

sunday pioneer

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'INDIA bloc will win LS polls, BJP will not even cross 200 seats'

'FDI norms in certain sectors LIKELY TO BE eased under new government'

Oozing charm and grace

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

Prime Minister Modi is unable to digest the free bus travel facility for women. Some states are providing free bus travel facilities to women to facilitate economic growth. Travelling in RTC buses has nothing to do with the Metro. The Metro is a different kind of entity. We are still appealing to increase the number of Metro coaches.

- Ponnam Prabhakar, Minister



DON'T MISS...

'Water Board supplying water...

From more than three days of water tankers delay, the HMWSSB has now been supplying water tankers to consumers within 24 hours of booking. Water board Managing Director C Sudarshan Reddy complimented officers and staff of the board achievement. On Saturday the HMWSSB released a press release, where it mentioned that during this summer more than 30,000 consumers depended only on water board tankers for drinking and normal uses. The HMWSSB said that to meet...

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Of strawberry shakes, drives...

Old writers never die, they simply go out of print, says India's storyteller through the decades Ruskin Bond as he turns 90 on Sunday, adding with his famed self-deprecating wit that 99 per cent of his tribe are forgotten in the long run. The companionship of his adopted family, drives on the serpentine Landour-Mussoorie route, frothy strawberry milk shakes, shelves filled with books to read and a handy notepad to write down his daily musings... they were and are just a few of his favourite things. Spending most of his days at his...

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Need to reconsider sachetisation of...

Cautioning against household savings getting invested in futures and options trade, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran on Saturday said there is a need to reconsider sachetisation of F&O trade because it requires different financial literacy. Speaking at the CII's Annual Business Summit, 2024, Nageswaran said whenever financial sector development precedes national development the story hasn't ended well for other countries as well. "Asian crisis 1997-98 is a very important example," he said. "When we take pride in the fact..."

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Global life expectancy...

Life expectancy around the world is projected to improve by almost five years in men and by over four years in women between 2022 and 2050, according to a global study published in The Lancet journal. Researchers said that the improvements are expected to be the highest in countries where life expectancy is lower, thereby contributing to an overall enhancement of life expectancy across geographies. Public health measures preventing and improving survival rates from cardiovascular diseases, COVID-19, and a range of communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases, are largely driving the trend of increasing life expectancy globally, the authors said. "In addition to an increase in life expectancy overall..."

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No EC nod yet for cabinet meet

Will wait till Monday for EC permission: CM

As the election code is in force, the government sought the EC's permission to hold the cabinet meeting. The government did not receive permission from the EC till Saturday night.



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state Cabinet's scheduled meeting on Saturday was postponed as the government did not receive permission from the Election Commission of India.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy had convened the Cabinet meeting on Saturday afternoon.

As the election code is in force, the government sought the EC's permission to hold the cabinet meeting. The government did not

receive permission from the EC till Saturday night.

The Chief Minister and his team reached the Secretariat in the afternoon and waited for the EC's permission till night. The Chief Secretary and top officials of all departments were also present to attend the cabinet meeting.

As there was no response from the EC till 7 pm, the cabinet meeting could not be held and the CM and ministers left the secretariat.

The government was planning to discuss the farm loan waiver scheme, paddy procurement, action plan for the Kharif season and other important issues connected to farmers in the cabinet meeting. The CM said that the cabinet could not discuss the farmers' welfare and other urgent matters.

Revanth had also decided to discuss State Formation Day celebrations on June 2 and pending

bifurcation issues between the Telangana and Andhra Pradesh as per the AP Reorganisation Act,

CM enquires about NDSA's interim report on Medigadda

Says will visit Medigadda, Sundilla barrages, pump houses soon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy inquired about the recommendations made by the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) in the interim report on the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project and the steps to be taken.

The Chief Minister held a meeting with Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy at the Secretariat on Saturday. Ministers

Tummala Nageswara Rao, Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy, J. Krishna Rao, Konda Surekha and CM's Adviser Vem Narender Reddy were also present.

The NDSA recently submitted an interim report regarding repairs and temporary restoration of the damaged Medigadda and Sundilla barrages, considered the most important structures in the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme.

Continued on Page 2

Dharani issues to be solved before June 4

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Dharani Committee has decided to make the Revenue Department solve the one lakh pending applications of farmers before June 4, it is learnt.

On Saturday, the Dharani Committee held a meeting at the secretariat and took the decision. The Committee discussed the land issues of farmers and gave suggestions to the government for solving land issues.

It may be recalled that the BRS government had kept 2.5 lakh complaints pending. The state government had conducted a special drive to solve these prob-

lems and had solved 1.5 lakh complaints. One lakh complaints are still pending.

Meanwhile, the Dharani Committee thinks that Dharani portal issues will be solved if 76 modules are changed as there are mistakes in 119 divisions in the Dharani Portal. There were allegations that the BRS government transferred prohibited and assigned lands to their names using these mistakes in the Dharani Portal.

The Dharani Committee is also studying land transactions of the BRS government. The Committee will submit a report to the government soon.

Rs 725 crore sanctioned for Kalyana Lakshmi scheme

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government has sanctioned funds Rs 725 crore for the Kalyana Lakshmi scheme for fiscal 2024-25. Principal Secretary Burra Venkatesham issued orders regarding this on Saturday. Congress sources believe that once the election code is lifted, the Kalyana Lakshmi Rs one lakh financial assistance and 10 gm gold scheme promised by the

Congress is likely to be implemented. Before the Assembly elections, the Congress had announced that it would also give Tulum gold in addition to the financial assistance provided earlier under the Kalyana Lakshmi Scheme. The government which has been working on this for a long time has sanctioned funds. Congress sources believe that the party is likely to get good mileage through this scheme.

Case booked against two BRS MLAs over land dispute

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A case was registered against BRS MLAs Ch Malla Reddy and Marri Rajasekhar Reddy and others here on Saturday following arguments over fencing around a disputed land, police said. Police said they also registered a counter case at Petbasheerabad police station against another group of people, who claimed ownership of that land measuring over one acre, based on the complaint lodged by Malla Reddy. The former Telangana minister and Medchal MLA Malla Reddy and his son-in-law Malkajigiri MLA



Rajasekhar Reddy along with their followers reached the spot and alleged that some persons tried to encroach upon the land belonging to them by erecting a boundary fence.

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No connection between free bus travel scheme & Metro: Ponnam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar said that there is no connection between the free bus travel scheme for women and Metro operations.

Ponnam was reacting to Prime Minister Modi's comments about the free bus travel facility affecting Metro.

He said, "The Prime Minister is unable to digest the free bus travel facility for women. Some states are providing free bus travel to women to facilitate growth due to conditions there. Travelling in an



RTC has nothing to do with the Metro. The Metro is separate. We are still appealing to increase the number of coaches in the Metro." Ponnam asked whether the

Prime Minister is thinking about political gains. "Why did the Prime Minister say that about free bus travel? The Congress government in Telangana will not have any problem regarding free bus facilities for women. We will increase routes and increase the number of buses," he said.

"The PM should stop playing games on free bus facility for women. It is not right to say that there is a loss because of the free bus travel facility. Don't lower the image of the Prime Minister's post by talking about small issues like this," Ponnam said.

It's now TGSPDCL & TGNPDCL

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Discoms have changed their names to TGSPDCL and TGNPDCL as per the orders of the Telangana government.

The new logos featuring the change have been given to the department. The order issued by the CMD, Musharaff Faruqui, says, "It has been decided to change the acronym of the Southern Power Distribution Company of Telangana Limited to TGSPDCL and to use the new logo in all official correspondence."

Hence, all Chief General Managers,

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Telangana needs voices of dissent, says KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President K T Rama Rao said that Telangana needs voices of dissent.

In a tweet on X, he said, "What Telangana needs today are voices of dissent and voices that question the government."

He was making a pitch for Enugula Rakesh Reddy, the BRS candidate for the MLC by-election



in Khammam, Warangal and Nalgonda graduates' constituency. KTR will be campaigning on Sunday in the Bhuvangiri and Aler constituencies for the MLC elections.

KTR in his post on X said, "Rakesh hails from a humble farming family from a remote village in Hanamkonda district."

2

Will go to BJP office with AAP leaders today: Kejriwal dares PM to arrest them

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Saturday that he and other AAP leaders would go to the BJP headquarters on May 19 "so that the prime minister can send anyone he wishes to jail".

The BJP is saying they will send AAP MP Raghav Chadha, who had just returned from the UK, and Delhi ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj to jail too, he claimed at a press briefing hours after his aide



Bibhav Kumar was arrested in connection with the alleged assault on his party's parliamentarian Swati

Maliwal. Kejriwal, who is also the AAP national convener, however, asserted that his party could not be crushed by sending its leaders to jail.

Accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "playing the game" of sending AAP leaders such as Manish Sisodia, Satyendar Jain, and Sanjay Singh to jail, he said, "I am coming to BJP headquarters with all my big leaders, MLAs, MPs, everyone, at 12 noon tomorrow."

2

LOK SABHA POLLS

Inducements worth Rs 8,889 crore seized

Drugs account for 45% of total seizures

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Authorities have seized cash, drugs and inducements worth Rs 8,889 crore that aimed to influence voters in the ongoing Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission said on Saturday.

At 45 per cent, drugs formed the biggest chunk of the total seizures. Narcotics worth around Rs 3,959 crore were seized, it said.

Drugs, liquor, precious metals, freebies and cash influence elections in varying degrees, some flowing directly as inducements while others through reduced levels of circu-

lation of money, the poll authority said. The commission said it has laid special emphasis on the seizure of narcotics and psychotropic substances. Analysis of data found that states and Union Territories that used to be transit zones are increas-



ingly becoming consumption territories of drugs, it said.

The Gujarat Anti-Terrorism Squad, Narcotics Control Bureau and the Indian Coast Guard in joint operations have made three high-value seizures of drugs in just

three days, amounting to Rs 892 crore, the poll panel noted.

Rs 849.15 crore in cash, Rs 814.85 crore worth of liquor, drugs worth Rs 3,958.85 crore and precious metals worth Rs 1,260.33 crore have been seized, it added.

9 killed, 15 injured as bus catches fire in Haryana

PNS ■ GURUGRAM

At least nine people were burnt alive and 15 injured when a moving bus caught fire near Tauru in Haryana's Nuh district in the early hours of Saturday, police said.

The incident occurred around 2 am on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway. The bus was carrying around 60 people, all residents of Punjab's Hoshiarpur and Ludhiana, who were returning from pilgrim towns of Mathura and Vrindavan.

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OBTUSE ANGLE



'Double dhamaka' for Pithapuram voters

Going by reports that cannot be proved or verified, it was 'double dhamaka' for voters, but an instance of double-crossing among the opposition combine in Pithapuram during the just-concluded elections in Andhra Pradesh. It seems initially voters were given cash as inducement by the Jana Sena Party, which had ensured it was their show out and out. However, the alliance partners, sensing that they had been left out in the crucial distribution process, chose to quietly get back at JSP. So, money was distributed again in another round. Thus, many voters were paid twice. There were also a few who took money, but did not vote. Overall, the sheer amount spent in Pithapuram seat has raised a credible question: Will Pawan Kalyan contest again in elections?

Revanth's footwork a barometer of his fitness

Some talk about their chappan-inch chest to assert their credentials as a leader, while others let their feet do the talking. When Chief Minister Revanth Reddy impulsively played football with students of the University of Hyderabad the other day, few would have imagined that the sport would go on to mirror the Chief Minister's remarkable fitness levels. He played on and on, for three hours to be precise, and not just for photo-ops. His footwork at play has since become a talk in political circles about his health and fitness. For, only in the first round the Congress leaders who had tagged along with the CM played. But in terms of footwork, they were pathetic. For the next two hours, it was only the Chief Minister and the enthusiastic and energetic students who were at play in all seriousness. Surprisingly, the students had no qualms about competing in the sport with none other than the CM of the state. They treated him as any regular player. But for the leaders who had accompanied Revanth to the university, it was indeed

a reality check on their fitness levels. Some like Balmoor Venkat, not well-versed with the sport, did self goals, lending rare spectacular moments that day.

Was it improper invitation or lack of coordination?

When a chief minister is conducting a review, it does not mean that the chief of the department concerned can be taken

aggressive best at the CLP office. Having shifted his adda upon losing in the Assembly elections, Jagga Reddy has been participating in party activities to mend matters. Some of the party leaders, while crediting him for sorting out certain internal issues, now treat him as their political 'guru'. In his new avatar, he has been advising some party leaders to not give any chance whatsoever to opposition parties to tarnish the image of the Congress.

Otherwise, both the grand old party and its 'careless' leaders would suffer, he warns those listening to him.

REPORTERS' DIARY

Confidence, overconfidence and piety

What stood out after the Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh is that both ruling YSRCP and the opposition TDP-JSP-BJP combine claimed victory soon after polling ended. What did not go unnoticed was that Chief Minister and YSR Congress president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy took some time to assess polling trends and then declare that his party would come to power with far more seats than its tally in the 2019 elections. He then went abroad on a vacation with his wife. In contrast, TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu declared immediately after polling that the alliance would come to power in the state. To lend weight to his claim, Chandrababu said that the party's annual meeting, Mahanadu, scheduled to be held during May 27-29, had been postponed since the party was busy "with the Assembly results and the formation of the government". People then compared the 'confidence' of Jagan who coolly went on a vacation and the 'overconfidence' of Chandrababu, who nevertheless has been visiting various temples with his wife. It is a different matter that both treated voters as God before the polls.

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

for granted. The department head must get his due, apart from proper invitation; otherwise, the CM concerned will invite trouble! Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, who conducted a review on Agriculture and related issues on Wednesday, must have understood this the hard way. For, Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwar Rao did not attend the review, sparking rumours that he chose to abstain as he had not been properly invited for the meeting. Hot discussions and speculations among media persons followed. Some of the scribes got wind of the 'fact' that the Minister did not attend 'due to lack of proper invitation', while others presumed he was 'not informed in time'. Whatever it is, the Minister conducted reviews of his department on Thursday and Friday, letting everyone know who the boss of the agriculture department is, regardless of the view from the CMO.

Trouble-maker becomes trouble-shooter

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee leader T Jagga Reddy, as a legislator, was better known as a trouble-maker for the party. Now, as TPCC working president, Jagga Reddy, who is also in the race for TPCC president position, is holding court at Gandhi Bhavan these days, focused on resolving intra-party issues. Previously, when he was an MLA, he was seen at his

KCR may not succeed in reuniting those who fought for Telangana

SNCN ACHARYULU
HYDERABAD

Is it possible for BRS President K. Chandrasekhar Rao to bring back those who were part of the Telangana movement? The political circumstances that exist now are entirely different from what it was at that time.

During the Telangana movement, the Telangana sentiment was at its peak and it played a dominant role in politics. At that time everyone in Telangana wanted a Telangana state and supported the BRS and it led the stir for a separate state.

KCR also ignited the Telangana sentiment among

the public. But after the formation of Telangana and after experiencing 10 years of BRS rule the situation is different now.

After the BRS came to power the BRS leadership created a situation which made those who were part of the Telangana movement to distance themselves from the BRS. They have lost confidence in the BRS leadership. The 10-year rule of the BRS disappointed them.

The BRS leadership gave importance to those who opposed the Telangana movement and ignored those who were part of it.

In the BRS itself, two groups named UT and BT came into

existence. Those who fought for Telangana were called 'Udyama Telangana-UT' and those who joined the BRS after it came to power were named 'Bangaru Telangana-BT'.

Addressing a function on Friday, KCR said that another movement should be launched in Telangana and that the Telangana movement is still going on. He added that those who fought for a Telangana state should reunite and that plans are on the anvil regarding that.

After the achievement of a separate state and after 10 years of rule by the BRS if the movement is still going on means that the KCR govern-

ment has failed to meet the aspirations of the people.

The BRS extensively campaigned till it was defeated in the Assembly elections that it had achieved 'Bangaru Telangana' during its 10-year rule. If that is true why are the people of Bangaru Telangana dissatisfied?

After the Congress came to power the BRS launched a new campaign that the Congress government is 'destroying' the Bangaru Telangana achieved by the BRS.

When the BRS was in power those who were in the Telangana movement joined it. After the BRS defeat in the Assembly elections, many of its top leaders left the party.

Case booked against two...

Continued from page 1

However, another group of people claimed that they had purchased the land. In a video, Malla Reddy was seen arguing with the police and ordering his men to remove the fencing. The boundary fence was removed even as police tried to prevent them.

As mild tension prevailed, police dispersed both the groups. Cases were registered on charges of trespass, vandalism, obstructing the duties of police officials among others under relevant IPC sections, a senior police official said.

Both parties have documents pertaining to the land and a survey will be conducted, the official said.

Raghunandan complains to DGP against Venkatrami Reddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP's Medak Lok Sabha constituency candidate, M. Raghunandan Rao, asked Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to reveal whether he is shielding Medak BRS candidate Venkatarami Reddy due to the caste factor.

Raghunandan asked the Chief Minister to reveal whether the government is not arresting Venkatarami as Venkatarami is a close relative of Revenue Minister Pongulapati Srinivas Reddy. Raghunandan said that the police are not arresting Venkatarami although there is evidence against Venkatarami, who is



also a BRS MLC. Raghunandan demanded that the police should arrest Venkatarami immediately.

Raghunandan filed a complaint with the Director General of Police (DGP) on Saturday alleging that Venkatarami had a role in the phone tapping case as per former

DCP Radhakishan Rao's statement.

Speaking to the media after filing a complaint with the DGP, Raghunandan said that Radhakishan Rao also gave a statement stating that he had transported Rs 3 crore belonging to Venkatarami during the Assembly elections.

FIFTH PHASE OF LS POLL

Campaigning ends for 49 seats; Amethi, Rae Bareilly, Baramullah in limelight

PNS ■ MUMBAI/LUCKNOW

Campaigning concluded on Saturday for the fifth phase of Lok Sabha polls covering 49 constituencies in six states and two UTs including the high-profile Rae Bareilly and Amethi seats from where former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and Union Minister Smriti Irani are in the fray respectively.

In Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla, former chief minister Omar Abdullah, who is among 22 candidates in the fray, held a roadshow in Soibugh - a central Kashmir village that was once a hotbed



of militancy - on the last day of campaigning.

While temperatures soared across the country, there was no let up in the campaign

heat as the Lok Sabha election season entered the last fortnight. The Election Commission on Tuesday said it expects star campaigners,

particularly of the national parties, to lead by example in the remaining three phases of the Lok Sabha polls and not vitiate the delicate fabric of society.

With over 40 of these seats with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), Prime Minister Narendra and other BJP leaders tried to fend off the challenge posed by the INDIA bloc parties by raising the pitch on issues of appeasement, dynastic politics, Ram temple, Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), corruption and welfare initiatives taken by his government.

9 killed, 15 injured...

Continued from page 1

All of them are relatives, police said.

"Nine people -- six women and three men -- were killed in the accident. Fifteen people were injured and have been hospitalised. All the injured are stable," said Inspector Jitendra Kumar, Station House Officer, Sadar Tauru. "The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained. A probe is underway," he said.

A local resident said that after noticing the fire, some people chased the bus on a motorcycle and asked the driver to stop. The locals also informed the police and fire department.

Will go to BJP office with AAP...

Continued from page 1

Whoever you want to put in jail, do so all at once."

"You think that you will crush the Aam Aadmi Party by putting its leaders in jail, the AAP is not going to be crushed like this. You try it once and see."

Kejriwal said the AAP is an idea that has struck a chord with people across the country.

'Congress govt...'

Continued from page 1

"I know very well the situation inside in the Congress," Maheshwar said.

He was speaking to journalists during a chat-chat at the Secretariat media point on Saturday after meeting Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to demand that the government should procure paddy immediately and pay a bonus of Rs 500 for every quintal.

Replying to a question, Maheshwar said that he and R & B Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy are not on good terms for the last 15 years. "How will I be in touch with Komatireddy Venkat Reddy?"

Venkat might have said that in the evening," Maheshwar said. He said that the BJP will win eight to 10 LS seats (Adilabad, Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Chevella, Mahbubnagar, Malkajgiri, Secunderabad and Zaheerabad). There is a tough fight at Bhongir and Warangal and there is a chance for the BJP to win Nagarkurnool. If the BJP wins these too then its strength jumps to 11, Maheshwar said.

The BJLP leader said that Prime Minister Modi's charisma worked in Telangana in the Lok Sabha elections. The Congress distributed money and that became a minus point for them.

Kejriwal, who was arrested in a money laundering case linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam, has been granted interim bail till June 1 by the Supreme Court to campaign in the Lok Sabha polls. He will have to surrender and go back to jail on June 2, a day after the last phase of polling in the general elections.

The Chief General Manager, Joint Secretary and Superintending Engineers of TGNPDCL are hereby directed to change the acronym of the Northern Power Distribution Company of Telangana Limited to TGNPDCL," CMD K. Varun Reddy said.

The Chief General Manager, Joint Secretary and Superintending Engineers of TGNPDCL are hereby directed to change the acronym of the Northern Power Distribution Company of Telangana Limited as TGNPDCL immediately, he said.

BRS alleges Rs 1,000 crore scam in Civil Supplies Dept

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former MLA Peddi Sudarshan Reddy said that irregularities are taking place in the name of global tenders in the Civil Supplies Department.

Addressing a press conference at the Telangana Bhavan on Saturday, Peddi said that after the Revanth government took over, irregularities involving nearly Rs 1,000 crore took place in the Civil Supplies Department.

He said, "The hand of the Congress is visible behind these tenders. The CM and Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy are directly involved in the irregularities that took place in inviting tenders for auctioning the stored grain. The goodies went from Revanth Reddy to Rahul Gandhi." "Their hand is very much there in the latest tenders invited for the purchase of fine rice for the mid-day meal scheme. The rate per kilo of thin rice is fixed higher than in the open market.

ART 370 BURIED IN 'KABRISTAN'

Cong should forget 'dream' of restoring it, asserts Modi

PNS ■ SONIPAT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday kept up the attack on the Congress, saying it should forget the "dream" of bringing back Article 370 as it has been "buried in the 'kabristan (graveyard)'".

Addressing a rally at Gohana, his second of the day in Haryana, Modi referred to the Lok Sabha polls as a "kurukshetra (battle)" in which "there is development on one hand and 'vote jihad' on the other".

Striking a chord with the locals, Modi referred to Gohana's famous "Matu Ram ki jalebti" to target the opposition.

Attacking the INDIA bloc, he said they have a formula of having five prime ministers in five years if they come to power. "Ask them is the prime minister's post our Matu Ram ki jalebti." "In the 2024 'kuruk-



shetra', there is development on one hand and 'vote jihad' on the other," he said. "I want to ask the people of Haryana... who will win?" He waited for people to respond before saying, "Your reply has decided 'Phir Ek Baar', and the crowd went, 'Modi Sarkar.'"

Modi said now the Congress is not even hiding its "desh-virodhi agenda (anti-national agenda)."

They are saying openly what Modi did in 10 years they will reverse it if they come to power, he said. But their "dream" of bring-

ing Article 370 back will never be fulfilled, he added.

"They are saying that we will restore Article 370 in Kashmir... This means once again a free run for terrorism and bloodshed in the Valley," he said.

"From the brave land of Haryana, I want to tell those associated with the Congress that only tricolour will fly in Kashmir now," he said. "Forget the dream of bringing back 370 in Kashmir."

And if you try to do it 'lene k dene pad jayenge' (you will pay very heavy price)."

Telangana needs...

CM enquires...

Continued from page 1

He is a graduate of BITS Pilani with dual Masters degrees in Management and Economics. After working with global companies in the US for seven years, Rakesh entered politics with a strong desire for public service.

Rakesh has penned many articles in leading dailies on contemporary political issues and economics. He has also authored several books on the economy. Rakesh Reddy's commitment to education and empowerment is evident in his delivering guest lectures on the Indian and Telangana economies to civil service hopefuls and creating the E-Classes app for underprivileged students prepar-

ing for competitive exams. He has also organised mega job fairs in Hanamkonda.

"Rakesh has participated in many debates advocating the rights of students, unemployed youth and employees. In times of crisis, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and Warangal floods, he stood shoulder to shoulder with communities offering unwavering support," KTR said.

"Through the Indus Foundation, Rakesh Reddy endeavours to preserve Telangana's cultural heritage, including dance forms like the Kuchipudi and Perini, rural traditions, and folk arts. Rakesh is a dynamic educationist and he is contesting as the BRS candidate for the Khammam, Warangal, Nalgonda MLC seat.

Uttam explained all the important points and recommendations made in the interim report to the CM and the ministers. The NDSA made it clear in 2019 that danger is lurking around the barracks and the risk factor cannot be ruled out even after repairs are taken up.

In view of the beginning of the monsoon season shortly, the Chief Minister said that the steps to be taken will have to be discussed in the Cabinet meeting. The government will take a decision on whether to repair the damaged structures or go for alternatives after consultations with the irrigation department.

The CM said that these crucial issues could not be discussed in detail as the cabinet meeting scheduled in the afternoon was postponed.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Ekadashi: May 18 11:23 AM to May 19 01:50 PM
Dwadashi: May 19 01:50 PM to May 20 03:59 PM
Nakshatram:
Hasta: May 19 12:23 AM to May 20 03:16 AM
Chitra: May 20 03:16 AM to May 21 05:46 AM
Rahukalam: 5:02 PM to 6:38 PM
Yamaganadam: 12:12 PM to 1:49 PM
Varjyam: 12:06 PM to 01:52 PM
Gulika: 3:25 PM to 5:02 PM
Amritakalam: 08:33 PM to 10:20 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:46 AM to 12:38 PM
HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Scattered Thunderstorms
Temp: 34°C
Humidity: 61%
Sunrise: 5:43 AM
Sunset: 6:42 PM
Updated: May 18 2024 5:00 PM

City-based realtors arrested for defrauding 350 customers

Police said that three promoters of Bharati Lake View cheated people of between Rs 50 and Rs 60 crore

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Economic Offence Wing (EOW) Police of Cyberabad Police Commissionerate arrested three accused on Friday for allegedly cheating a large number of people in the name of a pre-launch offer of Residential Apartments, called "Bharathi Lake View" at Kompally in Medchal-Malkajgiri District.

Police arrested Chairman of Bharathi Builders Dupati Nagaraju, Managing Director Mulpuru Shivarama Krishna, and Chief Executive Officer Thoddakula Narasimha.

The accused Dupati Nagaraju and Mulpuru Shivarama Krishna started a construction firm in the year 2021 in the name of Bharathi Builders office at Madhapur. He acquired 6.23 acres of land



at Kompally and announced his plans to construct residential apartments in the name of Bharathi Lake View apartments.

Later, he hatched a plan to collect huge deposits from prospective buyers by offering a pre-launch offer at an attractive price. The promoters offered flat at the rate of Rs 3,200 for square feet.

As per their plan, they published brochures and held meetings at Kompally and Madhapur to attract deposits from potential buyers. For this purpose, Nagaraju and Shivarama Krishna appointed Narasimha Rao as CEO for Bharathi Builders to bring in more purchasers. After some days the accused persons, after collecting deposits, did not construct any building and sold the entire land of 6.23

acres worth about Rs 100 crore to other people.

The complainant BVS Prasada Rao and about 350 others were cheated of between Rs 50 and Rs 60 crore. The case was filed under 406,420 IPC and Section 5 of the Telangana Protection of Depositors of Financial Establishments Act- 1999.

The EOW DCP K Prasad appealed to the public not to invest and deposit money in such pre-launch offers and to report any suspicious investment schemes/real estate transactions or activities to the authorities. The department is committed to prosecuting those who dupe people and ensuring justice for the victims.

The case is being investigated by EOW inspector J. Venkateswarlu under the supervision of DCP K. Prasad.

L&T provides clarity on Metro rail service timing

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The L&T Metro Rail Hyderabad Limited (L&TMRHL) clarifies the Metro Rail service timings extension. The regular operating hours are from 6 am to 11 pm.

L&TMRHL said that on a trial basis, it offers extended service hours on all Fridays and Mondays only for the convenience of passengers. It said that as on Fridays, the last train departs at 11:45 pm instead of 11 pm, offering an additional 45 minutes of service. On Mondays, the first train departs at 5:30 am instead of 6 am, offering an additional 30 minutes of service. L&TMRHL clarified that this is on a trial basis, and a final decision will be taken depending upon the demand and the usefulness of adjusting the maintenance schedule of the track and trains.

'Water Board supplying water tanker within 24 hours of booking'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

From more than three days of water tankers delay, the HMWSSB has now been supplying water tankers to consumers within 24 hours of booking. Water board Managing Director C Sudarshan Reddy complimented officers and staff of the board achievement.

On Saturday the HMWSSB released a press release, where it mentioned that during this summer more than 30,000 consumers depended only on water board tankers for drinking and normal uses.

The HMWSSB said that to meet the demand, the water board increased water tankers from 584 on March 1 to 872 tankers on May 17. A total of water filling stations have been increased from 72 to 89. The board received 3,150 tanker bookings on March 1 but the number increased to 4,065 on May 17. More than 1,500 tanker deliveries have been



HMWSSB Managing Director Sudarshan Reddy speaking at a review meeting with officials in Hyderabad on Saturday

increased in a 78 days of time. The board supplied 1,70,000 tankers in 31 days of March but 1,41,550 tankers were supplied in 17 days of May. Along with those, the board increased drivers and workers for people of Hyderabad to supply water.

To mitigate the water problem emergency pumping was started with 10 pumps in Nagarjuna Sagar Reservoir on April 20 as per the directives of the state government. On the other hand, MD

Sudarshan Reddy continuously monitored the situation in the city. He held meetings constantly with the field level staff and senior officials of the water board and prepared special plans for supplying the tankers for consumers within 24 hours of time.

580 million gallons per day MGD of water was supplied this summer. Compared to last year, Jalamandali has supplied 20 MGD of additional water to the city residents.

Reopening of Mecca Masjid bomb blast case demanded

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

City-based activists on Saturday urged Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to ensure that the investigation into the Mecca Masjid blast case is reopened. They observed the 17th anniversary of the tragedy. Tabling of the Bhaskar Rao Commission's report in the Telangana Assembly is one of the demands put forth by the group.

In a statement the activists said, "Seventeen years ago today, on May 18, the Mecca Masjid was struck by a terror attack that killed nine people and injured 58. The tragedy did not end there as the police opened fire on an irate crowd that had gathered in the immediate aftermath, resulting in the

deaths of five more individuals. Since that day, justice has eluded both those killed in the blast and those killed by the police.

While the Hussaini Alam police registered two cases, the Central Bureau of Investigation took over after re-registering them. Evidence pointed to the involvement of Hindutva elements in the blast. About a year later, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) was constituted. It took over the investigation. A charge-sheet was filed naming five people, including Naba Kumar Sarkar, alias Swami Aseemanand. However, after a lengthy trial, the NIA failed to prosecute the accused and in April 2018 the Special NIA

Court acquitted all the accused.

Shockingly, the NIA, which operates under the Ministry of Home Affairs, chose not to appeal the verdict. The travesty is that when victims attempted to file an appeal in the Telangana High Court against the acquittal of the accused, the NIA Special Prosecutor objected on grounds of maintainability of the plea. It raised serious questions about the role and commitment of the NIA in handling this case. The Ministry of Home Affairs has not addressed the matter to date, highlighting the shortcomings of the BJP government's purported zero-tolerance policy in dealing with terrorism, they said.

Hyderabad entrepreneur gets 'Global Ambassador for Water Ionizer' title

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

City-based entrepreneur Jagannadha Shastry has been awarded the prestigious "Global Ambassador for Water Ionizer" title at the "Direct Selling Growth Conclave - 2024" organized by Network Express in Mumbai.

The award was presented by Deepak Bajaj, a renowned Business Coach, Author, and Motivational Trainer.

The event, held at the Shanmukhananda Auditorium, attended by 36 companies across India and more than 3,000 participants.

Shastry, with over 20 years of experience in the Direct Selling industry, has influenced more than 30,000 families in his Enagic journey over the past 8 years, achieving the coveted 6A2-5 Global Rank.

Shastry, along with his two brothers, are considered the "Pioneers of India" by Oshiro, the Founder of Enagic, as they introduced the Enagic Kangen Water Device to India in 2015, even before Enagic India was launched in 2016. The Sastry brothers, known as the "SBT Global" team, have been instrumental in driving the growth of the water ionizer industry in the country.

In addition to this latest accolade, Shastry was also awarded the "Global Leader in Direct Selling" title by Network Express in 2023. He continues to inspire and guide aspiring Direct Selling enthusiasts through his mentorship, training, and influential speeches at national and international platforms.

"It is a true honor to receive this award from the esteemed Mr. Deepak Bajaj in front of such a large and engaged audience," said Shastry.



Jagannadha Shastry Somanchi receives the Water Ionizer award

Three held for forging fake degree certificates

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Maheshwaram Special Operations Team in Coordination with the Chaitanyapuri police on Thursday arrested three persons for allegedly forging fake degree certificates in the name of the Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth in Uttar Pradesh.

and Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar University in Bihar. The accused were identified as Mohammed Abrar Hussain (45) a resident of Mehdipatnam, Yed Insnain Mohammed (28), a resident of Langar Houz and a cashier and Ram Singh, a native of Uttar Pradesh.

The police seized 11 certificates and three transcripts

belonging to the Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth and one transcript, three mark-sheets belonging to the Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar University.

Apart from these, a laptop and two mobile phones were also seized from the accused. Acting on a tip off, the police apprehended two persons. Upon interrogation, Abrar revealed that he had forged and sold fake certificates in order to make money. These certificates were sold to Visa aspirants and other consultants. Hussain used Adobe Photoshop software to create the certificates. The consultants sold the same at Rs 30,000 -40,000 each to aspirants since 2022.

Onamaalu community celebrates 'Amma avakai adhbutaha'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As a community initiative dedicated to preserving, promoting, and celebrating Telugu Culinary Heritage, Onamaalu conducted culinary documentation.

Onamaalu, in line with its ongoing community initiatives, presented a unique culinary theatre experience titled "Amma Avakai Adhbutaha", based on this cherished tradition. The event commenced with rural women from Siddipet performing the Naatu Bappu for the guests, followed by the Culinary Theatre.

The annual ritual of making Avakaya involves the entire family's participation, considerable effort, and being close to traditional processes upheld in Telugu households. Much like every dish that varies in flavor and preparation method every 100 km, Avakaya comes in many varieties, with differences in the choice of raw mango, ingredients, and pickling method.

An actor, educationist, and avid food enthusiast, Geetha Bhascker Dhaasyam said, she learned the art of making Avakaya after her marriage when she moved to Hyderabad. For her, Avakaya symbolises life experiences and memories of countless occasions she prepared it for friends and relatives, bringing her joy when they relish her

creation. Her method of making Avakaya, distinct to Telangana, involves minimal use of mustard powder and the addition of ginger-garlic paste.

She carefully demonstrated the step-by-step process at The Culinary Studio, sharing tips, explaining the variations, and recounting stories.

The Guests recollected about their Avakaya memories from childhood while involving in typical Telugu snacks, including Gunta Ponganaalu with Thurimina Mamidikaya Pachadi, Kobburi Mutti, Rajahmundry Style Tomato Bhajji, and Bezawada Mirapakaya Bhajji.

Rains lash parts of Hyderabad, thunderstorms likely till May 23: IMD

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rains lashed parts of the city on Saturday evening as the Indian Meteorological Department - Hyderabad (IMD-H) predicted thunderstorms in Telangana till May 23.

Areas including Uppal, Dilsukhnagar, Saroornagar, Saidabad, LB Nagar, Chaitanyapuri, Ramanthapur, Vanasthalipuram, Hayathnagar, BN Reddy, Begumpet, Khairatabad experienced heavy downpour. Water inundation and heavy traffic was reported



from these areas. As per the IMD-H report districts including Bhadradi Kothagudem,

Khammam, Nalgonda, Suryapet, Mahabubabad, Warangal, Hanamkonda,

Jangaon, Siddipet, yadadri Bhuvanagiri, Mahabubnagar, Nagarkurnool, Hyderabad, Vikarabad and Medchal Malkajgiri are likely to experience thunderstorms on Sunday. On May 20, similar conditions are expected to prevail over the aforementioned districts along with KomaramBheem Asifabad, Mancheril. Similar conditions are likely to prevail over Telangana till May 23.

As per The Telangana State Planning and Development Society (TSDPS) Telangana is likely to experience moderate

rains till May 21; The maximum temperature in the state during this period is expected to remain between 39-42 degrees Celsius. The minimum temperature is expected to remain between 24 to 27 degrees Celsius.

Areas under the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) are likely to experience thunderstorms during the next three days. The maximum temperature is expected to remain between 36-38 degrees Celsius, while the minimum temperature is expected to remain 24-26 degrees Celsius.

Swecha offers 'Summer of AI' internship for engineering students

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Creating an opportunity dedicated to promoting the free software and free knowledge movement, an internship programme for engineering students on Artificial Intelligence (AI) called the "Summer of AI" has been announced. This initiative aims to equip over 100,000 engineering students with AI skills, making them job-ready.

The initiative is launched by Swecha, a non-profit organisation, that aids in developing a Telugu language-centric Large Language Model (LLM). Swecha aims to leverage the vast talent pool of engineering students in India by training them in AI. This initiative presents an opportunity to create a large pool of trained AI engineers, extending well beyond the small group of researchers and developers specialised in deep models.

According to the Swecha, The significance of this initiative lies in the scarcity of Indian language and India-centric LLMs. India, with its rich culture and a population that constitutes one-sixth of the world, would greatly benefit from having its own LLMs. Developing LLMs for most



Founder of Swecha Y Kiran Chandra, along with Secretary of Swecha Praveen Chandra, unveiling a poster of Summer of AI internship for engineering students in Hyderabad on Saturday.

Indian languages, which are considered low-resource, poses a challenge due to the need for extensive foundational knowledge to be compiled and digitised. Swecha announced that it runs with an objective of providing a large-scale internship programme for first and second-year engineering students trained in the basics of AI, engaging them in extensive data collection through interviews. The project aims to interview people in villages and towns to collect information and knowledge on various local skills and information, including Telugu folk tales,

songs, food, local history, and more.

Founder of Swecha, Y Kiran Chandra said, the "SUMMER OF AI" project has the potential to enrich the Telugu language by preserving its culture through the documentation of oral traditions, folk knowledge, and personal narratives. He also said, this initiative aims to develop a detailed collection that serves as a foundational resource for training and refining Telugu Language Models, ensuring more accurate and contextually appropriate language processing in digital environments.

Ultimately, it empowers the Telugu community and supports language revitalisation.

Kiran Chandra said, the approach involves collecting speech, transcribing it, and creating datasets for both speech and a base LLM. The team is also working with large libraries and the Telugu Academy to create a large number of books. This process will be conducted through month-long internships for 100,000 interns, starting with an initial batch of 10,000 interns.

He also said, tools are being developed to assist with data collection at this scale. Upon successful completion, the collected data will be used to create datasets and publish information on a Telugu/Wiki-like portal. This approach will be extended to other languages and regions as well.

The project is a collaboration between Swecha, IIIT Hyderabad, Ozonetel, Meta, and TASK. Chaitanya Chokkareddy, CTO of Ozonetel Communications Pvt Ltd.; Y Kiran Chandra, Founder of Swecha; and Praveen Chandra, Secretary of Swecha, The project is announced in a press conference at the Swecha Telangana office on Saturday.

Man held for duping people promising government jobs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's Task Force (North) Zone in coordination with the Gopalapuram police on Saturday arrested a person on the charge of defrauding job seekers. He allegedly cheated several youngsters by promising jobs in the railways.

The accused was identified as Suryadevara Anil Kumar (34), a resident of Yapral. He is a native of Andhra Pradesh and was previously involved in a similar case. The accused obtained con-

tacts of youngsters seeking jobs through Whatsapp group and lured them by promising jobs in Income Tax Department and TTE (Group-C) in the South Central Railway. Kumar tricked a victim, identified as Shaik Hussain, promising him a job in the Income Tax Department in Patna. Convinced by Kumar, the victim traveled to Patna and received a joining letter which later proved to be a fake one.

Kumar offered him a position at the South Central Railway in Secunderabad. Under the guise of training, Shaik

Hussain worked as a Train Ticket Examiner (TTE) for six months under the guidance of TTE Naveen Kumar, for which Anil Kumar collected Rs. 10,00,000.

Similarly, the accused deceived A Rajesh by promising to facilitate the purchase of a software company for him, collecting Rs 85,000. After realising they were duped, the victims approached the police and filed a complaint.

The accused was arrested under sections 406 and 420 of the Indian Penal Code.

INDUSTRY-SPONSORED

IIITH launches part-time MS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

The part-time Master of Science (MS) by research program is designed to cater to the evolving needs of working professionals and the technology

companies. The part-time program is structured around a long thesis project advised jointly by the company 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 company may need.

Professionals with a Science/Engineering degree and at least 1 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 3 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. P.J. 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 program. This unique industry-academia collaboration will provide opportunities for companies to take advan-

tage of IIIT-H's research strengths. It also allows the professionals to gain Masters level understanding of research by enrolling in same courses as IIIT's regular students and working with the same research groups as our regular students."

The self-paced MS by Research program offers a dynamic framework to accommodate the working professionals time and work constraints. Applications for the Autumn 2024 batch, expected to begin in August 2024, are open now. Details at <https://outreach.iiit.ac.in/industry/>

How Supreme Court rescued NewsClick

It was saga of a journalist and online journalism. The Supreme Court has rescued NewsClick by ordering the release of the news website's founder and Editor-in-Chief Prabir Purkayastha. A Supreme Court bench of Justices BR Gavai and Sandeep Mehta on 15th May 2024 stated: "There is no hesitation in the mind of the court that the grounds of arrest were not provided, which vitiates the arrest. The appellant is entitled to release from custody after the Pankaj Bansal case. The remand order is invalid." Justice Mehta, who authored the judgement, had held that grounds of arrest must be provided in writing to the accused in its March judgment in the Pankaj Bansal case. The Supreme Court had on April 30 questioned the Delhi Police for hastily producing Purkayastha before the magistrate without informing his lawyer after his arrest. The Bench further said it was surprising that the remand order was passed even before his

lawyer received his remand application. The sequence was explained by Kapil Sibal, while arguing in favour of Purkayastha. Sibal said he was 'arrested on October 3 and produced before the magistrate at 6:00 am the next day. Only legal aid lawyers and the additional public prosecutor were present, and the journalist's lawyer was not informed'. Further Sibal said: 'When Purkayastha objected to this, the investigating officer informed his lawyer through telephone and the remand application was sent to him on WhatsApp'. Then the Bench had asserted 'the principles of natural justice require that Purkayastha's lawyer be present when the remand order is passed'. The story continues like Purkayastha was arrested on October 3 last under the anti-terror law, *Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)*, days after a *New York Times* investigation alleged that NewsClick had received funding from a

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network pushing Chinese propaganda. In a March charge-sheet that ran 8,000 pages, including annexures, the Delhi Police accused NewsClick and Purkayastha of terror funding and promoting Chinese propaganda. It had also arrested NewsClick's HR head Amit Chakravarty on October 3, but in January, a court allowed him to turn approver in the case. Clearly it shows how the journalists were pressurised through non-journalists to turn approver. The rule of law needs to be followed. But rulers and the Delhi Police were not with the

journalists. The misuse of arrest powers against journalists and political opponents continues. Is it possible for everyone to run to the apex court? While the rule of law has prevailed in some cases, the lack of support for those without economic, political, or legal resources remains a problem. The Supreme Court noted that under Section 3 of the *Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)*, an accused can be charged with money laundering if they are connected to the proceeds of crime. The investigation must gather facts and determine if



PROF MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR ACHARYULU
Dean, Mahindra University, Hyderabad

these proceeds were generated from a scheduled offence. Without following the requirements of the Cr.P.C. and established legal procedures, such actions violate the law, according to the Supreme Court (in *Vijay Madanlal Choudhary vs. Union of India*, <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/14485072>). In another significant case *Pankaj Bansal vs. Union of*

India (2023 SCC OnLine SC 1244, (2023 INSC 866), the Supreme Court emphasized that the ED must provide written grounds for arrest. These points illustrate how the ED's practices under the PMLA have been critiqued for lacking procedural fairness and violating constitutional rights. The Supreme Court said that the ED is not following Chapter XII of the Cr.P.C., which outlines principles for investigations. This lack of adherence means there are no clear legal criteria or guiding principles, potentially violating Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees equality before the law. The ED can summon accused persons based on an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) without the accused knowing the allegations. Under Section 50 of the PMLA, the accused must make statements that are admissible as evidence. This creates an unfair situation as the accused might not be

aware of the charges against them, unlike the clear provisions in the Cr.P.C. (Criminal Procedure Code) for summoning accused persons (Section 41A) and witnesses (Section 160). The SC mentioned that safeguards initially provided by Section 173 of the Cr.P.C. in the original 2002 PMLA have been weakened by amendments. Notably, amendments in 2009 and 2019 reduced protections. For example, changes to Sections 5 and 17 diluted certain safeguards, and the 2019 amendment removed a crucial protection in Section 17(1). The SC pointed out that filing a chargesheet for a predicate offence is essential under Section 19 of the PMLA, which requires reasons to believe someone is guilty. Summoning individuals under Section 50 should only happen after registering the ECIR. Any prosecution attempt without these steps is inconsistent with the PMLA and violates fundamental rights. It was argued that following the

Cr.P.C. is crucial as it ensures procedures established by law. Investigations must adhere to Sections 154 or 155 of the Cr.P.C. to maintain constitutional safeguards of reasonableness and fairness. In essence, the Supreme Court criticized the ED's inconsistent and unfair practices under the PMLA, emphasizing the need for adherence to established legal procedures to protect individual rights. The Supreme Court's judgement on May 15, 2024, in the case of *Prabir Purkayastha v. State* (2024 INSC 414), highlighted significant issues with the way the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the police handled arrests under PMLA and the UAPA. Justice Mehta explained any lapse would be a violation of Article 22(5) of the Constitution, which mandates that a person under detention should be communicated the grounds of the detention order and allowed to make a representation against the detention at the earliest opportunity.

KAKATIYA UNIVERSITY CRIES FOR ATTENTION

Teachers and students accuse BRS govt of neglecting the varsity

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Teachers and students of Kakatiya University have expressed the hope that the State government will set the matters in the varsity right. They urge the government to appoint a new vice-chancellor as the term of the incumbent Vice-Chancellor comes to an end on May 21. The university was established 16 years ago. Initially, funds were released for construction of buildings. But, the university was completely neglected during the 10-year BRS rule. The present VC of the university was successful in achieving the 12 B recognition from the UGC, but failed to start new courses. The state government is accused of not finding a solution to the university's problems. University has only 13 departments. In spite of offering only a few courses, some of the courses have been brought under the category of self-financing courses. The tuition



fee has increased for post-graduate courses in English, Botany, Maths and Telugu as they have been converted to self-financing courses from that of regular courses. There were allegations that new teaching posts were not sanctioned. Each department should have four assistant professors, two associate professors and a professor. But, the economics department has only two regular teachers. Five posts in the department remained vacant. The teaching in the university has affected as there are only two or three faculty members in Botany, Maths, Telugu and English departments. Out of 10 professor posts sanctioned, eight remained

unfilled. Out of 16 associate professors, there are only six in the university. Out of 37 assistant professor posts sanctioned, 27 remained unfilled. This gives a clear picture of the careless manner in which the academic and research activities were carried out in the university. During the past 10 years no new courses were introduced in the university. In the new course of food and science technology, there are no regular faculty members to teach the subject. There is a demand to start engineering, BEd and MEd courses affiliated to the university, but the government did not bother to pay attention to the demand.

Vigilance inquiry ordered into VC's 'misdeeds'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The State government on Saturday ordered a Vigilance inquiry against Kakatiya University Vice Chancellor T Ramesh. Ramesh is facing allegations like retention of terminated faculty, illegal transfers of staff, unfair academic appointments and others. After receiving a complaint Principal Secretary Burra Venkatesham ordered an inquiry into allegations against Ramesh. In the order copy it has mentioned that a complaint was received from certain faculty members of Kakatiya University on Friday. The Director General of Vigilance and Enforcement

would inquire into the allegations against T Ramesh and furnish a report to the government for taking further necessary action. Few months ago students had agitated against the alleged irregularities and corruption in PhD admissions. They demanded the removal of Vice-Chancellor accusing him of indulging in large scale irregularities in admissions and administration. After the government ordered a probe against Ramesh, he said, "I am welcoming the government to set up a vigilance committee against me on the complaints of people who want to get promotions and did not like the development of the university and people"

There is a need to take up construction of indoor stadium, football stadium, sports complex, synthetic track and such other amenities in the university.

No flagship programme for Revant govt, says BRS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has nothing to claim as his flagship programme in the last six months, said former MP Boinapally Vinod Kumar at a press meeting held at the Telangana Bhavan on Saturday. "Revanth's government has entered its sixth month. The first six months are very crucial for grading anyone," he said. Vinod said that KCR has the credit of implementing Raithu Bandhu for the first time in the country.

"The CMs of many states and the PM praised Rythu Bandhu. This is the inspiration for many farmer investment assistance schemes. Raithu Bandhu is a capital investment. The first showers will come on Rohini Karthe. It will be a relief if the farmer gets investment help early. The Revanth admin gave Yasangi Rythu Bandi during harvesting time and not during cropping. This time without making such a mistake, a decision should be taken to release Rythu Bharosa on Rohini Karthe," he said. "Rs 7500 per acre should be

released to farmers in the first week of June itself. Mostly thin varieties of grain are cultivated during the rainy season. Farmers do not cultivate thin varieties as the percentage of oil is high during Rabi. Giving Rs 500 per quintal as a bonus for super fine rice is cheating farmers. Rs 500 bonus should be given for all types of rice. In the cabinet meeting, the government should discuss about helping farmers. Don't make the bonus a bogus promise he said. The BRS said that the government must buy whatever quantity of wet paddy the farmers have.

Man held for impersonating Additional Secretary

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cybercrime police on May 15 arrested a man for impersonating additional secretary, Finance Department and duping people of Rs 3,60,000. The accused was identified as Thota Balaji Naidu (50), a native of Andhra Pradesh. He was former employee of the NTPC. He contacted an MLA and introduced himself as additional secretary, Finance Department and said that a new government loan scheme which required participation of 100 members with a contribution of Rs 3,600 each. The MLA transferred the amount to a mule bank account provided by the accused. Following the transfer, the accused stopped

responding to the victim. Following an investigation, it was revealed that Naidu gathered contacts of MLAs and MPs from myneta.com and contacted them as additional secretary of Finance Dept and informed them that the Government launched a new scheme of sanctioning grant, for which participation of members with a contribution amount per member is required. Believing it to be genuine the Public Representatives transferred the amounts to the bank accounts given by the accused. Once he receives the amount, he will switch off the mobiles and avoid their calls. Further investigation revealed that the accused is a habitual offender and involved in 37 cases in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh cheating several public representatives.

Exemption from property tax for poultry farmers sought

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

In a bid to provide relief to local poultry farmers, MLA Shankar has called for the exemption of property tax being levied on them. On Friday, MLA Shankar met Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao and sought exemption from property tax for poultry farmers. During the meeting, Shankar emphasised the financial burden that the property tax has imposed on poultry farmers and requested the Minister to ensure that poultry farmers are exempted from paying property tax. He also requested the Minister to see that the property tax arrears of poultry farmers too are waived. Addressing the media after



MLA Shankar submitting a memorandum to Minister for Agriculture Tummala Nageswara Rao in Hyderabad on Friday

MLC elections: Kishan Reddy seeks intelligentsia's support for BJP

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Union Minister Kishan Reddy has exuded confidence that the graduates and intelligentsia will support the BJP in the May 27 by-elections to the Warangal-Nalgonda-Khammam Graduates' constituency. Addressing the management of various educational institutions from KG to PG at Satyam Convention Hall here on Saturday, he said that the BJP is fielding Premender Reddy this time also and noted that the campaign in the MLC elections began late. However, he is confident of the BJP nominee getting support from graduates and intelligentsia. He recalled how BJP candidates used to get elected whenever the elections were held to Graduates' constituency in undivided AP. Though the BJP is not in power in Telangana, right from



the beginning graduates and intelligentsia gave their support to the BJP. Currently, the atmosphere is conducive for the BJP in Telangana. The Modi government strengthened economy and enhanced the image of nation in the eyes of world. He increased the creation of infrastructural amenities and improved connectivity across the nation. Sannakka-Sarakka Tribal University was sanctioned to Telangana. Modi government brought UNESCO recognition as world heritage structure to the historic Ramappa temple. The credit of restoring

1000-pillored mantap in the temple goes to Modi. The Centre released funds to Panchayats and Municipalities and giving Rs 20,000 towards subsidy annually for the benefit of farmers. It provided 30 per cent quota for women. The BRS regime made the surplus state of Telangana to the position of not able to pay salaries to government employees. The Congress is not in a position to fulfill the promises made by it. It is facing difficulties to implement the loan waiver scheme. The previous regime auctioned bar licenses and sold government lands in ring road and drove the state on the brink of bankruptcy. Who should be held responsible for this and what is going to be the fate of our children, he said. Thousands of crores to be paid to beneficiaries under tuition fees reimbursement

and under Arogyasri, he said. The government is not able to pay the dues of small contractors. The state government is not able to clear the bills unless the Centre extends financial support to the state, he said. Therefore, he appealed to the voters of the constituency to lend their support to the BJP candidate, who is the son of soil of Warangal. The DNA of Congress and BRS is one and the same. He underlined the need for safeguarding the state of Telangana. Now the time is ripe for the graduates and intelligentsia to support the BJP. The BJP is ready to fight on behalf of the people, he said therefore he sought the support of the intelligentsia to the safe-guard party. The BJP would now focus on strengthening grass-roots organisation to participate in the elections to local bodies.

Polling officials told to making counting phase a success

PNS ■ NALGONDA

District Collector and District Returning Officer Dasari Hari Chandana has asked the counting supervisors, counting assistants and micro observers to make the counting phase successful. She complimented the staff for successfully completing the polling phase. She was addressing at a training programme held at Udayaditya Bhavan of Nalgonda Collectorate on Saturday. She asked them to remain alert near the counting table and with regard to the following the rules and taking necessary precautions. Problems, however minor they are, with regard to counting should be brought

to the notice of the Returning Officer and Assistant Returning Officer, she said. If the counting staff is found negligent, action would be taken against them under the election rules, she cautioned. Trainer Balu explained them dos and don'ts at different stages right from the time of entering the counting centre. Additional Revenue Collector Srinivas, Special Collector Pulichintala Natarajan, DRDO Nagireddy, Devarakonda, Huzurnagar, Suryapeta, Chundurur RDOs, nodal officer for training and district agriculture officer Shraan and District Lead Bank Manager Shramik and others were present.

DCA cautions public against counterfeit Sildenafil

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Drug Control Administration (DCA) has issued a warning against counterfeit drug identified as Sildenafil, claiming to cure erectile dysfunction. The Administration has asked pharmacists to stop its sale of a particular batch of injections being sold under

the brand name of 'Pulmosil Injection' 10 mg/12.5 ml (with batch number KFA0300, Mfg Dt 06/23 with expiry date of 05/25) purportedly manufactured by the Sun Pharmaceutical industries in Turkapally village. The DCA Director General VB Kamalasan Reddy said that authorities had found fungus in sealed vials of the

counterfeit version of the product in question. In the light of these grave findings, the DCA issued a 'spurious / counterfeit drug alert and a stop use notice' regarding the counterfeit version of Pulmosil. He further said the counterfeit product could be identified by these parameters: While the counterfeit injection has

"white flip-off seal", the original has a "violet flip-off seal"; the label edges of the counterfeit one have "sharp or straight edges" while the original has "curve edged labels or rounded corners"; an the contents in the counterfeit injection have a "light pale yellow colour solution" while the original one has "clear colourless solution".

The DCA has also ordered the chemists and druggists to stop sale and distribution of this particular counterfeit injection and report to the Drugs Inspector concerned immediately. The DCA also urged people to pass on information about any counterfeit or spurious drugs on its toll free number 1800-599-6969.

TSPSC chief calls for meticulous planning for Group- exams

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

In a video conference on Saturday, Telangana State Public Service Commission (TSPSC) Chairman M Mahender Reddy underscored the importance of meticulous arrangements for the upcoming Group-1 Preliminary Examination scheduled for June 9. The Chairman, along with District Collectors,

Additional Collectors, CPs, SPs, and other officials, reviewed the preparations and outlined the guidelines to be followed by candidates. Mahender Reddy informed the officials that the Group-1 Prelims exam would take place on June 9 from 10:30 am to 1 pm. Stressing the significance of punctuality, he advised candidates to arrive at the examination centers at least two

hours before the scheduled time for the biometric fingerprint collection process. Regarding logistics, Mahender Reddy suggested appointing additional invigilators, one for every 160 candidates, for the biometric capture. He emphasised the involvement of the police department, with police commissioners and SPs acting as nodal officers for the biometric fingerprint collection process.

Violence in Bishkek: Indian mission asks Indian students to stay indoors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Saturday asked its students in Bishkek to stay indoors after the Kyrgyz capital city reported mob violence targeting international students, especially from South Asia.

The Indian embassy in the Central Asian country said it is in touch with the Indian students and the situation is "calm" now.

The mission asked Indian students in the city to stay indoors.

In a statement, the Kyrgyz foreign ministry said that "destructive forces are deliberately disseminating untrue and false information" about the situation in Bishkek. It said the situation in the city is "calm and under full control", adding all necessary measures have been taken to ensure security.

External Affairs Minister S



Jaishankar advised the Indian students to stay in regular touch with the Indian Embassy. "Monitoring the welfare of Indian students in Bishkek. The situation is reportedly calm now. Strongly advise students to stay in regular touch with the Embassy," he said in a post on 'X'.

The Indian embassy said, "We are in touch with our students. The situation is presently calm but students are advised to stay indoors for the moment and get in touch with the Embassy in case of any issue."

Police in riot gear were deployed in part of Kyrgyzstan's capital overnight as large

crowds gathered in anger over an alleged fight between local and foreign people, The Times of Central Asia reported.

The incident appeared to reflect tension over the presence of migrants, many from South Asia, in Kyrgyzstan, it said.

The number of Indian stu-

dents in Kyrgyzstan is estimated to be around 15,000. It is not immediately known how many of them are in Bishkek.

The Kyrgyz foreign ministry said destructive forces are deliberately disseminating untrue and false information about the situation in the Kyrgyz Republic in foreign mass media and social networks, especially in the territory of Pakistan.

It said the situation in the city of Bishkek is calm and under full control. All necessary measures have been taken to ensure security, and maintain peace and stability, it said.

"Therefore, the ministry asks the representatives of mass media, blogger community, as well as foreign colleagues to be guided only by the official and confirmed information of the competent bodies," the Kyrgyz foreign ministry added.

Rae Bareilly should once again show UP, country path to progress: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said Rae Bareilly should once again show the path to progress and development to Uttar Pradesh and the country as it has been the ideological and political centre of the state in the past.

Sharing a video with his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in a post on X, he recollected memories of their childhood while passing through Rae Bareilly, from where he is contesting on the Lok Sabha seat vacated by his mother Sonia Gandhi.

"Rae Bareilly has an important role in India's progress, in giving direction to the country. Rae Bareilly has for years been Uttar Pradesh's political and ideological centre, and it was Rae Bareilly that showed the path in the freedom struggle," he said in the over four-minute video.

"Today, the role of Rae



Bareilly should be one that first shows the path to Uttar Pradesh's progress and development and then Uttar Pradesh should once again show the path of progress and development to India," he also said.

In the last Lok Sabha elections, Rahul Gandhi had contested from Amethi but lost to BJP's Smriti Irani. After representing Amethi from 2004 to 2019, he has shifted to Rae Bareilly this time.

Taking a swipe at top BJP leaders, he said he has respected his family and shared good ties with all family members and does not allow politics to come in.

"When you do politics, if you do not respect your family and cannot maintain your relations in the family, you cannot keep ties outside (the family) too," he said.

"If you lie in your daily life, you will lie in politics," Gandhi said.

INDIA bloc will win LS polls, BJP will not even cross 200 seats: Mamata

PNS ■ GOGHAT (WB)

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee on Saturday claimed that the INDIA bloc will come to power in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and BJP will "not cross the 200 mark" in the polls.

She accused Congress, and CPI(M) of having entered into a nexus with BJP in the state to discredit the state government and asked the electorate not to vote for any non-TMC parties which will benefit the saffron camp.

Addressing an election rally at Goghat under the Arambagh Lok Sabha constituency, Banerjee said "I had coined the name INDIA and at the national level we the coalition partners are all working together to resist the autocratic, demonic Narendra Modi government. TMC will play its role in installing the INDIA bloc to power."

"See what Modi is telling now - he is no more making tall '400 paar' seats by BJP. He can read the writing on the wall already. BJP will not cross even 200 tally, BJP will bite the dust," she said. Banerjee alleged that CPI(M), Congress and other Left partners in West Bengal have entered into a 'mahaghat' (unprincipled nexus) with communal, undemocratic, autocrat BJP just to

discredit the ruling TMC which is only waging the war against Narendra Modi and Amit Shah in the state.

The TMC supremo also slammed CPI(M) for allegedly committing mass murders at places like Goghat and Sihar during its rule and claimed only she as then opposition leader had dared to face the "Marxist terror at that time braving her life."

"I know the true face of CPI(M) in Bengal," she added.

Describing Modi and Shah as "anti-Bengal," she said, "his issuing advertisements in media to profess his love for the state won't cut much ice with the residents of the state who know these BJP heavyweight leaders will never understand our ethos and sentiments."

Reiterating her allegations about BJP concocting the charges of atrocities against TMC leaders on women of Sandeshkhali, she said "they made some of the poor, unsuspecting women sign on blank papers and incorporated charges of sexual misconduct in the complaint later."

"Be alert about BJP's sinister plan to remove some of the idols from temples (in Sandeshkhali and elsewhere) and engineer riots to get votes on polarization plank," she cautioned the voters and the security personnel.

BJP is planning to ban RSS: Uddhav

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday claimed that the Bharatiya Janata Party was planning to ban its ideological parent, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), after winning a third term in power.

Speaking at his last rally

here before the campaigning for the Lok Sabha elections ended in Maharashtra, Thackeray also said that the Election Commissioner who was "acting like Modi's servant" will be removed after the INDIA alliance government comes to power.

"The way they tried to use and throw the Shiv Sena, a similar game will be played by

Narendra Modi in future (with the RSS), and that has been stated by (BJP president J P) Nadda," he said.

Thackeray was referring to Nadda's comments to a newspaper that when the BJP was a small party and less capable, it needed the RSS, but now the saffron party has grown, become more capable, and "runs itself".

"Nadda said there was a need of the RSS until now, (but) we are capable now and we don't need the RSS. If they (BJP) came to power, it is a bigger danger for RSS workers because they will ban the RSS," Thackeray claimed.

In the past, (then Union home minister) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had banned the RSS, he noted.

ODISHA ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

126 'crorepati' candidates in third phase polls

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

One hundred and twenty-six candidates in fray for the third phase of Assembly elections in Odisha are 'crorepati', with BJD candidate from Champua segment Sanatan Mahakud the richest with Rs 227.67 crore assets.

Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Puri and Sambalpur Lok Sabha constituencies along with 42 assembly seats under these Lok Sabha segments will go to polls in the third phase polls in Odisha on May 25.

The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and Odisha Election Watch have analysed the self-sworn affidavits of 381 out of 383 candidates, who are contesting for 42 MLA seats in Odisha.

UP progressed under Modi, says Shah

PNS ■ LALITPUR/BANDA (UP)

Union Home minister Amit Shah on Saturday highlighted Uttar Pradesh's transformation from a state known for producing country-made pistols to one now manufacturing cannon balls.

Addressing an election rally in Lalitpur in favour of BJP's Jhansi candidate Anurag Sharma, who is eyeing a second term, the Union home minister said the state started developing only after Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister and Yogi Adityanath the Chief Minister.

"There was a time when country-made pistols were produced in Uttar Pradesh. But PM Modi built a defence corridor in Bundelkhand, and now cannon balls are made here," Shah said.

He added that "if Pakistan makes any mistake," the shells made in Bundelkhand will be used to "destroy" it.

Shah also slammed Congress leader Mani Shankar



Aiyar's atom bomb remark that has sparked a political row.

"Mani Shankar Aiyar has said Pakistan should be respected as it has an atom bomb and not ask for PoK (Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir) from the country. But this is Narendra Modi's government. We are not afraid of the atom bomb. PoK belongs to India and will remain so. We will take it."

In a purported video clip that has gone viral on social media, Aiyar is heard saying India should give respect to Pakistan as it is a sovereign nation and engage with it as it also possesses the atom bomb.

He indicated in the video that if a "mad person" comes to power there and uses the atom bomb, it will have its effect in India too.

While Aiyar has said the video was old and dredged up now as the BJP's election campaign is faltering, the Congress said it totally disagreed with the remarks made by Aiyar some months ago.

During the rally in Lalitpur, Shah said that with the completion of four phases of polling, Modi has "moved towards a triple century" by winning 270 seats in 4 phases and Rahul Gandhi's INDI Alliance has been wiped out.

"This land fought against the Mughals and the British. Now Bundelkhand also has to fight against the 'desi Angrez' present in our country," he said without naming anyone.

Urging people to vote in favour of the BJP, the home minister said, "This election is for the development of the country, for securing the country."

INDIA CORNER

NEET paper solver gang busted in Delhi, four held



Four people including two MBBS students were arrested for allegedly running a paper solver gang for NEET exams here, police said on Saturday. The matter came to the fore on May 5 when a student's biometric data was mismatched during the NEET exam at Bhartiya

Vidya Bhavan Mehta Vidyalaya located in Tilak Marg area, police said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Devesh Kumar Mahla said the two proxy students Sumit Mandoliya and Krishan Kesarwani, were caught from the centre. Given the seriousness of the offence, the case was transferred to the Special Staff of New Delhi District and a dedicated team led by Inspector Sanjay Kumar Gupta was formed to conduct the investigations, the DCP said. During sustained interrogation, Sumit Mandoliya and Krishan Kesarwani, both MBBS students, revealed the names of their handlers -- Prabhat Kumar, 27, and Kishor Lal, 37 -- who were nabbed from a hotel in Noida on Friday. The officer said Kumar and Lal are residents of Rajasthan and Bihar, respectively. The duo, who works as medical school admissions consultants, would charge the amount of Rs 20 to 25 Rs lakhs from the aspirants to provide them proxy students for the NEET exams.

Teen girl kills 2 sisters over father's 'worry' about many kids



A 13-year-old girl allegedly strangled her two younger sisters to death as her father was worried about having five children, police said on Friday. Late on Thursday night around 12:30 am, an information was received at Noorpur police station about

bodies of two girls found in a house in village Gauthawar Jait, Superintendent of Police Neeraj Kumar Jadaun said. When the police reached the house, they found Ritu (7) and Pavitra (5) lying on the floor, he said, adding that spot investigation did not reveal any signs of forced entry. Sahdev and Savita lived in the house with their five children. Savita's two eldest daughters, the 13-year-old and a 9-year-old, were from her first husband, Pukhraj. The two deceased girls and their 1.5-year-old brother were from her second husband, Sahdev. SP Jadaun said that during initial questioning, the 13-year-old said that two unknown people entered their house and strangled her sisters. However, she later confessed to strangling them to death with a scarf as her father was worried because of the size of the family, he said. The bodies of the victims have been sent for post-mortem and the minor accused girl is being interrogated, the police said.

Bibhav Kumar arrested, anticipatory bail plea infructuous, says court

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The anticipatory bail plea of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar, accused of assaulting AAP Rajya Sabha member Swati Maliwal, has become infructuous as he has been arrested, a Delhi court observed on Saturday.

Kumar was arrested on Saturday, two days after an FIR was registered against him at the Civil Lines police station.

Additional Sessions Judge Sushil Anuj Tyagi, while dictating the order to the court staff on the anticipatory bail plea, noted



that Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Kumar Srivastava appeared through videoconferencing around 4.45 pm and informed

the court that Kumar has already been arrested in the case.

"On court query, the additional public prosecutor for the state

submitted that the applicant was arrested at about 4:15 pm," the judge said. The judge noted Srivastava's submissions that Kumar's wife had been duly informed about his arrest.

"Since, the applicant (Kumar) has already been arrested, the present application is disposed of being infructuous," the court said. "Copy of this order is also sent to the investigating officer or station house officer concerned for information and necessary action," it said.

Earlier in the day, the court had reserved its order on the plea filed before it on Saturday.

'Savarkar is not election issue, Modi tried to polarise voters'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Saturday said Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was not an election issue, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi tried to polarise people by talking about him during his campaign rally here.

Modi, in his speech here on Friday, dared Pawar to make Congress leader Rahul Gandhi promise that he would not criticise the late freedom fighter and Hindutva ideologue ever again.

"Savarkar is not an election issue, and Rahul has not spo-

ken about him (late). But Modi's speech was divisive and meant to instigate, polarise. I have never seen such a prime minister," Pawar said at a joint press conference with Congress

chief Mallikarjun Kharge and Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray on the last day of campaigning for the final phase of the Lok Sabha polls in Maharashtra.

Rahul Gandhi has often targeted Savarkar, claiming that he helped the British rulers and wrote mercy petitions when he was incarcerated on the Andaman islands

Of strawberry shakes, drives and four newspapers a day

PNS ■ LANDOUR (UTTARAKHAND)

Old writers never die, they simply go out of print, says India's storyteller through the decades Ruskin Bond as he turns 90 on Sunday, adding with his famed self-deprecating wit that 99 per cent of his tribe are forgotten in the long run.

The companionship of his adopted family, drives on the serpentine Landour-Mussoorie route, frothy strawberry milk shakes, shelves filled with books to read and a handy notepad to write down his

daily musings... they were and are just a few of his favourite things. Spending most of his days at his picturesque home Ivy Cottage in the quiet cantonment town of Landour, a short drive from the noisier Mussoorie, the twin towns' most famous resident shows little signs of ageing. High blood pressure and dwindling eyesight aside, his childlike enthusiasm is intact as he discusses life, old age, writing, food and everything in between.

"Ninety-nine per cent of writers are forgotten in the long run. We are writing for poster-

Ruskin Bond turns 90



ity but nobody remembers us afterwards... I am happy if my

family remembers me and a few readers get some pleasure out of my writing but it is very easy for a writer to disappear, to go out of print," Bond told PTI in a rare interview at his home, often breaking into laughter at his own answers.

The ace raconteur makes light of his celebrity status and of being India's favourite children's author with more than 500 titles, including short stories, essays and novellas, since his debut novel "The Room on the Roof" in 1956.

"They say 'old soldiers never die, they simply fade away'.

Even old writers never die, they simply go out of print," Bond laughed.

His latest "Hold on To Your Dreams", published by Penguin Random House India (PRHI), offers a unique glimpse into Bond's personal space and everyday life -- memories of his boyhood, his friends, lost love, moments of joy, anguish, triumphs and tragedies. He became a writer almost by accident.

Bond said didn't aspire to become one, at least initially. His first two ambitions, and he failed miserably at both, were

to become an actor or a tap dancer.

"I wanted to be an actor, that never happened. I wanted to be a tap dancer, never had the figure for it. Then I realised I could write. I was a great bookworm. I grew up on books. Then I thought this is the best thing to do. Nothing better than a book, then why not write a few. Join the brigade of authors, so I did."

At 90, Bond continues to be a voracious reader with his nose either in the books or newspapers -- quite literally -- due to his poor eyesight.

'FDI norms in certain sectors likely to be eased under new government'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has recently relaxed foreign direct investment norms in the space sector and there is a possibility of further FDI liberalisation in certain other areas when the new government will come to power, a top official said on Saturday.

Secretary in Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Rajesh Kumar Singh said that in the last few years, India has liberalised FDI policy in many segments.

India has one of the most liberal foreign direct investment (FDI) policies in the world and in fact more liberal than many Southeast Asian countries that the country is often compared with, he said.

Recently FDI norms were eased in the space sector and "it is quite possible that under a new government, we can attempt some further liberalisation of any pockets that are left and where some liberalisation is possible," Singh said here at CII's annual business summit. The Lok Sabha elections are underway in the country and the counting is scheduled for June 4.

attempt some further liberalisation of any pockets that are left and where some liberalisation is possible," Singh said here at CII's annual business summit. The Lok Sabha elections are underway in the country and the counting is scheduled for June 4.

The government has eased FDI norms in the space sector by allowing 100 per cent overseas investment in making components for satellites, as part of efforts to attract overseas players and private companies into the segment.

FDI in India declined 13 per cent to USD 32.03 billion in April-December 2023, dragged down by lower infusion in computer hardware and software, telecom, auto, and pharmaceuticals, according to the government data.

Talking about the success of the production linked incentive schemes (PLI), the secretary



Recently FDI norms were eased in the space sector and "it is quite possible that under a new government, we can attempt some further liberalisation of any pockets that are left and where some liberalisation is possible," Singh said here at CII's annual business summit. The Lok Sabha elections are underway in the country and the counting is scheduled for June 4.

said so far Rs 1.13 lakh crore of investments have come in and the beneficiary companies have

recorded over Rs 9 lakh crore of sales, exports of Rs 3.45 lakh crore and created jobs for over

8 lakh people. The scheme was announced in 2021 for 14 sectors, including telecommunication, white goods, textiles, manufacturing of medical devices, automobiles, speciality steel, food products, high efficiency solar PV modules, advanced chemistry cell battery, drones, and pharma with an outlay of Rs 1.97 lakh crore.

Singh said some people criticize the scheme stating that it has not led to increase in domestic value addition but they should know that it takes time.

People have raised issues with regard to India attracting players in the semi-conductor segment stating that it is too capital intensive and not suitable for India. "The target is not labour intensity, it is mainly strategic and to ensure that we do not become over dependent on unsecured supply chains," he said.

FSSAI TO FRUIT TRADERS, FOOD BIZ

Don't use banned product 'calcium carbide' for fruit ripening

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Food regulator FSSAI has asked traders and food business operators not to use the banned product 'calcium carbide' for ripening of fruits.

In an official statement, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said it has "alerted traders/fruits handlers/Food Business Operators (FBOs) operating ripening chambers to strictly ensure compliance with the prohibition on calcium carbide for artificial ripening of fruits, particularly during the mango season."

FSSAI has also advised Food Safety Departments of states/UTs to remain vigilant and take serious action and deal stringently against person(s) indulging in such unlawful practices as per the

provisions of the FSS Act, 2006, and rules/regulations made thereunder.

"Calcium carbide, commonly used for ripening fruits like mangoes, releases acetylene

Additionally, acetylene gas is equally hazardous to those handling it.

"There are chances that calcium carbide may come in direct contact with fruits during application and leave residues of arsenic and phosphorus on fruits," the regulator said.

Due to these dangers, the use of calcium carbide for ripening fruits has been banned under the Regulation of the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2011.

This regulation explicitly states, "No person shall sell or offer or expose for sale or have in his premises for the purpose of sale under any description, fruits which have been artificially ripened by use of acetylene gas, commonly known as carbide gas".



Calcium carbide, commonly used for ripening fruits like mangoes, releases acetylene gas, which contains harmful traces of arsenic and phosphorus.

"These substances, also known as 'Masala', can cause serious health issues such as dizziness, frequent thirst, irritation, weakness, difficulty in swallowing, vomiting and skin ulcers, etc," FSSAI said.



Markets end special trading session with gains

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices closed the special trading session on a firm note on Saturday, extending their rally to the third day running amid fresh foreign fund inflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 88.91 points or 0.12 per cent to end at 74,005.94. During the session, it jumped 245.73 points or 0.33 per cent to 74,162.76.

The NSE Nifty advanced 35.90 points or 0.16 per cent to 22,502. The National Stock Exchange (NSE) and BSE on May 7 said they will conduct a special trading session in the equity and equity derivative segments on May 18 to check their preparedness for handling major disruptions or failures at the primary site.

The special live trading session will have an intra-day switchover from the Primary Site (PR) to the Disaster Recovery (DR) site.

In separate circulars, the two exchanges said 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. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies reached an all-time peak of Rs 4,12,36,791.05 crore in the special trading session.

Among the Sensex components, Nestle, Power Grid, Tata Motors, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Technologies, Hindustan Unilever and State Bank of India were the major gainers. JSW Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra, Maruti and Kotak Mahindra Bank were among the laggards.

Wall Street ended mostly higher on Friday. "The Dow Jones Industrial Average has hit 40,000 for the first time, buoyed by optimism from a softer-than-expected April inflation report, which has increased bets on a September rate cut by the Federal Reserve.

STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

India, UK reaffirm FTA

PNS ■ LONDON

India and Britain have reaffirmed their commitment to conclude a mutually beneficial free trade agreement (FTA) at the annual UK-India Strategic Dialogue here, as the two sides reflected the "good progress" on the 2030 Roadmap since the last review.

Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra, who is on a visit to the UK, held discussions with his counterpart, Sir Philip Barton, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) on Friday. After their meeting, the FCDO said the two leaders reviewed the

progress made on the UK-India 2030 Roadmap since the last strategic dialogue in January last year and looked



ahead to the next phase of bilateral cooperation.

"The two reflected on good progress on the 2030 Roadmap since the last review, noting key areas where the UK and India

have worked together to tackle some of the world's biggest challenges," the FCDO said in a statement.

"This included collaborating on the world's first malaria vaccine, working closely on India's successful G20 Presidency and increasing opportunities for students and entrepreneurs under the Migration and Mobility Partnership. Alongside celebrating the milestones since the last review, this year's dialogue included the ongoing commitment to negotiate a mutually beneficial free trade agreement (FTA), and enhance defence cooperation," the statement added.

MERGER OF IDFC WITH IDFC FIRST BANK

Debt, equity holders approve proposal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shareholders and non-convertible debenture (NCD) holders of IDFC First Bank have approved a proposal to merge parent IDFC Ltd with the lender.

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) convened a meeting on May 17 through video conferencing and other audio-visual means to consider and approve the composite scheme of amalgamation for IDFC First Bank, the bank said in a regulatory filing.

The board of the bank presented the result of voting on the proposal for amalgamation before the NCLT.

'India on mission to become world's leading producer of critical minerals'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is on a mission to become the world's leading and the most sustainable producer of critical minerals, Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc's Chairperson Priya Agarwal Hebbar has said.

Critical minerals, such as cobalt, copper, lithium, nickel and rare earths, play a crucial role in the production of clean energy technologies, from wind turbines to electric cars. Critical minerals are particularly in demand for the production of batteries for electric cars.



Speaking at Bank of America Securities Global Metals, Mining and Steel

Conference 2024 in Miami recently, Hebbar said the mining and metals sector will

play a crucial role in helping the world meet the net-zero goals.

"We take our role as champions of India's natural resources very seriously and we are well positioned to capitalize on this economic growth," Hebbar, who is also Vedanta Director, was quoted as saying in a statement on Saturday.

The mining and metals sector holds the key to unlock the future. The transition to net-zero goals globally will be mineral intensive and meeting this demand will be not easy, she said.

'Expecting good response from many companies on EV policy'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Saturday said India is expecting good response from many automobile companies on its electric vehicle (EV) policy, which was released in March to attract global players like Tesla.

Secretary in Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Rajesh Kumar Singh said that in the policy, the government has used tariff tweaks without actually spending any money to seek commitments from manufac-

turers to set up base in India. "Everybody talks about one company (US-based EV major Tesla), but we are expecting responses from many companies to that policy," Singh said here at CII's annual business summit.

On March 15, the government approved an electric-vehicle policy, under which duty concessions will be given to companies setting up manufacturing units in the country with a minimum investment of US\$ 500 million, a move aimed at attracting major global players like Tesla. As per the pol-

icy, a company will get three years to set up manufacturing facilities in India, and start commercial production of e-vehicles, and reach 50 per cent domestic value addition (DVA) within five years at the maximum.

The companies that would set up manufacturing facilities for EV passenger cars will be allowed to import a limited number of cars at lower customs/import duty of 15 per cent on vehicles costing US\$ 35,000 and above for five years from the date of issuance of the approval letter by the government.

At present, cars imported as completely built units (CBUs) attract customs duty of 70-100 per cent, depending on engine size and cost, insurance and freight (CIF) value less or above US\$ 40,000. The policy seeks to promote India as a manufacturing destination for EVs and attract investment from reputed global EV manufacturers. According to the scheme, the company will be allowed to import CBUs of e-4W manufactured by them at a reduced customs duty of 15%, subject to the conditions.

Can't comment on merger or privatisation of PSBs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

It will not be appropriate to comment on the merger or privatisation of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) since the Lok Sabha Elections are underway, Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi said on Friday. The clarification was sought after media reports suggesting the government could plan merger of PSBs instead of privatisation.

"Elections are going on, it is not appropriate to comment on such issues," Joshi said. The

government in the past had done consolidation of PSBs in two tranches.

The mega consolidation, which took effect from April 1, 2020, saw 10 PSBs consolidate into four -- Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India merged with Punjab National Bank; Syndicate Bank merged with Canara Bank; Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank merged with Union Bank of India; and Allahabad Bank with Indian Bank.

Need to reconsider sachetisation of F&O trade to safeguard household savings: CEA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cautioning against household savings getting invested in futures and options trade, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran on Saturday said there is a need to reconsider sachetisation of F&O trade because it requires different financial literacy.

Speaking at the CII's Annual Business Summit, 2024, Nageswaran said whenever financial sector development precedes national development the story hasn't ended well for

other countries as well. "Asian crisis 1997-98 is a very important example," he said. "When we take pride in the fact that we have the world's largest trading volume in futures and options (F&O), we need to ask ourselves is that a sign of progress or a sign of concern," the CEA said.

He said the financial sector has a responsibility to ensure that capital market grows in those areas where we can actually harness Indian household savings for productive purposes. "Many of the people cur-



rently engaged in the market do not understand them... The sachetisa-

tion of futures and options is something that we need to reconsider because financial literacy that is required for trading stocks is very different for trading futures and options," Nageswaran said.

Sachetisation refers to process of making financial products and services available in smaller, more manageable packets.

As per government data, the net household savings declined sharply by Rs 9 lakh crore in three years to Rs 14.16 lakh crore at the end of 2022-23 fiscal.

The data showed that the investment in mutual funds almost trebled to Rs 1.79 lakh crore in 2022-23 in three years from Rs 64,084 crore in 2020-21. The household investment in shares and debentures almost doubled to Rs 2.06 lakh crore in 2022-23 from Rs 1.07 lakh crore in three years from 2020-21.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had earlier this week cautioned against an "unchecked explosion" in retail F&O trading saying it may potentially create problems in household finances.

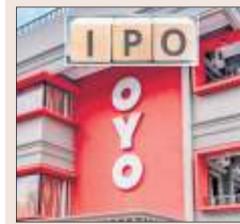
MONEY MATTERS

Banking industry doyen N Vaghul dies at 88



Veteran banker N Vaghul died on Saturday afternoon due to health complications, sources said. He was 88. Vaghul, who held many leadership positions in the banking industry, is credited with transforming ICICI from a public finance institution to a private sector bank in his 11-year stint as the chairman and managing director, starting in 1985. He was admitted to a private hospital in Chennai due to

'OYO withdraws DRHP, to refile IPO post refinancing'



Softbank-backed OYO is set to refile its much-awaited IPO as the global travel tech player is close to finalising its refinancing plans to raise up to US\$ 450 million via sale of dollar bonds, sources said. JP Morgan is the likely lead banker for the refinancing through the sale of dollar bonds at an estimated interest rate of 9 to 10 per cent per annum, a source said. In preparation for the refinancing, OYO has already moved its application with markets regulator SEBI to withdraw its current draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). The company intends to refile an updated version of the DRHP, after the bond issuance. Oravel Stays Ltd, OYO's parent company, had in November prepaid a significant chunk of its debt amounting to Rs 1,620 crore through a buyback process. The buyback involved repurchasing 30 per cent of its outstanding Term Loan B of US\$ 660 million. The move brought down its outstanding loan amount to around US\$ 450 million. A source closely involved in the company's IPO plans told PTI, "The refinancing will result in material changes to OYO's financial statements. Hence as per existing regulations, it will need to revise its filings with the regulator." "Since the decision for refinancing is at an advanced stage, it doesn't make sense to continue pursuing IPO approval with the current financials. So it's prudent to withdraw the current application," he added.

Nepal bans sale of Indian spice-mix products



After Singapore and Hong Kong, Nepal has also banned the sale and import of certain spice-mix products manufactured by Indian brands over alleged quality concerns. Four spice-mix products by MDH and Everest were banned in the Himalayan nation from Friday due to suspected ethylene oxide or ETO contamination, according to the Department of Food Technology and Quality Control here. Under this, Madras Curry Powder, Sambhar Mixed Masala Powder, Mixed Masala Curry Powder of MDH and Fish Curry Masala of Everest have been banned in Nepal. "As residue contents of ethylene oxide are found to be exceeding the prescribed limit in these four products, the import and sale of these products are banned within the country as per Article 19 of the Food Regulation 2027 B.S.," the department said in a notice issued on Friday. "Our serious attention has been drawn towards media reports about the sale of these sub-standard products in the market, and they are harmful for consumption," it said. The food quality control watchdog has also urged importers and traders to recall these products from the market. Last month, Singapore and Hong Kong halted sales of some spices produced by MDH and Everest over suspected elevated levels of ETO linked with some cancers. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has since initiated steps to examine the quality of powdered spices from various brands in the country.

"We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care about what you think. Words are secondary. Thoughts live; they travel far"
— Swami Vivekananda



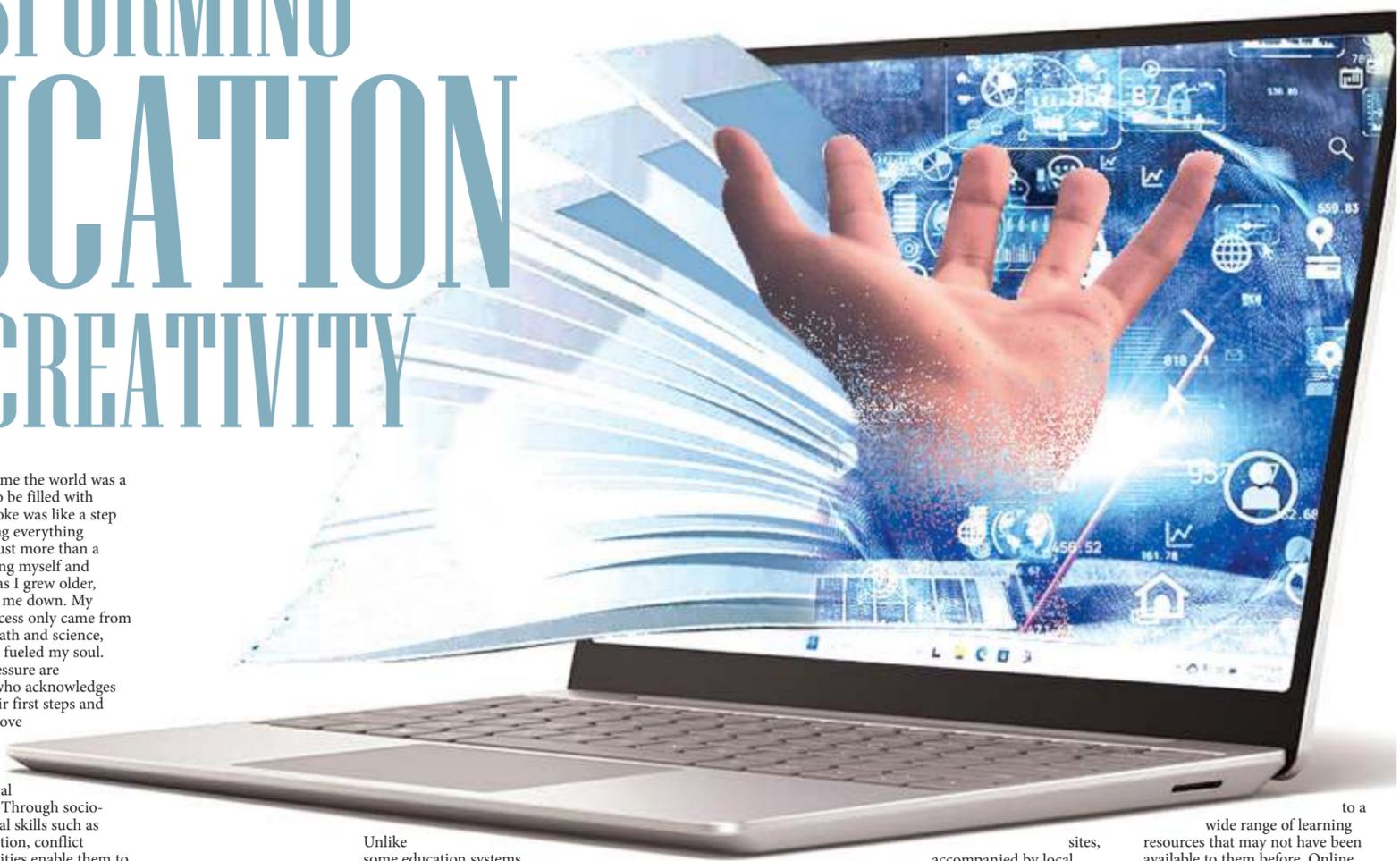
The future of education in India isn't just about doing well academically, it's about empowering kids to follow their passions and create their own paths to success. And that journey is definitely worth talking about, ADITI SHARMA



CANVAS OF CHANGE

**TRANSFORMING
EDUCATION
WITH CREATIVITY**

When I was a child, for me the world was a blank canvas, ready to be filled with colors. Each brushstroke was like a step towards understanding everything around me. Art was just more than a hobby for me, it was a way of expressing myself and finding escape in midst of chaos. But as I grew older, societal expectations started weighing me down. My parents and teachers believed that success only came from excelling in traditional subjects like math and science, leaving no room for the creativity that fueled my soul. Elders often believe that stress and pressure are exclusively their burdens to bear, yet who acknowledges that even toddlers struggle to take their first steps and teenagers face immense pressure to prove their worth to the world. This is where schools step in, recognizing the importance of nurturing not just academic growth but also the social and emotional well-being of children. Through socio-emotive learning, students develop vital skills such as problem solving, effective communication, conflict management, and self-care. These abilities enable them to understand and manage their emotions, build supportive and cooperative communities, and ultimately help both themselves and others thrive. One particular innovation that has impressed me is the use of Emotion Charts in schools. These charts have pictures of faces showing different emotions such as sadness, anger, surprise, silliness, fear, excitement, and embarrassment. Children can use these charts to express how they feel each day. The efforts made by schools to incorporate emotional learning are not only effective but also incredibly beautiful! This new approach to education is producing adults who are better at handling stress, managing their emotions, and controlling themselves. When I was in 3rd grade, my mother always stressed about my exams and expected me to score a perfect 20 out of 20. This pressure pushed me into an exhausting race for marks. I believe children should be exempted from exams during their primary years so they can enjoy a stress-free childhood and focus on developing their creativity and skills. The new education system has introduced a change many of us wished for as children, which is no exams until 3rd grade. This shift creates a less pressured environment, allowing children to learn at their own pace without worrying about marks or grades. By eliminating early testing, we can cultivate a love of learning in a calm, supportive atmosphere, free from the anxiety of exams. When my parents were in school, the main focus was on academics. When I was a student, we had academics as well as co-curricular activities and sports. But now, education has evolved even further. It includes subjects and activities like yoga, meditation, journal writing, and mindful coloring. This shift in education has had a significant positive impact on children. It has helped them in several ways with, aggression management, emotions regulation, making thoughtful decisions and better communication in relationships. Back in my teenage years, the school syllabus was synonymous with exams. Schools viewed exams as a method of assessment, but to me, they were more like photographs. Students needed to memorize information and reproduce it exactly in their answers. It felt as though we were being asked to take a screenshot of our textbooks and paste it directly onto our exam sheets. Traditionally, assessments focused purely on memory recall. However, today's educational landscape has evolved significantly. Modern assessments extend beyond paper and pencil, embracing practical, hands-on experiences and field experiments. These contemporary methods provide a more comprehensive evaluation of a student's understanding and skills, offering a richer, more meaningful approach to learning and assessment. Back in my 10th-grade days, I vividly remember yearning to choose subjects like English, Biology, and Fine Arts.



BOARDS! THE WORD ITSELF FEELS HEAVY WITH PRESSURE, EVEN THOUGH I NAVIGATED THEM LONG AGO. THE PRESSURE OF BOARD RESULTS WAS SUCH THAT, THOSE TIMES WERE SO STRESSFUL THAT EVEN A PEACEFUL BREATH FELT IMPOSSIBLE, AND MY ANXIETY WAS AT ITS PEAK

Unlike some education systems abroad, Indian education didn't grant us the freedom to pick our own set of subjects. But now, with the advent of the new education policy, the landscape has undergone a dramatic transformation. It's surreal to think that students today have the liberty to tailor their education according to their interests and passions. Imagine a science student delving into the world of music or arts and it's truly an evolution! When I chose humanities, people often asked me what my future profession would be and if I could earn well with it. The rise in humanities enrollments has validated the importance of creative and critical thinking skills, fostering an environment that values artistic expression and cultural understanding. BOARDS! The word itself feels heavy with pressure, even though I navigated them long ago. The pressure of board results was such that, those times were so stressful that even a peaceful breath felt impossible, and my anxiety was at its peak. My parents often reminisced about facing board exams in 5th and 8th grades, but as a child of the 2000s, I thankfully escaped that additional stress. For me, board exams were a daunting once-a-year event in 10th and 12th grades. It was a struggle to cover entire textbooks, and while I managed above-average marks, the pressure was intense. However, the upcoming change to split exams into two sessions seems promising. This approach will distribute the workload more evenly, reduce stress and give students more time to prepare for the next session. This division will allow timely feedback on performance, identifying areas for improvement and providing support before the next session, ultimately enhancing student learning and performance. My personal favourite change that has ever been happened in the

Indian education system has been the thoughtful replacement of the word "fail" with "essential repeat" and "back" with "supplementary." This shift was crucial, as the harsh terms "fail" and "back" often demotivate students and heighten the fear of judgment. The new supportive terminology boosts self-esteem and encourages students to persevere, fostering a more positive and resilient mindset. Cross culture learning is also a major revolution which is crucial as it fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, promoting empathy, respect, and global awareness among students. This inclusive approach not only enriches students' educational experiences but also equips them with the social and emotional skills necessary to navigate and contribute positively to a multicultural society. One of such is National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). NIOS offers flexible learning opportunities to students from diverse cultural backgrounds, including those from rural areas, tribal communities, and marginalized groups. Through its inclusive curriculum and open learning approach, NIOS promotes cross-cultural understanding by catering to the needs and realities of various communities across the country. In cultural exchange programs at my school not only exposed me to diverse perspectives but also highlighted the varied approaches to education around the world. Witnessing how children from different international cultures learn and left a profound impact, opens eyes to new possibilities in learning. My school had students from France and they spent a week immersed in the school's community. They also had the opportunity to explore Delhi's landmarks, museums, and cultural

sites, accompanied by local students who act as guides and ambassadors. In return, they organized reciprocal visits, sending groups of students to partner schools abroad to experience different culture. It is an enlightening experience that underscored the importance of fostering international and global understanding through education, revealing that cultural exchange is not just a leisure activity but an essential aspect of comprehensive learning. With years these programmes have lifted students with gain of first-hand exposure to diverse perspectives, traditions, and ways of life. This experience not only broadens their worldview but also cultivates tolerance, appreciation for diversity, and intercultural communication skills. In the past, they often overlooked the importance of sports and physical education, especially during the crucial 11th and 12th grades. Previously, schools often overlooked this aspect of holistic development. However, there has been a shift in perspective, with educational institutions now recognizing the importance of nurturing not only academic excellence but also mental and emotional well-being through sports and physical activities. Speaking of mental health, it's heartening to see prestigious institutions like IITs and IIMs taking proactive steps to address the issue of student suicides. Programs focused on mental wellness and weekly counselling sessions are now becoming the norm, with institutions like IIT Guwahati leading the way. Well on discussing mental health, pandemic has affected our minds and changed the way we view things around us. Were you a quarantine student too? Well I was. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ed-Tech was the only way we could learn. With the introduction of EdTech, students now have access

to a wide range of learning resources that may not have been available to them before. Online platforms offer educational materials such as e-books, videos, and interactive tutorials, making it easier for students to explore different subjects at their own pace. Who would have imagined that tools like ChatGPT could handle assignments, develop content, and become indispensable aids? AI, VR, and AR have transformed education, especially in the arts, by creating exciting opportunities for creative expression and discovery. AI personalizes learning and provides intelligent creative tools, VR immerses students in virtual environments for hands-on artistic experiences, and AR overlays digital information onto the real world for enhanced visualization. Together, these technologies make art education more engaging, interactive, and innovative, fostering deeper creativity and understanding among students. **The education system is changing, and it's not just about academic freedom. It's also about unlocking creativity and supporting overall growth.** As someone who truly believes in the power of art, I'm excited to see more recognition of artistic and creative careers. It's no longer just about commerce and science. With the increasing popularity of vocational courses in fields like culinary arts, design, and interior decoration, India is on track to become a center of creativity and innovation. My passion for improving education comes from wanting to see every child bloom with their innovative and extraordinary minds. I wish to advocate for a system that not only keeps up with the times but also nurtures each person's unique talents and dreams. **The future of education in India isn't just about doing well academically, it's about empowering kids to follow their passions, express themselves freely, and create their own paths to success. And that journey is definitely worth talking about.**



TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF PRINTMAKING

An exhibition showcasing the past five decades of printmaking through the works of works of five acclaimed artists, highlights the profound impact and continued relevance of the medium in today's art world, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

The art world is a vast canvas, painted with vibrant strokes of creativity and innovation. Within this canvas, printmaking stands as a unique art form offering artists a medium to express their thoughts, emotions and perspectives in a distinct and appealing manner. Unlike painting or sculpture, where the final image is visible throughout the creative process, printmaking is a journey of revelation. The true image remains unseen until the very last stages adding an element of anticipation and surprise that makes printmaking so captivating. The exhibition, *Rupantar Panch Dashak: Five Decades of Printmaking*, delves into this alluring world of inked narratives. The preview of the exhibition was held at the Visual Art Gallery. Curated by Alka Pande, this exhibition is not merely a showcase of exquisite artwork; it is a celebration of printmaking's enduring legacy and its transformative power. Organised by Members of Multiple Encounters, the exhibition brings together the talents of five renowned printmakers: Anandamoy Banerjee, Kavita Nayar, Moti Zharotia, Dattatreya Apte, and Sushanta Guha. Each artist, a master in his or her own right, explores the art of printmaking as a tool of personal expression, transforming the medium into a canvas for their unique visions. The show promises to be a celebration of exceptional talent, presenting various printmaking styles and expressions. The exhibition's title, 'Rupantar', perfectly encapsulates the essence of printmaking signifying the transformative journey of an artist's work over five decades, highlighting the evolution and innovation inherent in their creations. Beyond the individual narratives, 'Rupantar' also offers a glimpse into the broader landscape of printmaking in India, showcasing its diversity, depth, and enduring relevance in the contemporary art scene. Anandamoy Banerjee, a recipient of prestigious awards like the AIFACS annual

best exhibition award, views printmaking as a reflection of his life experiences, dreams and artistic journey. His work, a blend of drawing, painting, prints and experimental pieces tells a story with each creation. Abstract and introspective, his works often present a colourful combination of human forms intertwined with abstraction. Dattatreya Apte, a founding member of the Indian Printmakers Guild draws inspiration from the world around him, the "reflections" and "impressions" that linger on surfaces. His prints whether painted, printed or physically cast, are a testament to his fascination with the art form's complex nature. Each piece showcases the evolution of his concept from an idea to the final artwork. Kavita Nayar's art reflects a deep personal journey, likened to the process of giving birth. Her focus on nature, particularly flowers symbolises life's cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Nayar's prints span five decades with works in oil pastels on paper and board. She also creates an installation with prints showcasing her diverse artistic expression. Moti Zharotia, an artist with a visionary approach, uses printmaking to delve into the essence of life. His silkscreen prints beautifully blend masculine and feminine energies, as seen in his theme *Purusha & Prakriti*. In his wider collection, 'Impressions on Impression'; Zharotia symbolises the harmonious interplay of life's core forces. His work not only showcases the harmony between humans and nature but also highlights their interconnectedness creating a profound sense of balance and unity. Sushanta Guha, known for his socially conscious art uses printmaking as a tool to address pressing issues affecting humanity. His work vividly contrasts the rapid urbanisation seen in modern development with the simultaneous decline of human values, leading to increased individual suffering and identity crises. Through his impactful woodblock prints and



lithographs, Guha urges viewers to contemplate the complexities of the contemporary world. His art serves as a poignant reflection of societal challenges particularly highlighting issues like violence and religious extremism. Alka Pande, the curator, describes *Rupantar* as an enlightening experience. Witnessing the development and transformation in the artist's practices over five decades offers invaluable insights for aspiring artists. Beyond showcasing finished works the exhibition sheds light on the "art of making" itself from the technical aspects of printmaking to the final artistic expression. *Rupantar* also bridges the gap between traditional printmaking and contemporary artistic practices. It

highlights how younger artists who may not specialise solely in printmaking, incorporate various printmaking styles into their mixed media creations. The art world is a diverse and dynamic realm offering a medium through which artists can express their creativity. Among these, printmaking stands out as a unique and fascinating art form with a rich history and enduring appeal. Printmaking is the art of creating images by transferring them from a matrix or plate onto paper or another surface. This process allows for the production of multiple copies of an artwork making it an accessible and versatile medium for artists to explore and experiment with. Ultimately, *Rupantar Panch Dashak: Five Decades of Printmaking*, is a multifaceted celebration. It celebrates the artistry and dedication of five master printmakers while also elevating the art form itself. It highlights the intricate techniques and rich history of printmaking while acknowledging its contemporary relevance. *Rupantar* invites viewers to delve deeper into the world of art and appreciate the story's work into every mark on the paper. This exhibition serves as a powerful reminder that printmaking is not merely a means of reproducing images; it's a dynamic and versatile art form capable of sparking introspection, igniting social commentary and revealing the intricate beauty of the artistic process itself. The exhibition leaves behind a legacy of artistic excellence and imaginative exploration. It is not only a celebration of the talent but also highlights the importance of printmaking in the art world. It has shown us that printmaking is not just a technique; it is a form of expression that can convey deep emotions, tell compelling stories and provoke thought and reflection. Let us recognise the significance of printmaking in preserving cultural heritage, promoting artistic innovation and enriching our lives with beauty and meaning.

Laapataa Ladies Shines Bright

This Kiran Rao directed film is a must-watch for its engaging storyline, brilliant performances, and important social message, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Laapataa Ladies, is a perfect blend of humour, social commentary and a heartwarming storytelling. Marking Kiran Rao's return to the director's chair after several years, the film is a delightful surprise that resonates with the audiences. The original story by Biplab Goswami, screenplay and dialogues by Sneha Desai, along with additional dialogues by Divyanshi Sharma contribute to the film's cohesive and engaging narrative. The film boasts a talented cast with Pratibha Ranta (Jaya), Nitanshi Goel (Phool Kumari), Sparsh Shrivastav (Deepak Kumar), Satendra Soni (Chhotu) and Chhaya Kadam (Manju Maai) along with the charismatic Ravi Kishan (Shyam Manohar). Each actor delivers a stellar performance, bringing their characters to life with finesse and authenticity. The story unfolds with two young brides, Phool Kumari and Jaya, accidentally swapped during a train journey due to a veiled misunderstanding. As Phool's helpless husband, Deepak Kumar seeks help from a cop Shyam Manohar, a point when the journey of the perfect story begins. Kiran Rao's storytelling is exceptional, seamlessly weaving together elements of amusement, emotion and social commentary. The film's storyline is compelling, offering a message about the importance of women's empowerment and identity in society. Rao adeptly employs humour and the motif of veiled identity (*ghunghat*) to illuminate the pervasive influence of patriarchy within society. The dialogue is witty and the humorous scenes are executed with finesse, keeping the audience entertained throughout. One of the film's standout aspects is its emphasis on the importance of self-realisation and self-identity. Through the character's journeys, the audience is reminded that true happiness comes from within and that women are their own heroines. The film delivers this message with subtlety and grace, making it relatable to a wide audience. The performances in *Laapataa Ladies* are superb, with Ravi Kishan stealing the show with his impeccable comic timing. His portrayal of Shyam Manohar adds depth to the film with his acting leaving a lasting impression. Chhaya Kadam's portrayal of Manju Maai is undeniably impressive. She delivers her dialogues with a powerful mix of conviction, truth and humour. Particularly noteworthy is her line, "A man who loves you has the right to hit you and one day I exercised my



right as well." This powerful statement serves as a slap in the face of patriarchal norms, forcing viewers to confront the harsh reality of domestic violence disguised as love. Manju Maai doesn't stop there. Her wisdom shines through another impactful line: "Being happy on your own is the toughest thing, Phool, but once you've mastered it, no one can bother you." This resonates deeply, highlighting the importance of self-respect and the empowering freedom found in self-sufficiency. Pratibha Ranta and Nitanshi Goel shine in their roles, bringing depth and authenticity to their characters. Their fresh faces coupled with immense talent create magic on screen. Even actors with smaller screen time such as Satendra Soni as Chhotu, Durgesh Kumar as Dubeyji or Rachna Gupta as Deepak's sister-in-law deliver impactful performances showcasing the depth and richness of the film's ensemble cast. The film explores themes of identity, self-discovery and empowerment. It highlights the strength and resilience of women showcasing how they navigate societal expectations and find their voice in a male-dominated world. *Laapataa Ladies* is a must-watch for its engaging storyline, brilliant performances, and important social message. Kiran Rao has once again proved her directorial prowess, creating a film that is both entertaining and thought-provoking. While viewers need to exercise patience as the film unfolds at a somewhat slow pace, this deliberate pacing contributes to the movie's beauty and its ability to make a significant impact on the audience. Despite its leisurely pace, the film's narrative depth and emotional resonance make it a worthwhile and memorable cinematic experience.

Brett Lee bats for Australian Avocados

BY GYANESHWAR DAYAL

Avocados Australia recently launched in the Indian market with Cricket Legend Brett Lee as its brand ambassador. Soon Australian avocados would be available in India. The Australian exporters are upbeat about the Indian market as they feel it is the place where they would have first mover advantage and would be able to appeal to Indian consumers with their superior quality. Avocados are to the West what mangoes are to Indians. Avocados, often hailed as a superfood, are not just delicious but also incredibly nutritious. Native to Central America, these green fruits are packed with healthy fats, fibre, vitamins, and minerals. They're particularly rich in monounsaturated fats, which are beneficial for heart health. Avocados are incredibly versatile and can be enjoyed in various forms: sliced on toast, mashed into guacamole, blended into smoothies, or even used as a substitute for butter in baking. In fact, Brett Lee was seen making a few of avocado recipes by himself. As he put it "for an athlete nothing better than having avocados for energy and



nutrition, just slice it and with a dash of lemon and salt and you have an excellent healthy snack." Their creamy texture adds depth to dishes while providing a host of health benefits. Beyond their nutritional value, avocados are also environmentally friendly. They require less water to grow compared to other fruits and can thrive in diverse climates. Avocados Australia Limited, representing the Australian avocado industry, has officially entered the Indian market, unveiling cricket icon Brett Lee as their esteemed brand ambassador. This collaboration signals a significant milestone for both Australian avocados and the burgeoning Indian fresh fruit market. Renowned for their

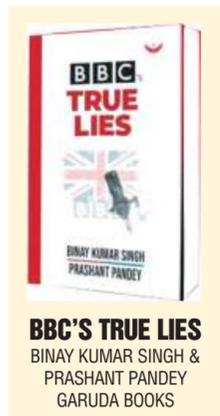
superior quality and health benefits, Australian avocados promise to tantalise Indian taste buds with a fusion of flavour, texture, and nutrition. With Brett Lee lending his endorsement, this launch aims to introduce a premium and healthy option to Indian households, advocating for the incorporation of avocados into daily meals and snacks. The avocado market in India is experiencing a notable uptick, mirroring a global trend of increased demand over the past decade. Avocados are hailed as a nutritious addition to all diets, particularly suiting vegetarian preferences. Australia's avocado industry is also on the rise, with production forecasted to surge from over 115,385 tonnes in 2022-23 to approximately 170,000 tonnes by 2026. Aligned with this growth trajectory, Australian growers are actively pursuing new overseas markets, including India, with increased exports crucial for the industry's long-term sustainability. So the next time you're craving something tasty and nutritious, consider reaching for an avocado - it's not just a delicious fruit but also a powerhouse of nutrients!

The real face of BBC's news coverage

BBC's True Lies is a signboard cautioning the common man about the dangerous acts perpetrated by the British Government owned media network, writes **KUMAR CHELLPPAN.**

There are enough laws in the Indian Penal Code to punish those involved in impersonation and cheating. Reports about fake physicians, engineers and lawyers getting caught and sent to prison are routine affairs in India. There are rules in the statute books to punish those engaged in food adulteration and marketing. There was an incident involving the Chennai Police arresting a Class VIII dropout by the name 'Professor Ravi Kumar Reddy' in 2015 who has been teaching advanced power systems at Saveetha College of Engineering for nearly three years. His colleagues and students never got a chance to doubt his credibility till one of the professors came across the real Prof Ravi Reddy who had been teaching at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. The Chennai 'Professor' turned out to be Ashok Kumar Choudhury from Guntur who was blessed with a photographic memory. We have legislations and provisions in the IPC to book such impersonators. Unfortunately, we do not have laws to prosecute fake journalists, the driving force behind media which is being flouted as the Fourth Estate of democracy. As on date most of the media and journalists act as propagandists while the line demarcating news and views have almost disappeared. There was a time when the English-speaking population

of Chennai woke up to their bed *Kaappee* and the morning newspaper which was known by the name *Mount Road Mahavishnu*. Not anymore. The moment readers understood that this *Mahavishnu* is feeding them fake and distorted news, they dumped the daily once and for ever. But the paper still survives because the minority community and Marxists believe only what is published in this newspaper. The story of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC World) is no different. The media house launched to disseminate to the world His Majesty's Voice (HMV) and counter the media blitzkrieg by Germany during the Second World War has degenerated into a fake news manufacturing plant. The last few decades of BBC's coverage of Asia and Africa speak volumes about its real intentions. The BBC is no more disseminating truths but specialises in spreading falsehood. There is a phrase which we regularly use; *'Suppressio Veri, Suggestio Falsi'* which means that suppression of truth is equivalent to suggestion of what is false. One need not elaborate on this as the term is self-explanatory. It may have a lot to do with the kind of statecraft and diplomacy being followed by the BBC. Author Binay Kumar Singh and columnist and Prashant Pandey, a seasoned journalist,



have come out with BBC's True Lies, a book which deals with the purpose for which the radio channel was launched, and its modus operandi. While in college, our teachers used to tell us to listen to BBC Radio news so that it would help us improve our English pronunciation. But I found the All India Radio's English news bulletins immortalised by the legendary Surjit Sen, always stand out. The day I started listening to the bulletins aired by the BBC, I could make out the distinct discrimination the channel had towards India. For the BBC editors, India was an uncivilized country of people believing in superstition and sorcery.

Although the Government of Britain claimed that they do not have any prejudice against India, the reality is quite the opposite. The authors explain how the BBC portrayed India taking over Goa as an armed attack on Portugal, a blatant case of misinterpretation of facts by the news channel. During 2023, student unions in Kerala were vying with each other in exhibiting the documentary film on Gujarat produced and aired by the BBC. The SFI students who always shunned the BJP were in the forefront of this campaign and made arrangements in campuses so that the gullible students could be fooled. Most of the viewers who sat throughout the documentary were in the dark about the facts that led to the riots. They were also ignorant about the Supreme Court verdict or the findings of the Special Investigation Team that interrogated Narendra Modi, the then chief minister of Gujarat for 19 hours. The BBC was rehashing and churning out charges levelled against Modi by TV journalists who had personal scores to settle with him. The most important thing to be borne in mind is that for the BBC, *jihadis* become terrorists only when they hurt British interests. All other *jihadis* are mere gunmen or liberators fighting against countries which Britain does not like. During the Cold War, Britain and the US had similar

criteria in identifying heads of nations. Those heading Communist/socialist/dictatorial regimes opposed to the then Soviet Union were friends of the US and UK. The best example was General Zia-ul-Haq, the Pakistani despot who perpetrated terrorist acts against India. There were many Latin American heads of nations for whom democracy was an alien word and who always were considered as friends of US and UK. The real face of BBC's news coverage came out in the open during the last 1970s when OP Tyagi introduced in Parliament a legislation named the Freedom of Religion Bill. The BBC started sounding alarm bells in its bulletins claiming that all religions other than Hinduism were in danger in India! Of late, there were allegations from various Hindutva forces that BBC was into religious conversion in a big way. It is for the BBC to prove that their hands are clean. Authors Binay Kumar and Prashant need to be appreciated for bringing out this book packed with explosive information. Since public memory is short, they are likely to forget what the media airs/publishes once they listen or read the contents. *BBC's True Lies* is a signboard cautioning the common man about the dangerous acts perpetrated by the British Government owned media network.

THE ENIGMATIC WORLD OF LEOPARDS

Leopards are the only large cat species with a widespread presence across the country, its conservation status and population dynamics serve as a barometer for the health of India's ecosystems



H S SINGH

As per the report on the Status of the Leopard in India (2022), the overall leopard population in the tiger range landscape in 18 states of India was estimated at 13,870 subadult and adult leopards. In the tiger states also, the leopard-dominated area in Uttarakhand, major parts of North-East India and some other minor leopard habitats in those states were not covered in the survey

The Indian leopard (*Panthera pardus fusca*), a sub-species of leopard out of nine sub-species of leopard in the world, is found throughout India from Jammu & Kashmir in the North-West Himalayas to Cape Comorin in the south and, from the Gir forest (Saurashtra) and thorn forest in the arid zone (Kachchh) in the extreme west to the moist forest of Myanmar in the east. Although the majority of them, about 95 per cent are confined to India, its small populations, about 5%, are also found in Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, east of the Indus River in Pakistan and a small area of southern China adjoining Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar. Out of eight subspecies of leopards in Asia, except the Indian leopard, none of the other subspecies of leopards in Asia, have a population above a thousand, and few of them such as the Amur leopard, and Arabian leopards are Critically Endangered. Only two sub-species, the African leopard and the Indian leopard still have viable populations and distribution ranges.

POPULATION STATUS

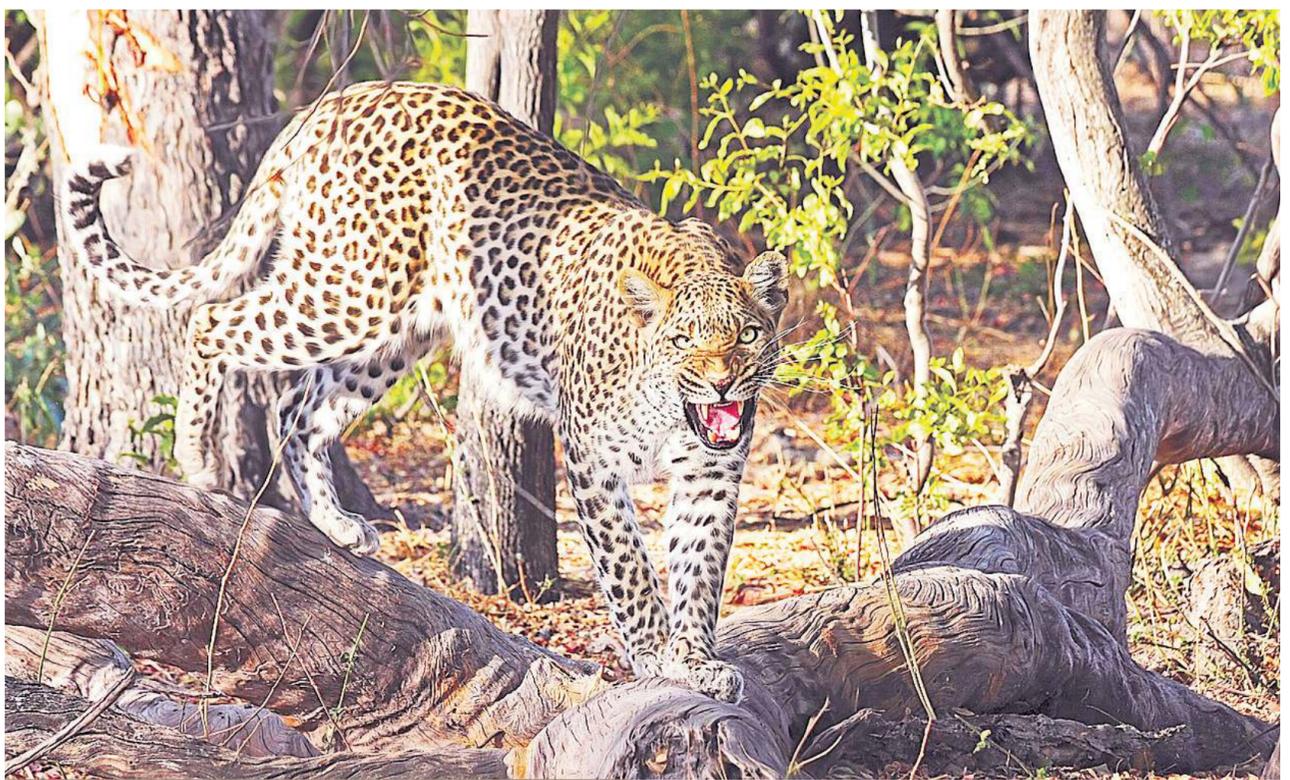
Hunting records and British Gazetteers reveal that India had a large population of leopards before the Second World War. It is stated in the publications that about 150,000 leopards were hunted during a span of 50 years (1875-1925). Perhaps, the leopard population was in the range of nearly one lakh hundred years ago. The population drastically declined and reached to lowest level in the 1960s when about 6000 to 7000 individual leopards were estimated in the Indian jungle by the famous naturalist E P Gee (1964).

Protection and conservation measures by creating a network of Protected Areas and enacting laws have contributed to the leopard's recovery but the scale of poaching two decades ago slowed the recovery rate. When the scale of poaching declined, the population consistently increased in all leopard habitats, except Naxalite-affected states such as Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Telangana, Odisha and part of Maharashtra, and states in the North East of India. As per the report on the Status of the Leopard in India (2022), the overall leopard population in the tiger range landscape in 18 states of India was estimated at 13,870 subadult and adult leopards. In the tiger states also, the leopard-dominated area in Uttarakhand, major parts of North-East India and some other minor leopard habitats in those states were not covered in the survey. The Indian leopard occurs in 30 states and Union Territories whereas the population estimate in 2022 was only for major parts of 18 states.

Thus, the population declared in the leopard's report is only for two-thirds of the leopard distribution range, not for the entire India. Using data, as mentioned in the status report of leopard for leopard population in India by media and scientific communities is not correct. Major leopard states such as Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana and major parts of Uttarakhand and North-East states are not covered in this report.

After accounting for all habitats, the leopard population was over 8,650 in the Central India Landscape covering eight states. The second major population block supporting over 4,600 leopards in northern India: the Himalayas-Shivalik (Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal, Uttarakhand, terai belt of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and the northern plains). The third major population block supporting about 3,600 leopards is the Western Ghats (Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala).

The North-East and Brahmaputra plains have extensive forests but moderate to poor wildlife, including the Indian leopard and a total number of smart cats may be in the range of about 1,000-1,100 leopards. Gujarat Forest Department counted 2,274 leopards in the state in 2023. Arid and semi-arid zones comprising Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat State, Dadara-Nagar Haveli and the Western Aravallis in Rajasthan support about 2,500-2,600 leopards. Additionally, leopards are also found in small patches of forests, tea gardens, sugarcane fields, ravine areas and other such lands that are not surveyed.



Man-eater leopards

Stories of man-eating leopards and shunting of innocent ones in search of punishing the culprit have been repeated over centuries. During Jim Corbett's time also, hunters killed several innocent leopards while targeting a man-eater. Like criminals in human society, the man-eating leopard always harmed innocent leopards. When two man-eaters killed one and a half dozen people in Dhanpur taluka in Dahod district in Gujarat in 2003, the authority punished innocent leopards by eliminating 14 of them from the area. When three children were killed between Talala and Veraval in Junagadh in February 2003, a total of 11 leopards were punished by removing them from the wild. When one or two leopards killed five people in Mandavi taluka in Surat districts in the post-monsoon and early winter in 2010, the situation compelled the Forest Department to engage several trap cages in the area. While hunting and trapping the man-eater, about two dozen leopards, including cubs were eliminated from the six villages in three months. When a leopard killed five people in Veraval in Junagadh in March 2012, a total of nine leopards were trapped and removed from the area. Similarly, when a leopard killed eight people in Visavadar and the surrounding area, about one and a half dozen leopards were captured and removed from the area in the year 2019. When leopards caused the death of human beings in the sugarcane belt in the fringe of Gir forests, over two dozen leopards were caged in 2023.

The situation in Uttarakhand was not different. There were cases when people retaliated and eliminated a large number of leopards in Uttarakhand, unnoticed by the department when the leopards killed human beings. When people were killed in Borivali National Park near Mumbai by one or two man-eaters, a total of 37 leopards were removed from the park in three years. In Ahmednagar division in Maharashtra, a total of 57 leopards were captured during 2001-05

and 24 of them were released in the adjacent forests. A similar story was repeated in Gannar and Nashik Forest divisions. Every year leopards are captured from the Indian forests and locked in zoos where they are already crowded. Unofficial cases of leopard elimination due to human retaliation are equally high. A large number of the leopards were eliminated or captured from high-concentration zones of the animals when one or two problem animals created an emergency. One hunter, who has been hired to kill leopards on many occasions in Uttarakhand, killed 56 leopards over seven years and has been given awards for "bravery" for doing so. The Uttarakhand Wildlife Department keeps a list of authorized hunters. These kills appear to be "legal," though the shooters admit that for every man-eater killed, at least three innocents are slaughtered. It seems that public pressure forces authorities to "officially" declare a leopard as a man-eater in many cases.

The association of the leopard with man has both advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantage to the leopard in its proximity to man is its propensity for man-eating which was observed in many cases. The leopard, if once taken to man-eating, becomes a burden to the rest of the leopards and is often a deadly menace to children and is, therefore, eliminated immediately. But science and technology are yet to be developed to capture or eliminate man-eaters without harming innocents. The leopards have lived in close association with human beings for centuries and the man-eating has been a problem always. Modern society is now more arrogant and has no tolerance for such acts of wild animals. As a result, the people punish innocent leopards till the elimination of the man-eater is confirmed beyond doubt. These incidents prove that man-eating reduces the survival chances of other leopards and hence administration has to be alert to track the animal when it starts attacking intentionally.

RANGE OF LEOPARD'S HABITAT

The occupancy area of leopards in the forests is over 320,000 sq. km. Leopards also occupy sugar-cane fields, tea gardens and other such vegetation cover. About one-fourth of the leopard's habitat overlaps with habitats of super cats - tiger and lion where leopards manage to survive under the persecution of the

km. in India. Of this, 684,000 sq. km. is in the states and Union Territories which support leopards. One-third of the forest cover in the leopard's states may not be suitable for leopards.

Thus, potential leopard habitats may range over 450,000 sq. km. of forest cover to accommodate the growing population in the present occupancy areas of the leopards. How many leopards or tigers or Asiatic lions can be managed in the Indian forests is a million-dollar question. The big cats are on the path of recovery (about 700 lions, 3,680 tigers and over 20,600 leopards at present) in India but the dispersing big cats do not find proper habitats due to their fragmentations and absence of prey base. There is scope to accommodate the growing population of leopards in the forests which are devoid of leopards and wild ungulates, if herbivores are restocked by taking up long-term habitat restoration works.

HUMAN-LEOPARD CONFLICTS

Only about 35 per cent of the leopard population is found within national parks and wildlife sanctuaries and the rest were counted beyond the Protected Areas boundaries. Leopards are also found in good numbers in extended habitats such as sugarcane fields, tea gardens, ravines, Prosopis thickets and other such non-forest areas. There are about three dozen Protected Areas or sites in the country where leopard density is high, over 10 adult and subadult leopards per 100 sq. km. and a few of them have very high concentrations, about 20 leopards or more per 100 sq. km. Dhanpur forests in Dahod district, Jambughoda forest in Godhra, sugar-cane belt in Mandvi taluka in Surat, some fringe areas around the forests of Gir and Girnar in Gujarat; Sanjay Gandhi National Park near Mumbai, some sites in the districts of Nashik, Ahmednagar and Gannar in Maharashtra; Rajaji National Park, some areas in Pauri Garhwal, Teri Garhwal and Almora districts in Uttarakhand; Katarnighat forests in Uttar Pradesh and Kuno and Panna National Park in Madhya Pradesh, Sariska Tiger Reserve and a forest block adjoining Jaipur in Rajasthan; the Western Dooars in West Bengal and some open forest mosaics of central Karnataka have such high leopard concentration and human-leopard conflicts.

Population management in the conflict areas is one of the key management strategies to avoid human casualties and, if it is not done, public unrest may start in a big way against conservation. High leopard density normally results in the depletion of prey and frequent leopard attacks in the villages, leading to the eruption of anger and public agitation. Since the leopard population has doubled in India during the last two and half decades and it is now no longer Endangered or Vulnerable, there should

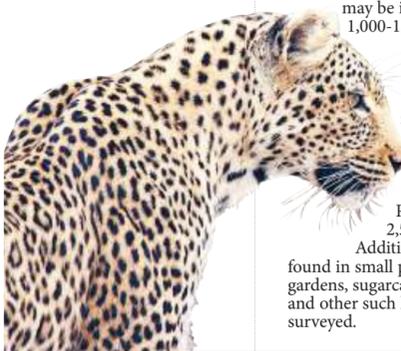
not be any hesitation to remove problem animals from such areas, if the attack on human beings persists. In no case, density should be allowed to exceed 25 adult leopards per 100 sq. km., as serious conflict is unavoidable in such high-concentration sites.

The human death rate in India due to leopard attacks was 400-410 people/year during the first decade of the 20th century (The Indian Forester Jan 1907). It declined drastically after the Independence of the country. Annually, about 95 to 100 human beings were killed by leopards during the first decade of the 21st century. Subsequently, human casualties increased consistently during the last decade due to the leopard's recovery and its dispersion in new areas, including villages and towns. In Uttarakhand, 565 human - beings were killed at an average rate of 22 human deaths/year by leopards since the creation of the state.

During the last few years, the average human death rate was 18 human deaths/year in Maharashtra. Annual death rate was 13 human deaths/year in Gujarat during the last five years. The scale of human deaths in Madhya Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, West Bengal, Himachal, Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Karnataka is also close to the same range. Thus, annually, over a hundred people are killed and thousands injured by leopard attacks. If population management policy is not placed into operation, the human death rate due to leopard attacks may reach to the level that prevailed a hundred years ago. Since human-leopard conflicts are scaling up with the increase of the leopard population in many states, the management of dispersing leopards in villages and cities and increasing human-leopard conflicts are major management challenges.

The frequency of occurrence of leopard attacks on humans over a specific period should be mapped for the identification of conflict hot spots. The management should establish a Rapid Response Task Team with equipment and infrastructure to attend to cases without delay. A Rapid Response Team with the necessary equipment should be placed into operation in high man-leopard conflict sites. Tranquilizer gun, flashlights (to each member); first-aid Kits (one large kit to each team); mobile phones (to each member); reflector jackets (to each member) baffle shields and batons (to each member); public announcement system (one to each team); pamphlets and posters on 'Do's and Don'ts During Conflict Situations' (one set to each team) along with equipment as mentioned for RRT should be provided. Police Force should be integrated with the Task Force in high-conflict situations.

(Dr H S Singh is a Member of the National Board for Wild Life, Gandhinagar; views are personal)





'Manthan' breathes anew in Cannes

PNS ■ CANNES

A significant slice of New Indian Cinema history was under the spotlight at the 77th Cannes Film Festival on Friday night. A restored 4K version of "Manthan" (The Churning), Shyam Benegal's 1976 film about the creation of India's first dairy cooperative in a Gujarat village, lit up the screen at Salle Buneel. Naseeruddin Shah, a key member of the film's cast, spoke ahead of the screening. "First and foremost, this show of Manthan is dedicated to Dr. Verghese Kurien," the veteran actor said. "It is also an occasion to recall Smita Patil, Girish Karnad, Amrith Puri and music composer Vanraj Bhatia." "It was my second film as a screen actor," Shah said. "I was extremely nervous about how it would do at the box office. Nobody gave the film a ghost of chance but it turned out to be a sleeper hit that generated more work for all of us." The actor said that at a time when Hindi filmmakers

would make only what they felt that the audience wanted to see, Shyam Benegal "found ways to speak about the truth of the times." "Manthan", funded with a contribution of Rs 2 each from half a million milk farmers, was a follow-up to Benegal's first two films, "Ankur" (1974) and "Nishant" (1976), which was in Competition at the Cannes Film Festival. It completed a timely and powerful trilogy on rural distress. "Manthan" was restored using a 35mm camera negative preserved at the National Film Archive of India. The sound was digitised from the 35mm release print in the possession of Film Heritage Foundation (FHF), which undertook the restoration project a year and a half ago. It was funded by the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd. The film was restored under the aegis of FHF at Prasad Corporation's post-studios and the Bologna-based L'Imagine Ritrovata laboratory in association.

Aishwarya walks in blue-silver gown in second appearance

PNS ■ CANNES

In her second appearance at the 2024 Cannes Film Festival, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan once again opted for a gown by designer duo Falguni Shane Peacock. Aishwarya wore a shimmering blue and silver gown as she walked the red carpet on Friday for the screening of acclaimed filmmaker Yorgos Lanthimos' latest feature "Kinds of Kindness", starring two-time Oscar winner Emma Stone. The outfit boasted a sweeping trail and bold, dramatic shoulders, featuring metallic fringe. The actor had a cast on her right hand that she has been wearing for an unspecified injury. A regular at the Cannes Film Festival for the past two decades, Aishwarya debuted at the 2024 edition on Thursday with a gown by Falguni Shane Peacock, who are also attending the film gala. The actor struck a pose in the monochrome gown adorned with 3D metallic elements and golden accents while



walking the red carpet. She was attending the premiere of Hollywood legend Francis Ford Coppola's latest movie "Megalopolis", starring Adam Driver. Besides Aishwarya, actor Kiara Advani made her first appearance at the French Riviera in a draped ivory crepe back satin dress from designer Prabal Gurung.

After 180 years, new clues are revealing how anaesthesia works in the brain

PNS ■ BRISBANE

Over 350 million surgeries are performed globally each year. For most of us, it's likely at some point in our lives we'll have to undergo a procedure that needs general anaesthesia. Even though it is one of the safest medical practices, we still don't have a complete, thorough understanding of precisely how anaesthetic drugs work in the brain. In fact, it has largely remained a mystery since general anaesthesia was introduced into medicine over 180 years ago. Our study published in The Journal of Neuroscience today provides new clues on the intricacies of the process. General anaesthetic drugs seem to only affect specific parts of the brain responsible for keeping us alert and awake.

Brain cells striking a balance

In a study using fruit flies, we found a potential way that allows anaesthetic drugs to interact with specific types of neurons (brain cells),

and it's all to do with proteins. Your brain has around 86 billion neurons and not all of them are the same - it's these differences that allow general anaesthesia to be effective. To be clear, we're not completely in the dark on how anaesthetic drugs affect us. We know why general anaesthetics are able to make us lose consciousness so quickly, thanks to a landmark discovery made in 1994. But to better understand the fine details, we first have to look to the minute differences between the cells in our brains. Broadly speaking, there are two main categories of neurons in the brain.

The first are what we call "excitatory" neurons, generally responsible for keeping us alert and awake. The second are "inhibitory" neurons - their job is to regulate and control the excitatory ones. In our day-to-day lives, excitatory

and inhibitory neurons are constantly working and balancing one another. When we fall asleep, there are inhibitory

neurons that tell you that they'll "put you to sleep" for the procedure: it's essentially the same process.

A special kind of sleep

While we know why anaesthetics put us to sleep, the question then becomes: "why do we stay asleep during surgery?" If you went to bed tonight, fell asleep and somebody tried to do surgery on you, you'd wake up with quite a shock. To date, there is no strong consensus in the field as to why general anaesthesia causes people to remain unconscious during surgery.

Over the last couple of decades, researchers have proposed several potential explanations, but they all seem to point to one root cause. Neurons stop talking to each other when exposed to general anaesthetics. While the idea of "cells talking to each other" may sound a little strange, it's a fundamental concept in neuroscience. Without this communication, our brains wouldn't be

able to function at all. And it allows the brain to know what's happening throughout the body.

What did we discover?

Our new study shows that general anaesthetics appear to stop excitatory neurons from communicating, but not inhibitory ones. This concept isn't new, but we found some compelling evidence as to why only excitatory neurons are affected.

For neurons to communicate, proteins have to get involved. One of the jobs these proteins have is to get neurons to release molecules called neurotransmitters. These chemical messengers are what gets signals across from one neuron to another: dopamine, adrenaline and serotonin are all neurotransmitters, for example. We found that general anaesthetics impair the ability of these proteins to release neurotransmitters, but only in excitatory neurons. To test this, we used *Drosophila melanogaster* fruit flies and super-resolution microscopy to directly see what effects a general anaesthetic was having on these proteins at a molecular scale.



Man shoots his 6-month-old baby multiple times at home near Phoenix



PNS ■ SURPRISE

A man shot his 6-month-old baby multiple times Friday at a home northwest of Phoenix after taking the infant and its mother captive, but the mother escaped with minor injuries and the child was expected to survive, authorities said.

They said the status of the suspect remained unknown after a fire broke out during a standoff with police. Officers went to the home in the city of Surprise in response to an emergency call around 11:30 a.m. from a woman who said she and her baby had been held captive there since 3 a.m.

by the child's father, police said. The woman managed to escape and borrowed a cellphone from a nearby construction crew, Sgt. Rick Hernandez said during a news conference Friday. He said she told the dispatcher the infant was still inside the home and could be in danger. Officers heard gunfire from inside the house as they arrived, Hernandez said. They entered and found the baby with multiple gunshot wounds but did not see the father. They retrieved the child and retreated. "The infant victim was airlifted to a nearby hospital in serious condition, but injuries are believed to be non-life threatening," Surprise police said in a statement Friday night. "The female victim was treated at the

scene for minor injuries and was transported to the hospital to be with the child." SWAT officers surrounded the home in the afternoon, and Hernandez said investigators believed the man was still there. A fire broke out during the standoff with police, police said in their statement Friday night. The suspect was believed to still be in the home but his status was unknown, they said. Aerial videos and photos from the afternoon showed a thick plume of smoke rising from the severely damaged house. Hernandez said the man did not live at the home with the woman and the baby. "The condition of the suspect will be unknown until it is safe for investigators to enter the residence," police said in the statement Friday night.

'More than 50 lakh large farmland trees vanished in India'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 50 lakh large farmland trees vanished between 2018 and 2022 in India, partly due to altered cultivation practices, revealing a "concerning trajectory," new research published in the journal Nature Sustainability has found. Researchers said that "an observable trend was emerging" wherein agroforestry systems are being replaced with paddy rice fields, even as a certain loss rate could be found to be natural. "Large and mature trees within these agroforestry fields

are removed, and trees are now being cultivated within separate block plantations typically with lower ecological value, they said.



Block plantations, usually involving fewer species of trees, were found to have increased in numbers which some villagers from Telangana, Haryana, Maharashtra and other states confirmed via interviews. The team, including researchers from the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, explained that the decision to remove trees is often driven by perceived low benefits of the trees, coupled with concerns that their shading effect.

Sri Lankan Tamils observe 15th anniversary of armed conflict end

PNS ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka on Saturday marked the 15th anniversary of the end of the armed separatist campaign with Tamils holding a series of events throughout the former conflict zone in the north and east regions to remember their dear ones killed in the clashes. However, in many areas, police and the government troops were accused of attempting to disrupt the memorial events. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil

Eelam (LTTE) had run a military campaign for a separate Tamil homeland in the



north and eastern provinces of the island nation for nearly 30 years before its collapse in

2009. On May 18, 2009, Sri Lankan army declared victory with the discovery of the body of the dreaded LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. Agnes Callamard, the Secretary General of the Amnesty International, visited the final battle site at Mullaivaikkal in the north-eastern Mullaithivu district to attend the commemoration. "Today's anniversary is a grim reminder of the collective failure of the Sri Lankan authorities and the international.

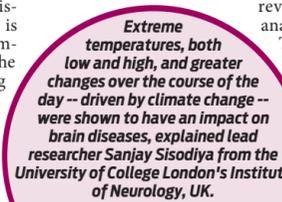


Climate change likely to impact people with brain conditions, study finds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Climate change is likely to negatively affect the health of people suffering from brain conditions such as migraine and Alzheimer's, new research published in The Lancet Neurology journal has found. Extreme temperatures, both low and high, and greater changes over the course of the day -- driven by climate change -- were shown to have an impact on brain diseases, explained lead researcher Sanjay Sisodiya from the University of College London's Institute of Neurology, UK. "Night-time temperatures may be particularly important as higher temperatures through the night can disrupt sleep. Poor sleep is known to aggravate a number of brain conditions," he said. The study, reviewing 332 papers published from around the world between 1968 and 2023, looked at 19 different nervous system conditions, including stroke,

migraine, Alzheimer's, meningitis, epilepsy and multiple sclerosis. The researchers found an increased number of admissions, disabilities or deaths resulting from a stroke due to higher temperatures or heatwaves. They also said that people having dementia are vulnerable to damage from extreme temperatures and extreme weather events such as floods and wildfires as cognitive impairment can limit their ability to adapt to environmental changes. The team also examined how climate change impacted several serious yet common psychiatric disorders, including anxiety, depression and schizophrenia. Sisodiya said that climate anxiety was "an added, potentially weighty influence". "Many brain conditions are associated with a higher risk of psychiatric disorders, including anxiety, and such multimorbidities can further complicate impacts of climate change and the adaptations necessary to preserve health," he said. With extreme weather events becoming more severe and global temperatures rising, the researchers acknowledged that people are being exposed to worsening environmental factors that may not have been severe enough to affect brain conditions in some of the earlier studies they reviewed as part of the analysis. Therefore, they said, it was important to ensure that research is up to date, and looks at not only the present state of climate change but also the future.



Global life expectancy projected to improve by 5 years in men, over 4 in women by 2050: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

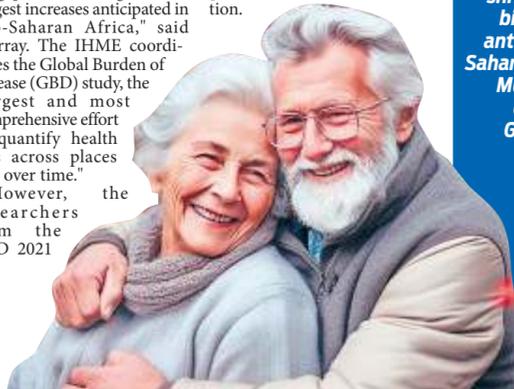
Life expectancy around the world is projected to improve by almost five years in men and by over four years in women between 2022 and 2050, according to a global study published in The Lancet journal. Researchers said that the improvements are expected to be the highest in countries where life expectancy is lower, thereby contributing to an overall enhancement of life expectancy across geographies. Public health measures preventing and improving survival rates from cardiovascular diseases, COVID-19, and a range of communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases, are largely driving the trend of increasing life expectancy globally, the authors said. "In addition to an increase in life expectancy overall, we have found that the disparity in life expectancy across geographies

will lessen," said Chris Murray, director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), University of Washington, US.

"This is an indicator that while health inequalities between the highest and lowest income regions will remain, the gaps are shrinking, with the biggest increases anticipated in Sub-Saharan Africa," said Murray. The IHME coordinates the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study, the "largest and most comprehensive effort to quantify health loss across places and over time."

However, the researchers from the GBD 2021

Forecasting Collaborators said that the ongoing shift in disease burden to non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular ones, cancer and diabetes, and exposure to associated risk factors including obesity and high blood pressure, will have the most impact on the next generation.



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This shift was analysed to increase an individual's years lived with disability or YLDs. Disease burden is the impact of a health problem on a given population, measured through varied indicators such as deaths, disability, or financial costs.

Therefore, as the disease burden shifts from that of communicable ones to non-communicable health problems, people are expected to live longer, but with more years spent in poor health, the researchers said.

They said that healthy life expectancy around the world, referring to the number of years one could expect to live in good health, will increase by 2.6 years in the coming years - from 64.8 years in 2022 to 67.4 years in 2050.

For India, the study has projected that by 2050, on average, men could have a life expectancy of over 75 years, while that for women could be almost 80 years.