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PM jabs INDIA bloc: Aims just 50 seats to save 'honour'



'LEARNING' THAT NAWAZUDDIN SIDDIQUI WAS CAST IN SECTION 108, I WAS COMPELLED'



Kajal Aggarwal bags key role IN KANNAPPA



QUOTE OF THE DAY

The pioneer

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is running a government which he does not know when it will fall. BJP MLAs are not in touch with the Congress, but Congress MLAs are in touch with the BJP. Why should we be in touch with the Congress as nobody knows when the government is going to fall.

- Alleti Maheshwar Reddy, BJP leader

DON'T MISS...

Government will make roads...

Declaring that Telangana roads will be made accident-free, Roads and Buildings (R&B) Minister Komati Reddy Venkat Reddy directed officials to control accidents on the Hyderabad-Vijayawada highway. He asked officials to control accidents by displaying signboards, controlling speed, constructing six-lane roads, developing junctions and providing underpasses. Service roads will be constructed on both sides of the road and other steps to minimise accidents will be taken up...

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Delhi BJP issues 'chargesheet' ..

Ahead of the May 25 polls on seven Lok Sabha seats in the national capital, Delhi BJP on Friday issued a "chargesheet" against its INDIA bloc rivals AAP and Congress, listing alleged scams and corruption involving the two parties that have been in power for last more than two decades. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva along with other party leaders released the 40-page Hindi and English booklet titled "Congress and AAP - Partners in Loot", at the party office...

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India must ink addl FTAs, reduce..

India needs to sign many more Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with other countries and reduce tariffs to compete with the rest of the world. Niti Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam said on Friday. Addressing the captains of the Indian industry at a CII Annual Business Summit, Subrahmanyam said the government should not protect any sector from competition. "I think we should be very, very confident about our capabilities about India actually being able to be competitive with the..."

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RCB and CSK clash for final playoff ..

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's fairy tale resurgent run will be up against the might of five-time champions Chennai Super Kings and the weather gods when the two sides clash in an epic do-or-die match to decide the fourth and final team for the IPL play-offs, here on Saturday. Thursday's washout in Hyderabad meant that Sunrisers Hyderabad joined Kolkata Knight Riders and Rajasthan Royals as the three confirmed teams for the play-offs and the race is now for only one spot with two teams in fray...

-SPORTS

CABINET MEET TODAY

Decision likely on repairing Medigadda, Annaram barrages

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cabinet meeting on May 18, that is, Saturday, chaired by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy would discuss the action plan for repairing the Medigadda and Annaram barrages as the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) has submitted an interim report.

The Cabinet meeting will discuss issues pending under the AP Bifurcation Act as Telangana will complete 10 years on June 2. The meeting would also discuss all unsolved issues between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The Cabinet meeting would discuss the division of around 100 assets as per Schedules 9 and 10 of the State Reorganisation Act.

The meeting would also discuss

- Panel to hold talks with Andhra Pradesh
- Division of around 100 assets as per bifurcation act on agenda
- Mobilising funds for farm loan waiver priority

taking over buildings allotted to Andhra Pradesh besides disputes about arrears. The Finance Department would present a report containing all details for discussion at the Cabinet meeting.

The government thinks that it can solve pending issues by constituting a committee to hold talks with Andhra Pradesh.

The Cabinet meeting would also discuss mobilising funds for farm loan waiver as the Chief Minister



taken pledges at several places across the state during the Lok Sabha campaign that the Congress

government would waive farm loans by August 15. The government has to mobilise Rs 32,000 crore to waive the loans of 42 lakh farmers.

The Cabinet meeting would discuss guidelines for the loan waiver schemes as well as how to mobilise funds.

The Cabinet meeting would also discuss the progress in procuring paddy and the Kharif crop plan. It would discuss how to mobilise resources to improve the state's revenue.

The Cabinet meeting would discuss the steps to be taken before the new academic year begins in June. The Cabinet would discuss the distribution of books, uniforms and the supply of superfine rice to hostels etc.

Cong MLAs are in touch with BJP, says Maheshwar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Commenting that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is running a government that does not know when it will fall, BJP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy said that BJP MLAs are not in touch with the Congress, but Congress MLAs are in touch with the BJP.

Maheshwar Reddy said that they will reveal how many Congress MLAs are interested in joining the BJP very soon.

Replying to a question on Friday, Maheshwar said that there is no need to answer the allegations of Congress leaders like the Komati Reddy brothers and T. Jagga Reddy.

"Why should we be in touch with the Congress as nobody knows when the Congress government will fall? I am condemning the allegation of Congress leaders that BJP MLAs are in touch with the Congress," Maheshwar said.



Free bus scheme will hamper Metro: PM Modi

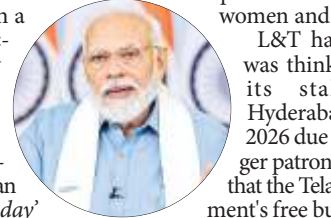
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Prime Minister Modi questioned election freebies which push states into a situation where they end up struggling for funds.

"You build a Metro in a city and then to win elections in the same city you promise free bus rides for women. This means you are taking away 50% of Metro passengers," the PM said in an interview to 'India Today' magazine.

"You are adding to traffic woes and damaging the environment by taking away passengers from the Metro. How will our Metro survive and the country move forward," Modi said.

This comes a couple of days after Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that if L&T wants to exit the Hyderabad Metro project due to



the state government's free bus ride scheme for women they are welcome to do so.

Revanth said his government will continue with the Congress scheme to provide free bus rides for women and transgenders.

L&T had said that it was thinking of selling its stake in the Hyderabad Metro after 2026 due to low passenger patronage and added that the Telangana government's free bus ride scheme for women had made the metro "less attractive."

TPCC Media and Communications Chairman Sama Ram Mohan Reddy said, "What more can we expect from a PM who has never considered public welfare? He has never helped the poor and the needy."

Continued on Page 2

Kejriwal's aide attacked me with full force: AAP MP Maliwal in FIR

P5

SC holds verdict on Kejriwal's plea against arrest

● Allows him to move trial court for bail

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday reserved its verdict on Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's challenge to his arrest by the ED in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam but granted him liberty to move the trial court for regular bail. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta reserved its judgement after hearing senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi and Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, who appeared for Kejriwal and the Enforcement Directorate, respectively. "Arguments heard. Judgement reserved. Notwithstanding the same, and without prejudice to rights and contentions, the appellant can move the trial court for grant of bail in accordance with law," the bench said in its order. The top court perused the case files and statements of the witnesses and accused recorded after October 30, 2023, the day senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia's bail plea was rejected. Sisodia is accused in both the corruption and money laundering case linked to the alleged scam. During the hearing, Raju claimed the probe agency has unearthed some personal chat messages between Kejriwal and some hawala operators.



AAP named as accused in Delhi liquor policy case

The Enforcement Directorate has, for the first time, named a political party as an accused in a case. In a supplementary chargesheet filed in the Rouse Avenue court in the alleged liquor policy scam on Friday, the Enforcement Directorate has named the Aam Aadmi Party - a national political party - and its national convener, Arvind Kejriwal, who is out on interim bail in the case. The agency is probing the money laundering angle of the alleged scam and this is the eighth chargesheet it has filed in the case, but the first in which the Delhi chief minister has been named.

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BRS terms registration fee hike as 'licensed loot'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS has opposed Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's proposal to increase property registration fees and stamp duty and said it was nothing but "licensed loot."

"Hiking property registration charges shattered the dreams of the poor and the middle class to acquire homes. This policy is heartless," BRS leader Dr Sravan Dasoju said.

"Revanth came to power mouthing slogans of Praja Palana and he had accused

"Hiking property registration charges shattered the dreams of the poor and the middle class to acquire homes. This policy is heartless."

the KCR government of taxing people but he is now snatching money through various ways. First, they opposed the LRS scheme. They want to enhance property registration charges which they opposed before. What is the change that this

government brought about?" he said. "He made many untenable promises. Without serious thought they gave promises. Having come to power he now wants to loot the public."

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'TG' to replace 'TS' everywhere

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government will be replacing all references of TS with TG. As per the UO note by Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari, "All the Special Chief Secretaries/Principal Secretaries/ Secretaries are informed that, the official abbreviation for the Telangana adopted by Government of India is 'TG'. Accordingly, it has been decided to adopt 'TG' as the official abbreviation at the State level also with immediate effect."

All the departments of Secretariat are directed to replace all references to 'TS' with 'TG' in the nomenclature of all State PSUs,

Continued on Page 2

85% Indians say climate change affecting them

Survey by Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Eighty-five per cent of people surveyed in India say they are already experiencing the effects of climate change, and more than a third of them have either already moved or considered moving because of extreme weather events such as severe heat, droughts and floods.

Ninety-one per cent of 2,178 adults surveyed between September 5 and November 1 last year by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and CVoter are "worried about global warming".

Eighty-five per cent of the people said they are already experiencing the effects of climate change.

Thirty-eight per cent had to go without enough clean drinking water for at least one day in the past year and 72 per



Weather-related disasters triggered over half a million (above five lakh) internal displacements in India in 2023 and around 2.5 million (25 lakh) in 2022.

power generation and other sectors of the economy.

Deadly floods left a trail of destruction in the Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand last year. A glacial lake outburst flood in Sikkim in October led to the collapse of a hydroelectric dam, killed more than 100 people, and affected more than 88,000. According to the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication-CVoter survey, more than 70 per cent of people think global warming affects weather in their local areas and monsoons in India but only 64 per cent usually receive warnings ahead of an extreme weather event.

2

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- ECE (Embedded Systems)
- ECE (VLSI)
- Mechanical Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering (Automotive Design)
- Mechanical Engineering (Robotics)

HIGHLIGHTS

- 14000+** Students from 27 States 5 U.I.'s 10 Countries
- 2+2** Study option in Universities abroad
- 406** Super Dream* & Dream** Offers
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- 100+** MoU's with Industry Partners

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Eligibility Criteria for Non Engg Programmes: Admission based on Personal Interview and 55% in +2/Intermediate

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Civil Supplies Minister Uttam failed in procuring paddy: BJP

Revant gov't not 'bonus' gov't but 'bogus' gov't: BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
Declaring that Chief Minister Revant Reddy's government is not a 'bonus' giving government but is a 'bogus' government, BJP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy said that Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy had failed to procure grains and that he should resign. Uttam has no idea of farmers' problems, he added. Maheshwar said that rice millers are looting farmers while buying paddy and that the BJP is condemning rice millers for threatening farmers. Criticising the Congress government for stating after elections that it will give Rs 500 bonus only for super fine type rice, he said it is nothing but injustice. He said the government should procure the entire paddy in procurement centres immediately. Speaking to the media at the State BJP office along with BJP

The government has been playing games with the lives of farmers by appointing Uttam Kumar Reddy who has no knowledge of farming as Civil Supplies Minister. It is painful that farmers are forced to sell paddy subject to many conditions.



MLAs Palvai Hareesh Babu, Patel Ramarao and Paidi Rakesh Reddy on Friday, Maheshwar said the Congress government is deceiving farmers like the BRS government by declaring three to four kilogrammes as wastage in each 40 kg bag citing moisture and other reasons. "Who is running this mafia? Unfortunately, Uttam did not respond when the BJP drew his attention to this. The government has not yet completed depositing Rythu Bandhu

money. Meanwhile, the Congress government is giving leads to the media stating that it will give Rythu Bandhu money only to farmers having five acres. The Congress did not mention the five-acre condition during elections," Maheshwar said. He said the government had failed to implement the loan waiver scheme and had not given Rs 12,000 to farm labourers. "Crores are being paid as bribes at procurement cen-

tres. The government has been playing games with the lives of farmers by appointing Uttam Kumar Reddy who has no knowledge of farming as Civil Supplies Minister. It is painful that farmers are forced to sell paddy subject to many conditions. The government is fudging figures to show that it procured 30 lakh tons of paddy," Maheshwar said. He asked whether there were any secret deals between rice millers and government officials. "We will expose the scandal. Corruption is rampant in the state. The CM's order to buy wet paddy is not being heeded at the ground level. A bonus of Rs 500 should be given to every farmer who raises paddy. The CM should stop delivering movie dialogues and must take action against corrupt millers," Maheshwar said. He said the BJP will fight the government till all the problems of farmers are solved.

BRS will not disappear, says Cong leader Vijayashanthi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress leader Vijayashanthi, who stayed away from the Lok Sabha elections, suddenly came out with a post on 'X' supporting the BRS on Friday. In her post, Vijayashanthi criticised Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy for stating that the BRS will disappear from Telangana. She said in her post, "BJP state President Kishan Reddy's opinion that the BRS will no longer exist in Telangana is not reasonable. It is natural in southern states for regional emotions to drive public sentiment. Those who act without understanding the South should examine the political response to Karunanidhi, MGR, NTR, Ramakrishna Hegde, Jayalalitha and now the BRS. Perhaps what the BJP has not thought about is that the Congress understands the phenomenon of southern self-respect."



Gov't to encourage cultivation of fine rice varieties

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress government is thinking of encouraging farmers to cultivate fine paddy varieties although their yield would be less compared to that of coarse paddy varieties, it is learnt. However, the demand and prices for fine rice varieties are high in the market. The production of fine variety rice is decreasing every year and that of coarse rice is increasing. The percentage of coarse variety rice is 98 and that of fine variety is just two per cent. Due to this coarse rice stocks increased massively not only in the state but across the nation. Most farmers are now cultivating coarse paddy varieties and due to this, there is a shortage of fine paddy varieties. The price of fine rice in the market is also increasing by the day. The government is distributing rice through ration shops in the state. Ration shops needed 24 tons of rice per year. The gov-



ernment distributes coarse variety rice through ration shops and supplies fine variety rice to social welfare hostels and anganwadi centres and for mid-day meals. Many ration card holders are selling ration rice as the rice supplied is coarse. Recyclers recycle the coarse rice and sell it in the market for high prices. Due to this, government funds are getting wasted and the purpose of supplying ration rice is not getting served. Ration cardholders are also not happy. So the Congress government is thinking that this problem can be solved by encouraging the cultivation of fine variety paddy instead of coarse varieties.

CM Kejriwal likens situation in India to that in Russia

PNS ■ AMRITSAR

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday likened the situation in the country to that in Russia, claiming there is a "dictatorship", and opposition leaders are being put in jail. Kejriwal was addressing Punjab Aam Aadmi Party workers and leaders, including MLAs and MPs, asking them to put in their best to ensure the party's victory in all 13 Lok Sabha seats in the state. He slammed the BJP, accusing it of putting all rival party leaders in jail. "The dictatorship that is going on in our country is not acceptable. India has never seen such a period in the past 75 years -- putting opposition leaders in jail," the AAP chief said. "Like in Russia, (Vladimir) Putin had either sent all rival leaders in jail or got them killed and then conducted the elections and got 87 per cent votes. When there is no opposition, you will be the only one to get the votes," he said. Kejriwal was granted bail by the Supreme Court in the Delhi excise policy case on May 10 to allow him to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections.

KCR says they're reuniting forces that were part of T-agitation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
BRS chief and former chief minister of Telangana K Chandrashekar Rao said that another movement should be initiated in the Telangana State, which was in conflict, and that there is still agitation going on in the State. He said that once again the forces of the movement are being reunited and the work & planning is being designed. On Friday, KCR launched a book 'Son of the Soil' (Bhoomiputrudu), which is based on editorial articles of Telangana activist Gosula Srinivas Yadav on the changes in political and social aspects, the State's progress and other issues. Reminding that the movement has intensified with the spread of sentiments in the Telangana movement after 2001, poets and artists once again reminded the need for unity. KCR has found fault with the Congress government's thinking in the direction of regressive direction for Telangana which was won by an agitation. He said farmers,



workers and unemployed people expressed grief and that various groups are facing many difficulties under the Congress rule. On this occasion, KCR recalled that he ruled Telangana for 10 years without causing any trouble to the people. Former minister Harish Rao, Balamallu, Sarath and others were present.

Hike in registration charges, stamp duty will affect poor: TRA

Chief Minister A Revant Reddy's decision to increase registration charges and stamp duty has raised concerns among people. There is a huge difference between the market value of land and the selling price. Telangana Realtors Association president Naragani Praveen Kumar expressed concern that if the prices and charges are increased, the poor and middle class will lose their dream of owning a house. As per his

statement on Friday, if the market value has to double, the stamp duty should be reduced from 7.5% to 3%. It will be convenient for buyers and sellers. He said that if the stamp duty is kept at 7.5 per cent only by increasing the market value, the registration charges will become a burden to the buyers. He said that if we include the LRS charges along with the registration charges, we will have to pay lakhs of rupees.

Surendra Mohan posted as Secy, Mines & Geology

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana government issued orders posting K Surendra Mohan, IAS(2006), as Secretary to Government (Mines & Geology), I & C Department, vice Benhur Mahesh Dutt Ekka, IAS(1995), transferred. Surendra Mohan is also placed in FAC of the post of VC & MD, TS Mineral Development Corporation Ltd., duly relieving Benhur Mahesh Dutt Ekka from FAC of the said post. As per the orders, Benhur Mahesh is directed to report to General Administration Department.

DIRECTORS' CHOICE



Film directors Ram Gopal Varma, Anil Ravipudi, Harish Shankar and others met Chief Minister A Revant Reddy at his residence on Friday. They invited the CM to the programme to be organised on the occasion of Directors' Day on May 19

Free bus scheme will hamper...

Continued from page 1

He has always sided with the rich and today he reveals his intentions. If the number of women who use public transport is increasing it is clearly a reflection of the need for such welfare mea-

asures." "The BJP sees this as a burden on the government. The Congress sees it as helping the poor and the middle class. Modi is nowadays showing different shades to the public. On the one hand, he endorses a manifesto giving freebies

in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. In Andhra Pradesh, the TDP and the Janasena have promised free bus travel for women as part of their super six manifesto," Ram Mohan Reddy said. "The CM is clear. L&T is a private player and it is always

open for the firm to go and for someone else to come in. People are choosing the TSRTC so that they can save some money which means they need money. Fuel prices have skyrocketed during Modi's rule," he added.

BRS terms registration fee hike as....

Continued from page 1

This is licensed loot by the Congress. They are collecting LRS fees, selling public lands and increasing registration values.

In what way will it help the poor or the middle class? A poor man can no longer buy land. You are making it unaffordable for the poor. You are behaving like a businessman and not as a leader," Sravan said. BRS leader Krishank Manne said, "When the Congress was in the Opposition, Sridhar Babu criticised the BRS and asked why we are increasing land rates. Today, can you explain why your Congress government is increasing land registration charges? This is Revant Reddy's double standards."

BJP leader Raghunandan complains against Medak BRS candidate Venkatrami

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP candidate in Medak Lok Sabha constituency, M. Raghunandan Rao, filed a complaint with the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) demanding the disqualification of Medak BRS candidate Venkatrami Reddy alleging that Venkatrami had distributed Rs 500 per vote during the elections. Speaking to the media after

filing his complaint on Friday, Raghunandan said that Venkatrami had distributed money packed in envelopes polling booth-wise in all villages. He said that the Chegunta Police could intercept only a car carrying money although the BRS transported the money in 20 cars. He said that the Police Commissioner of Siddipet and

the SP of Medak did not care even though he had complained to them. He said that former Minister Harish Rao and six MLAs distributed money from the Erravalli farmhouse and that Rs 84.27 lakh was found in a car belonging to BRS leaders. He appealed to the Election Commission to disqualify BRS candidate Venkatrami by adding Rs 84.27 lakh to

Venkatrami's account. Raghunandan asked the police to reveal whether they think that the BRS is still in power. He said that he would file a complaint with the Central Election Commission if the CEO failed to take action against Venkatrami. Raghunandan also appealed to the Election Commission to consider the inclusion of Venkatrami as A-5 in the FIR.

'TG' to replace 'TS'...

Continued from page 1

agencies, autonomous institutions and any other government bodies, official documents (including letterheads, reports, notifications, etc.), signages within and outside government offices, websites and online platforms and any other official communication. All the departments are requested to submit the action taken/ compliance report immediately latest by May 31 to the Joint Secretary to gov-

ernment (Coordination), General Administration Department. All the Special Chief Secretaries/ Principal Secretaries/Secretaries were requested to review with all government institutions under their administrative control to ensure this migration seamlessly across the board. They were asked to adopt 'TG' in all official documents - all official documents, including policy papers, GOs, notifications, circulars, reports, letter heads

and other communication materials, should use 'TG' instead of 'TS'. This includes both electronic and hard copy documents. Orders were given to standardisation in communication wherein all future official communication, both internal and external, should utilise 'TG' as the abbreviation for Telangana. Departments are requested to take stock of existing stationery and printed materials with 'TS'.

85% Indians...

Continued from page 1

While 86 per cent of the respondents favour India's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, 78 per cent say the government should be doing more to address global warming. Sixty-one per cent think India should augment the use of renewable energy while only 14 per cent think the country should expand the use of fossil fuels. India accounts for nearly 18 per cent of the global population but uses only 6 per cent of the world's primary energy, according to the International Energy Agency. However, due to its large population, India is currently the third-largest greenhouse gas emitter

behind China and the US. Research shows India is among the countries most vulnerable to climate impacts. Climate change has already begun to alter growing seasons in the country and, with around 50 per cent of its population engaged in agriculture and other climate-sensitive sectors, the damage to productivity and health is significant. According to the independent think tank Council on Energy, Environment and Water, more than 80 per cent of the Indian population lives in districts highly vulnerable to extreme weather events. It is projected that 148.3 million (14.83 crore) people in India will be living in severe climate hotspots by 2050.

SC holds verdict on...

Continued from page 1

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who also appeared for the ED, said the alleged hawala operators have been arrested now and the chat messages have been recovered from them. Singhvi contested the claim and said the allegation was being made to prejudice the mind of the court. "Is this submission for the court or the media? Why was he suppressing this fact till now? The arguments are being made to create a doubt in the court's mind in the last minute," Singhvi told the bench. Raju claimed the probe agency has got evidence about money having been sent from Andhra Pradesh to Goa through hawala channels to

help with the Aam Aadmi Party's 2022 assembly poll campaign. The bench questioned Raju whether this "evidence" was mentioned in the "grounds of arrest" recorded in writing and given to Kejriwal. "The probe agency is not supposed to share everything with the accused before the chargesheet," Raju replied, adding that sharing every material with the accused at the time of arrest will jeopardise the investigation, delay the trial and there will be chances of witnesses being influenced. He said under the PMLA and CrP, the investigating officer is not supposed to share everything about the "grounds of arrest" with the accused or else the accused will start challenging the

material at every level and there will be hundreds of petitions before the court. The bench told the ASG, "How will then the accused defend himself or challenge his arrest, if complete material is not shared with him? How will he challenge those grounds?" It pointed out that Section 19 of the PMLA, which deals with the powers of arrest, uses the word "guilty" and it means that the investigating officer must have reasons to believe, based on the material in possession, that the accused is guilty. Justice Khanna said, normally, the investigating officer should not arrest a person until he has sufficient material to show that he is guilty, and that should be the standard practice.

AAP named as...

Continued from page 1

Mr Kejriwal was arrested on March 21, becoming the third senior AAP leader to be taken into custody in the alleged scam, after his former deputy Manish Sisodia and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh. Sources said the decision to name the AAP as an accused can have major repercussions for the party. The Enforcement Directorate, they said, now has the option of writing to the Election Commission of India and requesting them to begin the process of derecognising the Aam Aadmi Party. It can also attach the party's assets, including its headquarters in Delhi. The development comes at a time when the AAP finds itself embroiled in a controversy surrounding its Rajya Sabha MP Swati Malival, who has alleged that she was slapped and kicked

by Mr Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar at the chief minister's residence on Monday, when she was waiting to meet the AAP chief. The allegations have kicked up a political storm and the AAP has faced attacks from various quarters, including from Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. An alleged video from the day has also led to Ms Malival and the AAP trading charges. Earlier on Friday, a Delhi Police team, accompanied by forensic specialists, had visited Mr Kejriwal's residence as part of its investigation into Ms Malival's complaint. **SUPREME COURT'S POSER** In October last year, the question of making the AAP an accused was raised by the Supreme Court, which had asked why the party was not being named if it had, as per the Enforcement Directorate's claims, benefited from the alleged kickbacks in the liquor policy case.

'Hyd will be transformed into a global investment destination'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Civil Supplies and Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy announced that Hyderabad would be transformed into a truly global investment destination, competing with the world's top metropolises.

Speaking after inaugurating the IGBC Green Property Show 2024 at Hitec on Friday, Uttam Kumar Reddy stated that the Congress government aims to send a clear message to global investors and the country that Hyderabad will become a truly global city in every sense.

He highlighted that the existing infrastructure in Hyderabad, including the international airport, Outer Ring Road, expressway, flyovers and drinking water from the Godavari and Krishna rivers, was primarily developed by the Congress government from 2004 to 2014. "We will build infrastructure in Hyderabad to an unprecedented level," he said.

Citing examples, he mentioned Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's plans to develop the Musi Riverfront to global standards and expand the Metro Rail to reach every corner of the city. Additionally, he assured that the Telangana government would foster a business-friendly environment and that the Ease of Doing Business in Telangana would be the highest in the country. Investors and business people will find the government highly supportive.

"We will be transparent, friendly and efficient. We will be business-friendly and entrepreneur-friendly. Whatever needs to be done to boost investment, industries, Information Technology, construction and real estate, our government will be at the forefront," he said.

Uttam Kumar Reddy assured everyone in the State and country that the Congress govern-



Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy inaugurating the IGBC Green Property Show 2024 at Hitec on Friday. Minister D Sridhar Babu also seen

Over 884 projects going green in Hyd, says Min Sridhar Babu

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for IT and Industries D Sridhar Babu said that over 884 projects are going green in Hyderabad and 1.13 billion sqft of green building space certified by Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) makes a significant impact on resource conservation. He spoke during the three-day programme of IGBC Property Show organised by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) at HITEC City on Friday.

He said, "In all, 12 out of the 17 sustainable development goals are implemented in the construction industry whether it is concrete or energy. Of the energy produced, 40 per cent is consumed by the construction

industry. However, I appreciate the CII and the IGBC for creating a carbon-free green print by promoting green homes in the country, especially in Telangana. India is committed to net zero carbon by 2070 but the CII-IGBC industry in Telangana aims to achieve this by 2050."

He also said that soon, there will be carbon credits and if one were to upscale the industry or want a personal level credit, then it is important to have net zero carbon credits to achieve the loans or permission to upscale the industry.

Although Hyderabad ranks second in IT after Karnataka, the government wants to grow IT to its peak. During the last five years the term of exports was to the

tune of Rs 2.5 lakh crore. The State government will double this, he said. The government will ensure IT grows exponentially in Telangana. He also stressed that the government was keen to encourage the green model all over.

Shekar Reddy, Vice-Chairman of CII-IGBC said, "The IGBC Green Property Show 2024 is a remarkable initiative that highlighted the importance of sustainable living. It showcased the tremendous progress Telangana has made in embracing green practices and I commended the efforts of IGBC and participating developers in driving this movement forward. Over 70 exhibitors are showcasing 75,000+ properties to the tune of 70 crore square feet."

He highlighted that the existing infrastructure in Hyderabad, including the international airport, Outer Ring Road, expressway, flyovers and drinking water from the Godavari and Krishna rivers, was primarily developed by the Congress government from 2004 to 2014. "We will build infrastructure in Hyderabad to an unprecedented level," he said.

ment in Telangana intends to elevate Hyderabad and Telangana to a truly global level. "Real estate is largely driven by perception. Our government will take the necessary steps to create real momentum in the construction and real estate sectors and boost investment," he said.

"We are accessible round-the-clock and available to address your grievances, needs and demands. Our single-minded goal is to make Hyderabad a centre of investment, a truly global city with world-class infrastructure," he said.

Uttam Kumar Reddy noted that the Congress government had been in power for about five months, with nearly two months spent on elections, limiting their actions due to the model code of conduct. "Now we are focused entirely on governance. We will address any issues in industry, construction, and real estate. We assure you that we will take care of them," he said.

TO REVOLUTIONISE CLASSROOM LEARNING

OU unveils smart interactive boards

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a significant step towards integrating advanced educational technology, the University College of Arts and Social Sciences, Osmania University, has introduced smart interactive boards in 25 departments on Friday. These state-of-the-art boards represent a substantial investment in modernising the educational infrastructure. Each interactive board costs approximately Rs 2 lakh, with the total project expenditure amounting to around Rs one crore.

During the inauguration of these digital classrooms, Osmania University Vice-Chancellor Prof. D Ravinder highlighted the crucial role of educational technologies in enhancing teaching and learning experiences. He stressed that as the landscape of education evolves, it is imperative to equip classrooms with the lat-



OU VC Prof. D Ravinder signing on the interactive board

est tools, applications and software to keep pace with these changes. The new interactive boards offer teachers a valuable platform to showcase and enhance their skills and talent, while students gain invaluable educational experiences.

Prof. Arjun Rao, Principal of the University College of Arts and Social Sciences, expressed gratitude to the varsity's administration for their support in launching the digital interactive boards. He emphasised that this initiative will

significantly contribute to effective teaching and learning for students, aligning with the institution's commitment to academic excellence.

Prof. Laxminarayana, OU Registrar; Prof. Redya Naik, OSD to VC; Prof. Talaq Sultana, Dean of the Faculty of Arts; Dr B Ram Shepherd and Dr Balu Naik, Vice-Principals of Arts College; along with Heads and Chairpersons of various departments and faculty members participated in the inaugural programme.

TO FOSTER ADVANCED RESEARCH

IIITH launches part-time MS for professionals

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The International Institute of Information Technology, Hyderabad (IIIT-H) on Friday announced the launch of a part-time industry sponsored Master of Science (MS) for working professionals to foster advanced research skills and empower individuals to drive tech-led innovations. Applications are open and the first batch will start in August 2024.

The programme is designed to cater to the evolving needs of professionals and the technology companies. It is structured around a long thesis project advised jointly by the companies and IIIT-H faculty,

with few courses to be taken alongside the foundational knowledge needed for the thesis. With bulk registration, companies can choose tech areas and advisors, as well as co-create projects with IIIT-H focusing on specific solutions companies may need.

Professionals with a Science/Engineering degree and at least one year of tech industry experience may apply. Participants can choose the individual courses in each semester and enrol alongside full-time students at IIIT-H over three years, concurrent with the thesis project. Expert mentorship and hands-on learning will ensure success in emerging tech and upskilling

efforts. Director of IIIT-H, Prof. Pj Narayanan said, "In today's world, those with expertise in the deep-end of technology will have a big edge. IIIT Hyderabad wants to facilitate employees of IT companies in Hyderabad to acquire such expertise through this thesis-oriented programme. This unique industry-academia collaboration will provide opportunities for companies to take advantage of IIIT-H's research strengths."

Applications for the Autumn 2024 batch, expected to begin in August 2024, are open now. Details at <https://outreach.iiit.ac.in/industryms/>.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

SBI, Hyderabad Circle on Friday launched a Cyber Security Awareness Drive by flagging of publicity vehicle from the local head office at Koti. The vehicle was flagged off by Manju Sharma, General Manager (NW-1), Debashish Mitra, General Manager (NW-2) and AK Sarathy (GM).

The campaign objective is to create awareness amongst the public on large number of cybercrimes being reported and the use of Cyber Crime Helpline Number: 1930, Cyber Crime reporting portal www.cybercrime.gov.in and social media handles of Cyberdost on Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, X, YouTube, Telegram, LinkedIn, Koo, ShareChat and Public. The vehicle would go around the city promoting the awareness on cyber security and the use of helpline 1930.

Speaking on the occasion, Manju Sharma emphasised the need for creating awareness to avert financial cyber frauds. "Cybercrime poses a burgeon-

Cyber security awareness drive vehicle flagged off



ing threat, impacting many individuals and organisations. As we increasingly rely on technology for various aspects of our lives, the risk of cyber threats also rises," she said and added that understanding the importance of cybersecurity can help prevent data breaches, identity theft and other cybercrimes. It's not just

about protecting sensitive information, but also about safeguarding our digital infrastructure.

Speaking on the occasion, AK Sarathy said that awareness programmes teach safe online habits, like creating strong passwords, recognising phishing attempts and keeping software updated. These practices

can significantly reduce the risk of falling victim to cyberattacks, contributing to a safer and more secure digital world.

The event was attended by Jitendra Kumar Sharma (DGM-CDO), Malathi Nambiar (DGM-CM&CS), Sunil Kumar Goel (DGM-Fin & Ops) along with other DGMs.



Mamata Madireddy, Murali Varadarajan, Krishna Gollapudi and others in a group picture

FMC holds Green Annual Summit-2024

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Facility Management Council (FMC) organised the 10th edition of Green Annual Facility Management (FM) Summit 2024 at the Address Convention on Friday at Narsingi. IT industry veterans and facility management professionals inaugurated the event by lighting the lamp.

The National FMs Summit-2024 is an annual conference of Facilities Management professionals. Over 400 facilities management professionals participated in the summit. The conference focused on future technology and AI practices which every facility

manager will use in the next 10 years.

Murali Varadarajan, Chief Strategy Officer, L&T Metro Rail (Hyderabad), gave an inaugural keynote address on "The Mobility for Today and Tomorrow". He gave an overview of L&T Metro and its operations in the past seven years. He said, "We have a 4.5 lakh daily average ridership. The average trip length is 12.5 km. The highest ridership so far is 5.5 lakh. Hyderabad Metro so far operated from 6 am to 11.59 pm. But today onwards, we are extending another 45 minutes. Which means it will operate 45 minutes past midnight." He also announced that on every

Monday the Metro will operate from 5.30 am.

It was followed by a panel discussion moderated by Mamata Madireddy MD, Head of Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) Global Services Centres on integrating sustainability into the corporate strategy. Participating in the panel discussion, Krishna Gollapudi, Executive Vice-President of Hitec Businesses said, "We live in a plastic world. We must go back to our roots to adopt sustainable practices."

Seshasae Kanthamraju, CEO of Ramoji Film City, said Ramoji Film City registered a 1.5 million footfall a year. The

Ramoji Film City is the most inspiring destination for storytellers. He said, "This is the worst generation for the next generation. Let us be better for the future."

Saurabh Agrawal, Vice-President of Welspun Flooring said, "Sustainability is the key factor in every industry today", while Prof V Venkata Ramana, Vice-Chancellor of RGUKT, Basar, pointed out that they have embarked on cleaning river Godavari which involves about 300 students. "We must promote Academic Social Responsibility. The moderator Mamata said, "HSBC Global Services aims to go net zero by 2030."

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Government will make roads accident-free: Komatireddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Declaring that Telangana roads will be made accident-free, Roads and Buildings (R&B) Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy directed officials to control accidents on the Hyderabad-Vijayawada highway.

He asked officials to control accidents by displaying signboards, controlling speed, constructing six-lane roads, developing junctions and providing underpasses. Service roads will be constructed on both sides of the road and other steps to minimise accidents will be taken up.

The Minister said that the Regional Ring Road (RRR) would become a game changer and that the government is



taking steps to complete the RRR as soon as possible.

Venkat reviewed conditions on the 17 black spots on the Hyderabad-Vijayawada National Highway in the secretariat on Friday and the safety measures required in these

and constructing six-lane roads in some places.

The officials told the Minister about the 17 black spots where the maximum number of accidents were taking place. They are Choutuppal, Pedakaparthi, Chityala, Kattanguru, Inupamula, Takumatla, Jangaon Cross Roads, Eenadu Junction, Durajpally Junction, Mukundapuram, Akupamula, Komarabanda Cross Roads, Katakmgudem, Mella Cheruvu, Srirangapuram, Ramapuram Cross Roads and the Nawabpet Junction.

R&B Department ENC Ganapathi Reddy, National Highways Regional Officer Razak and others attended the review meeting.

TS PGCET exam rescheduled

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad (JNTUH) on Friday announced that in view of the Staff Selection Commission examinations and Telangana State Public Service Commission (TSPSC) Group-1 examination, Post Graduate Engineering Common Entrance Test (TS PGCET 2024) is rescheduled.

The test that was scheduled from June 6 to 9 is rescheduled from June 10 - 13. Interested candidates who did not apply till date can apply for admission May 25. There will be no further extension without late fee. For more details, the candidates can go through the website <https://pgcet.tsche.ac.in/>

MISSION BHAGIRATHA SCHEME

Need to provide uninterrupted water supply in villages stressed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Principal Secretary of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Sandeep Kumar Sultania held a state-level meeting at the Engineer-in-Chief Office of Mission Bhagiratha at Errum Manzil on Friday. The meeting was aimed at reviewing the drinking water supply through the Mission Bhagiratha scheme.

Speaking on the occasion, Sandeep Kumar said a comprehensive review had been conducted on the Mission Bhagiratha supply status in rural areas across the State, categorised by division and Executive Engineer.

He said the Mission Bhagiratha Engineers would take the responsibility of ensuring drinking water supply to every village and household. He instructed the engineers to carry out repairs to plug leaks, if any, in pipelines. Sandeep emphasised the importance of continually providing standardised daily drinking water through the Mission Bhagiratha



Principal Secretary of Panchayati Raj Sandeep Kumar Sultania at a meeting with Mission Bhagiratha Engineers in Hyderabad on Friday

scheme. He urged the engineers to act responsibly and avoid negligence. Engineers were directed to collaborate with Panchayat Secretaries to ensure the daily chlorination of overhead tanks in villages. Sandeep also issued strict instructions to quickly address and resolve complaints related to drinking water supply. Sandeep directed, that, in addition to Mission Bhagiratha's supply, the officials to maintain existing village infrastructure such as hand pumps, single-phase motors, and schemes.

The Chief Engineers, Superintending Engineers, and Executive Engineers were encouraged to conduct regular field visits and regularly review the drinking water situation. Mandal-level Mission Bhagiratha Engineers were instructed to coordinate closely with Panchayat Secretaries, Engineer-in-Chief Krupakar Reddy, Mission Bhagiratha Chief Engineers, Superintending Engineers, Executive Engineers, and others participated in the review meeting.

Corporator among 4 held for circulating fake video

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Cybercrime Police arrested Malkajgiri corporator Vurapalli Sravan and three others for circulating an old video with fake information of rigging and making it viral in the social media. On Wednesday, the Election Commission of India also clarified that the video which went viral on social media was fake, which was an old video and not linked to Hyderabad constituency.

Along with Sravan, the police arrested Mohammed Bin Ali Al Gutmi, Piddamulla Kashi and Kanukati Mithilesh and produced them before

XII ACMM Court, Nampally. On Friday, the Hyderabad Police stated that on May 15, they received a complaint against the fake video. The complaint mentioned that, when a police was doing social media surveillance, the complainant came across one video in which one person in a polling station was voting multiple times and saying that this incident was happened at one of the polling stations in Bahadurpura (Old City), in the recent Lok Sabha elections held on May 13.

However, the alleged video was an old one recorded during West Bengal elections held in 2022.

Urban Nap unveiled at the 10th National Summit 2024

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Providing a quick nap solution at your workplace, the Urban Nap Pad was unveiled. It is a unique corporate wellness initiative aimed at increasing human productivity and wellness by ensuring a well-rested brain for efficient and high-standard work.

The Telangana Facility Management Council showcased the Urban Nap Pad at the 10th National Summit 2024 at the Address Convention at Narsingi.

According to the company representative, it is a nap pad

displayed by SPICA at the Summit. Employers globally are realising that there is a significant cost attached to sub-optimal work resulting from stressed and tired staff. The company representative highlighted that a well-rested brain is important to a day of efficient and high-standard work. Napping in the workplace is now proven to have potential benefits on work efficiency and staff well-being.

President of TFMC, Satyanarayana Mathala said, "An afternoon power nap can recharge your body and mind, providing you with the need-

ed energy to tackle the second half of your day." He also said, it is a wonderful wellness device that every corporate house, railway station, bus stand and airport should have, which is a 10 to 20 minute afternoon power nap that can improve your concentration and sharpen your motor skills.

According to the SPICA, the Urban nap pad, which costs Rs 7.5 lakh and is also available for monthly rent at Rs 30,000, features a zero gravity seat, gentle back massage, oxygen therapy, meditation music, ventilated seat, fresh air inlet, timed waking and mobile app booking.

Officials asked to take steps to prevent floods in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Commissioner Ronald Rose on Friday ordered the officials to take necessary steps to prevent floods in Hyderabad.

On Friday, the Commissioner inspected various areas in the Serilingampally zone. During

the inspection, he directed the officials to take flood prevention measures at Biodiversity, Q Mart and DLF areas.

Ronald Rose ordered the officials that as the previously constructed box drain at Biodiversity is not allowing rain water to flow, the proposed box drain construction should be taken up on a war-footing and steps should

be taken to prevent flood water from stagnating. Additional grills should be arranged at Q Mart. Clean the drains and demolish the illegal construction at DLF road, he said.

Along with the Commissioner, Serilingampally Zonal Commissioner Sneha Sabarish and other officials inspected the areas in the city.

Man nabbed for cheating Indian students in US

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Cyber Crime Police arrested a 28-year-old Andhra Pradesh resident named Kanolla Ashok Kumar in the case of cheating Indian students who were studying in the USA on the pretext of offering 10 per cent discount of semester fee.

Along with Ashok, an USA resident Tarun and a resident of Delhi named Waqar used to work in different consultancy agencies who send stu-

dents to the USA for studies and have access to such students' databases, whereas the accused contacted them and cheated the Indian students. The fraudsters collect semester fee from the victims into their own bank accounts and fraudsters used to pay the university fee using their credit or debit bank cards. Then the status of the semester fee payment used to be shown as paid. But after some days, the fraudsters applied for charge back

when the fee payment status used to be shown as not paid. Thus the fraudsters cheated the Indian students studying at USA universities.

On a complaint received from a victim, a resident of Trimulgherry, Hyderabad, stating that the fraudsters cheated his son to the tune of Rs 4,38,599, the police filed a case under 66(C), (D) ITA Act-2008 and 419, 420 IPC. After the arrest of the accused, police seized his mobile phone.

Two held for rape, murder of anganwadi teacher in Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two persons were arrested in Mulugu district of Telangana on Friday for allegedly raping and murdering a 50-year-old woman anganwadi teacher, police said.

The woman's body was noticed in a forest area in Tadvai mandal of the district by some local people on May 15, who informed the police and later her son lodged a complaint with the police.

During the course of the investigation, it came to light that the two accused (aged 45 and 42) allegedly raped the woman on May 14 and later "killed" her when she resisted their attempts to snatch her gold jewellery, they said.

The woman was hit with a stone on her head and later strangled to death with her scarf by the two accused, who took away the jewellery, police said. A senior police official said the 45-year-old accused,

known to the victim, offered her a lift on a bike while she was returning to her house after duty on May 14 and took her into the forest area where he along with the second accused allegedly raped her.

The accused were booked under Indian Penal Code (IPC) Sections 364 (Kidnapping or abducting in order to murder), 376 D (gang rape), 379 (theft), 302 (murder) and 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence).

TV actor Chandu Challa commits suicide

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Television serial actor Chandu Challa committed suicide in Alkapur Colony within Narsingi police station limits on Friday.

Chandu acted in many serials along with Trinayani. He is survived by his wife Shilpa Prema and two children. He got married in 2015. He is said to have had an



extra-martial affair with television serial actress Pavitra Jayaram who recently died in a road accident. Currently, Chandu was acting in Radhamma Pelli and Kartika Deepam serials. The police are investigating the reasons behind his suicide. The case is registered and investigation is on.

Govt to encourage establishment of new rice mills, modernisation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As part of the Rice Milling Policy, the government will take measures to encourage the establishment of new rice mills and their modernisation, said Agriculture and Marketing Minister Tummala Nageshwara Rao. While participating in the review meeting with the officials of his department on Friday, Nageswara Rao directed the officials to prepare proposals to set up food processing units as soon as possible in every district.

He directed the officials to develop the food parks by encouraging the private investors.

He directed the officials to see that farmers do not face problem due to unseasonal rains by encouraging food processing units.

He said that the government

departments should purchase clothes through TESCO as per GO number 2 issued on March 11, 2024. He said that they received Rs. 255 crore orders till now from various departments. He asked the officials to ensure the supply of quality clothes sought by the



departments orders. The Minister said that the handloom weavers used to get Rs 5.70 crore meters orders, including Bathukamma saris. However, this year, they got 2.50 crore meters orders, excluding Bathukamma saris. The government departments

are expected to give order for 80 lakh meters soon. He said that the officials have to ensure handloom workers provide work for entire year and also ensure speedy paying of bills. The Minister directed the officials to prepare proposals for power subsidy for powerlooms.

The Minister directed the officials to speed up setting up of sanitary napkins unit through Telangana State Handloom Cooperative Association. He asked the officials to take steps to supply those napkins to school students through education department.

He directed the officials to set up solar panels on marketing and how downs corporation buildings. He directed the officials to enter into agreement with power officials. He asked the officials to conduct a study in this regard to assess the issue.

Drogo Drones contract with IFFCO to spray insecticides

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Drogo Drones signed an agreement with IFFCO on Friday for spraying insecticides in 30 lakh acres across the country and getting permission from the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for the Krishi 3 drone that provides extensive services in the agricultural sector. In a statement, Drogo Drones CEO Yashwant Bonthu said plans have been made to provide emergency medical services along with air taxis.

Yashwant said that Drogo Drones has signed an agreement with IFFCO to spray pesticides in 30 lakh acres in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Kerala,

Karnataka and other states through their newly introduced drones. He said, "Drogo Drones will expand its services to survey, mapping, transportation of products and other sectors. Preparations are being made to establish a drone service hub in important district headquarters across the country and then in mandal centres. Drogo Drones' latest Krushi 3 Pro drone can spray pesticides over four acres on a single charge. It can fly in the air for 24 minutes when fully loaded with pesticides and 42 minutes when empty. With the new drone, farmers can increase their yield by 80 per cent by spraying pesticides on 30 to 35 acres per day.

Special officers need to take pro-active steps: People

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

Special officers' rue descended on Ranga Reddy district. On the directions of the Congress government, special officers have been appointed to oversee the administration of all 558 gram panchayats in the district following the end of the sarpanchs' tenures. However, the transition has been fraught with difficulties with communities raising concerns over the handling of crucial issues, such as sanitation and access to clean drinking water.

Critics allege that the special officers, despite their mandate to address public grievances and implement development schemes, have failed to effectively tackle pressing concerns. Amidst accusations of bureaucratic inertia, residents lament the perceived lack of progress in infrastructure development

and service delivery. One of the key points of contention arises from the continued administration of panchayats by special officers alongside their regular departmental duties. This dual responsibility has led to a perceived neglect of grassroots governance, with schemes falling short of their intended impact.

Furthermore, the absence of elected representatives has left communities feeling disenfranchised, with long-standing requests for extended tenure for Sarpanchs going unanswered.

Instead, a slew of gazetted and non-gazetted officials, including Tahsildars and Revenue Inspectors, have been tasked with assuming interim control. The challenges facing these special officers are manifold. With limited financial resources at their disposal, essential services such as education are at risk of being compromised. Despite being entrusted with responsibilities over two weeks ago, the absence of funds has left officials grappling with the dilemma of how best to proceed.

Moreover, the failure to convene regular gram sabhas, a cornerstone of grassroots democracy, underscores the broader governance deficit in the district. As the fiscal year draws to a close, the spectre of pending house taxes and overdue bills looms large, further complicating the administrative landscape.

26K properties worth Rs16k crore registered in 4 months in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Standing second after Mumbai, Hyderabad recorded the second highest sales volume and YoY growth, with 9,550 residential units sold and 15% increased compared to last year. (in the first quarter-Q1 2024).

In its latest assessment, Knight Frank India reported that Hyderabad saw 26,027 property registrations in the first four months of 2024, with

a total value of Rs 16,190 crore. This represents a 15% year-on-year (YoY) increase in the number of registrations and a 40% YoY increase in the total value compared to the same period last year. The surge in 2024 registrations has been driven by higher-value homes, especially those priced at Rs 1 crore and above, which saw a 92% YoY increase. Mid-segment homes, costing between Rs 50 lakh and Rs 1 crore, also saw a 47% YoY rise.

Overall, the value of registered homes in all categories has increased, indicating a shift towards more expensive properties. Price levels in Hyderabad saw the most significant rise at 13% as focus shifted towards the development of premium high rise properties.

For April 2024, the total residential property registrations reached 6,578 units, marking a 46% YoY increase, with the value of these properties recorded at Rs 4,260 crore, also showing

Mid-segment homes, costing between Rs 50 lakh and Rs 1 crore, also saw a 47% YoY rise. Overall, the value of registered homes in all categories has increased, indicating a shift towards more expensive properties. Price levels in Hyderabad saw the most significant rise at 13% as focus shifted towards the development of premium high rise properties.

a significant 86% YoY rise. The Hyderabad residential market encompasses four districts, namely Hyderabad, Medchal-Malkajgiri, Rangareddy and Sangareddy, covering home sales relevant to both primary and secondary real estate markets. In Hyderabad, there's a

noticeable trend towards higher-value homes, reflected in the increasing registrations of properties priced above Rs 50 lakh. Upon examination, homes valued below Rs 50 lakh experienced a 4% year-on-year (YoY) decline in registrations. However, registrations for homes priced over Rs 1 crore surged by 92%, although from a comparatively lower base. What is particularly striking is the overall uptick in registration values

across all segments. Notably, in the category of homes priced at Rs50 lakhs and below, which saw a 4% YoY decline in registrations on a year-to-date (YTD) assessment, there was a 17% YoY increase in value during the same period. This suggests that even within the affordable housing category, there's a preference for more expensive properties.

Shishir Bajjal, Chairman and Managing Director, Knight Frank India said, "The

residential market in Hyderabad, like numerous other locations across India, is experiencing a noticeable shift towards high-end homes offering expansive spaces and premium amenities. Since the onset of the pandemic, prices have steadily risen, a trend that persisted through April 2024, as homebuyers consistently exhibited a preference for properties of higher value, particularly homes offering enhanced space and amenities.

INDIA CORNER

Poster with death threats to Mamata, Abhishek appear in Howrah

A poster with death threats to West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee and her nephew, party's general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, appeared in Uluberia in West Bengal's Howrah district on Friday, police said. The poster, handwritten in green ink on a piece of white cloth, was recovered from a construction site in Fuleswar area of Uluberia where Lok Sabha elections will be held on May 20. The poster written in Bengali read: "I will kill Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Abhishek by hitting them with a car. Everyone will light the lamps after that. I have a secret letter." The poster was found hanging on a stack of bricks. "It is not yet clear what the secret letter meant. It could be a prank. We have to find out whether a single person or a group was involved in it," the police officer said. The police have started an investigation into the matter, he said.



Four convicted in 2021 murder of Tihar Jail inmate

A special court has convicted four persons in connection with the 2021 killing of a Tihar Jail inmate which was investigated by the CBI, officials said Friday. Srikant Rama Swami was bludgeoned to death by four inmates on May 14, 2021. The officials said the conviction comes within 10 months of framing of charges on July 11, 2023. The CBI had taken over the probe on the orders of the Delhi High Court. Swami's sister had approached the HC seeking a CBI probe into the killing. After a thorough probe, the CBI had filed a charge sheet in a court here. Swami, who was an undertrial prisoner facing charges of murder and robbery among others was bludgeoned to death by four inmates, the officials said. The CCTV cameras on the premises were allegedly malfunctioning and there was no recording of the incident, they said.



Very heavy rain forecast: Avoid visiting Ooty from May 18-20, says Collector

The Nilgiris district administration on Friday said very heavy rains have been forecast from May 18-20 here and asked people to "avoid" visiting the hilly tourist attraction during this period. District Collector M Aruna said the India Meteorological Department has issued an "orange alert" forecast, meaning very heavy rain of 6 cm-20 cm on May 18, 19 and 20. "Those coming here should have all the required protection. If possible you can avoid travelling here during this period, she told reporters after chairing a meeting with officials of the Revenue, Police and Fire and Rescue Services department on rain preparedness. She said all the departments concerned were on standby. Nearly 3,500 disaster response personnel and required equipment including earthmovers were on standby. About 450 temporary shelters have also been kept ready and people have also been asked to stay indoors.



PM jabs INDIA bloc: Aims just 50 seats to save 'honour'

PNS ■ FATEHPUR (UP)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday took a jibe at the Congress saying its aim is to win just 50 seats so that it could save its "honour", and he also mocked Rahul Gandhi for contesting the Lok Sabha polls from Rae Bareilly instead of Amethi which he lost to the BJP's Smriti Irani in 2019. Addressing an election rally here, the prime minister also claimed that INIDA bloc has been defeated in the first four phases of elections itself and its "disappointed" workers have now stopped leaving their homes for poll-related activities. Modi said he had predicted that Rahul Gandhi would not dare to contest from Amethi and this has turned out to be true. "The further news is that to



save its honour, the Congress has now launched Mission 50. The target of the Congress is to get 50 seats in the entire country by any means," he said. The Congress recorded its worst-ever performance in the Lok Sabha polls in 2014, winning just 44 seats. Its performance improved slightly in 2019 when it won 52 seats. Taking a swipe at the SP and the Congress, Modi said, "The

dreams of 'panja' (Congress's poll symbol) and 'cycle' (SP's poll symbol) have shattered 'khata-khat, khata-khat'. Now they are planning for post-June 4 as to who should be blamed for the defeat 'khata-khat, khata-khat'. And, someone was telling me that tickets for foreign trips have also been booked 'khata-khat, khata-khat'." Congress leader Rahul

Gandhi has used the phrase "Khata-khat khata-khat" to claim that a fixed stipend would flow into the accounts of poor women if his party comes to power. "All the qualities of the Congress and the SP match with each other. They both are dedicated to 'parivarvaad' (dynastic politics). Both are in politics for corruption. They can do anything to please their vote bank. Both (of them) promote criminals and mafia, and both, the SP-Congress, are equally sympathetic to terrorists," Modi said. Intensifying his attack on the two INDIA bloc partners, Modi said, "The SP-Congress think that they will achieve what they want by dividing our society. The 'shahzaade' of the Congress is dreaming of putting a lock on the Ram temple (in Ayodhya)." Himachal BJP expels two rebel leaders

Himachal BJP expels two rebel leaders

PNS ■ SHIMLA

The BJP in Himachal Pradesh on Friday expelled Rakesh Choudhary and former minister Ram Lal Markanda for six years after it failed to persuade them to withdraw their assembly poll nominations as Independents. Markanda and Choudhary have been expelled from the primary membership of the BJP for six years with immediate effect, state BJP chief Rajiv Bindal said in a statement issued here. The efforts of BJP went futile and both the leader have not withdrawn their nominations. May 17 was the last day to withdraw the nominations. After revolt in Congress, six Congress MLAs had voted in favour of the BJP Rajya Sabha nominee Harsh Mahajan on February 27. Two days later, they were disqualified for defying a party whip to be present in Vidhan Sabha and vote in favour of the government.

BBC DOCUMENTARY CAST SLUR ON INDIA

Delhi HC judge recuses from hearing plea for damages

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A judge of the Delhi High Court on Friday recused himself from hearing a plea by an NGO seeking damages from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), claiming its documentary "India: The Modi Question" casts a slur on the country's reputation and makes false and defamatory imputations against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Indian judiciary. Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani said he was recusing himself but did not assign any reason for it. The court said the petition be listed before another bench for hearing on May 22 subject to orders of the Acting Chief Justice. The high court had earlier issued notice to BBC (UK) and BBC (India) on the plea filed by Gujarat-based NGO Justice



On Trial. The plea has said BBC (UK) is the national broadcaster of the United Kingdom and has released the news documentary -- "India: The Modi Question" -- which has two episodes and BBC (India) is its local operations office. It said the two episodes were broadcast in January 2023. The petitioner has sought damages of Rs 10,000 crore in favour of the NGO and against the defendants on account of the "loss of reputation and goodwill caused to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, the Government of India, the Government of the State of

Gujarat as it was during the period of the Gujarat Riots, and also the people of India". The documentary relates to the 2002 Gujarat riots when Modi was the state's chief minister. The government had banned the documentary soon after it was released. The plaintiff organisation, which says it is a society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 and also registered as a Public trust under the provisions of the Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950, has filed the suit for damages. The NGO has also filed an Indigent Person Application (IPA) which enables an indigent person to file a lawsuit. It has contended that the documentary contains content which casts a slur on the reputation of the country and also makes false and defamatory imputations.

Delhi BJP issues 'chargesheet' against Congress, AAP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the May 25 polls on seven Lok Sabha seats in the national capital, Delhi BJP on Friday issued a "chargesheet" against its INDIA bloc rivals AAP and Congress, listing alleged scams and corruption involving the two parties that ruled the city for last more than two decades. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva along with other party leaders released the 40-page Hindi and English booklet titled "Congress and AAP - Partners in Loot", at the party office. No immediate reaction was available from the AAP or Congress on the allegations. "For the first 15 years, the Congress, and now in the last 9 years, the Delhi government (run by AAP) has inflicted harm on the people of Delhi," the charge sheet read. It is unfortunate that the Aam Aadmi Party, born out of anti-corruption movement, has its senior leadership in jail or facing charges of corruption, it said. Sachdeva said there was a long trail of scams of AAP government in Delhi related to

excise policy, health, education, panic buttons in the buses, Delhi Jal Board among others. He also slammed Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal over alleged assault on AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal by his close aide Bibhav Kumar. "We believe Bibhav Kumar may get shelter in Punjab," Sachdeva said and demanded the Delhi Police take action in the matter. Vijender Gupta, BJP MLA and chairman of the "charge sheet committee," claimed that the document was completely based on "facts." "This charge sheet is a document exposing both the Congress and AAP," he said. The "charge sheet" was divided into sections, including the jailing of the AAP in the "liquor scam," Chief Minister's "Sheeshmahal," nine years of "corruption," their siding with "anti-national" forces, the "anti-Hindu" face of AAP, its "failed" education model, and its "failure" to clean Yamuna. The BJP had swept Lok Sabha polls in 2014 and 2019 winning all the seven seats in Delhi with huge margins.



Pollution in Delhi to be priority of INDIA bloc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Friday said that the INDIA bloc is going to form government and its priority would be working on five environmental issues, including pollution in air and Yamuna river, in the national capital. During a press conference over at DPCC office here in central Delhi, Ramesh said that if you look at the metropolitan cities across the world, Delhi would be among the most polluted city. "India Alliance is going to form the government, and it will give priority to the five issues related to environment, including air pollution, afforestation of Aravalli, reviving Yamuna Action Plan," he said. However, when he asked about the questions regarding AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal's alleged assault at the CM resident, Ramesh refused to comment on it saying that the press conference was held for environmental issues only.

MALIWAL ASSAULT CASE

Bibhav fails to appear before National Commission for Women

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar did not appear before the National Commission for Women (NCW) on Friday in connection with the alleged assault on AAP Rajya Sabha member Swati Maliwal. When an NCW team along with Delhi Police again went to serve him notice on Friday, the occupants of the house refused to accept it. The NCW, in a post, said "Officers of the NCW, along with the ACP of Civil Lines, New Delhi, attempted to serve a Notice of Hearing to Mr. Bibhav Kumar at his residence. When the occupants of the house refused to accept the notice, the officers affixed it on the gate of his residence. The hearing is scheduled for 18th May, 2024, at the NCW Office." The NCW also tagged photos from outside Kumar's home where they pasted a fresh notice. Earlier, NCW chief Rekha Sharma said a team of the commission had gone on Thursday as well to Kumar's residence to serve him a notice, but he was not at home. "Kumar's wife refused to receive the notice. My team has gone to his residence again today with police and if he does not appear (before NCW) by tomorrow, then we will go

Kejriwal's aide attacked me with full force: AAP MP Maliwal in FIR

AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal was "kicked and slapped seven to eight times" allegedly by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar at the former's official residence, and "did not relent" despite her asking him to stop, according to the FIR registered by the Delhi Police. In the FIR regarding the alleged assault on her, Maliwal also claimed that Kumar hit her with "full force again and again" but no one came to her rescue. She also alleged that despite telling Kumar that she was menstruating and in pain, he did not budge. The FIR quotes Maliwal as saying that this "is one of the most difficult times of my life" and "the pain, trauma and harassment has been mind-numbing". "... I am also having difficulty in walking," she said in the FIR. Maliwal, who earlier served as the chief of Delhi Commission For Women, said her situation is "exacerbated by the fact that having worked all my life for women issues and having helped lakhs of women get justice," she "ended up being brutally beaten by a person whom I know for long". personally to inquire," Sharma told reporters. She also said she would meet Maliwal. "I was telling Swati ji on Twitter (now X) to speak up, but I think she was traumatised because this incident happened at her (party) leader's house... an MP, who has always raised issues concerning women, was beaten. "Despite our differences, we have always stood by each other... once she feels a bit better, I will personally meet Swati. I hope she is better now, but I understand it would take time for her to come out of the trauma," the NCW chief said. On Kejriwal's silence on the

issue, Sharma said it shows that he does not care about anything. "This is an indication that he is taking Bibhav with him. Instead of supporting a woman, he is supporting a perpetrator. He distributes freebies in the name of women, but when a woman is being beaten in his house, he turns a blind eye and takes no action against the man responsible," she said. "Kejriwal has clearly chosen his side, which is with Bibhav," she added. While the police are conducting a probe, Sharma said, the NCW will also send its inquiry team.

'BJP govt fulfilled Ladakh's 70-year dream, will win poll'

PNS ■ KARGIL

Roads have reached where they never had before and there is water in every home, says BJP's Ladakh election in-charge Vikram Randhawa, confident the "drastic changes" in the lives of the people in the region will reap electoral dividends and give the party a hat-trick in the polls. He said the BJP government fulfilled Ladakh's 70-year dream of becoming a union territory and added that people won't be "ungrateful". "People of Ladakh go with the nation. The dream that people of Ladakh had to get a union territory was fulfilled by Narendra Modi ji in 2019. Definitely we are going to the people with this," Randhawa told PTI as Ladakh gets ready to vote on May 20 in the fourth phase of the general elections. This is the first Lok Sabha election since 2019 when the government abrogated Section 370 and bifurcated the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir into the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

"In five years, since the abrogation of Article 370, drastic changes have happened in Ladakh in terms of development. Even a layer-son says roads have reached where they had never reached before, and water supply has reached every home under Jal Jeevan Mission," he said. "Many such schemes have benefited people of Ladakh, and they cannot be thankful. Zojila tunnel, on which many dreams were just empty promises, was fulfilled by the Modi government." Talks over the demands of the people of Ladakh will continue, Randhawa added. The charter of demands of the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) includes safeguards under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and statehood. The Sixth Schedule deals with provisions for the administration of tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. "Modi ji sees all Indians from the same perspective. He said he's not prime minister but 'Pradhan Sevak'."



HINJILI AND KANTABANJI ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES

Odisha CM Naveen faces migration issues

PNS ■ HINJILI/KANTABANJI (ODISHA)

Located at a distance of about 350 km from each other, Hinjili and Kantabanji assembly constituencies of Odisha share two commonalities - both hold migration as the key issue and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik as the BJD candidate. Though local voters talk about infrastructure development, lack of job opportunities plague the two rural constituencies for several years. Though there is no official data on the number of migration from these two places, unofficial estimates say more than a lakh people have left

their homes in Hinjili and Kantabanji in search of jobs in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and other states. While Kantabanji is in the western region of Odisha, Hinjili is in the southern part of the state. However, the ruling BJD claimed that the rate of migration has drastically come down in Odisha. These migrant workers are now in high demand as political parties bring them back to their homes to cast votes in the Odisha elections. "We had to return from Surat in Gujarat to cast votes in Hinjili as our family lives here.



Unless we cast our votes, the local Sarpanch may deny us free rice or other such benefits being availed from the government," said Santosh Gouda (35), a migrant worker. Similar is the story of other migrant workers. Each migrant worker is paid train fare and meal allowance of Rs 500 to

return to the village and cast votes, Gouda said, adding that all parties including BJD, BJP and Congress adopt this approach to raise their vote share in the elections. Patnaik has been elected from Hinjili assembly segment since 2000. "It is our pride that our MLA is the Odisha Chief Minister. During the 24 years, he has improved certain infrastructure but has not solved the basic problem of migration. Had there been sufficient work here, why should our husband, brother and son go to another state in search of jobs," said Bilasini Behera, of Sheragada area under Hinjili

assembly segment. During Patnaik's tenure Hinjili, a small rural pocket, has become a municipality. Now it has sub-divisional hospital, rural industrial park, skill development centre, fire stations, Harabhangi irrigation project, drinking water supply for every household but migration is still a problem. However, despite infrastructure development, Hinjili has its problems. Large-scale migration and lack of cold storage for farmers are some of the problems in the segment. Hinjili is basically an agrarian economy where its residents mostly undertake vegetable cultivation.

Terrorism started to consume those who long practised it: Jaishankar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Asia is witnessing new tensions in land and sea as agreements were dishonoured and rule of law disregarded while terrorism has started to consume those who have long practised it, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Friday, amid China's military continuing posturing along the frontier in eastern Ladakh and Pakistan's support to cross-border terrorist activities. In an address at an event hosted by the CII, Jaishankar also talked about the power of currency and how "threat of sanctions" are deployed in the



"toolbox" of global diplomacy, in remarks that came days after the US warned of punitive measures after India and Iran sealed a deal on the Chabahar port. Jaishankar extensively delved into the consequences of the Ukraine conflict, escalation of violence in West Asia

and disruption of logistics in view of the geopolitical tensions, sanctions, incidents of drone attacks in the Red Sea and climate events. "The world is experiencing a 3F crisis of fuel, food and fertilisers. In Asia, new tensions have emerged in land and sea as agreements are dishonoured and rule of law disregarded," he said at the annual general meeting of the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII). "Terrorism and extremism have started to consume those who have long practised it. In many ways, we are actually going through the perfect storm," he said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Hot as Hades

The Indian Meteorological Department has forecast severe heatwave, leading to high health risk

As if the scorching sensation on the skin and mercury's validation of the heat and humidity were not enough, the Weatherman has issued a stark warning for north-west India, forecasting a severe heatwave with a high health risk over the next week. The announcement comes as temperatures continue to soar, posing significant challenges to people's wellbeing and safety. With temperatures likely to reach alarming levels, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) advisory underscores the urgency for residents, authorities and healthcare providers to take proactive measures to mitigate their impact. Heatwaves are characterised by prolonged periods of excessively high temperatures, often accompanied by high humidity levels, which can exacerbate the risk of heat-related illnesses and even fatalities. Northwest India, comprising States such as Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, is particularly susceptible to extreme heat events due to its geographical location. Prolonged exposure to high temperatures can lead to various ailments, including exhaustion, heatstroke, dehydration and cramps. Vulnerable populations — such as the elderly, children, pregnant women and those with pre-existing health conditions — are at heightened risk during such extreme weather conditions. Heat-related illnesses can manifest swiftly and escalate rapidly, necessitating prompt medical attention. Symptoms such as dizziness, nausea, rapid heartbeat, confusion and fainting should not be taken lightly. Of course, one cannot fight Nature but one can always be prepared to minimise its ill effects.



To mitigate the adverse effects of the IMD forecast, it is essential to launch comprehensive public awareness campaigns to educate residents on the risks and preventive measures of heatwaves. As a thumb rule, those living on pavements and in shanties are at bigger health risk. Establishing cooling centres with air conditioning, fans and hydration facilities will provide critical relief to the vulnerable population. Encouraging people to stay hydrated and seek shelter in cool, shaded areas during peak heat hours is vital. The old system of *pyaus* is long gone; instead, now only bottled water is available. The Government must set up water kiosks so that people can get free, clean drinking water on the go. Additionally, urban planning strategies that incorporate green spaces, tree cover and reflective surfaces can mitigate the urban heat island effect and enhance thermal comfort in urban environments. During summers, water scarcity and power cuts turn things worse. The authorities must ensure that load shedding is kept to a minimum and clean drinking water is available; otherwise the chances of outbreak of waterborne diseases are high. As northwest India braces for a severe heatwave, prioritising public health and safety is paramount. The IMD forecast serves as a crucial reminder to remain vigilant, stay informed and make concerted efforts to mitigate the risks. We have braved many adversities; this too will pass!

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PICTALK



Participants at the 'Run For Vote' marathon for the Lok Sabha election awareness, in Shimla

Assault most foul for kindness to animals



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

The man who savagely assaulted a young girl who was feeding stray dogs in Delhi must receive exemplary punishment

According to a report in the *Free Press Journal*, a young girl, Manisha Solanki, who feeds 150 stray dogs daily, was abused, harassed, beaten with a stick and left bleeding and crying in pain in Raghbir Nagar in North Delhi on May 14, 2024. The man, who reportedly attacked her, works in a roadside shop. He is also said to have savagely attacked the dogs who were quietly and peacefully eating the food she had brought. At least one dog was severely injured as the stick had nails attached to it.

The police, who have lodged an FIR following a complaint by the girl's father, need to follow up the matter vigorously and ensure that exemplary punishment is handed out to the culprit. The report that the stick had nails attached to suggest indicates that the intention was not just to hit but cause the maximum amount of pain. Also, the report that Manisha Solanki was doing no more than pleading with the man not to attack the dogs who were just peacefully eating, suggests that the person is utterly vicious by disposition. Such men are a threat to society and have to be regarded as such by the police. This is not the first incidence of its kind. In July, 2021, a 28-year-old woman was assaulted in East of Kailash by a mother-daughter duo. For the same reason, a woman was savagely beaten in Delhi's Sunlight Colony May, 2018. These are just two examples; others can be cited. Besides being assaulted, those who feed and care for stray dogs in India are also abused and harassed. It is often argued that this is because stray dogs bite and feeding ensures that their numbers grow. What is not realised is that there has been a steep fall in the number of dog bites in recent years. According to a report in *The New Indian Express* (dated December 3, 2023), by Jitendra Choubey, over 75 lakh cases of dog bites were reported in India in 2018; the figures were over 72 lakh in 2019, 46 lakh in 2020. It was over 17 lakh in 2021 and 21.8 lakh in 2022. Another report by Nikhil Ghanekar in *The Indian Express*



(dated March 27, 2024) cites data tabled in Parliament by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare showing an increase to 27.8 lakh in 2023. Despite being higher than the preceding two years, the figure of 27.8 lakhs marks a massive decline from that of over 75 lakh recorded in 2018.

Besides, the accuracy of these figures has been a subject of scepticism. A report (dated March 19, 2024) by Shainu Mohan in *The New Indian Express* cited N. Jayachandran, an animal rights activist and a former member of the Kerala State Animal Welfare Board, as describing the figures of dog bites as inaccurate and saying that there were no specific details and even scratches by cats were recorded as dog bites. Doubts about the reliability of the existing figures of dog bite cases, is implied in the communication dated March 7, 2024, from the Union Government's Directorate-General of Health Services (DGHS), to State Governments asking them to provide quality data on animal bites from all public health centres, community health



KONRAD LORENZ (1903-1989) WROTE IN *MAN MEETS DOG, 'THE WHOLE CHARM OF THE DOG LIES IN THE DEPTH OF THE FRIENDSHIP AND THE STRENGTH OF THE SPIRITUAL TIES WITH WHICH HE HAS BOUND HIMSELF TO MAN'*

centres, district hospitals and tertiary care facilities with inclusion of specific details regarding bites by pet and stray dogs. Of particular significance is the directive to avoid multiple entries of the same animal bite victims by maintaining separate records for new and follow-up patients in the animal bite exposure register. The suggestion is clear: there have been duplications. In many cases, pet and not stray dogs have been responsible. Reliable figures for the whole of India do not exist. The ones that are available clearly underline this point. According to a report by Anuradha Kher in *The Times of India* of May 24, 2004, Sassoon Hospital at Pune had recorded as many as 3,185 dog bite cases until May that year. She quoted Namdeo Patil, the hospital's medical officer, as saying that pet dogs were responsible for 70 per cent of the cases.

That the percentage of bites by stray dogs continues to be very high and one needs accurate statistics regarding their involvement, is clearly reflected in the DGHS's communi-

cation directing that the cases of pet dogs biting people be separately recorded.

Unfortunately, people who assault, abuse and harass those who feed and care for stray dogs do not realise this. They are emotional cripples brimming with hatred. Notwithstanding their aggression, the number of people looking after stray dogs is increasing all over India. Twenty years ago, one rarely saw people feeding them or vaccinating them on the streets.

Today, one sees them in most neighbourhoods. This is hardly surprising given the nature of dogs. Konrad Lorenz (1903-1989) wrote in *Man Meets Dog*, "The whole charm of the dog lies in the depth of the friendship and the strength of the spiritual ties with which he has bound himself to man." Lorenz, ethnologist and ornithologist and recipient of the 1973 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine along with Nikolaas Tinbergen and Karl von Frisch, should know.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BATTING FOR HIGHER POLLING

Madam — Apropos the news article "Sachin, IPL legends bat for higher polling," published on 17 May, this is my response. It's intriguing to see the Election Commission leveraging cricket legends like Sachin Tendulkar and IPL stars to drive voter turnout. This strategy, pairing the beloved sport with civic duty, could significantly boost engagement, especially among young voters. With the heatwave and general voter apathy threatening participation, such innovative outreach is crucial.

The integration of voter awareness messages into various digital platforms and services, from PhonePe to Swiggy, shows a commendable effort to reach people where they are most active. The collaboration with these companies and the BCCI during the IPL season represents a novel approach to a persistent issue. Encouragingly, the turnout in the recent phases shows an upward trend, suggesting these initiatives might be making an impact. This extensive, multi-platform campaign underscores the importance of every vote, aiming to strengthen our democratic process. It's a robust example of how popular culture and technology can be harnessed to foster civic responsibility.

Sahil Yadav | Lucknow

STRATEGIC PORT PARTNERSHIP

Madam — Apropos the news article "India and Iran sign Chabahar Port Pact," published on 17 May, this is my response. The recent long-term contract signed by India for the Shahid Beheshti Port Terminal in Chabahar marks a significant milestone in Indo-Iranian relations. This agreement underscores the strategic importance of Chabahar as a key gateway for India into Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan. The port's development, first envisioned in 2003, highlights India's consistent efforts to establish robust trade routes and enhance regional connectivity. Despite the changing political landscape and varying degrees of focus from successive Indian Governments, the Modi administration's renewed push has revitalized the project.

Modi-Yogi powerhouse



Apropos the news article "Modi filing nomination boosts BJP morale," published on 17 May, this is my response. As an avid newspaper reader, it's clear that Prime Minister Modi's nomination in Varanasi has electrified the political scene, highlighting Uttar Pradesh's critical role in national politics. The dynamic partnership between Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is undeniably a force to reckon with. Their joint presence in Varanasi not only bolstered the morale of BJP supporters but also underscored their confidence in securing a strong mandate in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Uttar Pradesh, with its 80 Lok Sabha seats, remains the epicentre of Indian electoral politics. The BJP's ambitious target of sweeping the State again, fueled by Modi's national appeal and Yogi's governance track record, sets a formidable challenge for the opposition. The development strides made under Yogi's tenure, particularly in law and order and economic growth, resonate with the electorate. Despite the unpredictability of elections, the Modi-Yogi duo's sustained popularity suggests a potential repeat of their past electoral successes, reinforcing their influence over the political landscape of both UP and the nation.

Vanshika Kumari | Roorkee

This persistence is crucial, especially as regional dynamics shift with China's Belt and Road Initiative making inroads into Central Asia and beyond. The Chabahar port offers India a strategic counterbalance, particularly for accessing Afghanistan and Central Asia, vital for regional trade and geopolitical influence. Moreover, the trilateral cooperation involving Afghanistan emphasises the port's role in fostering economic stability and prosperity in the region. This project not only strengthens India's position but also serves as a linchpin for broader regional cooperation. Given the volatile geopolitical climate, especially with the ongoing conflict in Gaza, India's strategic foothold in Chabahar gains even more significance, ensuring that it remains a critical player in West and Central Asian geopolitics.

Priyank Sharma | Bhopal

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SKILLS

Madam — Apropos the news article "The rising significance of skills in learning," published on 17 May, this is my response. Every era leaves its mark on language,

reflecting its emotions and trends. From renaming departments to emphasising skills in education, societal shifts shape vocabulary. While some debate the elevation of skill, it's undeniable that skills underpin all relationships, from parent-child bonds to professional interactions. Today, degrees in skills offer new avenues for learning and earning. Yet, this evolution prompts a reevaluation of traditional degrees and curriculum structures. To truly understand and integrate skills into education, a fundamental overhaul is necessary, starting with revisiting teacher training programs. This blend of philosophical reflection and practical action serves as a pivotal point for further discourse and implementation. Ultimately, recognising the centrality of skills enriches both education and livelihoods, expanding the horizons of learning and earning.

Siya Sood | Amritsar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Gifting power to the underserved children

Collaborative efforts aid underserved kids facing resource scarcity and socio-economic gaps, enabling education access and job market success



RAVI SONNAD

Underserved children face multifaceted challenges - limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, lack of access and opportunity to holistic education and socio-economic disparities. As a result, these children are left without the life skills and leadership skills necessary to thrive in today's rapidly evolving job market. According to the UNICEF Global Framework on Transferable Skills, an estimated 825 million children are expected to leave school without the basic skills necessary for work and life by 2030.

To tackle this issue effectively, it's imperative to embrace innovative approaches to skill-based learning. One such approach involves incorporating experiential learning opportunities into the curriculum. Research indicates that life or leadership skills cannot be taught in a traditional classroom environment but are inculcated when children experience situations, reflect upon them and make changes to their behaviour and habits. Team sports, the arts and free play are considered the best mediums to create these experiential



learning environments. The dynamic and often ambiguous nature of work in the 21st century demands a greater emphasis on teaching essential life skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication and financial literacy.

Another essential life skill is developing emotional resilience, especially for children dealing with hardship and difficulty. Children growing up in poverty experience stress, trauma and uncertainty. Communication skills are another important component in determining the course of one's personal and professional life journey. Through activities involving team sports, music, role-playing, public speaking and collaborative projects; children acquire the confidence and abilities.

Life skills training has been proven to be the most powerful antidote to reducing

intergenerational poverty since it equips children to overcome the odds stacked against them and become productive and responsible adults capable of taking care of themselves and the world around them. They can not only ensure that their families are no longer in the same socio-economic situation, but they also become powerful role models for their communities, encouraging others to believe in the prospect of a better future and take concrete steps toward realising it. Close collaboration between education institutions, non-profit organisations, Government agencies and local community stakeholders will allow resources, expertise and networks to be pooled to design and implement effective programs. By working together, these stakeholders can identify the specific needs of underserved communities and tailor educational initiatives to address them. Whether it is a customised curriculum, setting up a training centre, apprenticeships or mentorship; collaborative efforts can have a transformative impact on bringing change to skill devel-

opment at scale. There is ample evidence to suggest that in developing countries, entrepreneurship is an essential ingredient to economic empowerment. In addition to generating employment through large companies, encouraging individuals and small businesses to thrive is equally important. By instilling principles of innovation, creativity, risk-taking and resilience, entrepreneurship education equips individuals with the tools to identify problems, develop solutions and pursue their aspirations with confidence. Closing the gap in skill-based learning opportunities in underserved children requires a holistic approach that addresses the systemic barriers to education and economic empowerment. By fostering collaboration, promoting experiential learning and prioritising the development of essential life skills, we can create a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

(The writer is the founder of Enabling Leadership; views are personal)

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One must explore the intricacies of karma and surrender to a higher power



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

I was looking out one very cold morning in January when it was raining lightly also. What I saw inspired me greatly. One woman, not appearing well off was walking purposefully holding her child oblivious of the rain falling. What struck me was the beauty of the Lord's creation. This woman, not so fortunate in material terms, had still something very precious - a soul in the form of a dear child. She would be able to accept all her hardships in the hope that her dear child would look after her in her later years. What is the message from the Lord? That He punishes but never condemns anyone. Ultimately, reformation is the goal of all punishments. What else? We should follow God's example. All those placed lower than us have already been punished. Be very kind and generous towards them. It is not for us to compound their misery with ill behaviour. We will be punished for sure if we do that. If anything, those, who personally serve us due to their unfortunate circumstances, should be treated with respect in addition to giving them reasonable remuneration.

My next example is the mind - a faculty given to us to think, will and feel. It has a double use. This mind can dream of anything far from reality. It can help us to do very difficult tasks and it can make us feel very good also. Lord Krishna describes, "A person, having consciousness unattached to external sense objects, enjoys that happiness within, which is extraordinary. He, having consciousness linked to the Brahman, experiences eternal bliss." (*The Bhagavad-Geeta 5.21*) Now the opposite role of the mind. It can make one highly depressed even in the most opulent surroundings.



The strongest man can feel completely helpless like Arjuna did who was depressed, affected by compassion and thus suffering; his eyes were full of tears. (2.1) Lord Krishna had to preach to him to bring him around. He did, "My delusion has been dispelled by Your mercy; my memory has been restored. I, free from doubt, am composed." (18.73) God is very kind to us human beings. It is up to us to make proper use of this faculty, which is subtle and very powerful, much more than our bodies can be. God has guided us in great detail how to make the best use of it. Most everyone feels that good times can continue indefinitely. What is the reality? They don't, because we bring from our past life/lives both good and bad karmaphalas. Their manifestations are destined. No one has only good Karmaphalas, because, then, such a person would have qualified for liberation. Therefore, both good and bad ones keep on maturing. What happens then to one who has a faulty expectation when bad times come? He or she becomes highly depressed, sad, etc. with no preparation to deal with them. God has provided a solution, which is to take His shelter. This will ensure God's help to deal with bad times. Pains/sufferings will become tolerable and one will not break down. God's help to those, who preach God's message is almost unlimited. Why? Because, "He, who will preach this supreme knowledge amongst. My devotees will be doing highest devotion towards Me." (18.68) Many highly advanced preachers have travelled to the West and spread God's consciousness. They have gained great success thanks to God's support to them.

I will cite one more example of God's magnificent creation. We all suffer due to our egos and others causing us lots of botheration. But there is one superb use of this faculty of ego if we take shelter from God. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna, "Having My consciousness, you will cross all impediments by My 'kripa' (grace). But if you will not heed on account of the feeling of being the doer (egoist), you will perish." (18.58) As mentioned earlier, God can and will help if we can drop our false sense of ego.

(The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

Reflections on the
end of a 30-year war

Amidst scenes of unspeakable horror and relentless violence, the echoes of past atrocities resonate, urging a deeper understanding of the human cost of conflict

NILANTHA
LANGAMUWA

Fifteen years ago, on a day like today, the final bullet was fired, bringing an end to the 30-year-long war in Sri Lanka. The harrowing memories we witnessed have become a thing of the past, but their echoes still reverberate in our minds. However, I don't intend to offer a political analysis; instead, I aim to reflect on the unimaginable suffering endured by fellow human beings in this troubled land. Pain was not unique to the location where this brutal war took place, nor was any specific community singled out for oppression. The entire country, in various ways, was haunted by enemies in different forms. In my memory, there's a chilling scene that's deeply ingrained, a moment of unspeakable horror from my childhood innocence. At just six years old, I held tight to my mother's hand, driven by morbid curiosity like the others in our village who gathered hastily. Together, we witnessed the grim sight of a half-charred corpse, a stark reminder of the darkness plaguing our land. The overpowering smell of death overwhelmed us, defying our feeble attempts to shield ourselves from its grip. By the roadside, where our community thrived, lay the lifeless body of a man, his agonising death a haunting echo of the brutality lurking in the shadows. As the fire consumed his flesh, the echoes of his cries pierced the night, mourning a future stolen by merciless hands. To this day, the identity of his attackers remains a mystery, their cruelty matched only by their cowardice. In their relentless pursuit of violence, they showed no regard for the family he left behind, extinguishing life with a cold indifference that sends shivers down the spine.

That fateful day remains a solemn reminder of the darkness within the human heart, a stark acknowledgement of life's fragility in a world torn by chaos and despair. The sight of a skull, once full of life, now a grotesque symbol of agony, serves as a testament to the depths of human cruelty. Its gaping maw and charred teeth tell of the unspeakable suffering endured by its unfortunate owner — a chilling reminder of the atrocities committed by those in power. Illuminated by a burning tyre, this macabre scene exposes the brutality of oppressors who sought to crush dissent with an iron fist.

Yet, this is just one episode in the chaos that engulfed Sri Lanka during the second uprising of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). The horrors of that time still linger in my mind, a grim reminder of the generation born into a world besieged by violence and despair. For the parents of this generation, survival was the sole pursuit, each day a desperate struggle against the spectre of death. To stand with the State was to invite the wrath of revolutionaries who lurked in the shadows, waiting to mete out their brand of justice in the dead of night. Conversely, to align oneself with the revolutionaries was to invite swift and merciless retribution from the State apparatus, which spared no effort in its quest to crush dissent with utmost brutality. This was the grim reality that defined an era — a reality where horror knew no bounds and mercy was but a distant memory.

In the Sinhalese-dominated areas of the country, flames of rebellion raged unchecked, while in the north and east, where Tamils and Muslims held sway, the spectre of terror loomed large, casting a pall of fear over all who dared to defy the status quo. In this fractured landscape, where lines of ethnicity and ideology blurred in

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the face of unrelenting violence, the suffering of innocent lives knew no bounds.

In the crucible of my high school years, the Tamil Armed groups, notably the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), cast a long shadow over the land, their reign of terror reaching its zenith. Following the peace talks convened in Thimpu, Bhutan, the LTTE embarked on a ruthless campaign to assert their dominance, ruthlessly eliminating rival Tamil factions that dared to challenge their authority. Even those groups previously supported by the central Government under the leadership of Indira Gandhi and the State Government of Tamil Nadu were not spared from their wrath, as the LTTE sought to establish itself as the sole arbiter of Tamil interests.

Concurrently, amidst this bloody power struggle, the LTTE unleashed a wave of terror aimed at forcibly displacing Sinhalese and Muslim communities from the Northern peninsula, affording them scant hours to abandon their homes and livelihoods. Many Muslims scrambled to escape the impending violence, seizing whatever means of transportation they could find to flee to Government-controlled territories, where they hoped to find sanctuary from the chaos engulfing their homeland. Among these displaced individuals emerged tales of resilience and triumph, as some managed to rebuild their lives, ultimately ascending to positions of prominence as successful businesspersons and influential politicians. Yet, these stories of triumph are tempered by the grim reality of displacement and loss, serving as poignant reminders of the human cost exacted by the unrelenting tide of conflict and upheaval.

The reign of terror orchestrated by the LTTE unfolded with chilling precision, sparing none who dared to oppose its fascist ideology. Beginning with the systematic elimination of rival armed factions, the LTTE's campaign of violence soon expanded to target not only other

ethnic communities but also Tamil intellectuals who dared to advocate for political solutions and the right to self-determination. Rajani Thiarangama, a revered intellect and champion of Tamil rights, met a tragic end at the hands of LTTE militants in Jaffna—stark evidence of their ruthless intolerance of dissenting voices.

In my discussions with her father, A Rajasingham, years later in Colombo, the heartbreaking tale of his daughter's untimely demise offered a glimpse into the insidious tactics employed by the LTTE to silence its critics. This chilling account serves as but one example of the lengths to which the LTTE would go to impose its will upon the Tamil people, resorting to violence and coercion to enforce compliance. As the ranks of Tamil intellectuals dwindled, the LTTE turned its sinister gaze towards a new target: the recruitment of children into its ranks. Thousands of innocent youths were forcibly torn from their families, subjected to relentless indoctrination and thrust onto the battlefield, their tender frames bearing the weight of weapons far beyond their years.

Tragically, some would be groomed as suicide bombers, indiscriminately targeting politicians and unarmed civilians alike in a twisted bid for supremacy. As a war reporter, I witnessed the grim reality of child soldiers within the LTTE and its breakout faction; some of them were even unable to hold their weapons properly. Many of them were malnourished, their skeletal frames visible and for them, attending school was a dream that never came true.

The horrors unleashed by the LTTE knew no bounds, wreaking havoc upon innocent lives while lining the pockets of those who profited from the chaos. Even in distant Western nations, Tamil communities were subjected to extortion and intimidation, coerced into financing the LTTE's reign of terror under threat of violence or retribution against their loved ones back home. Despite damning reports by organisations

like Human Rights Watch exposing these atrocities, the truth was often overshadowed by pro-LTTE propaganda, whitewashing the brutality of their so-called "liberation struggle." Consequently, those who fought against this unimaginable terror of tyranny were blamed. That is why, understanding this brutal reality and the plight Tamils were forced to endure is essential homework before succumbing to prejudice.

War came to an end in May 2009, after a prolonged conflict that lasted for over three decades. Since then, numerous discussions have been held regarding the identification and condemnation of those actively involved. In the aftermath, countries have rapidly developed, logistics have been enhanced and connectivity has tremendously improved. Simultaneously, thousands of ex-LTTE members have been rehabilitated and reintegrated into society, with some even marrying Sinhalese individuals. However, the victory over terror has not been wisely utilised to address systemic issues within the State structure. Excessive politicisation and the exploitation of this "victory" for personal gain by certain parties have undermined social responsibilities.

The Government's failure to effectively respond to false allegations regarding casualties and mission details has had lasting repercussions. Many misconceptions and fabricated stories, propagated by vested interests aiming to distort the true nature of this brutal period, have further complicated matters. Regrettably, there is a glaring absence of discussions on safeguarding peace and averting the recurrence of past atrocities. There is no meaning in celebrating 'victory' over the loss of human lives, but rather in building a national conscience to unite everyone towards a common goal, where peace is a precious gem cherished by all, to safeguard for generations to come.

(The writer is a Sri Lanka journalist and author; Views are personal)

The changing face of Indian philanthropy

The stage is set for a monumental leap forward in the philanthropic movement, heralding an era of 'More, Sooner and Better Giving'

India has always been a nation with a deeply ingrained concept of philanthropy. This ethos has given rise to many philanthropists, who have contributed immensely and helped build and support many of the great institutions of modern India. The Tata's being the foremost example of such modern Indian Philanthropy.

Today, philanthropy in India stands at a transformative juncture in terms of both, the quantum and the quality of giving. According to Knight Frank's wealth report for 2023, the number of Ultra-High Net Worth Individuals (UHNIs), in India will grow by over 58 per cent in the next five years. India has seen the rise of many Unicorns in the past decade and is poised to see a



AMITABH JAIPURIA

rise of another ~150+ unicorns in the next few years, indicating a massive wealth surge. This is fortuitous as the demands on philanthropists for greater philanthropy will only increase which we hope will be met with a surge in philanthropic giving as well. UHNIs are redefining the giving landscape in India—they are now more actively engaged in the giving process, dedicating time to ensure their wealth dri-

ves substantial systemic improvements. Amit & Archana Chandra, Ashish Dhawan, Ajit Isaac, Harsh Mariwala, Kris Gopalakrishnan, Romesh and Sunil Wadhvani, Desh Deshpande and Vikrant Bhargava are a few of the great examples of new-age philanthropists, developing a portfolio of philanthropic initiatives including institution building and systemic change projects. This trend is only going to accelerate. Another key trend to emerge is the gradual reduction in the average age of philanthropists. These younger and newer donors, representing both current family benefactors and first-generation wealth creators, are breaking through traditional barriers with innova-

live and disruptive approaches to giving and are branching out to address issues beyond the historically favoured domains of healthcare, education and livelihoods. The emerging tribe of NextGen philanthropists coupled with the next generation of grassroots organisations—driven by young, committed and tech-savvy professionals—is set to transform the giving landscape in the coming years. The proportion of technology entrepreneurs is also increasing and these philanthropists have given more generously when compared to other sectors. While they account for about 8 per cent of overall wealth in the space, their philanthropic contribution makes up nearly 35 per cent of all giving—Azim Premji, the Infosys

founders, Rohini Nilekani, Shiv Nadar, the Kamath brothers, Subroto Bagchi and Sanjeev Bikhchandani are great examples of new age Philanthropists from the Tech sector. There's also a growing sensitivity to privilege among the younger generation of family donors and they are increasingly putting that privilege to work. Some of them are also carving out professional paths dedicated to philanthropy. However, despite the many positive trends in UHNI giving in India, challenges remain. First, there's an urgent need for India's UHNIs to increase the relative proportion of their giving. The current rate of giving doesn't match the pace of wealth accumulation. The 2023 India Philanthropy

Report by Bain & Company indicates that excluding contributions from Wipro's founder Azim Premji, UHNI donations fell by 5 per cent in fiscal year 2022 even as their wealth increased by over 9 per cent. Also, when compared to their peers in the United States, the UK and China, Indian UHNIs contribute significantly less relative to their wealth, in some cases, giving is lower by as much as a 10x factor. Second, philanthropic causes are becoming more diverse and varied, as some causes become more urgent like climate change and humanitarian crisis while traditional causes—education, healthcare, poverty alleviation and livelihoods—remain at the top of the agenda. Philanthropic capital is also increasingly being

tapped to address newer and often neglected causes in India such as sports, arts and culture and mental health amongst many others. Therefore, prioritising and allocating appropriate philanthropic capital to causes becomes crucial. Third, UHNIs need to engage themselves more in philanthropy by giving more time and effort. They also need to collaborate more with other philanthropists to pool their resources—money, time and effort—and take on more ambitious projects, create greater institutions and experiment with newer models to make a difference. They also need to experiment to see how technology can be leveraged to transform and scale services and service delivery in almost all areas, particularly in educa-

tion, healthcare, skilling and climate change. This transformation will also be aided by a new compact between the donor and the donee that is based on greater mutual respect and sees greater participation by all stakeholders in the decision-making processes for where, how and when resources get deployed and how the impact is measured. We can expect 2024 to be a milestone year for the philanthropic movement in India with More, Sooner and Better Giving than ever before. Personal philanthropy can play a unique catalytic role in helping resolve many challenges in India, the time is now. (The writer is CEO Accelerate Indian Philanthropy a Philanthropic initiative; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

JSW Steel Q4 net profit falls 65% to Rs 1,322 crore

JSW Steel has posted a 65 per cent fall in consolidated net profit at Rs 1,322 crore for the March 2024 quarter impacted by raw materials costs and some other expenses. It had clocked Rs 3,741 crore net profit during the fourth quarter of the last fiscal, the company said in an exchange filing on Friday. The company's total income also fell to Rs 46,511.28 crore from Rs 47,427 crore in January-March FY23. During the period under review, its expenses stood at Rs 44,401 crore, as against Rs 43,170 crore a year ago. Among the expenses, the cost of raw materials consumed by the company surged to Rs 24,541 crore from 23,905 crore in the January-March FY23. While "other expenses" increased to Rs 7,197 crore from Rs 6,653 crore in the year-ago period. In FY24, the net profit rose to Rs 8,973 crore from Rs 4139 crore in FY23. The income for the full year stood at Rs 1,76,010 crore, up from Rs 1,66,990 crore. The board of directors of the company announced a final dividend of Rs 7.30 for FY24.



Rupee rises 17 paise to close at 83.33 against US dollar

Rupee appreciated 17 paise to close at 83.33 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, on positive domestic markets and expectations of some fresh foreign inflows. Reports of selling of US dollars by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also supported the rupee, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.50 and touched an intraday high of 83.32 and a low of 83.50. The domestic unit finally settled at 83.33 (provisional), a rise of 17 paise from its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 83.50 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on strengthening of the US dollar amid hawkish Fed speak and weak Asian and European markets. However, a positive tone in domestic markets may support the rupee at lower levels. Any fresh FII inflows and/or RBI intervention may support rupee at lower levels. US\$-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.20 to Rs 83.70," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.



Kia introduces vehicle lease programme in partnership with Orix

Kia India on Friday said it has tied up with Orix auto infrastructure services to introduce a new ownership experience programme. The company has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Orix 'Kia Lease'. The initiative aims to enhance brand accessibility and offer customers another option to own Kia without any maintenance, insurance, or resale hassle, Kia India said in a statement. The first phase of the initiative has been launched in Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru and Pune, it added. "The leasing model is a global megatrend, gaining momentum in India too. This model resonates particularly well with new-age consumers seeking flexible mobility solutions at appealing price points," Kia India Chief Sales Officer Myung-sik Sohn said. With an industry forecast projecting 100 per cent growth over the next 4-5 years, the company anticipates its leasing service will outpace the industry growth average on account of better product range and service offerings, he added.



India must ink addl FTAs, reduce tariffs NITI Aayog CEO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India needs to sign many more Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with other countries and reduce tariffs to compete with the rest of the world, NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam said on Friday. Addressing the captains of the Indian industry at a CII Annual Business Summit, Subrahmanyam said the government should not protect any sector from competition. "I think we should be very, very confident about our capabilities about India actually being able to be competitive with the rest of the world," he said. India has just one insurance company among the world's top 50, while there are only two banks in the list of global top 100, Subrahmanyam said. "I think we should go for very low tariffs. India should



India has just one insurance company among the world's top 50, while there are only two banks in the list of global top 100, Subrahmanyam said.

sign many more FTAs," he said. Asserting that Indian companies can be on a par with their counterparts of the rest of the world, Subrahmanyam said, "We should not try to pro-

tect anybody. Sectors that have protected themselves end up getting more ambassador cars." Subrahmanyam noted that the Indian industry and services will grow and will live up

to the potential only if "we trade more". He also cautioned against protectionism and highlighted the need for India to get into global value chains (GVCs) to boost exports and secure supply chains. "Let wind come from all sides, from multiple doors, multiple windows. The breeze will blow outwards also," he said. The Niti Aayog CEO also called for greater private capital into the sector. "I think private investment in infrastructure is not there. We need to come up with new models and arrangements in which private capital is entwined into investing in infrastructure. "That will also require a lot of improvements in contract management, dispute resolution, and in fast-tracking our legal processes," he said.

Sensex climbs over 250 pts on buying in Reliance, M&M

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty closed higher on Friday as buying in index majors M&M, Reliance Industries and ITC helped the indices rebound from early lows. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 253.31 points, or 0.34 per cent, to settle at 73,917.03. The NSE Nifty advanced 62.25 points, or 0.28 per cent, to 22,466.10. M&M was the biggest gainer on the Sensex chart, rising 5.97 per cent, followed by JSW Steel, Ultra Cement, Kotak Bank, ITC and NTPC. Reliance Industries gained 0.73 per cent to close at Rs 2,871 apiece. In contrast, TCS, HCL Tech, HUL, Nestle Industries, Bajaj Finserv, Wipro and Infosys were among the losers.

TESTING PREPAREDNESS FOR DISRUPTIONS

NSE, BSE to conduct special trading session today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) and BSE will conduct a special trading session in the equity and equity derivative segments on Saturday to check their preparedness for handling major disruptions at the primary site. The special live trading session will have an intra-day switchover from the primary site (PR) to disaster recovery (DR) site. There will be two sessions - the first from 9:15 am to 10 am from the PR, and the second from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm from the DR site. During the special session, all securities, including those on which derivative products are available, will have a maximum price band of 5 per cent. Securities already in the 2 per cent or lower price band will continue to be available in



the respective bands.

"Exchange shall be conducting a special live trading session with intra-day switch over from Primary site to Disaster Recovery site on Saturday, May 18, 2024, in equity and equity derivatives segments," the exchanges stated in separate circulars. Earlier, NSE and BSE conducted similar trading sessions on March 2. These sessions are being conducted based on specific

discussions with markets regulator Sebi and their technical advisory committee with a view to assessing the preparedness of market infrastructure institutions like exchanges to handle any unforeseen event impacting their operations and restore operations from the DR site within the stipulated time. Typically, switching to the DR site is done to ensure business continuity in the case of a major disruption or failure at the primary site.

SPIC Q4 net loss at Rs 29 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Southern Petrochemical Industries Corporation (SPIC) on Friday posted a net loss of Rs 29.18 crore for the fourth quarter of 2023-24. The company had reported a net profit of Rs 23.53 crore a year ago. Total income fell to Rs 132.46 crore during January-March 2023-24 from Rs 676.34 crore in the same period a year ago, a company statement said. For full fiscal year 2023-24, SPIC logged a net profit at Rs 87.91 crore as against Rs 284.44 crore profit in the previous year. Total income dropped to Rs

1,962.16 crore from Rs 2,849.45 crore a year ago. "Due to heavy rain and flooding in Tuticorin, the company's plant at Tuticorin was shut down for 77 days in the last quarter, which led to reduced turnover and net loss in the quarter," SPIC said. The company has made claims with insurance companies for the 'Loss of Profit' and the claims will be recognized on receipt basis, it said. SPIC Chairman Ashwin Muthiah said the financial results were impacted by various factors, including severe floods in December.



Eldeco Housing Q4 profit declines 22% to Rs 12 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Eldeco Housing & Industries Ltd has posted a 22 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit at Rs 11.69 crore for the quarter ended March. Its net profit stood at Rs 14.90 crore in the year-ago period. Total income increased to Rs 51.56 crore in the fourth quarter of the 2023-24 fiscal from Rs 41.99 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year, according to a regulatory filing on Thursday. During the 2023-24 fiscal, the company's net profit fell to Rs 33.85 crore from Rs 44.36 crore in the preceding year. Total income declined to Rs 122.26 crore last fiscal from Rs 140.64 crore in the 2022-23 fiscal. Commenting on the results, the company's

Chairman & Managing Director Pankaj Bajaj said, "Lucknow real estate market continues to be strong. The trends of premiumisation and consolidation of the market in favour of bigger and branded developers have gathered momentum in Lucknow too." "The fiscal year 2024 was a significant year for us on two counts- One, we received our highest-ever bookings in terms of sales value and two, we were



finally able to break the logjam of fresh land bank acquisition and add to our project pipeline," he said. In terms of bookings, Bajaj said the total area booked during the last fiscal year jumped to 7,82,413 square feet in terms of area and Rs 388 crores in terms of value. "Both the numbers are the highest in the company's history," he highlighted. With planned launches in FY25, Bajaj said the company would be able to match or exceed the record sales in the last fiscal year. Eldeco Housing and Industries Ltd. is engaged in the promotion, construction, development and sale of townships, residential and commercial properties. The company was founded in 1985 and is based in Lucknow, India. It is part of the Eldeco Group, which has a presence in most states of North India.

India's spice export may fall 40%: FISS



PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

The Federation of Indian Spice Stakeholders (FISS) on Friday said India's spice export may decline nearly 40 per cent in FY25 if the issue of ethylene oxide or EtO contamination in spices meant for exports is not addressed at the earliest. The statement came against the backdrop of Hong Kong and Singapore banning the sale of popular brands MDH and Everest after detecting carcinogenic chemical ethylene oxide in their products, leading to a mandatory recall from shelves. In 2023-24, India's spice exports totalled USD 4.25 billion, accounting for 12 per cent share of global spice exports. "Lot of exporters have orders on their hands and they have been halted to an extent after that episode. As per our estimate, spice exports could be affected by 40 per cent of the

volume this year if the issue is not resolved quickly," said Tejas Gandhi, Secretary of FISS, an association of nearly 600 spice traders, exporters and farmers from across the country. Addressing a press conference on the issue, FISS Chairman Ashwin Nayak said that misinformation is being spread about EtO, which according to him, is widely used across the world and Indian firms are exporting EtO-treated spices to the US for nearly 30 to 40 years now. "EtO is not a pesticide which is directly sprayed on crops. EtO is an gaseous agent used only by approved organisations to remove or control harmful microbiological and bacterial elements from the spices, such as E. coli, coliform, aflatoxins and yeast. This is a widely used technique in most parts of the world," Nayak told reporters.



Kesoram chairperson Manjushree Khaitan dies

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The B K Birla Group on Thursday announced the death of Manjushree Khaitan, the chairperson of Kesoram Industries Limited. Khaitan, 68 died in her Kolkata home following a brief illness, leaving behind a legacy of exceptional leadership and philanthropy, group officials said. Having joined the Kesoram Board in October 1998, Khaitan assumed the role of chairperson in July 2019, following the demise of her father, industrialist B K Birla. Khaitan's commitment extended beyond the boardroom to the field of education, the group said in a statement.

BEML Ltd bags order worth Rs 250 cr from Northern Coalfields for dump trucks

PNS ■ BENGALURU

BEML Ltd has secured an order worth Rs 250 crore from Northern Coal Fields Limited (NCL) for the supply of 28 units of BH100 rear dump trucks, the company said on Friday. The BH100 rear dump truck is engineered to transport payloads of up to 100 tonnes, specifically designed for the

efficient handling of overburden and coal in mining operations, they said. In a statement, BEML Ltd said, "The dumpers will be maintained under a Guaranteed Spare Parts contract for a period of five years, ensuring uninterrupted service and operational efficiency. The BEML BH100 rear dump truck is renowned for its robust design, advanced features, and

operational efficiency, making it a preferred choice in the mining industry." Designed to transport payloads of up to 100 tonnes, the BH100 is ideal for heavy duty mining operations, particularly for handling overburden and coal. Engineered for fuel efficiency, the BH100 helps reduce operational costs while maintaining high performance levels, it said.

RBI nod for Pradeep Natarajan as IDFC FIRST Bank's Director

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the appointment of Pradeep Natarajan as Whole Time Director on the Board of IDFC FIRST Bank, the private sector lender said. "RBI...has accorded its approval to appoint Pradeep Natarajan as Whole Time Director, designated as Executive Director of the bank for a period of three years,"



IDFC FIRST Bank said in a regulatory filing on Thursday. The bank further said it will take the necessary steps to complete the formalities for the appointment of Natarajan as Executive Director.

Tesla 'silent'; yet to communicate its India plans

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US electric carmaker Tesla is 'silent' and yet to communicate its India plans to the government under the new EV policy, an official said on Friday. American tech billionaire Elon Musk, who was scheduled to visit India on April 21-22, had postponed his visit at the last moment citing "very heavy Tesla obligations". Musk, CEO of electric carmaker Tesla, was also slated to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the visit. "They (Tesla) are just silent.. the (EV) policy was always



meant for everybody," the official said when asked whether the company has communicated its plans to the government.

The commercial decisions are announced by the companies, the official added.

An e-mail query sent to Tesla remained unanswered. Earlier in April, he confirmed his visit to India in a post on X saying, "Looking forward to meeting with Prime Minister @NarendraModi in India." In June last year, Musk met with Modi during the latter's US visit and stated that he planned to visit India in 2024 while expressing confidence that Tesla would enter the Indian market soon. His proposed visit had raised expectations that he would announce plans for Tesla to set up shop in the country, along

with his satcom venture Starlink. It was expected that Musk would announce plans for Tesla to set up its manufacturing unit in India and investments for the same that could be billions of dollars and the way forward for selling Tesla electric cars in India at the earliest. Not just electric cars, he is also eyeing the Indian market for his satellite internet business Starlink, for which regulatory approvals are awaited. Musk had in the past called for import duty reduction in India to be able to sell Tesla cars in the country.

DGFT to identify, align best global practices in trade finance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) is evaluating best global practices in trade finance and identifying regulatory reforms to align India's future needs to propose comprehensive solutions, Joint DGFT Tirumala Venkatesh said on Friday. Over 2.5 lakh bank realisation certificates (BRCs) have been self-generated under the revamped eBRC system, which was soft launched last November, enhancing the ease of doing business, he said. "We are conducting a trade finance study at DGFT. The objective is to identify global best practices and benchmark, iden-



tify latest trends and technologies and future trends, identify institutional policy and regulatory reforms related to aligning the future needs of the country in the area of trade finance and propose comprehensive solutions with a road map for implementation," Venkatesh said. Highlighting the huge opportunity for growth in trade finance, he said a framework to capture flow of data for export credit needs to be created to provide policy makers with adequate data.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (GHMC)

EMERGENCY TENDER NOTICE

NT No. 011/SE/MICRZ/GHMC/2024-25 Dt: 16.05.2024

Name of the Work: 02 Nos of Civil Work, Estimated Amount: Rs. 289.00 Lakhs,

Download Start Date: 17/05/2024 @ 05.00 P.M., Last Date & Time for Receipt of Bids: 24/05/2024 @ 3.30 P.M., Name & Address Officer Cell No.: Sri Y. Maheshwar Reddy, Superintending Engineer, Charaminar Zone, GHMC, Phool Bagh, Baba Nagar, Phone No.: 7993354273. Further details can be seen at @ https://tender.procurement.gov.in Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Charaminar Zone, GHMC



Creating a musical atmosphere to aid several mental health conditions, Dr. Shambhavi Das has been creating much awareness about music therapy in Hyderabad. This week, *The Pioneer* connects with her as she shares her association with and love for the city.

'The cultural preference in Hyderabad leans heavily towards Carnatic music'

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Dr. Shambhavi Das, an Indian classical singer and music therapist, has dedicated her career to helping individuals with ADHD, autism, bipolar disorder, and other mental health conditions. Hailing from Allahabad (now Prayagraj), Hyderabad marks the second chapter of her journey, where she embarked on the path of music therapy. Here, she met her guru, Vidushi Rajam Shankar, and learned through the Gurukul Parampara tradition. Taking us through it, she explains, "Living with her, I began with chakra activation and furthered my understanding of vibrations, saphthswaras, and the connection between music and the vibrations of chakras. My career in autism therapy started under another guru, Dr. Meenakshi Ravi. Thus, my connection with Hyderabad deepened during my music therapy learning period, and I also established my clinic there." The city has shown acceptance of new treatments, cultures, and people from various walks of life. She reveals that Hyderabad has shown significant acceptance of holistic treatments like music therapy. The city's residents, especially those dealing with autism, exhibit a commendable level of patience, allowing the therapy to progress over the typical 16-20 sessions.

This patience and trust in the treatment are more pronounced in Hyderabad compared to other cosmopolitan cities. Rooted deeply in their traditions, the people of Hyderabad place a strong trust in music therapy. She also conducted workshops in hospitals and says, "While hospitals may not fully accept music therapy, they are open to giving it time and paying attention to its developments and impacts." In Hyderabad, she initially faced a language barrier while learning Telugu. Navigating the city, making contacts, and conducting research and workshops were more straightforward. However, she noticed distinct differences in how people approach treatment in these two places. She continues, "In Gurgaon, there is less patience; people are eager to try new things but often lack persistence. The residents here are modern and inclined towards innovation, whereas in Hyderabad, the people were simpler and more grounded, which contributed to a successful career for me. In contrast, Delhi seems to have a culture of showmanship, which I find quite different from the straightforward nature of Hyderabad." The time that she got to spend with her guru was one of the fondest memories she recalls from Hyderabad. During this period, she learned the invaluable practice of chakra activation. Before this, she had no knowledge of chakras, which led her to delve deeply into reading and understanding

them. She shares, "I also have cherished memories of working with autistic children, some of whom were incredibly intelligent. Their love and affection inspired me to organise more workshops and programs, focusing on rhythmic stimulation and meditation. I also conducted sessions for their parents, teaching them about chakra activation. These sessions helped parents learn how to address specific issues, and many reported a decrease in their anxiety." Likes and dislikes are often from personal perspectives and sometimes due to interaction with locals. "I appreciate the simplicity and acceptance I found in Hyderabad," she says. "However, one aspect I disliked was the limited embrace of Hindustani music. The cultural preference leans heavily towards Carnatic music, which, while understandable, presented a challenge for me as a Hindustani musician. This rigidity in cultural preferences is something every tradition has, but it did make it harder to introduce and integrate Hindustani music into the local scene." The city of Hyderabad has something to offer everyone, she says on a concluding note, adding, "I was keenly interested in music therapy, and in Hyderabad, I met my Gurus. I am grateful for the amazing people I met there. I had no relatives there, so I was inclined to take the path without anyone to demotivate or hinder."

'Learning that Nawazuddin Siddiqui was cast in Section 108, I was compelled'

PNS | HYDERABAD

From the gripping drama of *Operation Mayfair* to the deep melodies of *Sajna* with AB Rockstar, Yahhve Sharma's presence emanates charisma and depth. Yahhve, who is not limited to a particular genre, recently captivated fans with the devotional song video *Pawan Bhakti De De Ram*, demonstrating her flexibility too. And now, she's soon going to star alongside the renowned Nawazuddin Siddiqui in the upcoming film *Section 108*. Well, the process of selecting roles is a deeply personal journey for actors, and it's they who decide it by looking into various aspects such as character depth and script narrative. However, when she discovered the electrifying cast of the movie, she wasted no time in seeking out the director. She reveals, "When I first learnt that Nawazuddin Siddiqui was cast in the film, I immediately felt compelled to meet with the director and producer. I've always wanted to work with Nawazuddin Siddiqui, and when I read the script's narrative, I was captivated by the slightly negative role." The movie's title is enough to capture the audience's attention, serving as the first point of contact between the audience and the film because. She explains, "The movie revolves around a pivotal law known as *Section 108*, which states that if someone goes missing for seven years, they are legally considered dead, prompting insurance payouts to their nominee. Arbaaz Khan vanishes, causing Nawazuddin to investigate. Being sent by the insurance company to check the case isn't a trap, as many people use the law to make bogus claims."

Her role, just like a coin with two sides, provides depth, allowing her to effectively traverse its difficulties, she continues. "In the film, I play a girl from a modest Jaipur family who travels to Mumbai, only to discover her monthly pay is insufficient for subsistence. My part is complex, portraying two opposing sides: the ordinary girl striving to make ends meet and the beautiful persona she adopts when money enters the scene, causing her to become embroiled in #MeToo charges."

Transforming sensitivity into glam requires some training, and so, "I enrolled in acting classes with Ashish Pathode to hone my skills. He taught me to give dialogues with an uninterested demeanour, which is not a characteristic I possess in real life. I learned to manage my voice through dictation and breathing exercises, as well as how to effectively halt and continue lines. During my first class, I asked the director to speak with Ashish sir about my character. While I was naturally good at showing simplicity and fragility, we worked hard to capture the character's stylish and attitude-laden side."

The character's backstory is important in understanding the film and its plot. She explains, "The film features a prequel that dives into the back story of my character, showing her beginnings and how she becomes engaged in the events shown. With no clear finish, the film purposely leaves the audience in suspense, ending with a question mark rather than a definitive resolution, tempting viewers to speculate what might happen next."

She notes that experience working with filmmakers changes the whole character since collaboration with directors reveals the actual shade of personality. "Working with the director, was a fantastic experience. Prior to filming, I would approach him to discuss and clarify the

scene, and he would painstakingly explain the complexities of both the situation and my role. Shooting began on February 5, but I was summoned to the set on February 1, where the director introduced me to the other actors and shared insights into the screenplay. He had a serious approach to his goal while making everyone feel comfortable and at peace throughout the process."

"The performance and direction were commendable, and while our sets did not rival Sanjay Leela Bhansali's, they were still grand in scale. The film is brilliantly shot, and viewers can expect lots of twists and turns to keep them wondering at all times, unable to predict what will happen next," concludes the supporting actress.

ACTRESS YAHHVE SHARMA, WHO WILL SOON STAR ALONGSIDE NAWAZUDDIN SIDDIQUI IN THE UPCOMING FILM SECTION 108, GETS CANDID WITH THE PIONEER DISCUSSING HER CHARACTER, INSIGHTS ON THE CONCEPT OF THE FILM, AND MORE.



Discover your fertility power with the key benefits of testing before 30



The present times represent a fast-paced world, where lifestyle choices and environmental factors profoundly impact our overall well-being. This being said, the importance of prioritising women's reproductive health cannot be overstated. A research indicates that the fecundity of women begins to decrease significantly around the age of 30, with a more rapid decline observed after 37. Factors like stress, depression, anxiety, weight gain, and fatigue, further amplifies these challenges in their reproductive journey. For some women, the idea of fertility testing may seem premature, as they are not actively planning for a baby.

However, the increasingly sedentary lifestyle in modern times has necessitated undergoing a fertility check among women before turning 30. Following this proactive approach helps women gain valuable insights into their reproductive health and, accordingly, take preventive measures against various health issues that could potentially impact fertility and their overall quality of life.

The declining fertility trend and its complex causes

As per reports, 50% of women with PCOS face infertility and the rate of primary infertility reaches up to 15% of the population. Unhealthy dietary habits, sedentary lifestyles, smoking, and alcohol consumption are just a few contributors to this alarming trend.

Moreover, the presence of endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) in everyday products, such as water bottles, food packaging, electronic devices, personal care products, and cleaning supplies, has further intensified the issue. These hormone-hijacking chemicals are known to interfere with our hormonal balance and potentially lead to reproductive health issues like polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), ovarian cysts, and uterine fibroids in women.

Why early detection is important?

Testing early allows you to detect any underlying fertility issues sooner rather than later. Identifying potential problems early can help women take early precautions and timely interventions

and effectively address health conditions (like PCOS/PCOD, uterine fibroids, thyroid, etc.) to maintain optimal health and well-being.

Establishing a baseline and monitoring changes

Knowing your fertility status at a younger age provides a valuable baseline for comparison as you age. This information can help one to understand how their fertility changes over time, empowering them to make informed decisions about family planning. Regular fertility checks can also help identify any concerning trends or changes that may require further attention, allowing for timely interventions.

Opting for timely intervention

If any hormonal or fertility issues are identified through early testing, there is more time to explore and implement appropriate interventions. Lifestyle changes, medications, or procedures may be more effective when initiated earlier, potentially increasing the chances of successful fertility preservation or treatment. This way, it can significantly improve the outcomes of any necessary interventions.

Reduced stress and informed decision-making for family planning

Undergoing fertility testing before your 30s can ease anxiety and uncertainty about future fertility prospects. With a clear understanding of women's reproductive health, they can proactively plan for their desired family goals, whether that involves planning for pregnancy immediately or exploring options like egg freezing for later use. The knowledge is crucial to empower you to make informed choices that align with your personal and professional goals while considering your reproductive timeline.

As we steer an increasingly complex fertility landscape, prioritising early fertility testing emerges as a cornerstone of informed and empowered reproductive health management. By taking decisive action today, we pave the way for a future where fertility challenges are met with resilience and proactive solutions.

(The author, Sakshi Bakshi, is the Director of EPIA.)



Royaloak Furniture has unveiled a massive offer at its Hyderabad stores located in Banjara Hills, Kukatpally, Attapur, Ramachandra Puram, Neredmet, and Vanasthalipuram. This exciting opportunity provides customers with the chance to upgrade their homes with incredible savings of up to 70% on a wide range of furniture and home décor products.



Hollywood Producer and Former Tennis Champion Ashok Amritraj, launched Padmashri Dr Mukesh Batra's book 'Feel Good. Heal Good' at the 77th Cannes Film Festival 2024. The International launch was held at the Bharat Pavilion on 15 May 2024 in the presence of Hollywood luminaries Hal Sadoff.

PARTY



Anand Ram Reddiraju, regional business head of Max fashion stores in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, launched its 35th store in Hyderabad and the 74th store in the Telugu states at Aparna Mall in Nallagandla.



On the occasion of World Hypertension Day, Dr. Sridhar Reddy Peddis Cardiac Centre in Hyderabad organised a special awareness program. During this, Dr. Sridhar spoke in depth about the crucial topic that affects millions of people, and also shared some management criterias for hypertension.

APL APOLLO launches NEW TVC

APL Apollo Steel Tubes Ltd has launched an exhilarating new television commercial featuring Bollywood superstar Akshay Kumar, showcasing their innovative product, Roof Tuff – Color coated coils. The 60-second ad, produced in collaboration with Crayons, portrays Akshay Kumar in the role of 'The Tuff Hero', engaging in thrilling Parkour stunts while showcasing the superior durability and strength of APL Apollo's Roof Tuff. The TVC is set in the fictional town of 'Satranga', where Akshay Kumar narrates an action-packed story to his daughter about how he met her mother. Flashing back to 12 years prior, viewers witness Akshay Kumar in pursuit of a thief who steals his (future) wife's necklace. The adrenaline-fueled chase unfolds over rooftops, with Akshay Kumar showcasing his agility and toughness while traversing obstacles and demonstrating the durability of APL Apollo Roof Tuff.

Experience superior fabric care with Bosch

BSH Home Appliances Pvt. Ltd. introduced its latest range of 'Made-in-India' semi-automatic washing machines, meticulously crafted to cater to the discerning fabric care needs of Indian households. With an unwavering commitment to consumer-centricity and the ethos of Make In India, Bosch presents an unparalleled laundry experience, promising superior fabric care and convenience #LikeABosch. Manufactured at par with German standards of quality and design, these washing machines ensure reliability and performance that align with global benchmarks. This new semi-automatic range comes in captivating hues such as peacock blue, wine, lilac, coral pink, langleine orange, champagne gold, and shining black. The highlight of this innovative range is its pleasing design that sets it apart from the rest. It is further coupled with essential customer-centric features to make laundry chores more efficient providing added benefits to the users as listed below.

Vogue Eyewear unveils 'KEEP PLAYING'

Vogue Eyewear announced its latest campaign featuring talented actress and Brand Ambassador, Taapsee Pannu. This campaign encourages everyone to embrace every moment in life with a playful spirit. In a world that constantly presents us with dynamic situations, Vogue Eyewear believes that it is our approach to life which truly matters and makes all the difference. The campaign, titled "Keep Playing," invites consumers to tap into their light, bright, and joyful side while engaging with life in all its colorful facets. The latest collection of Vogue Eyewear styles is available at all leading stores and online platforms of Titan Eyeplus, Amazon India, AJIO, Nykaa, TataCliq and Sunglass Hut. Pricing: Starting at INR 3000/- onwards

Synchrony celebrates diversity and inclusion

Synchrony concluded its annual India Global Diversity Experience at District 150, Hyderabad, India. Over 150 employees across Synchrony's Regional Engagement Hubs in India assembled for a day of collaboration and interaction. The Global Diversity Experience 2024 aimed to create lasting connections beyond the event. It provided a platform for employees to engage in meaningful conversations with colleagues and leaders from Synchrony's Diversity Networks, Health360, and Citizenship teams. The event included networking opportunities, a community service workshop, and panel discussions with Synchrony leadership. Notably, Major Vandana Sharma, an ex-army officer, entrepreneur, and senior HR (Human Resources) professional, delivered a keynote address that provided valuable insights to all attendees.

Samsung launches three new refrigerators

Samsung announced the launch of three new refrigerators that ensure smarter living for Indian homes by helping consumers customise their choices. The new refrigerators feature Samsung's next generation Artificial Intelligence-powered Inverter Compressor. The AI Inverter Compressor, the heart of Samsung's new refrigerators, transforms the traditional internal design by optimizing motor and energy efficiency while saving electricity costs. Samsung's eighth generation compressor brings AI to the fore - marking a revolutionary change from its first compressor introduced 27 years back. The new AI refrigerators come in three models - the 809L 4-Door Flex French Door Bespoke Family Hub™ Refrigerator in Clean Charcoal + Stainless Steel colour, and the 650L 4-Door Convertible French Door models in Clean White in glass finish and Black Caviar in steel finish. Priced between Rs 1,72,900 and Rs 3,55,000 and are now available on Samsung.com, retail stores, and other e-commerce platforms.

Evolving dynamics of family relationships

Setting new standards in the home décor industry, myTrident introduced its latest campaign starring their enigmatic brand ambassador Kareena Kapoor Khan alongside the iconic Sharmila Tagore. This extraordinary collaboration highlights the harmonious and elegant relationship between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, marking a notable shift from the traditional narratives typically portrayed in brand campaigns. This initiative sets a new standard in creative storytelling, celebrating the evolving dynamics of modern family relationships. Crafted with cinematic finesse, the campaign unveils an enchanting television commercial produced by Dharma 2.0 under the leadership of Punit Malhotra.

Matrimony service for Telugu communities

'Telugu Sangam' - an exclusive platform tailored to bring together specific communities in the quest for marital bliss is set to revolutionize the matrimony landscape. The new service boasts of offering members a high quality, safe and success-oriented matrimony experience that will surely be liked and trusted by Telugu parents and eligible singles. Key new features of the service include - 100% verified profiles, only profiles with verified photographs, assured new profiles every week plus human assistance and support right through the membership period. This platform is meticulously-crafted to meet the unique preferences of Telugu speaking communities across the globe, fostering connections within their own cultural context.

Mohan Babu University attains Diamond Rating

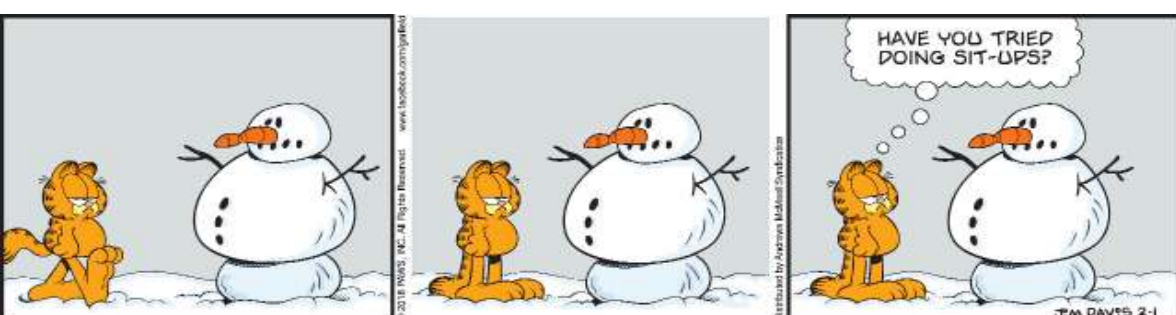
Mohan Babu University (MBU), established in 1992 under the visionary guidance of Padma Shri Dr. M. Mohan Babu stands proudly among the distinguished institutions recognized by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), the world's largest global higher education network, for its exceptional performance across nine domains. QS I-GAUGE has accorded MBU the prestigious diamond status in the overall category, propelling it to the ranks of esteemed educational institutions. This acknowledgement by QS I-GAUGE underscores MBU's leadership in higher education and reaffirms its unwavering commitment to excellence.

FUN

ARCHIE



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



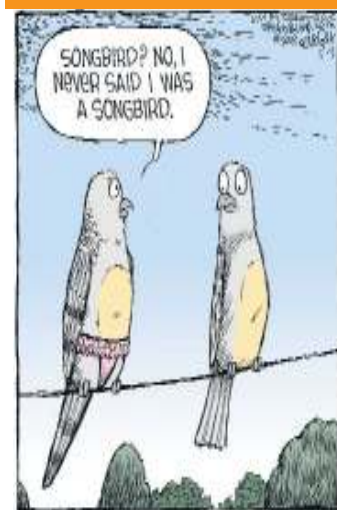
CALVIN AND HOBBS



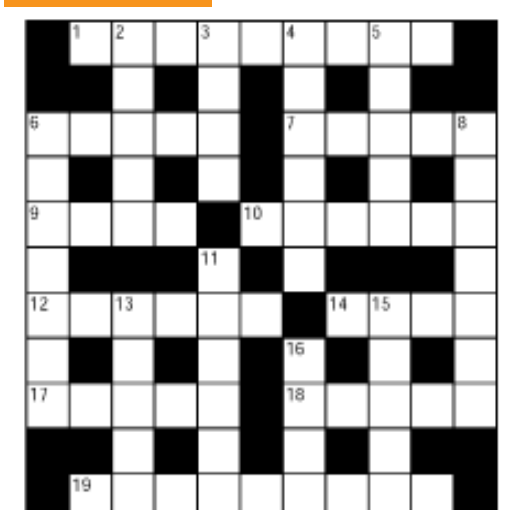
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

7			6		4			
	1	2						
8	3		4					8
	9		3					
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4			1		7			
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Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

ACROSS

- Don't jump out of a flying aeroplane without this
- A compass direction
- Time of darkness
- Decays
- A large seal-like animal with whiskers and long tusks
- Sampled by mouth
- Where Peruvians live
- Places where people live
- Parts of a sentence
- Vegetable growers
- A large striped wild cat
- Make longer by pulling
- Paper hankies
- Unkindly made fun of a person to annoy them
- Where Samoans live
- Mistake
- A brother or sister born on the same day as you

DOWN

- Grown-up
 - A throbbing pain
 - A building for an aeroplane
- SOLUTION
- | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P | I | D | O | I | S | | | |
| N | A | I | S | V | I | S | | |
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KAJAL AGGARWAL BAGS KEY ROLE IN KANNAPPA

The dynamic duo of Vishnu Manchu and Kajal Aggarwal, who captivated audiences as siblings in the film *Mosagallu*, are set to reunite once again on the silver screen for a grand venture - *Kannappa*. With this project poised to be Vishnu Manchu's most ambitious undertaking yet, Kajal Aggarwal is slated to play a significant role, adding depth and intrigue to the narrative of this monumental film.

Kannappa boasts a stellar ensemble cast that includes industry stalwarts such as Mohan Babu, Prabhas, Akshay Kumar, Mohan Lal, and Sarathkumar. With Akshay Kumar having already

completed his portion of filming and Prabhas recently joining the team, audiences can anticipate a cinematic spectacle like no other, as these powerhouse performers grace the screen together.

This highly anticipated Pan-India film, produced by the illustrious Mohan Babu and helmed by director Mukesh Kumar Singh, is nearing completion of its shooting schedule. *Kannappa* promises to be a visual extravaganza, immersing viewers in the captivating tale of a valiant warrior turned devout disciple of Lord Shiva - *Kannappa*. Vishnu Manchu, known for his versatility and dedication, brings this legendary character to life with passion and reverence, captivating audiences with his portrayal.

As Telugu cinema continues to make waves on the global stage, it is a moment of immense pride as the teaser of *Kannappa* is set to be unveiled at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival on May 20th at 6 PM. This landmark event signifies the growing recognition and acclaim garnered by regional cinema, showcasing the industry's boundless creativity and innovation on an international platform.

With anticipation building and excitement mounting, *Kannappa* promises to be an unforgettable cinematic experience, blending stellar performances, breathtaking visuals, and a captivating storyline that transcends borders and captivates hearts worldwide.

Makers deny casting director's involvement in MB-Rajamouli film

Recent speculations regarding the casting of SS Rajamouli and Mahesh Babu's much-anticipated project, *SSMB 29*, have been put to rest by the film's production house, which has refuted claims of casting director Viren Swami's involvement.

Reports had surfaced suggesting that Viren Swami, a well-known figure in the industry, had joined the team of *SSMB 29* and was tasked with finding a parallel lead alongside superstar Mahesh Babu.

However, the production house has categorically denied these rumours, asserting that Viren Swami is not associated with the project in any capacity.

In an official statement released to the media, the production house addressed the circulating reports, stating, "It has come to our notice that a prominent publication has published an article regarding the casting of SS Rajamouli and Mahesh Babu's project. We want to clarify that, contrary to what is stated in the article, Mr. Viren Swami is not involved in any part of our film in any way."

The statement went on to reassure fans, affirming that all official announcements regarding the project will be made directly by the production house when deemed necessary. This clear stance aims to dispel any confusion and urges fans to await official updates from reliable sources.

As anticipation continues to mount for *SSMB 29*, fans are advised to refrain from giving credence to unverified rumours and instead await official announcements from the production team. With SS Rajamouli at the helm and Mahesh Babu in the lead, expectations for the film are sky-high, making it all the more crucial to rely on authentic information regarding its casting and development.

As the industry eagerly awaits further updates on *SSMB 29*, fans can rest assured that any significant announcements regarding the project will be communicated directly by the production house, ensuring clarity and transparency throughout the filmmaking process.

Jr NTR's team clarifies on court case

Rumours swirled within Tollywood circles, alleging that actor Jr NTR had sought legal recourse from the Telangana High Court concerning a property dispute in Jubilee Hills. Reports indicated that Jr NTR had purportedly purchased a 681-square-yard plot in 2003 from Sunku Geetha Lakshmi, who was accused of fabricating documents and leveraging the property for loans from multiple banks.

Following a ruling by the Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT) in favour of the banks, purported attempts were made to seize the property, prompting Jr NTR's purported engagement with the High Court. However, the actor's team swiftly issued a press statement to counter the allegations. The statement clarified that Jr NTR had sold the property in question in 2013, urging media outlets to abstain from linking him



to the ongoing dispute.

"In response to the news published concerning Mr. NTR, we would like to clarify that the said property was sold by Mr. NTR in the year 2013. We request you to refrain from using Mr. NTR's name in any reporting regarding the said property, read the team's official statement.

Despite the clarification, the news stirred widespread discourse across social media platforms. Meanwhile, on the professional front, Jr NTR is actively involved in the much-anticipated film *Devara*, helmed by acclaimed director Koratala Siva.



Dubbing commences for LAGGAM

Producer Venugopal Reddy is bankrolling the film *Laggam*, directed by Ramesh Cheppala. The film aims to capture the essence, fun, love, and excitement of marriage culture, and it is expected to be a topic of widespread discussion. Director Ramesh Cheppala believes this film will be remembered forever.

Having completed its shoot, the film has moved to Prasad Lab for dubbing. Veteran actor Rajendra Prasad has started his dubbing sessions, and Sai Ronak, the film's lead, along with the crew, is also involved in the process.

The film features an ensemble cast including senior artists Rohini, LB Sriram, and many others. The story, screenplay, dialogues, and direction are all handled by Ramesh Chappala, with music composed by Charan Arjun. The editor is Bonthala Nageswara Reddy, and the cinematography is by Balreddy R Krishna. Lyrics are written by Kasarala Shyam and Sanjay Mahesh Varma, with choreography by Ajay Shivasankar.



Suriya launches Hit List teaser

Tamil director Vikraman's son Vijay Kanishka is making his debut as a lead actor with the film *Hit List*, whose teaser was unveiled by actor Suriya on Friday.

The film, also starring Samuthirakani, Sarath Kumar and Gautham Vasudev Menon is directed by Surya Kathir Kakkallar, and K Karthikeyan.

Bankrolled under R.K. Celluloids banner by K.S. Ravi Kumar, the film is an action, suspense, crime genre movie whose teaser seems to have impressed the audience already. The present audi-

ence is mostly attracted by crime and suspense genre movies, hence, this movie is also getting into the same genre. After watching the teaser, actor Suriya expressed, "The teaser is very good and I hope the movie will be even better. I definitely wish this film to give good success to Vijay Kanishka and his team."

DIRECTOR PAWAN KUMAR MAKES HIS ACTING DEBUT AS A HERO

Pawan Kumar Kothuri made his directorial debut with the film *Merise*, which won appreciation as a wholesome entertainment. The writer and director is now testing his luck as a hero with his second directorial venture titled *Average Student Nani*. Apart from playing the lead role, writing and directing the movie, Pawan Kumar is also producing it under his banner Sri Neelakanta Mahadeva Entertainments LLP.

The makers started the promotions of this youthful love, action, and family entertainer by unveiling its first look poster on Friday. The bold and intense first-look poster shows the intimacy of the lead pair - Pawan Kumar and Sneha Malviya. Sahiba Bhasin and Vivvya Santh are the other heroines in the movie.

On the technical front, Sajeesh Rajendran handles the cinematography, while Karthik B Kodakandla renders music and Uddhav SB is the editor.

Further details about the film will be revealed soon.



Choreographer Subhash Sarikonda turns director

Renowned choreographer Subhash Sarikonda is all set to make his directorial debut in the world of cinema, marking a significant milestone in his illustrious career. The talented choreographer, known for his impeccable dance sequences, is now set to showcase his prowess behind the camera as well.

Adding to the excitement surrounding this prestigious project is the inclusion of music director Leander Lee Marty, who previously collaborated with the legendary Prabhu Deva in the acclaimed film *Musasi*. Marty's expertise in crafting captivating melodies promises to elevate the cinematic experience of Sarikonda's directorial debut to new heights.

As anticipation mounts for further details about this upcoming venture, fans and cinephiles eagerly await to witness Subhash Sarikonda's transition from choreographer to director and the magical musical compositions of Leander Lee Marty.

PRABHAS' MYSTERIOUS POST SPARKS SPECULATION

In the realm of celebrity surprises, just before the release of their films, many stars have a knack for leaving fans intrigued with mysterious social media posts. Superstar Prabhas is no exception. On Friday, he shared something enigmatic on his Instagram story that has set tongues wagging and sparked widespread speculation among fans.

The post in question featured some text that reads: "Darlings! Finally, someone very special is about to enter our life. Wait *Cheyandi*." Naturally, this cryptic message has led to various theories circulating among fans, including speculation about Prabhas introducing his girlfriend to the world or even hinting at his own marriage.

Reports suggest that the post is actually related to the promotions of his highly anticipated film *Kalki 2898 AD*. Speculation is rife that the team is gearing up to introduce a new character in the upcoming days, hence the mysterious tease.

Directed by Nag Ashwin, the movie features an impressive ensemble cast comprising

Deepika Padukone, Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Disha Patani, and more. Drawing inspiration from Hindu mythology, the film centers around a contemporary interpretation of Lord Vishnu's avatar.



Kanguva has biggest war sequence with 10,000 people!

The extraordinary teaser of *Kanguva* has left the entire nation raving about it. The film from Studio Green, starring Suriya Sivakumar, has created a stir with every asset coming out. From the original content, thrilling background score, and execution, it immediately takes you into the world that makers are going to bring. Undeniably, it has everything that makes it a film of international standards. While everything about *Kanguva* itself sets the excitement to the peak, the one major attraction that piqued attention was the historic and war backdrop shown in posters and teasers. It can't be denied that *Kanguva* is nothing less than a

phenomenon that audiences have never experienced before.

The makers have left no stone unturned to ensure a cinematic spectacle for a global audience, and in their biggest attempt, they have pulled off the mammoth war sequence. As seen in the teaser, the film is filled with some terrific war sequences, and the story is set in two time periods, among which one is the prehistoric era.

In exciting details, a source close to the production shared an insight about the epic war sequence that makers had shot. The source said, "The makers, Studio Green, along with director Siva and the entire team, have worked on every aspect of the war sequences to do justice to the theme and subject. The film has the biggest war sequence, featuring Suriya Sivakumar, Bobby Deol, and more than 10,000 people."

The source further added, "Right from the action, stunts, and visualization of the entire war episodes, everything is being done under international expertise with an aim to deliver cinematic grandeur."

Kanguva is undoubtedly one of the most ambitious films coming this year. It promises a raw, rustic, and new visual experience for audiences with human emotions, powerful performances, and never-before-seen action sequences on a massive scale. The film features cinematography by Vetri Palanisamy and music by 'Rockstar' Devi Sri Prasad. Studio Green has partnered with top distribution houses to release the film on a massive scale worldwide. The film's release is planned for the second half of 2024.





RCB AND CSK CLASH FOR FINAL PLAYOFF BERTH AMID RAIN THREAT

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's fairy tale resurgent run will be up against the might of five-time champions Chennai Super Kings and the weather gods when the two sides clash in an epic do-or-die match to decide the fourth and final team for the IPL play-offs, here on Saturday.

Thursday's washout in Hyderabad meant that Sunrisers Hyderabad joined Kolkata Knight Riders and Rajasthan Royals as the three confirmed teams for the playoffs and the race is now for only one spot with two teams in fray -- CSK and RCB. Boasting of a better net run-rate and more points, defending champions CSK (13 points, NRR 0.528) start favourites at a venue where

they have lost to the home side only once in eight matches. RCB has 12 points and a net run-rate of 0.387.

However, what has heightened the drama surrounding the game is the forecast of rain. A washout will take CSK through to the playoffs, while RCB will need to win by at least 18 runs or chase the target with about 11 balls to spare.

The odds are therefore stacked against the home side, which is the most in-form unit in the tournament's final stretch. They've staged a spectacular comeback, securing five straight wins after enduring a six-match losing streak.

Orange Cap holder Kohli has been in phenomenal form with three fifties in last five innings as he is poised to ignite the field with yet another stellar show.

They will hope that skipper Faf

du Plessis is back among runs, having capped single digit scores in his last two outings. In the middle order, Rajat Patidar and Cameron Green have both showcased compelling form.

Mahipal Lomror and Dinesh Karthik would be looking to make the most out of the Chinnaswamy track, which is typically a good batting wicket. As for RCB's bowling, Yash Dayal has been their star, bagging the most wickets this season. Lockie Ferguson, Mohammed Siraj, Green, and Swapnil Singh face a formidable task ahead.

Will Jacks, who has impressed with the bat, is a part-time spin bowling option. But it will be interesting to see if he is utilised on this track.

For CSK, Rituraj Gaikwad has been the team's top run-scorer this season and is expected to

STAGE SET FOR EPIC FACE-OFF



give them a fine start. Fellow opener Rachin Ravindra is also back among runs and he along with Daryl Mitchell will be expected to lift the top order.

They will hope that Shivam Dube gets back into his rhythm. He has failed to score in his last four outings.

In bowling, pacer Srimarjeet Singh and Tushar Deshpande have done a neat job after they missed their premier trio of Mustafizur Rahman, Matheesa Pathirana and Deepak Chahar.

The inspiring presence of Mahendra Singh Dhoni will continue to be a factor for the side but it remains to be seen how big a role he is able to play given some nagging injury concerns.

Karthik (wk), Suyash Prabhudessai, Will Jacks, Mahipal Lomror, Karn Sharma, Manoj Bhandage, Mayank Dagar, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Akash Deep, Mohammed Siraj, Reece Topley, Himanshu Sharma, Rajan Kumar, Cameron Green, Alzarri Joseph, Yash Dayal, Tom Curran, Lockie Ferguson, Swapnil Singh and Saurav Chauhan.

CSK: Rituraj Gaikwad (c), Rachin Ravindra, Ajinkya Rahane, Daryl Mitchell, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Sameer Rizvi, MS Dhoni (wk), Maheesh Theekshana, Tushar Deshpande, Shardul Thakur, Shaik Rasheed, Moeen Ali, Nishant Sindhu, Mitchell Santner, Ajay Yadav Mandal, Prashant Solanki, Mukesh Choudhary, Srimarjeet Singh, RS Hangargekar and Aravelly Avanish.

When Chhetri sounded out Virat Kohli before retirement announcement

PTI ■ NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

As Sunil Chhetri sat contemplating how he would break his retirement plans to the world, he knew there was one man who would understand what exactly he was going through and Virat Kohli did not disappoint the iconic Indian football captain.

The 39-year-old Chhetri, the most capped India footballer with 150 matches to his credit and the country's top-scorer with 94 goals, will hang up his boots after the World Cup qualifying match against Kuwait on June 6 in Kolkata.

Chhetri's announcement came on Thursday, driven by, what he described as, rather inexplicable instincts. And he chose Kohli as one of his confidantes before going public with his decision.

"I did talk to Virat Kohli before my retirement decision, he is very close to me. I discussed with him because we both understand that we would know this thing exactly the way it is," Chhetri said in an online media interaction from Bhubaneswar where he is currently part of a national camp for the World Cup qualifiers.

"The ups and downs of sports, this part of retirement, we do understand that the other person would understand," he added, trying to describe in words the deep bond they have shared over the years.

Earlier on Friday, Kohli had acknowledged the communication from Chhetri and stated that his fellow Delhiite was at peace with the decision.



"He (Chhetri) is a really great player. He actually messaged me as well informing that he's going to do that. But I would actually say I felt like he is at peace with the decision," Kohli said in a short video interview on his IPL side Royal Challengers Bengaluru's 'X' page.

"I have become very close with him over the years and I wish the best. He is a lovely, lovely guy," Kohli and Chhetri have often spoken about each other fondly with the former stating that they share jokes and also some deep and meaningful chats whenever they catch up.

"...It just hits the right note," Chhetri had stated in an earlier interaction.

Kohli was among the first to offer support to Chhetri when he made an emotional plea to fans to show up for the national footballers during the 2018 Hero Cup in Mumbai.

Kohli later described Chhetri as "a man I can call a true friend."

"Very grateful for the friendship we have skip," he had stated on Chhetri's

birthday in 2022.

VAMIKA HAS STARTED BATTING: KOHLI: Kohli, besides talking about Chhetri, also informed that his daughter Vamika has recently started swinging the bat but he said he would never force his kids to take up cricket.

Kohli and his actor wife Anushka Sharma recently also welcomed a son, Akaay after the birth of Vamika in 2021.

"My daughter picked up a bat and she is really enjoying swinging the bat. But it's their choice," he said.

RCB are currently placed sixth in the IPL standings with 12 points from 13 games and will take on defending champions Chennai Super Kings in a must-win match here on Friday.

RCB made a remarkable comeback with five straight wins after enduring a six-game losing streak to stay afloat in the play-off race.

"The month of May has been very good. We found a ray of sunlight. We are glad that we have made the fans happy again," Kohli said of their fightback.

OTHER SPORTS

Shooter Manu Bhaker continues to dominate Olympic Selection Trials

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Olympian Manu Bhaker displayed complete dominance in 10m air pistol Olympic Selection Trials (OST), shooting a superb score to overcome the challenge of Asian Games medallist Esha Singh here on Friday.

Bhaker, coached by the legendary pistol marksman Jaspal Rana, shot a superb 241.0 in the third OST to push back the challenge of Esha (240.2) and Rhythm Sangwan (220.3) at the MP State Shooting Academy ranges.

Surbhi Rao (199.3) and Palka (179.1) were fourth and fifth respectively.

Manu's performance is all the more creditable as she came

into the 10m air pistol trials on the back of a superb showing in the 25m sports pistol trials.

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) is conducting a series of four trials in pistol and rifle to select the squad for the Paris Olympics.

The top-three scores in the trials along with Paris Olympics quota points will count towards the selection of the Indian squad for the Summer Games.

The range, however, was set on fire by Naveen in men's 10m air pistol OST T3 final, as he shot a 246.8, 0.3 points more than the existing world record, to emerge victorious.

Sarabjot Singh (242.4) was a distant second, while Arjun Singh Cheema (218.8), Varun



Tomar (197.3) and Ravinder Singh (176.9) were third, fourth and fifth respectively.

Ramita Jindal emerged winner in women's 10 air rifle finals (Trial 3), posting 252.6 to edge past Olympian Elavenil Valarivan (252.1). Nancy was

third, bowing out in a shoot-off with Elavenil, while Mehuli Ghosh and Tilottama Sen were fourth and fifth respectively.

In men's 10m air rifle finals (Trial 3), Sri Karthik Sabari Raj took an early lead in the 24-shot shoot-out and held on to it

after coming through two shoot-offs for the top podium finish against Divyansh Singh Panwar. Both ended on 252.5.

Arjun Babuta (229.9) was third, while world champion Rudranksh Patil and Sandeep Singh were third and fourth respectively.

India No. 1 and world record holder Sift Kaur Samra returned a splendid 593, while Olympian Anjum Moudgil shot a modest 588 as the duo dominated the qualification round (Trial 4) in the 50m rifle 3-positions event.

Nishchal (587), Shriyanka Sadangi (580) and Ashi Chouksey (577) were third, fourth and fifth respectively going into the finals to be played on Saturday.

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Indian women's hockey team's new captain Salima Tete hopes to utilise the "valuable lessons" learnt from the recent home series against South Africa to make a fresh start in the European leg of the FIH Pro League, beginning in Antwerp, Belgium on Wednesday.

Under former skipper Savita Punia, India managed just two wins from eight matches in the first leg held in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela to slip to sixth spot in the nine-team standings.

The midfielder from Jharkhand was handed over the captaincy baton, while Navneet Kaur was named her deputy ahead of the friendly series against South Africa at the SAI south centre here

New skipper Salima ready for European leg of Pro League after SA lessons

earlier this month. India won the series 4-2.

"As the captain of the Indian women's hockey team, it's a great honour to lead our talented squad into the European leg of the FIH Pro League," Salima said before leaving for Antwerp on Friday.

"We are determined to showcase our best performance and make our nation proud on the international stage. The recent series against South Africa has taught us valuable lessons, and we are eager to apply them as we face formidable opponents



in Europe. With teamwork, dedication, and a fighting spirit, we aim to leave a mark in every match we play." India will face Argentina in Antwerp on Wednesday in

their first match of the European leg.

This leg of the league will unfold in Belgium and England, with Antwerp hosting the matches till May 26, while London will host the matches from June 1-9.

In the six-match friendly series against South Africa held from May 3 to 11, India won the first three games 1-0, 5-1, and 3-1 respectively.

However, the visitors mounted a strong comeback in the fourth 2-2 (2-4 SO win) and fifth 1-1 (3-1 SO win) matches. In the final game of the series, India won 4-3 in the shootout

following a 1-1 tie at the end of regulation time.

Vice-captain Navneet said she is committed to support her Salima and the team to achieve success.

"Being appointed as the vice-captain is both a privilege and a responsibility. Alongside our captain, Salima Tete, I am committed to supporting and motivating our team members to give their all in every game."

"The recent series against South Africa showcased our resilience and determination, and we carry that momentum into the upcoming challenges in Europe," she said.

Please let us compete in Paris, we need mental peace before Olympics: Women quota winners

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Paris Games quota-winning women wrestlers on Friday pleaded with the national federation not to subject them to selection trials, saying that every single step they take and every little thing they do from now on will have a bearing on India's medal chances at the Olympics.

Anshu Malik, India's first female wrestler to reach the senior World Championships final in 2021, said all they need now is "mental peace" to prepare for the Games.

If selected, it will be 22-year-old Anshu's second shot at an Olympic medal, having competed at the Tokyo Games. She had exceeded expectations by locking a quota in women's 57kg category as a 17-year old but lack of big-stage experience meant that she crashed out in the first round.

However, the attacking wrestler from Nidani village has made tremendous progress since then, winning a historic Worlds silver and four Asian Championships medals.

She missed the Asian Games due to a knee injury she



suffered during the Asian Championships last year and fears that putting her body under pressure so close to the Games may spoil her preparations.

"We have to be very, very careful with every little thing we do. We are cautious in every single step we take from here on. I have competed at a number of competitions in the recent past, international events, nationals, trials and then the Qualifiers, so I am not required to be assessed on fitness through trials," Anshu told PTI from Tokyo where

she is training these days.

"We need mental peace before the Olympics. Already two months is too less a period to prepare. At this stage, every single day counts. We plan our training on a weekly basis and if I am called to India for trials, it will disrupt plans and affect medal chances."

"I also want to go to Europe for an international training camp from June 10 but I can't finalise that because of uncertainty around the trials. We need to strategise bouts with rivals but how will I do that if I prepare for the trials

and not for the Olympics?" she asked.

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) has called its selection committee meeting on May 21 in Delhi to decide on the trials criteria.

Nisha Dahiya (68kg) and Reetika Hooda (76kg) are among the five women wrestlers who have secured quotas for India.

"I am still recovering from the weight-cut at the qualifiers, if again we undergo trials, it will affect our body. We have to complete with elite wrestlers and need to plan well, but if

keep thinking about trials, how will we strategise," said Nisha, who trains at Satywan's akhada in Rohtak.

"In Bishkek, I got caught in crossing (Nordic system) and did not get enough points and the wrestler who I had beaten qualified. I was pretty sure that I will qualify in Istanbul. I am competing in 68kg for many years now, so I knew who my rivals could be and wrote down around 20-22 rivals, who I was expected to clash with and started watching their bouts.

"I was well-prepared. I expected China to win, for me China is the strongest rival, though I have beaten her."

After securing the quota, Nisha has not met her family in Panipat. "I came straight to my training centre from Istanbul. I did not want to lose time and focus, so began training here. I did not allow even my parents to come here. We will meet now only after the Olympics."

According to the criteria explained earlier, it was said that the wrestlers, who finished in the top-four at the last trials will compete against each other and the winner from the group will fight it out with the quota winner.

Arjun Erigaisi loses to Nikolas Theodorou in Sharjah Masters chess

PTI ■ SHARJAH

Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi was stunned by Nikolas Theodorou of Greece in the second round of Sharjah Masters chess tournament here.

Erigaisi, however, bounced back to register a victory over Nikoloz Kacharava of Switzerland in the third round that puts back his status as world number eight in live ratings. It was not an easy day for the Indian contingent.

Aravindh Chithambaram was the pick of the lot as he carved out an exceptional victory with white pieces.

The two-time national champion, who is based in Chennai, got the better of Muradli Mahammad of Azerbaijan to be the only Indian in the leading group.

Important and Indian results after Round 2: Nikolas Theodorou (GRE, 2) beat Arjun Erigaisi (1); Vasily Ivanchuk (UKR, 1) lost to Arjun Tabatabaei (IRI, 2); Temur Kuybokarov (AUS) lost to Vladimir Fedoseev (2); Hans Moke Niemann (USA, 2) Jahongir Vakhidov (IZB, 1); Muradli Mahammad (AZE, 1) lost to Aravindh Chithambaram (2); Marcin Krzyzanowski (POL, 2) beat Abhimanyu Mishra (USA, 1); Volodar Murzin (FID, 2) beat P Iniyani (1); Salem A R Saleh (UAE, 2) beat Shreyas Royal (ENG, 1); Parham Maghsoudloo, Parham (IRI, 1.5) beat S P Sethuraman; Denis Kadric (MNE, 1) drew with S L Narayanan (1); Nihal Sarin (1)



drew with Mikheil Mchedlishvili (GEO, 1); B Adhiban (1) drew with Raunak Sadhwani (1); Shant Sargsyan (ATM, 0.5) lost to Sankalp Gupta (1.5); David Gavrilescu (ROU, 0.5) lost to Abhimanyu Puranik (1.5); Maurizzi Marcandria (FRA, 1) drew with D Harika (1); Bibisara Assaubayeva (KAZ, 0.5) lost to Aditya Mittal (1.5); Madaminov Mukhiddin (UZB, 1) drew with Abhijeet Gupta (1); Dedic Bogdan-Daniel (ROU, 1) beat Bharath, Subramaniyam (0); Yilmaz Mustafa (TUR, 0.5) drew with Pranav Anand (0.5); Raja Rithvik (0.5) drew with Leon Luke Menodnonca (0.5); Eltaj Safarl (AZE, 1) beat Aditya Samant (0); V Pranav beat Alisher Suleymenov (UZB).