar project first came up as a crucial bilateral platform for Iran and India in 2003 when PM Vajpayee and Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani, unveiled a transformational strategic cooperation blueprint between the two nations. Iran and India while getting closer on the bilateral, were focussed on securing Afghanistan and making it an important transit destination further into Central Asia. The Delhi Declaration of 2003, signed between Iran and India reiterates "The recent trilateral agreement between the Governments of India, Iran and Afghanistan to develop the Chabahar route through Melak, Zaranj and Delaram would facilitate regional trade and transit, including to Afghanistan and Central Asia, contributing thus to enhanced regional economic prosperity."



However, post the Vajpayee Government, India's focus on the crucial infrastructure project shifted, partially impacted by domestic politics and a new world order. It wasn't until Prime Minister Modi became the prime minister that this integrated multi-modal Chabahar project found prominence. Hectic backroom negotiations, including the visit of the Afghan President to India in 2015, followed by PM Modi's visit to Iran in 2016, the signing of the trilateral agreement provided the much-needed impetus to the project. It also involved close coordination with the US (which wasn't too keen on India's enthusiasm, with Chabahar), but the independent access to Afghanistan served as the crucial lynchpin to unblock the hesitancy.

In 2017 India, Iran and Afghanistan held the second ministerial-level trilateral meeting to get an update on the establishment of a transport and transit corridor in Chabahar. The Statement released after the trilateral stated "Reiterating the importance of Chabahar as a hub for regional economic connectivity and their commitment to work towards this objective, the Ministers commended the joint efforts of the three countries in the recent successful transit of wheat from India to Afghanistan through Chabahar."

It was nearly seven years later that India got complete access to the Chabahar port for handling the crucial operations. It is important to be reminded that China has made significant progress in Central Asia by aggressively pursuing its Belt and Road initiative. Iranian President led a high-level economic delegation to China in February this year, while reiterating that China continues to be its largest trading partner. India's relations with Central Asian countries and further into Russia have been stable for decades. China has been a new entrant in the region which has first managed to acquire critical infrastructure projects in India's immediate neighbourhoods like Pakistan, Sri Lanka etc and is now in weather with Russia.

Iran has traditionally been a key influencer in the West Asian and Central Asian regions, however, the ongoing war in Gaza has revived old fault lines in the region. The US which withdrew from Afghanistan used to be a key decision-maker in the region and is keen to.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

# RBI fortifies the nation's economy with gold



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Taking a cue from prudent household savers, the Reserve Bank of India has significantly increased its gold reserves to 817 metric tonnes to hedge the economy



In a strategic move reminiscent of Indian households safeguarding their wealth, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is fortifying the nation's economic resilience by actively acquiring gold reserves. This bold initiative mirrors the prudence of household savers, as the central bank positions itself to shield itself against potential economic turmoil and bolster the country's financial stability.

The RBI now has accumulated gold reserves of 817 tonnes. This surge can be attributed to a combination of factors including escalating tensions in West Asia, Israel's assault on Palestine, the Russia-Ukraine war and persistent inflation, all of which have heightened the appeal of gold. Central banks worldwide are actively accumulating gold to diversify reserves and reduce dependency on the US dollar. China, in particular, has been on a gold-buying spree for the 17th consecutive month, aiming to hedge against currency depreciation and geopolitical risks. The world is unofficially going back to the gold standards it abandoned in 1971.

India is also hit by a continuous six-day fall in the stock market. It wipes out a significant investment. The loss is estimated at Rs 7 lakh crore. The household savers, of course, got their savings dipped as unemployment and rising prices hit them. The RBI in a clarificatory note on May 9, mentions that "they are putting their savings into real estate and the central bank is not worried of the phenomenon".

The bank itself has stepped up gold purchases to "help diversify its foreign exchange reserves base amid US dollar volatility". The US inflation rate in February hit 3.2 per cent year over year. Since the Federal Reserve began raising rates in 2022, it has raised rates from 5.25 per cent to 5.5 per cent in July 2023. It's

holding further raises given the US elections.

The price of gold has surged over 10 per cent since the start of the year, cementing its status as a preferred hedge against inflation and a sanctuary amid political and economic uncertainty. This significant uptick is largely due to considerable purchases by central banks and a rising demand for safe-haven assets.

Gold prices, in India, have been experiencing a significant surge in 2024, with a remarkable rally that has propelled them to an unprecedented all-time high of over Rs 73,000 per 10 gm two days before Akshaya Tritiya, when customary gold purchases reach a peak. This surge represents an impressive increase of approximately 21.1 per cent within just one year. On the day of Akshaya Tritiya on May 10, it has slightly dipped to Rs 72,788. Over six months, domestic gold prices surged from Rs 54,000 per 10 grams to a record high of Rs 73,958.

One can realise that nothing can appreciate faster than gold and can't question the RBI's sagacity. One dollar is at Rs 83.88. Rupee is expected to rise to Rs 82.50 in six months, a gain of about 1.1 per cent and in a year it could rise to Rs 82 - a gain of 1.7 per cent. It means the RBI dollar reserves would lose about 2 per cent value in a year. So, the RBI has decided to buy more gold than dollars. Its investment would be less at even Rs 73,000 for 10 gm and gains over 20 per cent. That's an intelligent economy.

The RBI has increased gold purchases to diversify reserves, with

gold value contributing to a \$3 billion rise in forex reserves to \$648.5 billion. RBI acquiring more gold in early 2024, aiming for diversification and inflation hedging.

The World Gold Council (WGC) says that RBI gold purchases touched 19 tonnes during January-March. This dwarfs the 16 tonnes of gold it bought in the whole of 2023.

In terms of countries with the highest gold reserves, the USA leads with 8,133 tonnes, followed by Germany, Italy, France and the Russian Federation with 3,366.49, 2,451.84, 2,436.01 and 2,271.16 tonnes of gold, respectively, according to WGC.

The surge in central banks' gold acquisitions stemmed from the aftermath of the US imposition of sanctions on Russia. These sanctions, triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, included freezing Russian reserve dollars and imposing restrictions on crucial commodity trades such as crude oil. The global repercussions of these measures were profound, exposing vulnerabilities within Western financial institutions.

The option of investments in the stocks has become riskier. In February, China divested an additional \$22.7 billion in U.S. Treasury securities, as per the latest Federal Reserve data, reducing its total holdings to \$775 billion. Despite this decrease, China retains its position as the second-largest foreign holder of U.S. debt. China is reducing its dependence on the dollar, as per US Federal Reserve data.

According to ICICIdirect study,

The RBI wants to diversify its foreign exchange reserves and reduce dependence on the US dollar. Gold offers stability and isn't directly tied to the performance of any one currency. It can be especially valuable during times of economic uncertainty or fluctuations in the dollar's value.

Gold is considered as a hedge against inflation. When the value of currencies weakens due to inflation, gold tends to hold its value or even increase. It protects the purchasing power of India's foreign reserves.

The diversification of the portfolio to gold reserve, RBI says, can inspire confidence in the Indian economy from foreign investors. It signals a strong financial position and stability, potentially attracting more foreign investment.

While less common today, gold can still be used for international transactions. Holding a gold reserve allows India to settle debts with other countries if needed, or if those countries aren't willing to accept rupee.

The next few years can be times of turmoil and gold can be a stabilising factor in the international economy. It is particularly so as the IT sector, industry, markets are in a destabilised condition and would take time to calm. At such volatile times gold is likely to be more in demand than paper currencies. The RBI has resorted to the right move and lead the India economy, which has been striving to become one of the major world economies.

(The author is a senior journalist; views are personal)

THE WORLD GOLD COUNCIL SAYS THAT RBI GOLD PURCHASES TOUCHED 19 METRIC TONNES DURING JANUARY-MARCH THIS DWARFS THE 16 TONNES OF GOLD IT BOUGHT IN THE WHOLE OF 2023

# Reflections of an oncologist navigating imperfections in cancer care

Doctors aren't infallible gods but compassionate humans dedicated to easing human suffering, even in the face of formidable medical challenges

As an Oncologist, my days are filled with facing the most dreaded and life-threatening cancers head-on, armed with an arsenal of anti-cancer treatments that range from mild to equally dreadful. But amidst the battle against this relentless disease, I've come to understand that medical science is far from perfect.

Every time I sit down with a patient and their family to discuss treatment options, I embark on a delicate balancing act. Yes, I outline the potential benefits of the treatment, but I also dedicate ample time to explaining its imperfections and the associated risks - risks that can sometimes be massive, impacting not only the



PRASHANT MEHTA

patient's life but also their quality of life. These discussions are rarely brief; on average, I find myself engaging with 2 to 8 family members, ensuring that everyone understands the complexities involved. And in these conversations, I make it a point to acknowledge that success is not guaranteed. I've had my fair share of failures and I recognise that my clinical judgements aren't infallible.

In the realm of oncology, the weight of responsibility is immense. The human toll of the disease, coupled with the emotional turmoil experienced by families, weighs heavily on me every single day. There are moments when the sheer gravity of it all threatens to overwhelm me, but I gather my strength, reminding myself of the dignity, composure and compassion required to navigate through these turbulent waters.

Recently, I stumbled upon an opinion piece penned by Mr. CY Gopinath, recounting the journey of a patient grappling with suspected pancreatic cancer. The patient felt as though his oncologist was pushing a

cancer diagnosis onto him. Such situations are not uncommon, especially when dealing with cancers that are notoriously difficult to biopsy. Misdiagnoses and the fear of missing a fatal diagnosis loom large in the minds of oncologists.

The widening trust gap between patients and healthcare providers is a cause for concern. Patients and their families may perceive our actions and recommendations in various ways, sometimes attributing them to ulterior motives. But the reality is often far more nuanced than it appears.

Having worked extensively in both private and Government healthcare settings, I've witnessed my fair share of diagnostic and ther-



apeutic errors. These errors stem from the inherent imperfections of medicine and the challenges of navigating a complex healthcare landscape. In the modern era, doctors are acutely aware of the trust

deficit that exists between us and our patients. The notion of a 'God complex' is a myth; instead, we recognise our limitations and strive to bridge the gap through open communication and transparency.

While drugs and surgeries aren't panaceas, alternative treatments aren't always the answer either. It's imperative to base our decisions on evidence-backed practices rather than succumbing to anecdotal allure.

In the realm of healthcare, there's no one-size-fits-all solution. Each patient's journey is unique, shaped by their individual preferences and circumstances. As doctors, we must personalise our approach, empowering patients to be active participants in their healing process.

It's crucial to foster an environment where patients feel empowered to question, learn and seek second opinions. After all, informed decision-making is the cor-

nerstone of effective healthcare delivery. In conclusion, amidst the cacophony of controversy and misinformation, the voice of expertise must prevail. Medicine is a science guided by evidence, not conjecture. Despite the challenges and uncertainties that lie ahead, I remain steadfast in my commitment to serve, echoing the words of my mentor: "Someone has to do this work and you've been chosen. Do it well."

The writer is a Senior Consultant and Program Director (Lymphoid Neoplasms and Cellular therapy) Department of Medical Oncology Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, Faridabad. Views are personal.

**MONEY MATTERS**

## Rupee settles 4 paise lower at 83.50 against US dollar

The rupee stayed range-bound and settled 4 paise lower at 83.50 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, weighed down by unabated foreign fund outflows amid investors' weak appetite for riskier assets. However, a firm trend in domestic equities supported the local unit and restricted its losses, forex traders said. The rupee remains under pressure due to ongoing elections and foreign fund outflows, and the same shall subside once the results are out, they added. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit traded in a narrow range. It opened at 83.45 and touched an intraday high of 83.44 and a low of 83.50. The domestic unit finally settled for the day at 83.50 (provisional), down 4 paise from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee had settled at 83.46 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 104.40, higher by 0.06 per cent.



## Reliance Retail to sell UK's ASOS apparels in India

Reliance Retail on Thursday said it has entered into a partnership to sell British online retailer ASOS' products in India. "Under a long-term licensing agreement, Reliance Retail will be the exclusive retail partner for ASOS across all online and offline channels in India," the firm said in a statement. ASOS' products cater to young adults. "Reliance Retail will introduce ASOS' curated portfolio of fashion-led own brand labels to the Indian market through a multi-channel presence for ASOS and a diverse array of retail formats, including exclusive brand stores, multi-brand store expressions, and digital commerce platforms," the statement said. The agreement is ASOS' first country-wide exclusive retail partnership. The deal with ASOS is the latest in a string of partnerships Reliance Retail has signed with international brands including American jewellery seller Tiffany & Co and French luxury brand Balenciaga.



## JK Paper Q4 net profit slips 2.44 % to Rs 276.6 cr

JK Paper Ltd on Thursday reported a 2.44 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to Rs 276.6 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2024, impacted by higher raw material cost and lower realisation across categories. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 283.52 crore a year ago, JK Paper said in a regulatory filing. Its consolidated revenue from operations in the quarter under review stood at Rs 1,804.87 crore against Rs 1,806.99 crore in the year-ago period, it added. The total expenses in the fourth quarter were higher at Rs 1,457.63 crore compared to Rs 1,379.42 crore in the same period of the preceding fiscal. The board of directors has recommended a final dividend of Rs 5 per share for the year ended March 2024. This is in addition to the interim dividend of Rs 3.5 per equity share declared and paid during the said financial year, the filing said. For the fiscal ended March 2024, its consolidated net profit was Rs 1,133.2 crore compared to Rs 1,208.22 crore in the previous year.



## 'Can't direct CBI to file FIR'

### Special Court to MMTTC on coal import scam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A special court has dismissed a plea by the Metals and Minerals Trading Corporation of India (MMTC) seeking the registration of an FIR by the CBI in connection with alleged corruption in the import of coal from an Australian company at inflated rates in 2009, officials said Thursday.

The PSU had sought directions to the CBI to register an FIR in matter which is now being investigated by the central probe agency by registering a preliminary enquiry.

A preliminary enquiry is the first step by the agency to ascertain if there is prima facie enough material in the allegations to warrant a full-fledged investigation through an FIR or a regular case, they said.

The plea was dismissed by the special court which said it does not have power to direct the CBI to register an FIR and investigate the case.

Citing orders of the Supreme Court and high courts, the special court said the powers to issue directions to the CBI to register an FIR lie with the Supreme Court and high courts only.



The public sector undertaking had approached the special court with a plea it had submitted two complaints with the CBI -- September 2, 2022 dated November 23, 2022 -- seeking the registration of the FIR in the matter as the complaints were disclosing the commission of the cognisable offences, but no action was taken by CBI.

The central probe agency had registered a preliminary enquiry last year.

The case pertains to a long-term agreement signed between MMTTC and Anglo American Metallurgical Coal Pty. Ltd on March 7, 2007 for the purchase of freshly-mined and washed cooking coal.

**Citing orders of the Supreme Court and high courts, the special court said the powers to issue directions to the CBI to register an FIR lie with the Supreme Court and high courts only.**

It is alleged MMTTC officials proposed and sanctioned USD 300 per metric tonne rate for the fifth delivery period between July 01, 2008 to July 30, 2009 despite being fully aware that the price of cooking coal had drastically fallen in the wake of Lehman Brothers collapse, and

purchasing coal at USD 300 PMT would cause a huge loss, they said. The complaint said that on November 20, 2008, the prices of coal were low and the Sale Purchase Committee of Directors should have satisfied itself for agreeing to a price of coal at USD 300 PMT as opposed to price which was USD 96.40 PMT for the previous delivery period. "It is alleged that the facts of the case constituted a clear case of conspiracy i.e. official of the complainant with the official of the Anglo Coal in order to gain pecuniary advantage to Anglo Coal by abusing their positions and to defraud the exchequer of this country," the MMTTC told the court.



**Biocon net profit falls 57% to Rs 136 cr; revenue at Rs 3,966 crore**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Biotech firm Biocon on Thursday reported a 57 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit to Rs 136 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2024 on account of higher expenses. The company posted a net profit of Rs 313 crore in the January-March quarter of the last fiscal. Total revenue rose marginally to Rs 3,966 crore in the fourth quarter compared with Rs 3,929 crore in the year-ago period, Biocon said in a statement.

The company said its total expenses rose to Rs 3,635 crore in the fourth quarter from Rs 3,389 crore in the same period of FY23.

For the year ended on March 31, 2024, the company said its consolidated net profit rose to Rs 1,022 crore as against Rs 463 crore a year ago.

## Exports may rise 12-15% to cross USD 500 bn this fiscal: FIEO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's merchandise exports are expected to increase about USD 60-70 billion to USD 500 billion by the end of FY25 on account of gradual improvement in global demand, apex exporters' body FIEO said on Thursday.

In 2023-24, exports dipped over 3 per cent to USD 437.1 billion. Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President Ashwini Kumar also said the country's services exports are also likely to reach USD 390-400 billion this fiscal.

"We are looking for merchandise exports between USD 500-510 billion in 2024-25. In the services, we expect exports to be around USD 390-400 billion for the current fiscal," Kumar told reporters here.

He said traditional markets like the US and Europe will help boost India's exports.

Sectors such as electronics, electricals, engineering, and pharma will play a key role in boosting shipments.

However, the new President said they are concerned as labour-intensive sectors like knitted and woven garments, footwear, gem and jewellery are doing good.

In the footwear sector, while



global imports grew at a CAGR of 5 per cent, India's exports contracted.

"The focus on skilling is still lacking as per piece production in many segments is much less as compared to Vietnam, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Cambodia," he said.

He suggested that the government address certain issues such as credit flow, interest subsidy and set up e-commerce hubs in the country to provide a cushion to the exporting community.

The share of export credit in the net bank credit is extremely low and not commensurate with the share of India's exports in the GDP, which is over 20 per cent, he said.

"The demand for the credit has gone up with rising inflation, high commodity prices

and abnormal increase in sea as well as air freight," he added.

With the longer voyage time, on account of diversion of cargo through the Cape of Good Hope, coupled with slow offtake from the shelves, the buyers are also taking longer time to remit export proceeds necessitating higher credit for a longer period.

"This requires additional flow at most competitive rates," he said, adding, "We are proposing to create an Export Development Fund to assist exporters, in undertaking export promotional activities."

For this, a budgetary support equivalent to 1 per cent of preceding year's export in Indian rupee can be made available every year through the budget grant to the department of commerce.

## Sensex jumps 676 pts, Nifty closes above 22,400

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty shot up nearly 1 per cent on Thursday, driven by buying in HDFC Bank and Infosys and a rally in the US and Asian markets.

In a highly volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 676.69 points or 0.93 per cent to settle at 73,663.72. During the day, it hit a high of 73,749.47 and a low of 72,529.97.

The NSE Nifty surged 203.30 points or 0.92 per cent to 22,403.85.

"The domestic market experienced a late surge, driven by strong global trends that pointed to lower-than-expected US consumer inflation figures, which suggests at least two interest rate cuts in 2024," Geojit Financial Services Head of Research Vinod Nair said.

Among the Sensex components, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, Tech Mahindra, Titan, Infosys, JSW Steel, Bajaj Finserv, HDFC Bank, Larsen & Toubro and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the major gainers.

Maruti, State Bank of India,



Power Grid, Tata Motors and IndusInd Bank were the laggard.

"The market exhibited volatility during trading hours but managed to gain nearly

one per cent, indicating a continuation of its recovery trend. Positive global cues led to a gap-up opening in the Nifty; however, the initial gains diminished quickly as

the session progressed. Subsequently, it witnessed sharp fluctuations on both sides before settling near the day's peak," said Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 1.07 per cent and smallcap index rallied 0.85 per cent.

Among the indices, capital goods jumped 2.05 per cent, followed by industrials (1.99 per cent), teck (1.66 per cent), Realty (1.59 per cent), IT (1.55 per cent), telecommunication (0.99 per cent) and healthcare (0.70 per cent).

## Share of non-fossil fuel to grow to 50% in domestic energy generation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government aims to increase the share of non-fossil fuel to 50 per cent in the country's total installed electricity generation capacity by 2030, MNRE Secretary Bhupinder Singh Bhalha has said.

The share of non-fossil fuel-based capacity in India's installed energy generation capacity is around 42 per cent at present, the official said in a address at the World Hydrogen Summit 2024 in



Rotterdam, Netherlands, on May 15, 2024, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy said in a statement.

"Approximately 43 per cent of India's current installed electricity capacity is from non-fossil-fuel sources, with projections indicating a rise to

50 per cent by 2030," he said.

As per official figures, there was a 10.79 per cent rise in non-fossil fuel-based capacity (renewable energy sources) addition at 190.57 gigawatt (GW) in 2023-24 over 172.01 GW in 2022-23. On the progress being made towards The National Green Hydrogen Mission, Bhalha said, "The government has made substantial progress in this regard, having awarded tenders for incentives to support green hydrogen production of a total of 412,000 tonnes per annum.

## Silver surges Rs 1,800 to hit all-time high; gold jumps Rs 650

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Silver soared by Rs 1,800 to hit a fresh record high of Rs 88,000 per kg on Thursday, while gold prices jumped Rs 650 to Rs 74,050 per 10 grams in line with strong global trends.

According to HDFC Securities, rising for the second straight session, silver prices surged Rs 1,800 to hit its life-

time high of Rs 88,700 per kg in Delhi. It had closed at Rs 86,900 per kg in the previous session.

Meanwhile, the precious metal price jumped from Rs 650 to Rs 74,050 per 10 grams. In the previous session, it had closed at Rs 73,400 per 10 grams.

"Bullion rose on Thursday as yesterday's lower US inflation figures raised the prospect of

interest rate cuts as early as September. In April, the underlying US inflation rate fell for the first time in six months.

"Following the data release, the US dollar index slipped to a fifth-week low, and US Treasury yields declined, which is also positive for the precious metal," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst, Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,386 per ounce, up by USD 21 from the previous close.

## Vedanta plans to raise up to Rs 8,500 cr via issuance of securities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mining billionaire Anil Agarwal-led Vedanta Ltd on Thursday said its board has approved raising up to Rs 8,500 crore through issuance of securities. The company will look at raising funds via instruments like American depository receipts, global depository receipts and foreign currency convertible bonds.

However, this is subject to regulatory approvals. The board also gave its go-ahead for investment in Vedanta Copper International VCI



Company Ltd (VCI) to set up a continuous cast copper rod plant in Saudi Arabia with a capacity of 125 kilo tonnes per annum. Vedanta Copper International VCI Company

Ltd was incorporated last year to explore growth opportunities in new geographies. "...VCI is in the process of establishing a state-of-the-art copper rod manufacturing facility... which will enable the company to explore more growth opportunities in new geographies. Post the investment, VCI shall become a direct wholly owned subsidiary of the company," Vedanta said. The board has also given its go-ahead to the first interim dividend of Rs 11 per share for 2024-25, amounting to Rs 4,089 crore.

## Muted loan growth a 'concern', aim for a 10-12% jump: LICHF

PNS ■ MUMBAI

LIC Housing Finance (LICHF)'s chief executive T Adhikari on Thursday said a muted loan growth of 4 per cent is a matter of concern for the lender and it will aim to accelerate it to 10-12 per cent in this financial year.

The home finance company will also look at tapping its play in the affordable housing segment in the new fiscal, he said, adding that its share of the overall book will double in three years.

"The muted loan growth of 4 per cent is a matter of concern, but I am confident of double-digit growth in FY25," Adhikari told reporters a day after the company announced its March quarter results showing a nearly 8 per cent dip in profits.

When prodded further, he said the loan book will grow in lower-double digits, between 10-12 per cent, and added that the overall quan-

tum of disbursements should touch Rs 75,000 crore in FY25 from the Rs 50,000 crore in FY24.

In the fiscal year gone by, he said an organizational restructuring exercise kept the overall activity depressed in the first half of the fiscal, while activity started off from the third quarter and normal-

ized in the fourth quarter which showed a 15 per cent growth on-year.

On the affordable housing plans, he said the company has implemented a plan of opening up offices in tier-III centres, putting the people and systems, and added that they plan to disburse Rs 6,000 crore of such loans in FY25.

When asked whether asset quality is a challenge in such loans, Adhikari said the company's experience suggests that a larger quantum of non-performing assets come from the high-ticket loans while the low-ticket ones have better repayment record.

## Odisha FPOs tap global markets with export of mangoes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant boost to farm exports from Odisha, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) in the state have marked their foray into the global markets with the first commercial shipment of fresh mangoes and vegeta-

This feat was made possible through a strategic collaboration between the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), the state Directorate of Horticulture

and Palladium which is the technical support unit for the 'Promotion and Stabilisation of Farmer Producer Organisations (PSFPO)' project. On May 15, as much as 0.75 tonne of fresh vegetables were exported to Dubai from the Biju Patnaik International Airport, Bhubaneswar. This included 0.5 MT supplied by the Madanamohana Farmers Producer Cooperative Society Ltd, an FPO from Dhenkanal district, a statement said.

Besides, 1.22 tonne of premium Amrapali and Dussehri variety mangoes



from the same FPO were shipped to Italy over the last

couple of days, it said. Farmers associated with

these FPOs realised 20-30 per cent higher prices for their produce in the export markets as compared to domestic sales, it added.

Lauding the efforts, Sitakanata Mandal, APEDA's Regional Head, said, "We wanted to facilitate exports of fresh produce this season. Our partnership with Palladium made this possible as they identified and connected the FPOs with exporters." "The work done by Palladium in linking Odisha's FPOs with global markets is praiseworthy," Mandal added.

Biswajit Behera, Associate Director of Palladium, said with over 800 FPOs, Odisha has immense potential to export fresh farm produce worldwide.

The market linkages created with export supply chains will boost farmer incomes and create sustainable business opportunities for the state's FPOs, he stated.

"We aim to provide more such global markets connected to FPOs in remote areas and help them adopt efficient quality control systems to scale up their operations," Behera said.



## 'As a solo traveller, I encountered eve-teasing in Kerala'

Hyderabadi content creator Aastha Maheshwari, who is also a passionate explorer, takes *The Pioneer* through her travel diaries this week exclusively for our Travelogue segment.

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Aastha Maheshwari, a passionate explorer and content creator from Hyderabad, travels into the depths of both international and national landscapes, not only as an experienced traveller but also as an avid scuba diver, deciphering the mysteries of the undersea world.

"In the rhythm of life, travelling is like a relaxing tune; each voyage provides the me with fresh experiences and is composed of emotions," she says. "It unleashes my creativity and frees my soul. I've been known to hike 20 kilometers just to see the perfect sunset—it's just who I am."

Exploring off-beat places and adventure activities brings out the adventurous and brave side in humans, and amidst the hustle of life, one finds simplicity and allure in the surroundings, offering unforgettable moments. She continues to share, "I recently went on solo journeys to Thailand and Vizag. In Thailand, I explored the breathtaking beauty of Koh Tao, indulging in memorable diving experiences. Given that it was my second visit to Thailand, I aimed to delve deeper into Bangkok's rich culture. In Vizag, my primary goal was to immerse myself in the coastal charm, spending a couple of tranquil days in the quaint town of Bheemli."

The limits of any part of existence blur when one meets the right tribe and people with comparable interests. For example, she remembers one instance when, "In my opinion, as long as one maintains warmth and openness, obstacles such as language, ethnicity, and nationality lose their meaning. During my travels, I spoke with numerous Germans who had relocated to an island. They were not only content creators, but also

diving instructors. Shared interests drew us together, transcending societal divides. Through these ties, one can easily learn about the history and culture of others by joining a tribe with comparable interests."

A place and its beauty cannot be explored in a few days, and engaging with locals takes time. "I repeat places numerous times since properly exploring them requires more than just one visit. During lockdown, I spent six months in Goa, immersed in its essence. I spent 35 days in Ladakh and two months in Manali, immersing myself in the local lifestyle. In a little town, I met old women who supported themselves by knitting. Four to five days barely scratch the surface of these places—I like to take my time and enjoy every minute, embracing leisurely travel," she explained.

Culinary is the gateway to many cultures, and India has abundantly experimented with flavours and tastes from all over the world, including Aastha's favourite Portuguese dessert, 'Seeradura', which she tried in Goa!

Then, obstacles while travelling are also unavoidable, and as a solitary woman traveller, concerns about safety arise, and women travellers frequently bring out the contrasting reality of locations. For women solo travelers, safety is always a companion. She describes, "As a solitary traveller, I encountered eve-teasing in Kerala, which served as a vivid reminder of the safety risks associated with travelling in India. Despite Kerala's reputation for safety, I did not feel safe there. In contrast, in Kargil, which is known for its less calm climate, I felt comfortable. This event demonstrated the need for alertness and attentiveness in solo travel, underscoring the crucial need to remain aware of one's surroundings."

The quick pace of life and modern-day jobs frequently result in burnout and neglect of travel. This developing environment of modern times necessitates holiday preparation, and as remote work becomes more common, the importance of experiencing new places increases, she explains. "As a content producer and freelancer, I can work from anywhere, blurring the line between the workplace and vacation. I honestly don't recall my last proper trip. Even throughout my two-month stay in Varkala, where I learned to surf, my laptop remained by my side while business continued. This is how I try to balance work and life. However, there are days when I simply don't feel like writing or creating content."

The trip to Vizag and Ladakh, two diverse yet enchanting destinations, opened her eyes to the remarkable compassion and friendliness of strangers, as she recalls, "Ladakh truly captivated the spirit; I was anxious to return



despite its commercialisation and the extended onset of altitude sickness. Spending only five to six days there felt insufficient; its attraction necessitated a longer visit. The friendliness of the folks I met was unexpected and uplifting. While trudging towards a monastery with my luggage, a monk offered me a ride in his mini-truck, demonstrating true hospitality. In Vizag, a cab driver went above and beyond to ensure my safety by avoiding drunken areas and dropping me out in a safe location." Her trip as a solo traveller is a dance between planned preparations and unplanned adventures. "As a lone traveller, spontaneity guides me, but I prefer to have arrangements in place, particularly for overseas journeys in terms of hotels, expenses, and currency conversion. However, I dislike fixed itineraries and prefer to depart from them whenever possible. During my recent trip to Thailand, there were days when all I wanted was a calm afternoon snooze, which is completely fine. Skipping some tourist attractions is also acceptable; what truly matters is living in the current moment and enjoying it to the fullest."

Additionally, "For women solo travellers, menstruation can add an added degree of complication to their adventures, but it doesn't have to be a barrier, because travel forces individuals to stretch their boundaries and embrace the new and challenging surroundings. Travelling empowers me in ways I never expected. I had no idea how capable I was until I went on solo adventures. I distinctly recall an 18-hour bus ride to Rishikesh while menstruating in sub-zero temperatures in December. I didn't think I'd be able to pass that test of resilience, but I did. Travel challenges you to your boundaries, providing you with stories to tell and unforgettable experiences and lessons to treasure and learn from."



Travelogue

## 'I have told directors & production houses to allow me chance to play anything out-of-the-box'



TEJAL SINHA

Love is the greatest gift that one generation can leave to another. While the love and learning that we get from parents is incomparable, so is it with grandparents too. Grandparents can be an incredibly valuable resource. Simply being close to them reassures one a lot about change and continuity—what has come before and what will come after.

In an era when youth, particularly those living in cities, are becoming increasingly disconnected from their roots, *Dil Dosti Dilemma*, streaming on Prime Video, tells a story about coming of age and making amends with grandparents. But does it prove to be an important lesson for youngsters to learn? Well, certainly not!

Because our guest for the day, Shishir Sharma, a much-celebrated actor not only in television but also in movies with his small yet remarkable stints like *Fanaa*, *Dangal*, *Chichhore*, *Uri: The Surgical Strike*, *Gaslight*, and many more, who plays the character of Asmara's Nana (maternal grandfather), feels that it is a very important lesson to learn for all of us and just not the youngsters.

"I think the older generations have also learned from these youngsters to listen to them and see their POV as well," begins the *Raazi* star. "It's not just about hopping on our POV all the time. It's not imposing our rigidity on them. We need to be more flexible in our thoughts, and her mother taking that stand was so important. It was impulsive but also very right in terms of values that she has to learn; just not being on a readily available road is not going to give you everything in life. Coming to your grandparents' house, staying in their house, learning in their house, and the value system in their

house, which Tanvi Ji teaches and tells her, I didn't have any such interaction with her in the show, but she learns that, she understands that, and she doesn't mind going into that world with her friends with that value system and forgetting those values that she was imbibing previously. She comes to a different road altogether."

As he further went on to discuss much in detail on the theme, he also enunciated us through one of the scenes where Asmara apologises to her Nanni, Akhtar Begum, and that's the value system that she learns.

And for such a value system to be imbibed, he also highlights that there needs to be two-way communication. "There has to be a dialogue from both sides, and none can keep quiet. You cannot keep quiet and be like you tell us what to do. You need to tell us what you think you should be doing."

The *Tanu Weds Manu Returns* actor knew that to make his character feel realistic, he had to certainly play it as real as possible. "I didn't want to make it look like a grandpa, which is fictitious, and people would think that this guy is just putting it on," says the *Kurbaan* actor. "I wanted to be as real as possible as a grandfather, not someone who is always giving advice but also playful at times. For example, there was a scene where I said *Tumne kabhi sooraj dekha hai* (Have you ever seen the sun?), which means playfulness. It was a situation that could have gotten out of hand."

As senior actors, there's always a notion that the scenes on the sets will be quite strict and serious. But that wasn't the case here. He revealed that he and Tanvi Azmi were all fun off-camera. "We wanted the sets to be as vibrant as possible. The director also enjoyed the banter. When you are on the sets, you want to be with everyone."

While there's quite a talk on the age factor and typecast, the *Disco Raja* actor highlights, "You don't

Actor Shishir Sharma, who has made his own mark in the entertainment industry with his persona on and off-screen, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, discussing the central theme of his just released project *Dil Dosti Dilemma*, playing grandpa on-screen, the age factor in the industry, and more.

get roles because you are so and so. The same thing has happened with me because of my persona. People didn't think that I'd be able to play a light-hearted or jovial person on set. This particular show proves it. I have told directors and production houses to give me a chance. I am an actor, and if I can take a gun and shoot someone on-screen, then I can also make people laugh, so why don't you just give me a chance? I wouldn't say I am typecast just because I played two army officers, one from the Indian army and one from the Pakistani army. That doesn't mean I am typecast. They are two different perspectives, individuals, and thoughts."

On a concluding note, he further goes on to say, "People should understand that we are actors and we need to be given that chance. Just because one looks like that and because there's a kind of persona, that doesn't matter. One should be given the opportunity to play something different for them to understand. People need to understand we are capable and can do things out of the box."



## Weakness and fatigue in hot weather? Don't confuse irregular heartbeat with a heat stroke!

Weakness and fatigue are very non-specific symptoms, they can occur for various reasons, including thyroid disease, anemia, post-viral syndrome, vitamin D, and vitamin B12 deficiency. But these can be considered a warning sign of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

Heat exhaustion and heat stroke are two important events that may happen in summer because of a failure of control over the cooling sweating mechanism. Due to this mechanism, our body is unable to cool down.

Individuals aged 50 and above are at a higher risk of developing problems in the summer when exposed to temperatures of 38.7 degrees Celsius and humidity levels exceeding 70 percent. An irregular heartbeat is something related to the rhythm disturbances of the heart and is quite different from a heat stroke.

Palpitations are just a manifestation of heat stroke; they can happen as part of the presentation of heat exhaustion or heat stroke, but common symptoms include disorientation, confusion, excessive sweating, fatigue, dizziness, palpitations, cold, moist skin, headaches, muscle spasms, and swelling in the legs.

**Difference between an irregular heartbeat and a heat stroke:**

An irregular heartbeat, also known as cardiac arrhythmia, is a condition in which the heart beats abnormally quickly, or slowly. Numerous factors, including stress, anxiety, coffee intake, underlying heart problems, cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, and hereditary disorders, are common causes of an irregular heartbeat.

Even though an arrhythmia usually is asymptomatic, during a diagnosis, symptoms including chest pains, fluttering in the chest, giddiness, skipping beats, shortness of breath, and excessive perspiration may be taken into consideration. There is a difference between an irregular heartbeat and a heat stroke, but it is important to note that an irregular heartbeat can also happen during hot weather.

According to a study conducted in 2020 by the Ministry of Earth Sciences, since

1950, the average annual temperature in India has increased significantly by 0.15 degrees Celsius every decade. Between 1951 and 2015, there has also been a rise in the number of warm days and nights, at roughly seven and three days each decade, respectively.

The most serious of all heat-related conditions is heat stroke, which manifests as impaired brain function (stroke) as a result of excessive body heat.

Cardiac patients are more predisposed to heat stroke and exhaustion. For example, patients with hypertension who are dependent on blood pressure-control medications should be more careful. Such patients can experience arrhythmia or palpitations due to the depletion of electrolytes and water caused by interference with cooling mechanisms during hot weather. Therefore, it is important to be cautious about common summer issues such as heat stroke or exhaustion if you experience these symptoms.

**Precaution and prevention of heat stroke and exhaustion require:**

- Drinking plenty of hydrating fluids
- Avoiding sun exposure, especially during the hottest part of the day,
- Having a healthy diet
- Applying sunscreen
- Avoiding strenuous activities in the peak summer
- Easing into outdoor activities gradually
- Wearing a breathable hat that shields your head from the sun but allows heat to escape.
- Rehydration is the key strategy for management.

(The author, Dr. Brajesh Kumar Mishra, is an Interventional Cardiologist and Cardiac Electrophysiologist, at Manipal Hospital in Gurugram.)

# what's brewing?

## LISTINGS

### Zoco brings the flavours of Pan America to Dubai

A vibrant new dining experience in the culinary heart of the UAE as V Hotel Dubai, Curio Collection by Hilton presents Zoco, a Pan American dining concept helmed by one of the city's most exciting young chefs. Curated by Peruvian Chef Gustavo Alonso Guin Barnachea, the menu is a smorgasbord of enticing, fiery, and flavourful dishes crafted with premium ingredients, reflecting the gastronomic heritage of Pan America. From the Peruvian-Japanese fusion of Nikkei cuisine to the time-honoured culinary traditions of Mexico, the emphasis at Zoco is all about sharing, with plates crafted to encourage connection.

### FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION

Amidst the pressing public health challenges of high mortality rates and compromised quality of life, the significance of effective asthma management comes into sharp focus. This year's World Asthma Awareness Month theme, "Asthma Education Empowers," underscores the vital role of knowledge in enhancing asthma management and patient outcomes. With India ranking #1 in prevalence and disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) due to asthma, in addition to accounting for 42% of all asthma-related deaths worldwide, this year's theme amplifies the urgency for national-level mobilisation to address this critical issue.

### Software engineer from Hyd secures dream job

Manideep Siva, a software engineer hailing from Hyderabad, achieved his dream role as SDE II at Slice, accompanied by an impressive salary hike of 400%, through sheer perseverance and the transformative power of upskilling at Scaler. At Scaler, Manideep found himself in a dynamic learning environment where he received personalised mentorship from industry experts who had previously worked with tech giants like Microsoft, Flipkart, Amazon, and Google. Leveraging the extensive resources and guidance provided by his instructors, Manideep honed his skills and improved his understanding of fundamental computer science concepts, propelling him towards his career aspirations.

### Free for All, Har Match Har Ball

As we inch closer to the beginning of the eagerly anticipated ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 starting June 2, fans across the nation are rooting for the Men in Blue. After the success of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 campaign, Disney+ Hotstar has once again collaborated with the young superstar Kartik Aaryan as he becomes the face for its latest campaign, Free For All, Har Match Har Ball. The recently released ad film for the campaign emphasises Disney+ Hotstar's 'Free on mobile' offering for the tournament, enabling all the cricket fans across the country to never miss any cricketing action.

### Introducing happy gut

Moderate, a leading advocate for holistic well-being, proudly announces the launch of its latest innovation: "Happy Gut." Building on its commitment to natural solutions backed by rigorous scientific research, Moderate introduces Happy Gut, a cutting-edge formula crafted to support digestive wellness and overall gut health.

WS Audiology (WSA) inaugurated its new Research and Development (R&D) hub in Hyderabad, marking a significant milestone in the company's expansion in India. The new hub underscores WSA's commitment to harnessing local talent and technology to drive global innovation. The meet was inaugurated by Principal Secretary of the Industries & Commerce (I&C) and Information Technology (IT) Jayesh Ranjan.



Vision IAS Hyderabad, hosted a seminar featuring several successful UPSC aspirants sharing their journeys. One such inspiring story comes from an Electronics and Communication Engineering (ECE) graduate from NIT Warangal, who also works as a Hardware Systems Engineer at Qualcomm. Nandala Srikanth (AIR 27) UPSC CSE 2023 attended to inspire current students with his journey and strategies. This event attracted a large number of aspirants eager to glean insights and strategies from successful candidates.



Gareth Wynn Owen, British Deputy High Commissioner, Hyderabad, attended the PTE partner Meet in Hyderabad. The focus of the meet was on expanding the partner ecosystem through exceptional customer service, comprehensive training programs, and raising awareness about market trends and opportunities. This gathering aimed at a significant stride toward empowering partners to achieve greater growth and success.

Monika

Ashu Reddy

Actresses Ashu Reddy and Amiksha, marked their presence at the launch of Hilife exhibition, which was held at Hicc-Novotel inHITEC City. The exhibition will showcase the tempting collection of creative fashion wear, lifestyle wear, bridal wear, and a lot more.

Jabilli

Manasa

Preeti

Kavita

PARTY  
Photos by- SV Chary

## FUN

### ARCHIE

### CALVIN AND HOBBS

### GARFIELD

### REALITY CHECK

### SPEED BUMP

### CROSSWORD

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

### NANCY

### SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATINGS: ★★☆☆☆

### ACROSS

- Large stone buildings built in ancient Egypt as tombs
- Steel pins knocked into wood
- Call in on
- Get
- A song sung by one person
- Have a lie down
- Thin cord for tying parcels
- Fabric
- Defrosts
- So smooth it is difficult to get hold of

### DOWN

- Indicate direction with your finger
- Moscow is in this country
- Shift
- A type of dance club
- Wrong
- Most powerful
- A sculpted figure
- Ruin
- Rome is the capital city of this country
- Large boat

SOLUTION

S	T	A	T	I	O	N	S
R	O	L	L	G	A	L	S
E	D	H	E	R	T		
T	O	W	E	R	A	N	O
C	O	V	E	R			
H	O	N	E	Y			
R	E	C	I	P	E		
R	N	I	E	R			
F	G	E	N	E	R		



# HOLLYWOOD VFX MAKERS FOR VIJAY'S THE GOAT



The cinematic juggernaut that is *The Greatest of All Time (The GOAT)* continues to gather momentum as it strides into the post-production phase, promising a visual spectacle like never before. Helmed by the esteemed director Venkatesh Prabhu and headlined by the charismatic Thalapaty Vijay, this ambitious project has once again sent waves of excitement rippling through Kollywood. Recently, producer Archana Kalpathi, confirmed via her Instagram Story that post-production activities have kicked off in earnest. The buzz doesn't stop there. It has been revealed by sources now that the film's VFX work has commenced, with a remarkable partnership inked with the team behind the revolutionary visuals of *Avatar*. This collaboration underscores the high-budget fantasy nature of the project and hints at a visual extravaganza that will push the boundaries of Indian cinema. The decision to enlist the expertise of a Hollywood VFX team speaks volumes about the grandeur and scale of *The GOAT*. With a plethora of VFX frames set to adorn the screen, the film

promises to transport audiences into a world where imagination knows no bounds. Adding to the allure of this cinematic spectacle is its stellar ensemble cast, which includes Meenakshi Choudhary as Thalapaty Vijay's love interest, alongside seasoned actors such as Jayaram, Sneha, Laila, Yogibabu, VTV Ganesh, Ajmal Amir, Mic Mohan, Vaibhav, Premgi, Ajay Raj, and Aravind Akash. With such a formidable lineup, *The GOAT* is poised to deliver riveting performances and unforgettable characters. Under the banner of AGS Entertainment and bankrolled by Archana Kalpathi, Kalpathi S Aghoram, Kalpathi S Ganesh, and Kalpathi S Suresh, the film promises to be a cinematic extravaganza like no other. Adding to the anticipation is the musical genius of acclaimed composer Yuvan Shankar Raja, whose spellbinding soundtrack is set to elevate the film to new heights. As fans eagerly await further updates on this highly anticipated venture, all eyes are firmly fixed on *The Greatest of All Time (The GOAT)*, poised to leave an indelible mark on the annals of Kollywood history.

## Pushpa 2 release on track



Amidst swirling rumors of a potential postponement, fans of Telugu cinema can breathe a sigh of relief as sources share that the highly anticipated release of *Pushpa 2* remains firmly on track. Directed by the acclaimed Sukumar and featuring the dynamic duo of Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna in lead roles, *Pushpa 2* has been generating immense buzz since its announcement. Recent speculations hinted at a possible delay in the release date, stirring apprehension among eager fans. However, a reliable source from the film's production team has quashed these rumors, affirming that *Pushpa 2* is slated for release on August 15 without any alterations. According to

the insider, Allu Arjun is set to wrap up shooting for the film this month. This steadfast commitment ensures that the film's release remains unaffected by any potential delays. In addition to the reassuring news about the release date, the musical promotions for *Pushpa 2* have kicked off with gusto, signaling the film's impending arrival. The recent launch of a Telugu song penned by the acclaimed Chandrabose further adds to the anticipation surrounding the project. Bankrolled by Mythri Movie

Makers and Sukumar Writings, *Pushpa 2* boasts cinematography by the talented Mireslow Kuba Brozek and is poised to hit screens worldwide on August 15, 2024, in multiple languages. With its grand scale and star-studded cast, the film promises to deliver a cinematic experience like no other.

## Naveen Chandra comes in support of Varun Sandesh

Helmed by director-producer Rajesh Jagannadham under The Fervent Indie Productions banner, *Nindha* delves into the enigmatic Kandrakota Mystery, setting the stage for a suspenseful narrative. The teaser launch, a highly anticipated event, saw Naveen Chandra extend his best wishes to the film's team. The teaser opens with a thought-provoking dialogue delivered by Thankella Bharani, setting the tone for the riveting tale that unfolds. Varun Sandesh's portrayal of a character caught in the throes of turmoil adds layers of intrigue, drawing viewers into a web of suspense and uncertainty. As the teaser progresses, glimpses of other key characters and glimpses of intense sequences hint at a thrilling journey filled with twists and turns. Crafted with finesse, the teaser expertly conceals the storyline while leaving a lasting impact on the audience. Rajesh Jagannadham's adept



editing ensures a seamless flow of visuals, enhancing the teaser's allure. Varun Sandesh's nuanced performance shines through, adding depth to the enigmatic narrative. Noteworthy contributions from cinematographer Ramiz Naveeth and sound designer Santhu Omkar further elevate the teaser, complementing the gripping visuals with immersive audio. Editor Anil Kumar's deft touch lends a polished finish to the teaser, amplifying anticipation for the film's theatrical release. With its tantalising glimpse into the world of *Nindha*, the teaser has sparked curiosity among audiences, setting the stage for an eagerly awaited cinematic spectacle. As anticipation mounts, fans eagerly await the film's arrival in theaters, poised to embark on a thrilling journey through the realms of truth and deceit.

## Lorry Chapter-1 first look is here

Sreekanth Reddy Asam's highly anticipated project, *Lorry Chapter-1*, takes center stage as its first look poster was unveiled on Thursday. With Sreekanth Reddy at the helm as writer, director, and stunt master, this film marks a significant milestone in his burgeoning career. Produced under the banner of King Maker Pictures, *Lorry Chapter-1* promises to captivate audiences with its thrilling narrative. Sreekanth Reddy's journey into the Telugu film industry began after completing a direction course at Loyola College, Chennai. Armed with a passion for storytelling, he honed his skills across various departments before gaining recognition for his innovative

YouTube videos. Now, transitioning from the digital realm to the silver screen, Sreekanth is set to make his mark with *Lorry Chapter-1*. The film stars Chandra Shikha and Rakhi Singh in lead roles, adding to the excitement surrounding its release. Speaking about the project, Sreekanth Reddy Asam expressed his gratitude for the support he has received thus far. "I began my career as a YouTuber, exploring my creativity through engaging videos that garnered widespread popularity," he shared. "With *Lorry Chapter-1*, I aim to deliver an action-packed entertainer that will resonate with audiences across languages. We are planning for a simultaneous release in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Bengali."



## Gangs of Godavari release pushed to May 31

With the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, it has been announced that single-screen theaters in Telangana will remain shut, leading to a lot of films getting postponed. In a recent report, it has been claimed that from May 17, 2024, the single screen theaters in Telangana will be shut down for 10 days, likely. As soon as this announcement came, the makers of Vishwak Sen starrer *Gangs of Godavari* announced the postponement of the film. The film has already been postponed, and the makers have begun their promotional activities already. Initially scheduled for release on



makers of *Gangs of Godavari*, just like it was to many other directors and producers. Starring Neha Shetty and Anjali as the female leads, the film is directed by Krishna Chaitanya. It also stars Nassar, Sai Kumar, Goparaju Ramana, and Hyper Aadi in other key roles. Set against the backdrop of the Godavari region, the film promises to deliver an action village drama. Vishwak plays the role of a Lankala Rathna, who fights against powerful people in his area.

### STANDALONE



## Rakul Preet Singh turns showstopper at International Fashion Week, Dubai

Actress Rakul Preet Singh dazzled the runway at the International Fashion Week Dubai, gracing designer Archana Kochhar's showcase with her radiant presence. The event witnessed the fusion of Mumbai's vibrant essence with Dubai's cosmopolitan flair as Kochhar unveiled her latest collection, "Bollywood Bling."

## Kajal confident about Satyabhama's universal appeal

Kajal Aggarwal, acclaimed as the 'Queen of Masses', takes center stage in the upcoming film *Satyabhama*, where she portrays the titular character alongside Naveen Chandra as Amarender. Produced by Bobby Thikka and Srinivasa Rao Takkalapalli under the Aurum Arts banner, the movie is helmed by director Suman Chikkala. Adding to the film's prowess, Sashi Kiran Tikka, the director of *Major*, assumes the role of presenter and lends his expertise to the screenplay. The third single, *Vethuku Vethuku*, has been unveiled now. Enthusiastic crowds, comprised of both young men and women, converged to celebrate the occasion, infusing the event with infectious energy. Renowned music director Sri Charan Pakala and his team took the stage, mesmerising attendees with soulful melodies and electrifying performances. The evening was further enriched with live renditions by talented singers accompanied by a dynamic orchestra, captivating the audience with every note. Amidst the musical extravaganza, a special contest added an element of excitement as participants vied for coveted prizes, adding to the festive atmosphere. Reflecting on the significance of the event, leading lady Kajal Aggarwal expressed her joy, particularly highlighting her connection to the song *Vethuku Vethuku*, which she described as her soulful anthem. She shared insights into her challeng-

ing portrayal of Satyabhama, emphasising the film's thematic blend of emotion, drama, and empowerment. Kajal expressed her confidence in the film's universal appeal and eagerly anticipated the audience's response upon its release. Notably, *Satyabhama* holds personal significance for Kajal as her first project since becoming a mother, resonating deeply with its purposeful narrative and emphasis on women's safety. She teased intriguing details about the film's portrayal of utilising the She app for girls' safety, underscoring its relevance in contemporary society. The song *Vethuku Vethuku*, composed by Oscar winner MM Keeravaani with lyrics penned by Chandra Bose, encapsulates *Satyabhama's* unwavering resolve to combat crime against women. Inspired by the character's determination, the lyrics serve as a poignant reminder of the power of resilience and courage. As anticipation mounts for *Satyabhama*, Kajal Aggarwal's heartfelt words and the evocative melodies of *Vethuku Vethuku* serve as a tantalising glimpse into the film's riveting narrative and its potential to resonate deeply with audiences.





# Mumbai Indians, Lucknow Super Giants look to end dismal IPL campaigns with win

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Out of reckoning from the IPL playoffs, Mumbai Indians and Lucknow Super Giants will look to end their campaign on a winning note when they clash at the Wankhede Stadium here on Friday. While Mumbai Indians were knocked out of the playoffs race long ago, Lucknow Super Giant's chances of making the last-four are extremely bleak even if they win their last IPL game here by a huge margin. Three consecutive defeats have not only denied LSG crucial points, they have also battered their net run rate. A 98-run loss to KKR was followed by a 10-wicket hammering by Sunrisers Hyderabad with a 19-run defeat to Delhi Capitals all but ending their chances of

getting into the playoffs after making the final-four in the previous edition. The seventh-placed LSG's NRR of -0.787 will not improve significantly for them to get back into contention, as Royal Challengers Bengaluru, at No. 6, are much better placed with a NRR of 0.387. Five-time IPL champions Mumbai Indians were the first team to be knocked out of the race for the playoffs this year as they endured a horror first season under new skipper Hardik Pandya. With only four wins from 13 matches so far, Mumbai Indians can at best finish with 10 points if they win on Friday, something that can possibly help them avoid a last-place finish. For Mumbai Indians, a pre-season change of leadership, with Pandya replacing Rohit



Sharma as captain, set off angry reactions from fans, which seem to have marred their campaign to a large extent. As a team, MI failed to get behind their captain. While their batting failed collectively, Jasprit Bumrah's individual brilliance with the ball (20 wickets in 13 matches), could not inspire the other bowlers to come together. The focus of the match would be on the likes of T20 World Cup-bound players such as Pandya, Rohit Sharma, Bumrah and Suryakumar Yadav given that they would be pivotal to India's hopes of bringing back the elusive trophy. Rohit is enduring a horror run with the bat with his best being 19 in the last six outings for MI, while Pandya too has not been able to inspire confidence in his all-round role. Suryakumar, though, has regained confidence with a strong showing in the IPL following three fifties and a century. For LSG, the lack of firepower and failure to capitalise on key moments has led to their plight even though skipper KL Rahul has had a successful run with the bat, scoring three half-centuries in his 465 runs this season at an average of 136.36. His strike rate, however, remained a topic of debate throughout even as the other batters failed to pull their weight. While Nicholas Pooran (424 runs at 168.92) provided the late impetus, the collective failure of LSG's bowlers has also remained an area of concern.



# Happy to get some reward after a challenging tournament: Nathan Ellis

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Punjab Kings pacer Nathan Ellis was relieved to see his team register a much-needed win, against second-placed Rajasthan Royals, after what has been a very difficult IPL season for them. Already out of playoffs contention, PBKS are currently placed in the ninth place with 10 points after five wins and eight losses in 13 matches, while RR, who have stuttered after an excellent start, maintain their second position despite a run of four defeats in recent times. "The wicket was a little bit slower than expected, but I still think it was a pretty good

wicket. Really happy for the guys to get some reward as it has been a bit of a challenging tournament for us," Ellis said at the post-match press conference here on Wednesday. Batting first, RR were restricted to 144 for nine in the stipulated 20 overs and then, PBKS chased down the target of 145 for the loss of five wickets, with seven balls to spare. "We were playing for pride today and trying to put in the best performance we can. Collectively, it was one of our better performances, adapted to conditions, bowled in partnerships. It was probably a complete performance," Ellis



said of the win. Skipper Sam Curran's unbeaten 63 off 41 balls anchored the PBKS innings, and he received support from Jitesh Sharma, who made 22 off 20 balls, as the duo combined for a 63-run partnership for the fifth wicket to earn the team's fifth win of the season. Playing his first game in this edition of the IPL, Ellis bowled tidily to finish with miserly figures of 1/24 from his full quota of four overs. He also took the all-important wicket of Sanju Samson. "Coming to the ground, we didn't know what we wanted to do -- bat or bowl. Later, I think we also decided on batting

first. Losing the toss wasn't the desired outcome. But I was happy. We bowled first, which gave us the chance to set the tone for the day," Ellis said. On how the surface played at the ACA Stadium in Guwahati, Ellis said: "The wicket was a little bit slower than expected, but it was still a pretty good wicket. In the powerplay, was where the game could have been won or lost and we both lost wickets there. "I think batting-wise, the powerplay was the best time to score and we both probably didn't have the greatest power players. And then from there the ball got a little bit softer and both teams lost wickets."

# Once I am done, I will be gone; you will not see me for a while: Kohli

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Well aware that he "can't keep going forever", Indian batting superstar Virat Kohli wants to give everything he has to his cricket career because he once he is done, he says he would be "gone" and won't be seen "for a while". Kohli's appetite for runs and centuries has already got him a record eighth ton in the IPL this season and he continues to lead the scoring charts with a mind-boggling 661 runs from 13 games for Royal Challengers Bengaluru. In a video posted by RCB on social media, the 35-year-old said the desire to live a regret-free life keeps him going. "So, it's just about not leaving any undone business behind and not having any regrets later, which I'm very sure of I won't. Once I'm done, I'll be gone; you won't see me for a while. "So, I want to give it everything I have till the time I play and that's the only thing that keeps

me going," said Kohli when asked what keeps him hungry. Kohli was picked by RCB soon after he led India to title triumph in the 2008 Under-19 World Cup and he has continued to be with the franchise ever since. "I think, as sportsmen, we do have an end date to our careers, so I'm just working backwards, I don't want to finish my career thinking what if I had done this on that particular day because I can't keep going on and on forever," he added. The former India captain is part of the Indian squad for the T20 World Cup in the USA and West Indies beginning next month. Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh had recently opined that RCB should think about giving back the team's captaincy to Kohli, saying he has an ideal combination of intent, commitment and aggression to take the side forward from the next season. South African Fa du Plessis is currently leading RCB.

# Hussey hopes Dhoni will carry on for two more years

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey is hoping that charismatic Mahendra Singh Dhoni would continue with the team for a couple of years more, saying the former skipper was still batting well. The 42-year-old Dhoni surprised everyone by stepping aside as captain of the 2024 season. Ruturaj Gaikwad was handed the reins of the side. "We are hoping he does keep going. He is still batting so well. He does prepare well - he gets into the camp very early and hits a lot of balls. He has been in good touch all season really," Hussey said on ESPN's Around the Wicket show. "I guess we just got to try to manage him from the body side of things. He had a knee surgery after the last season. So, he has been managing that

from the initial stage of the tournament. "I hope he keeps going for another couple of years. But we will just have to wait and see. He is the only one who will make that call. And, he likes to sort of build the drama a little bit as well. So, I wouldn't expect a decision anytime soon." Dhoni, who led the side to record five IPL titles, has been batting quite down the order this season, sometimes at number eight, and faces only a handful of deliveries. Hussey said that Dhoni's workload is being managed appropriately, given that he had undergone knee surgery. "That [knee surgery] is why we have had to manage him a little bit, and he only comes in at the back end. But, there has been no one better in being able to come in and hit the ball so cleanly from ball one than MS. He has been phenomenal," he added. The Australian was Dhoni wanted to



to stick around in the transition phase as Gaikwad was handed the captaincy. "MS sort of announced that he was not going to be attending the pre-tournament captains' meeting. And we're like, 'Oh, no. What's going on?'"

He said Ruturaj was going to be captain from then on. "So, it was a little bit of a shock to start with, but it has been managed really well. We have sort of known for a little while that he was the right man to take over the job when MS decided to step aside. "He wanted to still be here while the new captain took over, to try to help him along the way and sort of mentor him a little bit," said Hussey. Under Gaikwad's leadership, CSK has fared decently. The team is placed third on the points table and is likely to make the play-offs. "He has done a great job. He has been really calm and measured on the field. He will just get better and better. The more he does it and the more support we keep around him. The pleasing thing is, it has not affected his batting at all either," Hussey was effusive in his praise for Gaikwad.

## OTHER SPORTS



# AFI signs multi year deal with sports wear brand Puma

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) on Thursday announced that it has signed a multi-year deal with the sports wear brand Puma, which will now provide apparel, footwear and accessories to around 400 Indian athletes during domestic and international tournaments. Being the official kit sponsor, Puma's accessories will be used by top Indian athletes

including Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra, long jumper Murali Sreeshankar and steeplechaser Parul Chaudhary. "As an athlete training for 12 years, I know the importance of high-quality gear for high-level practice. With AFI teaming up with global sports brand, Indian athletes across all levels will now have access to training gear of international excellence, assisting us to express our best in our game now,"

Chopra was quoted as saying in a release. "This partnership signals the bright future of Indian sport," he added. This is the first time Indian athletes will get access to world-class speed suits that Puma supplies globally to other athletes. The speed suits are designed to aid freedom of movement, aerodynamics and faster speed, supporting athletes to focus solely on their performance and increase efficiency," the press

release mentioned. AFI President Adille Sumariwalla said, "Our association with Puma represents a significant milestone for India's athletes. With their high-quality gear, we are not only enhancing the performance of athletes but also creating a culture of excellence within the country's sporting community. We are confident that this partnership will propel Indian athletics to new heights on the global stage."

# Sharath, Manika to lead India in Olympic team debut

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Veteran Sharath Kamal and world no. 24 Manika Batra will lead the Indian men's and women's squads respectively at the Paris Games, where the country will make its Olympic debut in team events. The senior selection committee of the Table Tennis Federation of India on Thursday picked a six-member squad (three in each section) as per the Olympics norms, besides naming the individuals who would compete in the singles events. Sharath, Harmeet Desai, and Manav Thakkar will form the three-member men's team, while Manika, Sreeja Akula and Archana Kamath will be squad members in the women's category. The "Alternate Player" in each section would be G. Sathiyam and Ayhika Mukherjee. In the men's singles, Sharath and Harmeet will compete and it will be Manika and Sreeja in the women's event. The decision was taken based on the latest world rankings. It will be the fifth and final Olympic appearance for 41-year-old Sharath, who made his Games debut back in 2004. Since the selection of the squads and the individuals were as per the already pronounced TTFI criteria, three players "got selected themselves" because of their consistent performances over time and world rankings. However, there was a debate over the third player for the women's squad. After Manika and Sreeja Akula walked in on the back of their higher world rankings (top 50), Archana Kamath (103) made it to the team as the third player. The Bengaluru paddler edged out Ayhika Mukherjee



(133) on several counts, including her ranking. As for the men, Sharath picked himself as the top-ranked Indian at No. 40, while Harmeet (No. 63) and Manav (No. 62) were separated by one slot in WR. Though both made it to the team composition, National champion Harmeet got the selectors' nod based on his international (better win-loss proportion to his participation) and national performances. Incidentally, Massimo Costantini's presence as a special invitee at the meeting also added teeth as the foreign expert's inputs proved handy in the selection of the squads. Costantini will take charge of the Indian team for a third time as early as next week. He arrived in India earlier this week. Alternate players Sathiyam and Ayhika will travel with the team to Paris but will not stay in the official Games Village. Their services would be needed in case of an injury. **THE TEAMS:** **Men:** A. Sharath Kamal, Harmeet Desai, and Manav Thakkar; **Alternate Player:** G. Sathiyam. **Women:** Manika Batra, Sreeja Akula, and Archana Kamath; **Alternate Player:** Ayhika Mukherjee.