

Uttam made someone file a police case against me when I asked about public issues as an opposition leader. Is this the people's government? (Praja Palana). The Revanth government should order a probe into irregularities in the Civil Supplies Department. The government set up a committee, framed guidelines and issued a statement regarding inviting tenders for procuring paddy. How is all this possible on a single day?

-Alleti Maheshwar Reddy, BJLP leader



www.dailypioneer.com  
 Published From: HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN VIJAYAWADA

**EC wrong in directing Cong not to politicise Agnipath: Chidambaram**

**MALDIVES TO LAUNCH INDIA'S RUPAY SERVICE**

Shruti Haasan confesses **BREAK-UP**

**DON'T MISS...**  
**Both countries have a robust trade..**  
 Jennifer Larson, United States Consular General in Hyderabad, said that the number of Indian students studying in the US is increasing every year and that 40% of Indian students in America are Telugu. Telugu is the fastest-growing language in the USA, she said, during a panel discussion on 'Global Alliances: Strengthening Economic Bridges' organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Ladies Organisation (FLO) at the Park Hyatt on Thursday. The discussion also featured Gareth Owen, British...  
 -PAGE: 3

**'Early brain network differences in..'**  
 Six-week old infants with high chances of developing autism showed distinct patterns in brain connections, which researchers said likely emerge much earlier than autism-related behaviours can be noticed. The researchers focussed on the brain's salience network, a group of regions crucial to identifying information in the environment that is worthy of one's attention and enabling appropriate responses to them. In babies with high chances of developing autism -- a disorder marked by repetitive...  
 -PAGE: 5

**Leather exporters seek national..**  
 Apex body for leather and footwear exporters CLE has asked the government to formulate a national policy for the sector with a view to attract investments, boost India's shipments and create jobs. In a letter to Niti Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam, Council for Leather Exports (CLE) said that though there are schemes and support measures at central and state levels, there is a need for holistic development of the entire sector through a national policy. The elements of the proposed policy, it said, can...  
 -PAGE: 8

**SRH big hitters up against RR's..**  
 IPL's best power-hitters Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma will face a very different challenge in wily spin twins Yuzvendra Chahal and Ravichandran Ashwin when Sunrisers Hyderabad take on Rajasthan Royals in a high-octane second Qualifier here on Friday. 'Travishek' as the duo is affectionately called by the fans have taken power-hitting to a new level. Head (533 runs at 199.62) and Abhishek (470 at 207.04) have hit 72 sixes apart from 96 boundaries between them. If that's not enough, they have a  
 -SPORTS

## Bengaluru rave party: 86 people including Telugu actress test positive for narcotics

**PNS ■ BENGALURU**  
 The blood samples collected from those who attended the rave party at a farmhouse here recently have revealed that 86 people, including a Telugu film actress, tested positive for narcotics, police sources said on Thursday. According to sources, a total of 103 people had participated in the party, which was organised under the pretext of a birthday party. The participants included 73 men and 30 women. Police seized MDMA



**According to sources, a total of 103 people had participated in the party, which was organised under the pretext of a birthday party.**

(Ecstasy) pills, MDMA crystals, hydro cannabis, cocaine, high end cars, DJ equipment, including sound and lighting worth Rs 1.5 crore during the raid at the farmhouse near Electronic City in the wee hours of May 19. After the raid, police collected the blood samples of the participants in a private hospital, which revealed that 59 men and 27 women tested positive for narcotics. "Most of the people who attended the party were consuming drugs. The Central Crime Branch will issue notices to those who tested positive," a police source said.



## India needs to follow Buddha's message: CM

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 Chief Minister Revanth Reddy attended a programme at the Maha Buddha Vihar on the occasion of Buddha Purnima celebrations in Secunderabad on Thursday. "Today, India needs to follow Buddha's message. As an individual and on behalf of the government, I will extend all help to spread the message of Buddha," he said. "Visiting Buddha Vihar gives me immense happiness with a spiritual touch. At the age of 29, Buddha started preaching peace after giving up his kingdom. Buddha's doctrine is alive even

after 2,500 years. I am inspired by his preaching which commands to do everything as if meditating. It might sound like just a quote but has a lot of meaning. I try to do everything like meditation," the CM said. He said the government will sanction special funds from the Special Development Fund to build a Spiritual Centre (Dhyana Mandir). "I request you to run a school," the CM said. "A big worrying factor is that intolerance and envy are growing in society," the CM said. "This government is yours. We will extend all assistance and cooperation. Telangana respects Buddhist monks," Revanth said.

## CM, Uttam to visit Medigadda



Minister Uttam Kumar conducting a review with L&T officials on Thursday  
**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy will visit the Medigadda Barrage next week. Uttam held a review meeting with senior officials of the L&T and Irrigation Department and said that the recommendations of the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) regarding interim repairs of



ing officials. The barrage's downstream and the 60th gate of the barrage's pier were thoroughly inspected for around an hour. During the field visit of the CWPRS team local engineering officials were asked about project details. The CWPRS team's members, JN Eadlabadkar, Dr Prakash K. Pale and Dr DG Naidu, were present along with local engineering officials during the visit to the Parvathi Barrage. On Wednesday, they inspected the Medigadda and Annaram barrages of the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) in Jayashankar Bhupalpally district. The NDSA had suggested certain steps before the rainy season to maintain the status quo at the distressed barrages.

## 'BRS will down shutters after June 5'

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 R&B Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy reiterated that the BRS will down shutters after June 5. Addressing the media at his residence on Thursday, Venkat said that BRS activists themselves will beat up their leaders after the Lok Sabha results come out and that the BRS would collapse like the Medigadda Barrage. He criticised BRS Working



President KT Rama Rao for stating that there are many cases

KTR must speak of Kavitha's case instead of Mallanna's cases: Venkat  
 against Theenmar Mallanna, the Congress candidate contesting in the Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal Graduates' constituency by-poll, and asked KTR why he is silent about the liquor cases against BRS MLC Kavitha. "Why is KTR not speaking about the 8,000-page charge sheet against Kavitha? He is speaking due to frustration as Kavitha is in jail and the BRS government is gone."

## 'Ready for a debate on graft in civil supplies dept'

**Civil Supplies officials threatened contractors from Punjab & Haryana: Maheshwar**  
**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy could not answer when asked about the corruption and irregularities in his department, BJLP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy said. He said that Uttam made some people file a complaint against him and also made the police to file a case against him (Maheshwar) when he asked about public issues as the opposition leader. "Is this the people's government?" he asked and added that he is ready for a debate on corruption in the Civil Supplies Department.

## BRS leader axed to death in Telangana



**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 A BRS leader was found murdered in Wanaparthy district of Telangana with his family calling it 'politically motivated'. The incident occurred in Laxmipally village of the district during the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday

## BRS demands CM to sack Jupally

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 Bharat Rashtira Samithi Working President K.T. Rama Rao (KTR) accused the Congress party of fostering a culture of political murders in Telangana. He stated that Minister Jupally Krishna Rao is responsible for this culture in kolapur. KTR claimed that minister Jupally has introduced factionalism to Telangana in an unprecedented manner. He further alleged that the minister's influence is behind two murders committed within four months. These atrocities would not have occurred without the minister's support, KTR said. He demanded that Chief Minister



Revanth Reddy, if he possessed integrity, should immediately dismiss Minister Jupally Krishna Rao.

"This is not the first murder in this constituency," KTR stated.

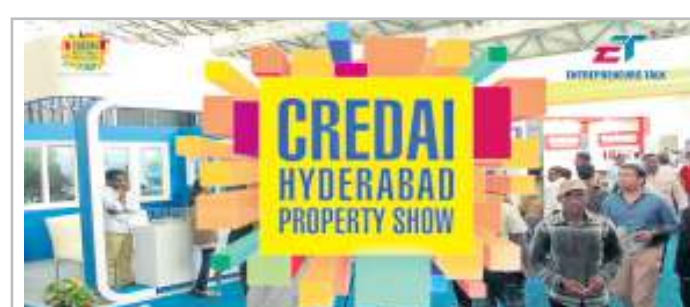
## Seven Naxals killed in encounter in Chhattisgarh

**PNS ■ NARAYANPUR**  
 Narayanpur, May 23 (PTI) Seven Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security forces in the forest along the border of Narayanpur and Bijapur districts of Chhattisgarh on Thursday, police said. The gun-fight broke out around 11 am when a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxal operation, Narayanpur Superintendent of

Police (SP) Prabhat Kumar said. The operation, involving personnel of the District Reserve Guard from Dantewada, Narayanpur and Bastar districts, Bastar Fighters and Special Task Force -- all units of state police -- was launched on May 21 based on inputs about the presence of cadres from the Maoists' Indravati Area Committee and Platoon No 16 in the forests of Abhujmad, he said.

## Realtors wary of reorganisation of districts

**PREFER DECENTRALISATION TO REDUCTION IN NUMBER OF DISTRICTS**  
**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 Realtors are apprehensive about the TG government's planned reorganisation of districts. Districts have always increased and then real estate prices go up as the infrastructure gets added like district headquarters and other government offices. However, if the number of districts is reduced it can slow down the real estate business. It may be mentioned here that the Telangana government wanted to reduce the number of districts from 33. A judicial commission is likely to be appointed for that. The current idea is to have districts like Parliamentary constituencies. However, although the idea has been floated no groundwork has begun in that direction. Realtors, however, expressed doubts about centralisation. On condition of anonymity, a prominent real estate expert said, "Decentralisation is always beneficial, but if the number of districts is reduced then the headquarters may benefit while surrounding areas may not witness any rise in prices. If investments have been made already those won't go away. Decentralisation is good for citizens as they need not go to far-off places.



Moreover, it creates value addition. So some infrastructure like buildings and roads are constructed. However, if we look at our source of revenue, it is mainly through HMDA which covers around seven districts. Barring this, decentralisation may stabilise prices." Another expert of CREDAI said, "In Telangana, during the last decade land prices were suppressed. After bifurcation, there were a lot of expectations and people went back to their villages and purchased lands. Once prices go up they won't come down as Telangana has not seen distress sales so far. It may not increase again this rapidly. It is too early to comment as we need to see how the reorganisation will be done."

## 6th Phase of LS Polls Campaign ends in 58 seats

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
 Campaigning ended on Thursday for the penultimate phase of Lok Sabha elections in 58 constituencies across six states and two Union territories, including all the seven seats in Delhi. Besides the national capital, polling for the sixth round of the marathon seven-phase elections will be held Saturday in 14 seats in Uttar Pradesh, all 10 seats of Haryana, eight seats each in Bihar and West Bengal, six seats in Odisha, four seats in Jharkhand and one seat in Jammu and Kashmir.



# Jagga warns Maheshwar not to spray 'ink' on Uttam



**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
TPCC Working President T. Jagga Reddy termed Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy as a 'White Paper' and warned BJLP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy that he should not spray 'ink' on Uttam.

of Maheshwar to level allegations without any basis. It is not proper for Maheshwar to throw mud at Uttam, he said. "I do not understand what Maheshwar is going to get by troubling Uttam. Maheshwar did not get his due recognition even though he became the BJLP leader. He is criticising Uttam to gain public attention. He should show evidence before the media or he should keep quiet.

# Cong leaders not in a hurry to go for polls to local bodies

**SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD**

While Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy wants to hold the local bodies elections at the earliest, senior Congress leaders are feeling that the government should not take a decision on holding the local bodies elections in a hurry. They feel that after the announcement of Lok Sabha results, depending on the performance of parties the government can take a decision on local bodies elections. If the BJP wins more seats in the

Sabha elections it may have effect on local bodies elections also. In some areas the BRS has strong cadre at ground level. Moreover the BRS is utilising every opportunity to provoke the people against the government. The Congress circles feel that if the BRS fails in the Lok Sabha elections the BRS leaders may think about leaving the party. The BRS MLAs are also looking towards the Congress. If all these things happen the BRS cadre at ground level will be demoralised. Utilising this opportunity,

the Congress also should try for further weakening of BRS at all levels. The Congress leaders said that their party also should take steps to prevent the BJP from not becoming stronger. A senior Congress leader said that there is no hurry to hold the local bodies elections, first they should make the political atmosphere in favour of the Congress before holding the local bodies elections. After the Lok Sabha election results in Telangana political picture will be clear as to which party is in which position.

The Congress circles feel that the BRS may have winning chances in Medak Lok Sabha constituency only and in the remaining seats the fight was between the Congress and the BJP. The BJP leaders are also in the same feeling. BRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao has commented over BJP winning 'one or none' seats in Telangana. The BJP says that the analogy will apply only to the BRS. The BRS leaders feel if they win around five seats in the Lok Sabha elections it will help their party to save face.

# Intellectuals must protect Telangana state: Kishan

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy said that intellectuals have the responsibility to protect the Telangana state. Interacting with educators and intellectuals at Khammam on Thursday, Kishan said the BRS weakened the Legislative Council and made it unimportant. "The BRS inducted Congress MLCs and eliminated the opposition. Now, the Congress has come to power and BRS MLAs and MLCs are joining it. There is no difference in either the BRS or the Congress winning as they are

one," Kishan said. He said that a BRS MLA joined the Congress and contested from the Secunderabad Lok Sabha constituency without resigning his MLA post. "I have not seen such incidents anywhere else. A BRS candidate after taking the party's B-Form joined the Congress and contested as a Congress candidate from Warangal. The Congress and the BRS have no ethics. Both the parties are destroying democracy," Kishan said. Kishan said that educationists and intellectuals should think and vote to ensure the victory of BJP candidate Gujjula Premender Reddy.

# 'No tension over going back to Tihar'

**AAP will not be finished even if you hang me: Kejriwal**

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

AAP national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, whose interim bail ends on June 1, said he felt no "tension or anxiety" over going back to Tihar Jail and considered incarceration as part of his "struggle" to save the country. Kejriwal, arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam, was granted interim bail by the Supreme Court on May 10 to campaign for the ongoing Lok Sabha polls.

Recalling his previous stay in jail, Kejriwal said he read three-four books, including the 'Gita', the 'Ramayana' and on the political history of the country. He also alleged that in Tihar, he was under round-the-clock surveillance through CCTV cameras installed in his cell that were monitored by 13 jail officials as well as by the PMO. "Just imagine being watched for every movement of yours for 24 hours. It will make life difficult. There was no moment for me to be relaxed," he said.

which accused it of not being able to check the Khalistani elements in Punjab and receiving foreign funds, said the charges were "laughable". "The prime minister, three days before the Punjab Assembly polls in February 2022, said in a rally at Abohar that Kejriwal wants to break the country to form Khalistan and become its prime minister. Is it believable?" he questioned. He said that the alleged liquor scam was like the Khalistan charge. "I laughed at all these."



# BJP believes women should be treated as second-class citizens: Rahul Gandhi

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday claimed the BJP believes women should be treated as "second-class citizens" and that its ideological parent RSS does not allow women to enter its 'shakhas'. Addressing an all-women poll meeting in Mangolpuri in support of the Congress' North West Delhi Lok Sabha seat candidate Udit Raj, Gandhi said though the BJP passed the women's reservation bill in Parliament with much pomp and show, later it said that it will be implemented after 10 years.

enquired about their well-being -- I am happy to see that our initiative of building metro in Delhi has proved so convenient for public transportation," the former Congress president said in a post on X in Hindi. He also shared pictures of him interacting and clicking pictures with passengers in the metro. Speaking at the poll meeting, Gandhi said working women have to do a second shift of chores after getting home and their efforts go unnoticed. "In India, we talk about every section of society but rarely is the work that working women do at home mentioned. When they come home after a long day at work, women have to start a second shift. They have to take care of their children.

# As long as I am alive, no one can snatch quota for Dalits, tribals: PM

**PNS ■ MAHENDRAGARH (HARYANA)**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday claimed that the INDIA bloc is talking about having five PMs over the next five years and said the fight over 'ghee' has broken out in the alliance, even before the cow has given milk. Hours before campaigning for the sixth round of the seven-phase Lok Sabha polls came to an end, Modi at a rally in Haryana's Mahendragarh asserted that till he is alive, no one can snatch the reservation for Dalits and tribals.



Munnetra Kazhagam. The INDIA bloc is "extremely communal, casteist and nepotist", he said while alleging that when the Congress was in power, it did not allow construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. Claiming that the INDIA bloc is talking about having five PMs in five years, Modi said, "The cow hasn't given milk but the fight over ghee has started in the alliance." Voting for the 10 Lok Sabha seats in Haryana will be held on May 25. his days working for the BJP in the state in the mid-1990s,

Prime Minister Modi said, "Haryana has showered a lot of love on me, I have deep relations with you." "It is my guarantee that we will not let Haryana's development stop," he said while canvassing for BJP's Bhiwani-Mahendragarh Lok Sabha seat candidate Dharambir Singh. Modi also said that in the last 10 years, "we have worked hard to wash off the sins of the Congress". The prime minister also targeted the INDIA bloc, saying it has already started making grounds for whom to blame for their defeat.

# BRS demands...

*Continued on Page 1*

Two people have been murdered within four months. Previously, Mallesh Yadav was killed, and now Sridhar Reddy has been murdered. The government should take responsibility for this heinous act. KTR reiterated his call for the sacking of Minister Jupally Krishna Rao, criticizing the Congress for its regime of revenge against those who did not support it in the elections. KTR expressed his distrust of the local police, demanding their immediate suspension and calling for action against the responsible officers. He insisted on either an SIT or judicial inquiry into the murders. "The police were supposed to arrive within ten minutes of the incident but showed up an hour and a half later, playing the role of spectators," KTR said. "If the gov-

ernment and the minister truly have no involvement in this, they should cooperate with an impartial investigation." He also alleged that the police were pressuring Sridhar Reddy's father to avoid mentioning the minister's name in any complaint. KTR highlighted ongoing Congress attacks in rural areas, accusing the local police of being mere spectators. He warned that such a culture is detrimental to Telangana, emphasizing that such incidents had not occurred in the state over the past ten years. He threatened to mobilize thousands of supporters to besiege the homes of ministers and leaders if the government fails to respond to these killings and atrocities immediately. KTR paid tribute to the body of BRS leader Sridhar Reddy, who was murdered in Kollapur.

# BRS criticises Ande Sri for agreeing to trim 'Jaya Jayahe'

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

The Telangana government has finalised the 'Jaya Jayahe' song which has 90 second duration. It is likely to be released by Sonia Gandhi and its music will be by MM Keeravani. However, the BRS criticised author Ande Sri for agreeing to cut the song. Ex-MLA Rasamayi Balakrishna said, "The Revanth government decided to cut the duration of the Ande Sri song 'Jaya Jayahe Telangana' which is around six minutes long to just two minutes. The stanzas about the history and culture of Telangana should not be cut. If you do that the song will lose its meaning.

# Seven Naxals killed in...

*Continued on Page 1*

The exchange of fire broke out when security personnel were cordoning off the forest on Bijapur-Narayanpur border on Thursday and the intermittent firing lasted till evening, he said. The bodies of seven Naxalites in 'uniform' and as many weapons were recovered from the encounter site afterwards, the SP added. A search operation was still underway in the area, he said. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai hailed security forces and asserted that his government has been strongly fighting against Naxalism. "7 Naxalites killed in an encounter with security forces in the border area of Narayanpur-Bijapur district. Certainly security forces have achieved great success. I salute their courage. Our govern-

ment has been fighting strongly against Naxalism. Our aim is to eliminate Naxalism from the state," Sai wrote on his 'X' handle. With Thursday's incident, as many as 112 Naxalites have been killed so far this year in separate encounters with security forces in the state. Ten Naxalites, including three women, were killed in an encounter with security personnel in a forest along the border of Narayanpur and Kanker districts on April 30. On April 16, security forces had gunned down 29 Naxalites during an exchange of fire in Kanker district, according to police. On May 10, police said, 12 Naxalites were eliminated in a gunbattle near Pidia village in Bijapur district. However, local villagers and activists alleged that those killed near Pidia were not Naxalites and the encounter was a staged one.

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Large parts of India sweltered under a heat wave for the seventh day on the trot on Thursday, with the mercury soaring to 48.8 degrees Celsius in Rajasthan's Barmer, the highest temperature recorded in the country this year so far. Official data showed that at least 16 places in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh recorded maximum temperatures of 45 degrees Celsius or above on Thursday.



**Maximum temperatures settled at 46.6 degrees in Madhya Pradesh's Guna, 45.9 degrees in Gujarat's Ahmedabad, 45 degrees in Uttar Pradesh's Orai, 45.4 degrees each in Punjab's Bathinda and Haryana's Sirsa.**

The brutal heat wave will continue for at least five more days, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. In Rajasthan, Churu logged a high of 47.4 degrees Celsius, Phalodi 47.8 degrees, and Jaisalmer 47.2 degrees. Maximum temperatures settled at 46.6 degrees in Madhya Pradesh's Guna, 45.9 degrees in Gujarat's Ahmedabad, 45 degrees in Uttar Pradesh's Orai, 45.4 degrees each in Punjab's Bathinda and Haryana's Sirsa.

However, in Delhi, the maximum temperature dipped slightly on Thursday but remained around a notch above the normal for this time

of the year. The IMD said the maximum temperature was recorded 0.8 notch above normal at 41 degrees Celsius. The Met office issued a 'red' warning for Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh.

# 'BRS will down shutters after...'

*Continued on Page 1*

The people of Telangana are not in a position to raise their heads out of shame due to Kavitha's liquor scam. We are unable to visit other states due to Kavitha's case," Venkat said. He said that KTR's words were disgusting and uncivilised although he was educated in the US. "KTR is speaking without any respect for the Chief Minister's post. Is KTR criticising the CM for providing free travel facility to women and filling 30,000 posts in government service?" he asked. KTR has been claiming that he developed Hyderabad by constructing a cable bridge on Durgam Cheruvu. "If that is so, what should

we say as we constructed the RGI Airport and the PV Expressway? KTR encouraged four IAS officers and kept all other IAS officers down," Venkat said. He said that under BRS rule only liquor sales developed and that there was no development. The BRS government collected Rs 2,500 crore from the innocent persons using liquor shops, he said and added that the heads of the BRS government earned Rs 6,000 crore using one tonic shop. Venkat said that the BRS constructed party offices without any permission and that BRS leaders would have to go around like Praja Shanthi President KA Paul after June 5. "KTR lost his mental balance after seeing the governance of the Congress gov-

# BRS leader...

*Continued on Page 1*

ernment focussed on public welfare. KCR is not coming to the Assembly as he is scared of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. Harish Rao is thinking of starting a new shop if KCR entrusts BRS responsibilities to KTR. It is better for KCR and his family if they try to get bail for Kavitha," he said. Addressing the media at his residence on Thursday, Venkat said that BJP Floor Leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy filed 70 letters under RTI in just a month after assuming his new post. Venkat said that Maheshwar grabbed the BJLP leader post bypassing senior BJP MLA T. Raja Singh. "I feel insulted to mention his name. Such a person is making false allegations against the CM and Civil Supplies Minister.

# 'Ready for a debate...'

*Continued on Page 1*

when some unknown persons attacked Sridhar Reddy (55), who was sleeping outside his house, with axe resulting in his death, police said. The father of the deceased alerted the police on Thursday morning after finding his son lying dead. The victim's father, in a complaint, alleged that some local leaders of the Congress party were responsible for his son's death. However, the police said they did not find any evidence in this regard so far. A senior police official said they were looking into different angles including property dispute between his (the deceased man) rivals. A murder case was registered and investigation is on.

# 6<sup>TH</sup> PHASE OF LS..

*Continued on Page 1*

April 18 with rice millers although the Model Election Code was in force," Maheshwar said. Declaring that he has no intention to corner anyone personally but is just questioning the government on public issues as an opposition leader, Maheshwar asked whether collecting an additional Rs 216 crore from millers was correct. "How can the millers bear it if the government gives them more paddy exceeding limits? The government asked the millers to give money although the millers said that they would give rice. Is it right for the Minister to threaten millers," he asked. "Should I make the excesses committed by the Minister at the Jala Soudha public? I am not afraid of harassment. I entered politics by selling my assets to serve the public.

# 6<sup>TH</sup> PHASE OF LS..

*Continued on Page 1*

Till now, voting has been completed in 25 states and Union territories and 428 constituencies out of 543. The last phase of polling is scheduled on June 1 and counting of votes will be taken up on June 4. Among the key contestants are Dharmendra Pradhan (BJP) from Sambalpur (Odisha), Manoj Tiwari (BJP) and Kanhaiya Kumar (Congress) from North East Delhi, Maneka Gandhi (BJP) from Sultanpur (Uttar Pradesh), Mehbooba Mufti (PDP) from Anantnag-Rajouri (Jammu & Kashmir), Abhijit Gangopadhyay (BJP) from Tamluk (West Bengal), and BJP's Manohar Lal Khattar (Karnal, Haryana), Naveen Jindal (Kurukshetra) and Rao Indrajit Singh (Gurgaon).



BOTH COUNTRIES HAVE A ROBUST TRADE RELATIONSHIP

# 40% of Indian students in US are Telugus, says Envoy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Jennifer Larson, United States Consular General in Hyderabad, said that the number of Indian students studying in the US is increasing every year and that 40% of Indian students in America are Telugu. Telugu is the fastest-growing language in the USA, she said, during a panel discussion on "Global Alliances: Strengthening Economic Bridges" organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Ladies Organisation (FLO) at the Park Hyatt on Thursday.

The discussion also featured Gareth Owen, British Deputy High Commissioner of Telangana and AP and Denise Eaton, Trade and Investment Commissioner for Australia in South Asia. In all, 150 FLO members attended the session.



Jennifer Larson, Priya Gazdar, Gareth Owen and Denise Eaton who took part in a panel discussion on 'Global Alliances: Strengthening Economic Bridges'

The session began with Priya Gazdar, Chairperson of FLO saying, "We are now living in a global village. Trade between nations has become much simpler than in the past. International trade allows companies in general and our members in particular to expand their markets and access goods and services. No country has as robust a relationship as India and the US have. The trade has grown nearly 10 times since 2001, to

about \$200 billion in 2023." Each of the speakers gave a list of three priority sectors for stronger trade relationships. Jennifer looked at education as a top priority area as it is worth \$9 billion annually contributing to the American economy by Indian students. She also stated that the bilateral trade between both nations might touch \$500 billion in the next five years. Also, Green Technology, Solar Panels, Yoga and Ayurveda have been

emerging markets in the USA. Denise said the trade delegation led by Australian Premier Anthony Albanese last year to India was very significant. It demonstrates our mutually beneficial relationship and the bond. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Albanese met thrice in the year 2023 itself speaks volumes. "Indian market means so much to us. You are the largest market", she added.

Gareth said the educational and cultural exchanges between the countries contribute to strengthening the trade relations. "Our cultural and people-to-people relations are very strong. The UK is an educational destination for many Indian students. We have 1.3 lakh Indian students studying in our country. In regards to entrepreneurship, especially women, he agreed that access to funds for women entrepreneurs is always challenging.

## Woman's novel protest against bad roads

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A woman sitting in a pothole filled with muddy water on the Nagole road staged a protest and demanded that GHMC authorities to repair roads in the area on Thursday. She was supported by BJP leaders Chinatala Surender, Nagole corporator and the locals.

Alleging that the civic officials failed to take necessary action to repair a new road in Anandnagar Colony in Nagole, she said, "We are facing issues due to potholes from Nagole to Uppal Road. There are at least 30 potholes which are deep.

Despite complaining about this issue to the officials, they have not taken any action. Many residents here are suffering issues due to these bad roads. We have spoken to the Commissioner but we want them to solve this issue as soon as possible. We need a deadline. It's our responsibility to maintain roads and keep them in good condition as they are used by everyone."

## Cases against Dileep, Harish over fake TGSRTC logo

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TGSRTC filed cases against Dileep Konatham and Harish Reddy under Sections 469, 504, 505 (1)(b)(c) of IPC and Section 67 of the IT Act for allegedly circulating a fake logo of the TGSRTC.

Dileep and Harish had shared a logo of the TGSRTC which was similar to that of APSRTC and the Kakatiya Kalathoranam and Charminar were removed from it.

The complaint filed at the Chikkadpally PS by Chief Traffic Manager, M&C, said, "On 23.05.2024 at around 1100 hours I saw a post on the social media platform 'X' with user ID Konatham Dileep (@Konatham Dileep) and @Harish BRSUSA. Harish Reddy posted on 'X' about the TGSRTC logo which has not been released so far after changing the name TSRTC to TGSRTC as per instructions of the Telangana Government."

"Both people wilfully created a fake logo and committed an offensive act. Harish Reddy had posted an abusive video

containing offensive language which damages the reputation of the Corporation and the government. He also circulated the video on other social media platforms," says the FIR copy. Reacting to the case, Dileep said, "False cases were filed against me and my friend Harish Reddy on Thursday for sharing a logo that had appeared in many publications as the new TSRTC logo and alleged that we made the logo."

He shared screenshots of the two media houses that first shared the logo. "If you are sincere, try to find out how the logo went to so many media companies. If you harass people like me, who have faced everything in the movement, you will face public anger." "These are wilfully filed cases. Media houses shared them initially. Like you said, if they have a bit of shame left they should file cases against them first," he said.

Earlier, brushing aside speculation regarding change in Telangana Road Transport Corporation's (TGSRTC) logo, TGRC Managing Director VC

Sajjanar on Thursday said there will be no change in the logo.

Sajjanar took to X and said, "The organisation has not finalised any new logo and that the logo being circulated on social media is fake. As the organisation continues to work on designing a new logo, TGSRTC reassures the public that any official updates regarding logo change will be communicated through proper official channels. Until then, the current logo of TGSRTC remains in place," he said.

Meanwhile, the corporation will soon take up an extensive exercise to change the abbreviation as well as logo on the corporation's website, online platforms, letter heads, rubber stamps, signages at offices, bus depots, bus passes, identity cards, tickets, workshops and on buses.

"It's a huge exercise and needs some time to complete. Though we have not set any time limit as such, we will ensure the work is finished at the earliest and the corporation bears a new and fresh look," said a senior official.

## 'No action taken on 1,230 vigilance reports in 10 years'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

During the last 10 years, the Vigilance and Enforcement department has inquired and submitted its report in 1,230 serious corruption-related cases pertaining to various departments, as per the Forum for Good Governance (FGG). Further it sent 768 appraisal reports, 1,215 alert notes and 123 system improvement notes. Unfortunately, after sending its reports to the government, there is no further follow up action by the V&E.

When the FGG sought information regarding disposal of V&E cases in the Secretariat by filing an RTI application, the stock reply given is 'information not available'. Padmanabha Reddy of the FGG said, "There is a deliberate attempt in the Secretariat not to take action

as suggested by DG, V&E. The V&E sends its reports after detailed inquiry/examination of cases. If timely action is not taken the tainted officials are likely to go scot free. In Telangana, there is no fear of punishment for wrong-doing. "Sab chalta hai" attitude has developed among employees."

"Taking advantage of this shortcoming, various departments in the Secretariat are just ignoring the V&E reports. In some cases, the reports are sent to HODs and that is the end of the matter."

In some instances, if any irregularity is likely to happen, V&E alerts the respective department in the Secretariat. The alert notes are not taken any cognizance and irregularity is allowed to take place.

Since the last 10 years, thousands of V&E reports have not seen the light of the day.

## SFA worker Kishan suspended for sexual abuse

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

SFA worker Kishan, in the Gajularamam Circle of Kukatpally was suspended by the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Commissioner for allegedly harassing a female worker under his supervision for the past few days. A complaint was filed against him a week ago, prompting BC Malla Reddy to suspend him and investigate the matter.

The videos of Kishan forcibly assaulting a female worker have gone viral in all social media platforms. The workers in the department demanded the permanent suspension of the accused. Similar incidents like this have previously emerged. It is stated that the accused forced female workers and assaulted them.

He also threatened them not to tell anyone about his heinous act.

## Science corridors proposed to boost deep-tech research

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Addressing the gap that India ranks fifth globally in knowledge generation, yet lags in innovation, FTCCI organised a session on Catalysing Deep-tech Innovations towards Global Presence in the city on Thursday.

NM Rao, a scientist specialising in protein engineering and CEO of the Atal Incubation Centre at CCMB, defined deep tech as cutting-edge technologies rooted in advanced science and engineering, aimed at introducing disruptive new products to the market.

Rao said, deep-tech startups are characterised by their strong focus on R&D, high entry barriers, intellectual property, complexity, longer time to market and the need for patient capital.

Identifying key trends shaping deep-tech investment, Rao emphasised sustainability, cross-border collaboration, healthcare, biotech surge, gov-



ernment initiatives and the boom in AI and Quantum Computing.

Highlighting Hyderabad's abundance of central institutions, Rao suggested naming localities like Habshiguda as Science Corridors to leverage these resources effectively. He mentioned the opportunity for deep-tech research in areas such as addressing protein deficiency among India's predominantly vegetarian population through innovations like cultured meat.

However, he said, there is a challenge in finding investors

willing to support the longer-term success of deep-tech projects in India.

Rao discussed the draft National Deep Tech Start-up policy, urging contributions to make it more effective in supporting the unique requirements of Deep-Tech Startups in India.

Following his talk, a panel discussion with Pankaj Dewan, Founder of Idea Labs, led to building a global deep-tech ecosystem, emphasising the role of youth and startups in driving innovation for a better future.

## 'Agitation if hostel rent bills for 2 years are not cleared'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

R Krishnaiah, president of National BC Association, demanded that the government release the budget immediately to solve the students' issues. Due to the non-payment of hostel rental bills, current bills and mess charges by BC hostels for the past 10 years, students are facing serious difficulties. Despite organising various discussions on this issue with the government, the government hasn't intervened.

He stated that the mess charge bills of 700 BC and 1,500 SC/ST hostels in the State have been pending for 10 months. Due to this, students are facing problems. They asked the government to intervene and pay the dues of the hostels.

He questioned whether the contractors' bills are being paid but the schoolchildren have paid the mess bills, fees and dues. "The current bills of hostels are pending for the last ten months. How will students study if electricity is cut to hostels during exams? This will affect the exam results of the students," Krishnaiah added.

About 295 BC college hostels and 321 BC Gurukula Schools in the State do not have their own buildings.

He warned that if the arrears are not paid within a week, agitation will be organised across the State. He also warned that strict action will be taken against the negligence of the finance department officials.

## Facelift for Cherlapalli satellite rail terminal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager of South Central Railway, conducted a detailed inspection of Cherlapalli Satellite terminal on Thursday. He conducted an extensive inspection of the on-going works at the upcoming coaching terminal at Cherlapalli which is being developed as a new and alternate terminal for the twin cities.

The General Manager detailed the progress of infrastructural works and other passenger amenity works by the officials.

The station is being developed with several modern facilities and passenger amenities at a cost of Rs 430 crore. A new station building with a modern architectural facade is



also comes under MMTS Phase - II project. The redeveloped station will have four additional high-level platforms, while the existing five platforms have also been extended to accommodate full-length trains. Two new foot-overs/bridges have been built to facilitate seamless inter-platform movement. Further, all nine platforms would have total seven lifts and six escalators for facilitating passenger movement. It will also have coach maintenance facilities for facilitating starting of trains from the station.

Later, Arun Kumar Jain conducted rear window inspection of Cherlapalli - Moula-Ali - Ammuguda - Sanathnagar section. He held a detailed inspection of Sanathnagar railway station.

## SCCL to seek Australian tech to raise coal output

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The SCCL will adopt Australian technology to achieve the target of producing 100 million tonnes of coal per annum in the next five years.

Australia's Trade and Investment Commissioner Denis Eaton held a meeting with SCCL CMD N. Balaram on Thursday at the Singareni Bhavan in Hyderabad regarding cooperation in modern mining technology for achieving the 100 million tonne production target set by SCCL in the next five years.

Speaking on the occasion, N. Balaram spoke about the technology currently being used in SCCL, the record production, transportation, turnover and growth rate of the company this year. He also said that SCCL had

successfully entered the thermal and solar sectors along with coal production.

He said opportunities in other fields are being fully examined as to expand SCCL's business. He recalled that earlier he had received training in mining, defence and technical matters with Sintars and other companies in Australia.

Australian Trade Commissioner Denis Eaton said an Australian team will visit SCCL in November to see for themselves the technology being used by SCCL and the company's new businesses.

He also asked them to make use of the training being conducted in Australia on new technologies in mining.

SCCL CMD N. Balaram said that SCCL will accept appropriate cooperation in matters that contribute to its progress.

## Cement industries bat for net zero carbon future

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The cement industries from across India on Thursday called for net zero carbon future.

Speaking of his commitment to net zero emission, Madhavkrishna Singhania, Chairman of Green Cementech 2024 and Deputy Managing Director and CEO at JK Cement Ltd said, "By committing to net zero, industries can not only contribute to the global fight against climate change but also unlock numerous benefits that enhance their economic performance, operational efficiency and long-term sustainability."

He further said, "India is the second largest cement producer in the world. It is pro-



Madhavkrishna Singhania, Chairman of Green Cementech 2024 addresses the gathering

jected to witness a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of approximately 7% till 2026, driven by burgeoning infrastructure demands, government initiatives and real estate developments."

Bearing in mind the cement sector's energy intensive nature and its environmental implications, CII Green Cementech 2024 aims to explore innovative strategies and initiatives to

reduce the industry's carbon footprint. Neeraj Akhouri, President, Cement Manufacturers' Association and Managing Director Shree Cement Limited said, "The cement industry's power consumption is the lowest in the world. The aim is to contribute to the nation's growth and hence the waste generated from our industry could be utilised by other industries."

## TG Education fair to showcase academic opportunities

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Vidya Samithi is set to host the Telangana Education Fair on May 25 and 26 at Uppal Shilparamam. Vem Narendar Reddy, the Chief Adviser to Telangana State, has been invited as the chief guest to event.

Telangana Vidya Samithi president Pendem Tarak Goud expressed his willingness to host this fair, which will feature colleges and universities from different states, along with career guidance experts. Students and their parents are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity and participate in large

numbers.

"The Telangana Education Fair is an essential platform for students to explore diverse academic opportunities and make informed decisions about their future," said Tarak Goud.

"We are honoured to have Vem Narendar Reddy join us as the chief guest, and we look forward to welcoming students and families from across the State." The two-day event is open to visitors from 10 am to 4 pm on both days, free of charge. Participating in the organising committee are Telangana Public Prosecutor Palle Nageswara Rao, and vice-president Ramesh Naidu.



## Sedentary lifestyle leading to diabetes in mega cities: Doc

MOHAMMED BALEEGH ■ HYDERABAD

In all, 75% of people in nation's mega cities today suffer from diabetes due to sedentary lifestyle, said Doctor Viswanathan Mohan, a diabetes specialist.

Speaking of the trends in diabetes and the reason for the high number of diabetic patients in India despite advancements in science, Dr Mohan said, "It (Diabetes) is increasing rapidly. In the 1970s only 2% of urban Indians and 1% of rural Indians suffered from diabetes. Till India opened its economy in 1991 there was a single digit rise in diabetic

patients. The moment the economy opened up, prosperity and affluence began. Before this, malnutrition was prevalent in pockets of India. Then the economy started booming due to the IT industry's gradual rise. As people started affording better, diabetes rates shot up due to mechanisation, greater income and the rise in obesity due to reduced physical activity," he added.

According to an ICMR study in 2023, in some states, the whole state recorded 26% of adults suffering from diabetes, which is 1 in 4 people above 20 years. 40% of people above 50 years in cities like Hyderabad, Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Bengaluru

have diabetes. Another 35% of people in these cities suffer from traces of diabetes. Moreover, 3 out of 4 persons irrespective of socio-economic backgrounds suffer from diabetes and 101 million people in India have confirmed diabetes while 136 million are at the pre-diabetes stage.

Speaking of symptoms and precautions against diabetes, Dr Mohan said, "Diabetes is largely an asymptomatic disorder; if 100 million in India are diabetic, 50 million of them may not even be aware that they have diabetes. If people wait for symptoms to get tested, they are not acute in chronic diseases like diabetes. Hence, they are at

high risk. The symptoms include excessive thirst, urination, feeling tired, loss of white itching in the genital region in both men and women, numbness in the feet, blurring of vision and wounds that don't heal. These symptoms are detected very late. The only way is to keep screening people regularly. A free blood test camp will be conducted in Hyderabad on Saturday."

With regards to children being vulnerable to diabetes, the doctor said, "Now, youngsters below 20 years are also affected by diabetes. Modification of lifestyle can help postpone the disease. However, most people aren't aware of this."

## Senior agriculture assistant sentenced to RI for three yrs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Special Judge Trail for Special Purpose Entity and Anti-Corruption Bureau (SPE & ACB) cases, Kumar Vivek, Karimnagar, convicted the accused officer Anna Reddy Pranavender Reddy, senior assistant, agriculture department to three years rigorous imprisonment for demanding and accepting Rs 3,000 as bribe from the complainant Daivala Srinivas of Veilchala village, Ramadugu mandal of Karimnagar district to process his application and forward it to the Asst Director of Agriculture for the purpose of issuance of licence for establishing a fertiliser shop at Veilchala.

The culprit is convicted for the offences punishable under Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and sentenced to suffer rigorous imprisonment for three years and should pay a fine of Rs 2,000 for the offence punishable U/s. 7 of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.

He will undergo simple imprisonment for a period of one month.

He is also sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for four years and shall pay a fine of Rs 4,000 for the offence punishable under Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 in default of payment of fine. Both the sentences of accused officer shall run concurrently.



BONUS FOR FARMERS

# Harish takes Tummala to task for 'barking' remark

PNS ■ JAGTIAL

Former Minister and BRS MLA T Harish Rao on Thursday came down heavily on Minister for Agriculture Tummala Nageswara Rao for "likening farmers to dogs." He claimed that the Minister, reacting to farmers' demand for bonus to all varieties of grain, remarked that "some persons are barking like dogs."

He was visiting a paddy procurement centre at Poduru under Kodimyalamandal in the district.

Addressing the farmers there, he said the Congress party ahead of the Assembly elections offered in writing on a bond paper bonus to paddy. But, now, the Congress leaders, after coming to power, has offered bonus to only fine variety of paddy. The government even released an order offering bonus to fine variety of paddy.

Out of the total area of 2.97



Former minister T Harish Rao interacting with farmers at Poduru paddy procurement centre in Jagtial district on Thursday

lakh acres under paddy, coarse variety of paddy is cultivated in 2.80 lakh acres in jagtial district. Fine variety of paddy is cultivated only in 1,70,000 acres

for using as food grains by the farmers.

Quoting a farmer Lakshma Reddy as saying, fine variety of paddy is being purchased in

the open market at a price between Rs 2,800 to Rs 3,000 a quintal, he said. Where is the need for the government to give bonus to the fine variety of paddy, he asked. These farmers would never sell superfine variety of paddy to the government to get Rs 500 bonus per quintal. The farmer Lakshma Reddy called it "cheating", Harish Rao said.

The yield of coarse variety of paddy is between 25 and 30 quintals an acre, while fine variety production is limited to 10 to 15 quintals an acre, he said.

The yield is less by at least 10 quintals, whereas the pest attacks, investment and duration of the crop is more in case of coarse variety of paddy, he said.

When a majority of the farmers produce only coarse variety of paddy, the government is offering bonus to fine variety of paddy only. It amounted to cheating the farmers, he said.

## PDSU students protest in front of KU

PNS ■ HANAMKONDA

Condemning a circular issued by director for hostels that the Kakatiya University mess will be closed, students affiliated to the PDSU on Thursday protested in front of the Kakatiya University administrative building carrying empty plates and raised slogans against the university Registrar.

They set fire the university to Registrar's effigy.

Kakatiya University PDSU secretary Marri Mahesh objected to the university shutting the mess as the students will stay in the hostel and prepare for groups, DSC and other competitive examinations during holidays. He demanded the university authorities to take back the circular.

The students withdrew the agitation following an assurance given to them by hostels director Sammaiah that the hostels would not be closed down but run them as usual.

## SRIDHAR REDDY'S MURDER

# Jupally advises BRS to stop playing politics over 'dead bodies'

PNS ■ KOLLAPUR

Excise and Tourism Minister Jupally Krishna Rao has attributed the motive behind the murder of BRS leader Sridhar Reddy to financial transactions and bad habits. The BRS leader was murdered at Lakshimpalli village of Chinnambavi mandal under Kollapur constituency.

In a statement on Thursday, the Minister expressed the opinion that BRS working president KT Rama Rao and other leaders have been trying to project the murder as a political murder. The Minister advised the BRS leader not to



play politics over dead bodies.

On one hand, KTR says that details are awaited, but on the other called it a political murder, he said, condemning the double standards adopted

by him. Within a few moments of murder taking place, KTR and BRS leaders started slinging mud on him, he observed.

Without ascertaining the facts, KTR and BRS leaders have been slinging mud on the government and also him, he claimed.

The people knew what Jupally Krishna Rao is, he said, claiming that he has a blemishless career in his long political innings. That is why people of Kollapur have been supporting him for decades. But, the BRS is not able to stomach his growth and hence politicising the murder of Sridhar Reddy, he said.

# DC warns against pushing spurious seeds

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

District Collector Shashanka has issued a stern warning against the circulation of spurious and inferior seeds, urging officials to take decisive action to protect farmers from potential losses. During a review meeting held on Thursday with the officials of the Agriculture and

Horticulture Department at the Integrated District Offices complex, the Collector emphasised the need for rigorous measures to ensure the district remains free from counterfeit seeds. Collector Shashanka stressed the importance of preparing for the upcoming Vanakalam season by eliminating the circulation of spurious seeds

with an "iron hand." He underscored the need to safeguarding the interests of farmers, ensuring they have access to genuine and high-quality seeds. The Collector called for meticulous planning to avoid any shortages of fertilizers and seeds required for cultivating approximately 445,428 hectares of crops during the monsoon.

# Shadnagar MLA seeks help for development of constituency

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

In a meeting with the Minister of Roads and Buildings Komatireddy Venkata Reddy on Thursday, Shadnagar MLA Veerapalli Shankar sought the minister's support for the construction of the "Y Junction" and Chatanpalli Railway over Bridge in Shadnagar Constituency.

On Thursday, Shankar, along with other local leaders and supporters, met Venkat Reddy to discuss developmental plans for the constituency. The meeting coincided with the Minister's birthday, during which MLA Shankar personally presented him with a bouquet.

Shankar emphasised his commitment to making a significant impact on local politics and development projects. He discussed developmental projects with the minister. Shankar conveyed birthday wishes to the Minister.



Shadnagar MLA Veerapalli Shankar greeting Minister for Roads and Buildings Komati Reddy Venkata Reddy on the occasion of the latter's birthday in Hyderabad on Thursday

## ARRANGEMENTS FOR COUNTING

# Collector gives PowerPoint presentation

PNS ■ BHONGIR

Collector Hanumanth K.Zendage on Thursday gave a PowerPoint presentation to the Assistant Returning officers and nodal officers of Bhongir Lok Sabha constituency on the arrangements made for counting in the Lok Sabha polls.

In the counting process, confidentiality of the vote is crucial, he said, asking the officials to adhere to election rules without fail while transporting and sealing the EVM machines while taking them to the counting hall from the strong room and vice-versa.

The assistant returning officers should without fail provide amenities like furniture,

drinking water, breakfast, lunch and so on, he said.

District assistant returning officer and Additional District Collector P Ben Shalom, Bhongir Assistant Returning Officer and RDO Amarender, Alair Assistant Returning Officer and District Additional Collector K Gangadhar, Munugode Assistant returning officer D Subrahmanyam, Nakrekal Assistant returning officer PurnaChander, Tungaturti assistant returning officer BS Lata, Janagoan assistant returning officer D Komaraiah, Ibrahimpatnam assistant returning officer K Ananta Reddy, nodal officers and others took part in the power-point presentation.

# 'Telangana takes pride Buddhist artifacts in State'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Celebrating the 2568th Buddha Jayanti on Thursday, Principal Secretary of Tourism Shailaja Ramaier, expressed Telangana's pride in its Buddhist artifacts being showcased internationally at the New York Metropolitan Museum and Seoul Museum.

Telangana Tourism Department conducted the 2568th Buddha Jayanti, coinciding with Buddha Purnima. Buddhist monks from north-eastern states led a programme with discourses and chants at the Buddha Statue in the Hussainsagar lake.

Addressing the gathering, Shailaja Ramaier emphasised that Buddhism is not just a religion but a way of life leading to enlightenment. She underlined the need to study its principles, highlighting Telangana's deep-rooted connection to Buddhism since the 3rd century BC with ancient centres like Kotilingala, Dulikatta, Nelakondapally, Phanigiri, Badhanakurthy, and Nagarjuna Mountain gaining international recognition.

Ramaier also said, excavations were carried out at places like Phanigiri and Chadat through the Archeology Department where ancient artifacts and even an ancient coin pot alongside Buddha idols were discovered. She expressed pride in Telangana's artifacts being showcased internationally in the New York's metropolitan museum and at Seoul museum, addressing the public to remember the state's rich



Principal Secretary of Tourism, Shailaja Ramaier, along with Director of Tourism K Nikhila and Buddhist monks, at the Buddha Statue in Hyderabad on Thursday

Buddhist history. Shailaja said, an establishment of a 300-acre Buddhavanam theme park at Nagarjunasagar is been constructed, featuring a Buddha statue and various thematic installations based on Buddha's principles. She also said plans for a digital center in the theme park, showcasing 2,000 years of Buddhism, including the life story of Buddha are ongoing.

K. Nikhila, IAS, Director of Tourism, along with other officials from the tourism department, participated in the program at the Buddha Statue by Hussain Sagar Lake.



# 42% quota for BC in local bodies' polls demanded

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Rajya Sabha member and national president of the OBC Morcha, K Laxman has warned the government against holding elections to local bodies without increasing reservations to 42 per cent.

He was speaking at the Pattabhadra Atmiya Sannelan organised at the Chinavenkatreddy function hall here on Thursday as part of the campaign for the Graduates' constituency by-elections for Nalgonda, Khammam and Warangal. He said the state government was cheating the BCs by not extending reservation to them. There are six guarantees, 420 assurances and five declarations. "The Congress has done injustice to the BCs by giving them religious reservation."

He sought votes for BJP MLC candidate Gajjala Premender Reddy.

The Congress has no right to ask for votes. He thanked the Prime Minister on behalf of the people for agreeing to build a railway line from Ramagundam to Manugur. He said that this railway project will provide many benefits to the people. He appealed to the students to vote in favour of the party.

# Kishan demands Rs 1,000 per quintal as bonus for coarse variety of paddy

PNS ■ YADADRI BHONGIR

Union Minister G Kishan Reddy, in an indirect reference to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, has quipped that justice cannot be done to the farmers by swearing by God.

On Thursday, he inspected the paddy procurement centre at Raghavapuram and Rudravelli of Bibinagar of Yadadri-Bhongir district. He demanded payment of Rs 1000



towards bonus to coarse variety of paddy and Rs 500 per

quintal as bonus to fine variety of paddy. He asked the officials at the paddy procurement centre about the delay in the procurement of paddy from the farmers. The farmers complained to Kishan Reddy that inordinate delay is taking place in the procurement of the paddy. Addressing the gathering, he said that the Modi government is ready to procure every amount of paddy. The promised loan waiver is

still elusive, the State government is shying away from extending bonus to the paddy, he said charging the Congress government in Telangana with complete failure in procuring paddy from the farmers.

He called the Telangana government as barbaric administration. The Congress leaders are sending suitcases full of money to Delhi, but not keen to implement the promises made to the people, he said.

## NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

# EC did not release controversial video: CEO

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Mukesh Kumar Meena has disclosed that eight police teams, comprising Superintendents of Police (SP) and Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSP), are actively pursuing the arrest of YSRCP Macherla MLA candidate and incumbent MLA Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy. This development comes in the wake of a video surfacing depicting Reddy purportedly vandalising an Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) at the Palvai Gate polling station.

Meena clarified that while the video footage did not officially leave the custody of the Election Commission (EC), it may have been leaked during the investigative process. Furthermore, the Presiding Officer (PO) and Assistant Presiding Officer (APO) on duty were suspended for failing to furnish accurate information regarding the EVM damage



incident. Speaking at a press briefing on Thursday, Meena underscored the EC's commitment to expeditiously apprehending Ramakrishna Reddy. He cautioned leaders of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) against visiting injured activists in the Macherla constituency, urging them to refrain from exacerbating tensions as the situation gradual-

ly stabilises. Meena also announced plans for a state visit on May 25 to personally inspect the strong rooms where EVMs are securely stored.

Meena assured the public of a robust three-tier security arrangement, involving both Central and State police forces, in place at the strong rooms. Continuous monitoring of CCTV cameras covering the sealed doors, secu-

urity corridors, and the control room is being carried out by officers. He emphasized the necessity for round-the-clock vigilance by police personnel for effective security monitoring. In a comprehensive review meeting with all District Election Officers on Thursday, Meena instructed them to enforce stringent measures for the vote-counting process scheduled for June 4.

# HC grants interim bail to Pinnelli till June 6

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a temporary relief to YSRCP MLA from Macherla, Ramakrishna Reddy, the AP High Court granted him interim bail. The court stipulated conditions for the bail, ensuring that no legal action could be taken against Pinnelli until June 6, 10 am.

On Thursday, Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy approached the AP High Court seeking anticipatory bail. A motion petition was swiftly filed by the MLA, leading to the court's decision to grant bail.

The hearing on the antici-



patory bail petition of Macherla MLA Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy was conducted by the AP High Court. Advocate Niranjan Reddy, representing MLA Pinnelli, argued that if the alleged incident indeed occurred on May 13, an FIR would have been lodged by May 15.



INDIA CORNER

Two kids, elderly man killed as car overturns in MP's Rajgarh district

Two children and an elderly man were killed and three others injured after the car they were travelling in overturned in Madhya Pradesh's Rajgarh district on Thursday, a police official said. The car going towards Indore flipped near a petrol pump in Sarangpur of the district around 11 am, killing a child on the spot. Another child succumbed to his injuries while being taken to the hospital from the scene, he said. The third person died during treatment in a hospital in Indore. The deceased were identified as Ishant Sharma (4), Nishi Sharma (02) and Dinesh Sharma (65), Sarangpur police station in-charge Santosh Singh Waghela said. The victims were on their way to Indore from Biora for shopping at the time of the incident. The three injured persons were referred to Indore after initial treatment at Sarangpur, he added.



Cannes: Meerut girl gives UK film school cause for cheer

Meerut-born Mansi Maheshwari, representing the United Kingdom as a graduate of the National Film and Television School (NFTS), is in contention for a La Cinef prize at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Maheshwari's 'Bunnyhood', a nine-minute-long animated film, premiered here on Thursday, a day on which all eyes were on the world premiere of Payal Kapadia's highly anticipated 'All We Imagine As Light', the first Indian title in Cannes Competition in 30 years. 'Bunnyhood' is, in the filmmaker's words, "a horror comedy in which I tell a coming-of-age story about me and my mother". She says: "The title refers to the stage of transition that separates childhood and adulthood. The film seeks to understand why people feel the need to lie." 'Bunnyhood' is the 25-year-old's graduation film. Maheshwari passed out of NFTS this year after completing a course in Directing Animation.



Four labourers buried alive while digging well in Jharkhand

At least four labourers, including a woman, were buried alive while digging a well in Jharkhand's Lohardaga district on Thursday, police said. The incident took place around 11 am in Chitri Ambatoli village in Senha police station area, around 80 km from state capital Ranchi, when the workers were digging a well under an MGNREGA project, a senior officer said. The police conducted a rescue operation but all the four labourers were found dead, he said. "A portion of the earth caved in when the four labourers were digging the well. Excavators and other equipment were deployed but the four persons were found dead," Senha police station in-charge Vedant Shankar said. The deceased were identified as Abu Rehan Ansari (35), Shabnam Khatun (21), Ramjan Ansari (35) and Bhagat, he said, adding the bodies were retrieved and sent for post-mortem examination.



Disclosure of station-wise voter turnout on website will cause chaos: EC to SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Wednesday told the Supreme Court that "indiscriminate disclosure" of polling station-wise voter turnout data and posting it on website will cause chaos in the election machinery which is already in motion for the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

The poll panel said that public posting of Form 17C - which gives the number of votes polled in a polling station - is not provided in the statutory framework and could lead to mischief and vitiation of the entire electoral space as it increases the possibility of the images being morphed. The EC also dismissed as false and misleading the allegation that the first two phases of the Lok Sabha elections saw an increase of "5-6 per cent" in the voter turnout data



released on the day of polling and in the subsequent press releases for each of the two phases.

The Election Commission stated this in an affidavit filed in response to a plea of an NGO seeking a direction to the poll panel to upload polling station-wise voter turnout data on its website within 48 hours of the conclusion of polling for each phase of the Lok Sabha elections.

"It is submitted that if the reliefs sought by the petitioner is allowed, it will not only be

in teeth of the aforesaid legal position but will also cause chaos in the election machinery which is already in motion for the ongoing General Elections to the Lok Sabha, 2024," the poll panel said in its 225-page affidavit.

It said the petitioner NGO 'Association of Democratic Reforms' has failed to mention a single instance where candidates or voters had filed an election petition on the basis of the allegations raised by the petitioner with respect to the Lok Sabha election in 2019.

Phase 5 turnout now at 62.2%; women outnumber men in casting vote

The voter turnout in the fifth phase of Lok Sabha polls held on May 20 has now climbed to 62.2 per cent, the Election Commission said on Thursday with women outnumbering men. According to an EC statement, 61.48 per cent of the registered male voters turned up at the polling stations as compared to 63 per cent of female electors. In phase 5, 49 seats across six states and two union territories went for polling where over 8.95 crore people, including 4.69 crore men, 4.26 crore women and 5409 third gender were eligible to vote. The participation of women in voting was higher as compared to men in Bihar, Jharkhand, Ladakh, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh.

The male-female turnout gap was wide in Bihar and Jharkhand. While in Bihar, the male turnout was 52.42 per cent, the female turnout was 61.58 per cent. Similarly, in Jharkhand, the male turnout was registered at 58.08 per cent, while the female turnout was 68.65 per cent. A maximum of 38.22 per cent of voters registered in the third gender category turned out to vote in West Bengal. EC noted that repolls at two polling stations in the Kandhamal in Odisha will be concluded on Thursday and the figures "may" change accordingly, once the data is updated for post-repoll. In the corresponding phase in the 2019 polls, the turnout was registered at 64.16 per cent.

EC wrong in directing Cong not to politicise Agnipath: Chidambaram

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Thursday said the Election Commission was "egregiously wrong" in directing his party not to 'politicise' the Agnipath scheme, asserting that it is the right of an Opposition party to criticise a policy of the government.

The Election Commission Wednesday came down heavily on the ruling BJP and opposition Congress, asking them to desist from campaigning along caste, community, language, and religious lines.

The EC also asked the Congress not to politicise defence forces and make potentially divisive statements regarding the socio-economic composition of the armed forces. The Commission was referring to remarks made by top Congress leaders on the Agnipath scheme.

In a post on X, Chidambaram said the ECI is wrong in



Agniveer is a scheme, a product of the policy of the government. It is the right of an Opposition political party to criticise a policy of the government

directing the Congress party not to 'politicise' the Agnipath scheme. "What does 'politicise' mean? Does the ECI mean 'criticise'? Agniveer is a scheme, a product of the policy of the government. It is the right of an Opposition political party to criticise a policy of the government and declare that, if voted to power, the scheme will be scrapped," the former Union minister said.

"Agniveer" creates two categories of soldiers who fight together, and that is wrong, Chidambaram said.

'Agniveer' employs a young man for four years and throws him out without a job and without a pension, and that is wrong, he said.

"Agniveer was opposed by the Army, yet the government thrust the scheme upon the Army, and that is wrong. Hence, the Agniveer scheme must be scrapped," he said.

"ECI was egregiously wrong in giving direction to the Congress party and, as a citizen, it is my right to say that ECI was egregiously wrong," Chidambaram said.

IF 'DOUBLE ENGINE' GOVT FORMED IN ODISHA Bulldozers to be used against mafia, says Adityanath

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Yogi Adityanath on Thursday said if the 'double engine' government is formed in Odisha, bulldozers will be used against the mafia.

During the last 20-25 years, the "officer raj" has "pushed Odisha to 50 years back", he claimed, alleging that the ruling BJD is playing politics with the future of youths in the state.

Addressing an election rally in the Chilika assembly constituency under the Puri Lok Sabha seat, Yogi said, "Give us strength to form a double engine government in Odisha so that we can clear the path by running bulldozers on 'land, sand, forest and cattle' mafia in the state, as we did in Uttar Pradesh."

The term "double engine" is used by BJP leaders to refer to the party being in power at the Centre as well as in a state.

"The BJD government is surrounded by bureaucracy and when the bureaucracy surrounds any government, it gives birth to dictatorship. Then corruption rises, the poor are exploited and the administration collapses," he alleged.

In an apparent reference to Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's aide and bureaucrat-turned-BJD leader V K Pandian, Adityanath said, "An officer should not be given so much freedom that he starts controlling the government. Only elected public representatives should govern the state, which is the basis of a healthy democracy."

He claimed that the BJD's "misrule" is because "Naveen babu has been surrounded by bureaucracy and he has been misled by bureaucrats".



"Power generated from Odisha is being provided at a cheaper price to other states. What kind of misrule is this?" he asked.

The BJP leader also accused the BJD government of "destroying" the Odia culture and said the Narendra Modi government has brought Ram Lalla to his birthplace in Ayodhya after 500 years.

Alleging that the Congress and TMC have been playing politics with religions, Adityanath claimed, "Policies of INDIA bloc parties promote terrorism, naxalism and corruption".

"Religion-based reservation is against the spirit of our Constitution. Only India-origin SC, ST and backward communities should get the benefit of reservation," he said, referring to a Calcutta High Court order against the TMC government's move to include Muslims under the OBC category.

The Calcutta High Court on Wednesday struck down as illegal the OBC status of several classes in West Bengal granted since 2010, sparking a political debate in the middle of the Lok Sabha elections.

The court observed that the inclusion of 77 classes of Muslims in the list of backward categories was to "treat them as a vote bank". Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "India earned respect in the world and its territories are secure", Adityanath said, adding that "terrorism and naxalism have been eliminated".

"Now, when a firecracker goes off in India, Pakistan comes up with a clarification that it has no role in the blast. Because, Pakistan knows that this is new India, Modi's India, which will not tolerate when one creates any mischief," the BJP leader said.

'PM Modi started equitable service delivery, minorities equally benefited'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had introduced a culture of equitable service delivery in the country wherein minorities were equally benefited, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said on Thursday.

He said the prime minister has successfully raised the standards of public service delivery above vote consideration, based on the principle of justice for all.

"Modi will always be credited for having introduced a new work culture in India wherein each of the pro-poor and public welfare schemes were designed in such a man-



ner so as to reach the most needy or the last man in the last queue, regardless of caste, creed, religion or vote consideration," said Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel. He said, purely objective parameters were followed to

meet the requirement, "wherever the requirement was not met in the past and to deliver justice wherever justice had been denied in the past".

This, the minister said, was quite a departure from the practice followed by the Congress and its allied governments earlier wherein vote bank politics pre-determined the selective rolling out of the state benefits.

"In contrast to the appeasement-driven practice followed during the Congress or UPA rule, Prime Minister Modi has introduced a culture of equitable delivery wherein minorities were equally benefited," he said here.

Five dead, as blast rips through chemical factory

PNS ■ THANE

At least five persons were killed and 56 injured following an explosion at a chemical factory in Maharashtra's Thane district on Thursday afternoon, officials said.

As a boiler exploded at Amudan Chemicals located in Phase 2 of Dombivli MIDC area around 1.40 pm, its impact and the resultant blaze affected adjacent factories.

As per the preliminary information, those killed were working in neighbouring plants, said Maharashtra industries minister Uday Samant. The plant where the explosion took place was not in operation for the last few



months and had restarted only a few days ago, he said.

Samant, local MP Shrikant Shinde and MLA Raju Patil visited the site inside the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) area, some 40 km from Mumbai. The blast was so loud that it was heard a kilometre away, an eyewitness said. Glass windows of adjoining buildings

cracked while many houses in the vicinity were damaged, officials said. Thick clouds of smoke could be seen hovering over the factory. Speaking to reporters at Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said a massive rescue and relief operation is underway at the site and he had directed the district collector to conduct a detailed inquiry into the incident.



Elephant census begins at Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve in TN

PNS ■ ERODE (TAMIL NADU)

The Tamil Nadu forest department on Thursday commenced a three-day-long elephant census at Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve as part of the state-wide initiative, officials said.

Around 300 forest officials are deputed to conduct the census in ten forest ranges at STR.

All precautionary measures are being taken, like providing firearms for enumerators to safeguard them from animal attack, drinking water and food, officials said.

The forest officials will conduct the census from 6 am to 6 pm daily till Saturday.

This second synchronised Elephant Population Estimation 2024 which began today will cover 26 forest divisions in 697 blocks, Additional Chief Secretary, Environment Climate Change and Forests, Supriya Sahu said.

The estimation will be done

simultaneously in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala, she said in a post on the social media platform X.

"The first synchronised estimation done in 2023 in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala had estimated a population of 2,961 elephants in TN. A total of 1,836 forest staff and 342 volunteers are participating in this exercise. Video - @supriyasahus #TNForest #Elephantestimation," Sahu said posting a video.

Five tiger reserves spread across the state have been included in the elephant census covering the forest areas from Hosur to Kanyakumari. The Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) has also been included in the census.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden Srinivas R Reddy, and Chief Conservator of Forests and field director of MTR, D Venkatesh, were among the officials involved in the annual exercise.

NORTH BLOCK BOMB HOAX

Delhi Police writes to Google, seeks IP address details

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the North Block received a hoax bomb threat email, the Delhi Police on Thursday wrote to Google seeking details of its IP address, an official source said.

The Internet Protocol (IP) address is a unique identifying number assigned to every device connected to the internet.

A bomb threat on Wednesday sent alarm bells ringing in the North Block, which houses the office of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), but was declared a

hoax after nothing suspicious was found.

A letter has been sent to Google to provide the IP address of the email which was sent to the MHA office, an official source said.

The Delhi Police Special Cell and the local police are investigating the case. A case may be registered at Kartavya Path police station for further investigation, an officer said.

A senior officer posted at MHA received the threat through an email around 3:30 pm on Wednesday. The email stated that the "building will explode as a bomb is planted".

'Early brain network differences in infants with autism-risk'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Six-week old infants with high chances of developing autism showed distinct patterns in brain connections, which researchers said likely emerge much earlier than autism-related behaviours can be noticed.

The researchers focussed on the brain's salience network, a group of regions crucial to identifying information in the environment that is worthy of one's attention and enabling appropriate responses to them.

In babies with high chances of developing autism -- a disorder marked by repetitive behaviour and impaired social interaction -- the researchers found stronger connections

between the salience network and brain regions processing sensory information and movement, or the sensorimotor regions.

The team, co-led by the researchers at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), US, further found that infants with stronger connections to sensorimotor regions in the brain had weaker connections with prefrontal ones, which are important for social interactions.

This suggested that paying more attention to basic sensory information comes at the cost of paying attention to socially relevant cues, thereby possibly playing a role in people with autism displaying an impaired social behaviour, the



researchers said.

"An emerging theory in autism research is that differences in sensory processing may precede the more classic social and communication symptoms of autism, and this data supports that theory in showing that very early brain differences related to how attention is allocated may pre-

dict both sensory and social behaviours in toddlers," Shulamite Green, an assistant professor at UCLA, said.

"In other words, more attention to extraneous sensory stimuli in the environment could make it difficult to attend to social cues, and this difference in attention could really affect how the brain develops

across the first year of life and beyond," Green, corresponding author of the study published in the journal Communications Biology, said.

The researchers also found that the brain patterns observed in six-week-old babies could predict their behaviour at age one.

Infants with stronger connections with sensory regions were found to show "over-responsivity" when they were a year old, a trait known to be characteristic of autism in which individuals show extreme responses to typical environmental sounds or sensations.

In contrast, the researchers found that babies having stronger connections with pre-

frontal regions in the brain showed a better ability to share attention with others at age one, an important stage preceding the development of social and communication skills that are often impaired in autism.

The observed patterns could help explain the reduced social attention and unusual sensory processing commonly seen in people with autism, the authors said.

For the study, the researchers analysed 53 infants, 24 of whom had a higher likelihood of developing autism because at least one older sibling had a diagnosis -- a factor known to enhance the risk of autism. The remaining 29 had no family history of autism or any other developmental disorder.





www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

## EC stirs a bit

The poll panel's latest directive to parties for a honest fight is a classic case of too little, too late

With the Lok Sabha elections approaching the final phases, the Election Commission (EC) has issued a stern directive to the Congress and the BJP against creating false narratives and making communal utterances. Interestingly, this directive comes after five of the seven poll phases are over. Also, the timing and impact of this intervention raise critical questions: Is the EC's directive aimed more at ensuring a free and fair election or at salvaging its image which has taken a dip? Though it is an independent, autonomous constitutional body, several events have raised doubts about its impartiality and functioning. There have been accusations of Government interference, from influencing the timing of elections to being lenient towards the BJP while being overly strict with the Opposition. Savour this: Since 2019, three Opposition parties registered 27 complaints against PM Modi but the EC took no action. A scrutiny of these complaints and the EC's response shows the poll body's 'reluctance' to act against the Prime Minister. The Congress has accused the panel of being "super, super cautious" regarding complaints against Modi, following the EC's request to the BJP to respond to the allegations of Modi's divisive speech in Rajasthan. The EC also asked the Congress to address the BJP's complaints against Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi. The EC's letters mark the first such action against a Prime Minister. But will any real action ever be taken?



According to the poll panel, approximately 425 major complaints, excluding those related to canvassing or requiring clarification, have been filed by various parties and candidates. Action has been taken or the matter resolved in 400 of these cases. Interestingly, in most cases, the punishment was so mild that it did not matter much; like abstaining from campaigning for two days, and so on. Now, with only two phases of polling left, the directive is not likely to achieve much since the electoral narrative has already been set, with party rhetoric having saturated media channels and influenced public opinion. The late issuance of this warning suggests only an attempt to curb last-minute escalations in divisive rhetoric. By waiting until the tail end of the election cycle, the EC has allowed political parties ample time to embed their narratives into the electorate's psyche, with an extra long rope for the ruling party. Besides, for such a warning to be effective, it needs to be backed by the possibility of tangible consequences. While the directive emphasises the need for a respectful and fact-based campaign, it lacks clear punitive measures for violations. Political parties might calculate that the benefits of inflammatory and polarising rhetoric outweigh the potential repercussions. To ensure future elections are fairer and more respectful of democratic principles, the EC should adopt a more proactive stance involving faster interventions and stricter penalties for violations. It can draw inspiration from its own history when TN Seshan first empowered the institution.

ter resolved in 400 of these cases. Interestingly, in most cases, the punishment was so mild that it did not matter much; like abstaining from campaigning for two days, and so on. Now, with only two phases of polling left, the directive is not likely to achieve much since the electoral narrative has already been set, with party rhetoric having saturated media channels and influenced public opinion. The late issuance of this warning suggests only an attempt to curb last-minute escalations in divisive rhetoric. By waiting until the tail end of the election cycle, the EC has allowed political parties ample time to embed their narratives into the electorate's psyche, with an extra long rope for the ruling party. Besides, for such a warning to be effective, it needs to be backed by the possibility of tangible consequences. While the directive emphasises the need for a respectful and fact-based campaign, it lacks clear punitive measures for violations. Political parties might calculate that the benefits of inflammatory and polarising rhetoric outweigh the potential repercussions. To ensure future elections are fairer and more respectful of democratic principles, the EC should adopt a more proactive stance involving faster interventions and stricter penalties for violations. It can draw inspiration from its own history when TN Seshan first empowered the institution.

### PICTALK



Devotees at Har Ki Pauri on the occasion of Buddha Purnima, in Haridwar

## Summer can be fun and learning for students

By engaging in innovative and educational activities, children can make the most of their summer break, ensuring both physical and intellectual growth

School students look forward to the arrival of summer vacations with a great deal of excitement. That period is also one of the happiest phases of a student's life. It also becomes imperative that parents recognise the worth of their children's time at this point. They start to worry about how they will ever let their child utilise his time wisely during those days. On the contrary, children are full of energy and anticipation in those months. However, it becomes troublesome for working parents if their kids are younger and highly energetic. Their daily scheduled activities go wild, making it harder for parents to engage their children in meaningful activities. Though summer vacation means different to everyone, the significance of summer learning should not be ignored. It is a vital component of children's physical as well as academic health. With just 60 days of summer vacation, every day a child does not participate in summer training represents a setback. Nevertheless, parents can engage their children in a variety of new and entertain-



ing activities. Summer Vacation Courses The hot Indian summer can be the toughest time to endure for some people, especially kids. They can suffer severely if they stay unprepared to beat the heat. Parents should be cautious about the meals their children eat during these hot days so that no additional stress is placed on their digestive systems. In order to avoid digestive and dehydration issues, parents can add watermelon, curd, cucumber, coconut water and seasonal vegetables to their children's meal plans. Children must begin learning about the contemporary technological environment in which they live. Therefore, parents can engage their kids with engaging and innovative learning products. Trends are as follows: AI and ML course for kids: There are various courses online to introduce children

with futuristic skillset like Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning. Any career option kids would choose, this skillset will be must. Students should opt for courses which consist of Python Coding, Generative-AI prompt writing and Industry Projects like Website & App Building. Kids and parents should not get afraid of new technologies rather take these as an opportunity to outsmart in the future job market. Learning AI tools will upgrade the performance quality of culturally active students also. Learning AI-ML will prepare the students for upcoming innovation and robotics related competitions too. The best outcome will be grabbing an online internship. It will help the kids become more confident for the future. Summer specialised Innovation Based Online Experiments: Students and Parents should look for online innovation based experiments or projects which will not only provide a project kit but also consist of live sessions to understand the science and technology of the project. Students should be able to represent the projects in

schools too. Some attractive projects could be Laser Home Security System, Rain Water Detection and automatic cloth retrieval machine, Automatic Smart Roof, Parking Occupancy Indicator, Smart Blind Stick etc. Apart from the ones mentioned above, there are many other innovative activities which can be explored by the parents to increase their children's confidence and interest during summer holidays. Moreover, learning is an endless process. School kids need to gain knowledge about new things every day that are useful for their career and educational growth. Some of the most important knowledge for kids during the vacation will be sustainability, space technology, Electric Vehicle technology, Autonomous Car technology, Flying Taxi system and drone technology etc. Thus, during the next summer vacation, students may simply PLAY. LEARN. EAT. REPEAT by contemplating these mentioned methods of utilising perfect and productive holidays. (The writer is advisor innovates and director at YuviPep; views are personal)



AJITH KUMAR NS

## Child development as a fundamental right

In the pursuit of a more equitable society, the universalisation of early childhood development should be recognised as a fundamental right, not a gratuitous freebie



APARAJITA SHARMA

That early childhood development (ECD) should be treated as a fundamental right rather than a gratuitous freebie is paramount for fostering an equitable society. The 2024 general elections offer a significant opportunity to advocate for the universalisation of ECD from birth to 18 years. Ensuring access to quality early education and care is crucial for the holistic development of children and the broader advancement of society.

**ECD as a Fundamental Right** India's commitment to social welfare is enshrined in its Constitution. The Directive Principles of State Policy mandate the Government to secure adequate means of livelihood, equitable distribution of resources and special protection for children and vulnerable sections. Early childhood is a critical period for cognitive, emotional and social development. The National ECCE Policy 2013 underscores the importance of providing quality health, nutrition, early learning and protection for children under six. Recognising ECCE as a justiciable entitlement under the RTE Act would ensure that all children receive the foundational support necessary for their development.

**Challenges in Providing ECD** After 13 years of implementation of the RTE Act 2009, only 25.5 per cent of schools across the country are RTE compliant. 8.4 lakh teacher positions are vacant and there is a constant shift towards contractual teachers. 19 per cent of schools in India are estimated to have teacher vacancies and one school in seven is run by a single teacher. While the quality of education cannot be ensured without professionally qualified and motivated teachers, 44 per cent of all teachers across the country work without job contracts, many fail to receive social security benefits and all are pressured with non-academic work which is estimated to account for 20-25 per cent of teachers' working hours. The average expenditure is 8,997 per annum for pre-primary, 9,913 for secondary and 13,845 for higher secondary. Costs are significantly higher in



urban areas and private unaided educational institutions. Despite the recognised importance of ECD, significant challenges remain. As of recent surveys, only 38 per cent of children aged 3-6 years are enrolled in preschool education in Government Anganwadi centres. Additionally, the issues regarding 0-3-year-old children remain at the bottom of the pyramid of rights and entitlements in the country. Issues such as being underweight, stunting and anaemia among children highlight the need for comprehensive early childhood programs that address both educational and nutritional needs. As of 2018-19, the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) had 30.1 per cent of Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) positions and 27.7 per cent of Supervisor positions vacant across the country. About 6.9 per cent of sanctioned positions for Anganwadi workers (AWWs) and 7.6 per cent of sanctioned positions for Anganwadi helpers (AWHs) were also vacant. This is a grave concern for achieving universalisation of childcare services in the country as well as improved governance at the project level. Despite the mention of establishing creches for promoting women workers and childcare services for their children vide several legislations,<sup>[6]</sup> the



THE DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES OF STATE POLICY MANDATE THE GOVERNMENT TO SECURE ADEQUATE MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD, EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES AND SPECIAL PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE SECTIONS

number of crèches came down to a drastic 3400 creches with only 84000 beneficiaries by 2023. The promise of crèche for promoting women workers is a welcome in political parties' agendas, however without universalisation and adequate public provisioning of childcare services they may again leave behind the most marginalised children and serve only a selected few. A public manifesto collated by four national-level networks working for children's rights spotlights the need for reiterating the constitutional provision to ensure rights, entitlements and the overall well-being of children. The manifesto calls for extending the Right to Education (RTE) Act to cover children from birth to 18 years, aligning with the internationally recognised definition of childhood. The manifesto further calls for drafting, implementing and enforcing a national regulatory framework for private schools and ECCE centres to combat the increasing commercialisation and privatisation of education. This framework should regulate fees, ensure compliance with quality norms and address social segregation. The Government must take immediate steps to ensure that all private schools adhere to the conditions under which recognition is granted and that no unrecognised schools are allowed to operate.

The State must be held accountable for its enforcement to guarantee that all children receive quality education. Strengthening School Management Committees (SMCs) and community participation in education is vital for the successful execution of educational policies. Additionally, it is critical to strengthen the Anganwadi system. Critical positions such as AWWs and AWHs must never be left vacant. The capacities of Anganwadi centres and workers should also be enhanced.

**Way Ahead** Investing in ECD has significant long-term benefits. Studies indicate that quality early childhood programs yield a high return on investment, contributing to better health, education and economic outcomes. Children who receive adequate early care and education are more likely to succeed in school, secure better jobs and contribute positively to society. Therefore, ECD should be recognised as a fundamental right, not a discretionary freebie. Its universalisation must be backed by adequate funding and robust policies, to ensure equitable access to marginalised children. There is a clear roadmap for achieving this goal.

(The writer is a member of Alliance for Right to ECD; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### BUDGET CLIMBDOWN CONCERN

Madam — Apropos the news story "Do not withdraw capital support for oil PSUs," published on 23 May, this is my response. As a regular newspaper reader, the Government's recent decision to halve the equity infusion for three major public sector oil companies—Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL)—is concerning. Initially, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a substantial Rs 30,000 crore for these companies to aid their transition to green energy and achieve net-zero emissions. However, this amount was slashed to Rs 15,000 crore, with no clear explanation provided.

Despite impressive profit margins, companies in the capital-intensive energy sector require substantial investments to transition to green energy. Past Government directives led to financial losses and predictable policy support is crucial to offset these losses and ensure their contribution to India's green energy transition and economic stability.

Khiraabdi Tanya | Noida

#### ELECTION BATTLE IN THE LAST LAP

Madam — Apropos the news story "Epic election battle enters decisive phase," published on 23 May, this is my response. With only ten days left in India's intense two-month election season, the focus sharpens on Uttar Pradesh, a critical battleground for the ruling BJP Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath have been tirelessly campaigning, emphasising law and order and cultural nationalism. Meanwhile, opposition leaders, notably Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge, strive to break the BJP's dominance. Despite Modi's polarising campaign, Yogi's steadfast leadership and achievements, including the Ram temple at Ayodhya, galvanise the BJP's base. The outcome in Uttar Pradesh, with its pivotal 80 seats, will significantly influence the national result. Both

#### Israel honours Indian caregivers



Apropos the news story "Israel honours Kerala caregivers," published on 22 May, this is my response. The celebration of Israel's National Day in India underscored the deep bonds between the two nations, especially in light of recent tragic events. Naor Gilon, Israel's Ambassador to India, expressed profound gratitude for India's unwavering support since the Hamas attacks on October 7. This solidarity reflects

Modi and Yogi's efforts will be crucial in determining the BJP's success, potentially solidifying their path to victory on June 4.

Preeti Bajaj | Chandigarh

#### RAISI'S OPPRESSIVE REGIME

Madam — Apropos the editorial "Iran at Crossroads," published on May 22, this is my response. The late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, a hardliner, has long been regarded as a prospective successor to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. He frequently criticised America and Israel and was on Washington's tight blacklist for serious human rights breaches. He was very vocal about growing Iran's nuclear power, despite US sanctions. Raisi held various key posts before becoming President of Iran in 2021 and many scandals have surrounded him. Specifically, he was accused of forcefully suppressing movements and opponents. Raisi was one of the Iranian politicians at whose behest two of the harshest acts of repression took place. Iran enacted regulations regulating women's dress and behaviour after Raisi

the extraordinary relationship between Indians and Jews. Gilon honoured two brave Keralaites, Meera and Sabitha, who risked their lives to save an elderly couple during the attack and paid tribute to Romi, a young Israeli child of Indian descent, for her bravery amidst the tragedy. The event, graced by Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra, highlighted the resilience and resolve of the Israeli people despite the pain inflicted by terrorism. Kwatra emphasised India's zero-tolerance stance on terrorism, aligning with Israel's fight against such threats. The national anthems of both countries played, symbolising unity, while a special message from President Isaac Herzog of Israel reinforced the call for the release of the 128 hostages. The Christian Alliance and Action for Social Action in Kerala also voiced strong support for Israel, praying for the hostages' safe return.

Jitu Majumdar | Kolkata

was elected president. Iran's hijab law has tightened. In September 2022, Iran witnessed significant protests after Mahsa Amini's death in custody for violating dress laws, marking the largest unrest since the 1979 Revolution. The demonstrations resulted in numerous casualties. Ebrahim Raisi, known for his harsh stance on exiled opposition and human rights groups, was linked to the mass killings of Marxists and leftists in 1988 while serving as Tehran's Revolutionary Court deputy prosecutor. Amnesty International reported the existence of 'Death Committees' in Iran, comprising religious judges, prosecutors and intelligence officers. These committees arbitrarily sentenced thousands of inmates to death. Amnesty reports that these committees have sentenced over 5,000 people to death. It was only after the mass hanging of 1988 that Raisi was called 'The Butcher of Tehran.'

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com





## FIRST COLUMN NEW CHALLENGES FOR INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

The global geopolitical landscape grows more complex with Russia-China ties



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The gruelling Indian elections, one of the largest democratic exercises in the world will be over in a week or so. A hectic flurry of pending policy decisions is likely to start immediately. If the current party comes back, a hundred days action-packed agenda would be rolled out by most major Government departments, going by PM Modi's Stated objective of not wasting a minute after polls are over. However, the geo-political space, which existed when the elections were declared, has become far more complex refusing to wind down any time soon.

To be fair some of the changes are driven by elections happening all across the globe during 2024, including in key European Union and US. This will ensure that almost all multilateral forums, where these key constituents and India are major contributors, would be subject to pressures of domestic politics and issues. Meanwhile, India's long-standing partner Russia, finished their election nearly a month back and upon reelection President Putin undertook his first State visit to China last week. Russia and China have emerged as the key UN Security Council permanent members, whose interests and policies are not likely to align with the US-led block any time soon.

The joint Statement released after President Putin's visit to China highlighted the importance of his visit to China. It was a message to the wider Western block of countries opposed to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, coming at a time when the Chinese president had just come back after meeting every senior leader from the European Union, the French President and reaffirmed firm support from a couple of East European countries. The European Union and recently the US have expressed grave concerns



and taken some tariff measures regarding China's non-competitive trade practices, especially regarding State-subsidised cheap Electric vehicles flooding their markets. Apprehensions have been raised by Indian trade associations that the loss of the lucrative US market for Chinese Electric vehicles could lead to, these automotive products being dumped in India leading to a situation similar to Europe and the US. In this context Russia seems to have come out in full support of the Chinese automotive sector, perhaps also sending a strong message to Europe and the US. In the media Statement released during Mr Putin's State visit to China, he mentioned "Regarding bilateral industrial cooperation, we are pleased to witness the proactive expansion of Chinese automakers and household appliance manufacturers in the Russian market. As discussed during our talks and as the President said, we acknowledge the detrimental effect of any unlawful actions, sanctions, or restrictions. We wholeheartedly embrace collaboration with our Chinese counterparts."

China has refrained from overtly criticising Russia over its war in Ukraine and has in the past been accused of supplying military equipment stealthily. Even though Ukraine found mention in both Statements by President Putin and President Xi Jinping, it was velvet-gloved, under larger international foreign policy issues and overall commentary on geo-political matters. On foreign policy matters Russian president's Statement read "We are working together to create a fairer and more democratic multipolar world order based on the central role of the UN and its Security Council, international law, cultural and civilizational diversity, as well as a calibrated balance of interests of all members of the international community. We believe that the creation of such alliances is extremely harmful and counterproductive." Reforming multilateral institutions, especially the UN and a permanent membership has been a long-term foreign policy goal for PM Modi. In the wake of geopolitics, the new Government will have its task cut out on foreign policy.

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

# Elder abuse is far more rampant than assumed



GURDEEP KAURO

Despite respect for the elderly, many seniors face abuse from family members. This hidden crisis demands urgent action to protect their dignity and wellbeing



The culture in India over the past few decades has significantly transformed. As the 21st century unfolded with developments and advancements in science, technology, communication etc. the values upon which cohesion and amicable environment at family to global level can be built have been hit hard. The world has never been wealthier or possessed greater knowledge and technological prowess than it does today but sadly, inequality, poverty, food insecurity, violence, exploitation and discrimination continue to escalate unchecked. Among the victims of exploitation are the elderly population across the globe. And this issue becomes more worrisome for India where the culture of respect and care for the elderly has always existed and was deeply rooted. Given the cultural norms, the value system of filial piety and residence with the children, more often than not the elders in the family seem protected but on closer and deeper investigation, it is not so. The prevalence of elder abuse and neglect is evolving as a pressing and distressing hidden reality. As the person ages, his or her ability to engage in productive/ remunerative work gradually decreases, further their physical ailments, diseases etc demand care and specific needs to be looked after, this worsens and complicates the problem. As dependency grows and contribution declines, the elders in the family become subject to abuse, isolation, neglect, humiliation and harassment. The increased rate of urbanisation, transborder migration, inflation, technological advancement and the scale and extent of dependency add to the vulnerability of the elderly being exploited and neglected. In most cases, the perpetrators of abuse- physical, psychological, financial and verbal are their children whom they have raised by sacrificing their comforts and basic needs. According to the United Nations policy brief titled 'The Impact-of-COVID-19-on-Older-Persons (2020)', the cases of elder abuse have grown worldwide during and after the pandemic, making it a worrisome issue.

Life expectancy and life longevity have enormously improved, given the advancements in diagnostic, medical and therapeutic science but for the ageing population support



THE PREVALENCE OF ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT IS EVOLVING AS A PRESSING AND DISTRESSING HIDDEN REALITY IN INDIA, DESPITE THE COUNTRY'S CULTURAL NORMS OF RESPECT AND CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

services from family, community and the Government are also crucially needed for dignified life and death. In the present-day neo-liberal world order, access to State-of-the-art health and care facilities burns a big hole in the pocket of those wanting to access them. In addition, inflation, job crunch, financial crisis and the burgeoning household budget for education, basic needs, recreational, health care services etc are largely responsible for the elders and their needs being pushed to the periphery. Lack of timely care and preventive measures compounds their problem and vulnerability to the extent of extreme dependency. The State of complete/ partial dependency makes them subject to neglect, harassment and humiliation, abrogating their human rights. With intra and transborder migration of young and productive age groups, the threat to survival, safety and well-being of the ageing population is rising across the globe including India. In the past few decades, the migration from rural to urban areas and from urban to distant lands has been considerably growing, the dearth of resources, harsh living conditions and tough competition faced by the young population a reason although indirect, for elder abuse and in absence of dear ones (son/grandchildren), adjustment to new settings also drains the elder population mentally, financially and emotionally and risks their wellbeing and safety.

Further, as senior citizens are seen as a liability, apart from the conflict over their care and responsibility, the conflict over inheritance and property share also traumatises them. It is estimated that more than 90 per cent of elder abuse cases emerge from property-related matters. Thus physical, verbal, sexual, mental and emotional abuse can occur within these dynamics, causing immense suffering to the elderly. The sudden-

part about elder abuse is that the perpetrators of violence and hardship against them are their family members, it could be their son/ daughter-in-law/ daughter/ son-in-law/niece/nephew/ grandchildren among other close relatives as a result of the instances of violence either don't come in the public domain or if at all it comes, it isn't given attention stating that it is a personal/family matter. Due to a lack of intervention, the concerns of the elderly being abused and harassed most often go unattended and cared for.

In most cases the abuse is subtle and persistent, so is perceived as normalised by victims and is difficult to label as abuse, however, badly harms the victims and their wellbeing. In some cases, senior citizens suffering from dementia or other cognitive impairments are unable to understand that they are being ill-treated and abused or at times may find it difficult to effectively communicate the reality and seek intervention. The absence of timely and appropriate intervention discourages the victims from reporting their abuse. It is also out of fear of offending the family members/ agonising them that the victims are reluctant to report or discuss the instances of violence and humiliation meted out by them. There is also a stigma around abuse and the concern that society may perceive them to be weak/ incapable and also that it might bring the family in a bad light is a reason that discourages senior citizens from speaking about their vulnerability and abuse. Moreover, the elderly either don't have awareness about the legal mechanism that they can take recourse to or do not have trust in the system and the law designed to protect them.

As most cases remain unreported, the exact figures associated with violence against elder persons cannot be provided. This however can-

not be taken as a reason to escape and deny the grim reality. The issue indeed is important and the laws enacted in the recent past to save the elders from abuse and violence, the growing number of old age homes and the increase in property-related disputes where the elders in the family are either as plaintiff or the defendant are a testimony. Globally, a very good proportion of the population is growing older, India mirrors this trend too. According to the United Nations Population Fund's India Ageing Report 2023, the population above 60 years will double from 10.5 per cent or 14.9 crore (as of July 2022) to 20.8 per cent or 34.7 crore by 2050. There is a dire need to understand that this population is neither small nor are their issues insignificant that can be ignored. It is important to understand that the elderly population which isn't engaged in productive work were once the ones who shouldered responsibilities and looked after the needs of the children. They had been once a very potential workforce in nation-building. They are a reservoir of knowledge and experience and should be valued for their sacrifices, pains and contributions made during their lifetime. As reasons are multiple behind elder abuse so are the ramifications, it is therefore important to have solutions at different levels ranging from sensitising the society at large to spreading awareness among elders, formulating policies, emboldening social security measures to robust monitoring and judicial mechanism to deal with the perpetrators of violence. Concrete measures need to be taken so that elder abuse, albeit hidden, is not perceived as normalised.

(The writer is Assistant Professor, Political Science, Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi; views are personal)

# Political turncoats being turned down by voters

There is a concerning pattern of political leaders forsaking their party affiliations in pursuit of personal gain, but voters are giving them a run for their money

India, once a beacon of guidance in global affairs encompassing Statecraft, religion and politics, now confronts a disheartening reality. Presently, its political landscape appears adrift and devoid of purpose. Those in positions of authority seem driven solely by personal gratification. The completion of the fifth phase of the 2024 general elections has stirred heightened activity among political factions. Both ruling and opposition parties fervently urge the public to cast their votes in their favour. As the electoral process unfolds, leaders assess their prospects of triumph or defeat, often shifting allegiances between parties. Moreover, other political entities not only welcome



VINOD TAKIAWALA

defectors into their ranks but also offer them electoral tickets, even at the expense of their loyalists. The phenomenon of leaders defecting from one party to another is not new. Reflecting on historical trends, in the 1960s, approximately 30 per cent of parties witnessed leadership changes. However, public sentiment, termed 'Janata Janardan,' proved decisive,

thwarting 31 per cent of defectors in 1977 and 85 per cent in 2019. Examining the success rates of party-switching leaders, in the 1960s, around 30 per cent of parties with new leadership secured victories. Contrastingly, in the 2019 elections, the success rate plummeted to less than 15 per cent. A recent example is Seema Soren from Jharkhand, a three-time MLA and sister-in-law of former Chief Minister Hemant Soren, who departed from the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on March 19. Similarly, Congress MP Geeta Koda from Jharkhand also crossed over to the BJP and secured a ticket for the

Singhbhum constituency. The trend continues with leaders like Brijendra Singh and Rahul Kaswa, former BJP MPs now contesting under the Congress banner and Ritesh Pandey, previously a BSP MP, a BJP candidate. Afzal Ansari, once aligned with the BSP, is now a candidate for the Samajwadi Party, while Bibi Patil and Sangita Azad, both former BSP MPs, are now BJP candidates. Analysts attribute these defections to various factors such as the denial of tickets or perceived better prospects in another party. However, the prognosis for such defectors appears bleak as data analysis from the Trivedi Center for Political Data at Ashoka University indicates a dwindling success rate, dropping below 15 per cent in the 2019 elections from around 30 per cent in the 1960s. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, out of over 8,000 can-



didates, 195 were party-switchers, constituting 2.4 per cent of the total candidates. However, only 29 emerged victorious, marking a success rate of 14.9 per

cent, significantly lower than previous years. The peak year for party-switching was 1977, post-Emergency, when disparate political forces united against Indira Gandhi, resulting in a success rate of 68.9 per cent for defectors. Conversely, the subsequent election saw this rate decline sharply. The question of which party, BJP or Congress, better accommodates defectors remains a subject of debate.

In 1984, following Indira Gandhi's assassination, sympathy propelled the Congress, leading to a remarkable success rate of 81.3 per cent for defectors. Conversely, the BJP, contesting its inaugural Lok Sabha elections in 1984, saw no success among its 62

defector candidates. However, subsequent years witnessed shifts in these figures. In 2019, 5.3 per cent of BJP candidates were defectors, with a success rate of 56.5 per cent, whereas the Congress, with 9.5 per cent defectors, saw only 5 per cent success. The future of defector leaders in the ongoing 2024 Lok Sabha elections remains uncertain until June 4th, when the Indian electorate bestows its verdict, symbolised by the "Vijayshree" crown. Until then, further speculation would be premature, necessitating patience from all stakeholders.

(The writer is a journalist and a freelance columnist; views are personal)



MONEY MATTERS

## MahaRERA suspends registration of 20,000 real estate brokers

Maharashtra's realty regulator on Thursday said it has suspended the registration of 20,000 real estate brokers, leaving only 13,000 such registered agents in the state. There were a total of 47,000 agents registered with the regulator, which began the registration of the middlemen for property transactions in 2017. Earlier this year, it cancelled the registration of 13,785 agents for not renewing their licenses. The registrations of an additional 20,000 agents have been suspended for one year for not obtaining MahaRERA's real estate agent certificate of competency or not uploading the certificate on the watchdog's website, an official statement said. Licenses of these 20,000 agents can be renewed if they complete training, obtain the certificate of competency, and upload the same on the portal within a year, it added. According to an official, about 5,500 new candidates are likely to appear for the examination to get registered as agents next month.



## IndiGo to introduce business class in flights this year

After flying for nearly 18 years, the country's largest airline IndiGo on Thursday announced it will introduce business class in flights this year, as the carrier seeks to provide more options for passengers amid rising economic growth. The airline will launch a "tailor-made business product", the details of which will be unveiled around August that will also mark the 18th anniversary of the carrier. The latest announcement also comes less than a month after the profitable carrier said it would buy 30 wide-body aircraft. "In a groundbreaking move to redefine business travel in India, IndiGo, India's most preferred airline, announces the plan to launch a tailor-made business product for India's busiest and business routes," IndiGo said in a statement. Currently, the airline only has economy class. It has a fleet of more than 360 aircraft and operates around 2,000 flights daily.



## 'Pre-owned car market expected to touch 1.09 cr units by FY28'

India's pre-owned cars sales market is expected to reach 1.09 crore units with value more than doubling to USD 73 billion by FY28, according to the latest Indian Blue Book (IBB) report. In FY23, the pre-owned cars sales in India stood at about 51 lakh units. The domestic used car industry was valued at USD 32.44 billion in FY23, as per IBB report by 'car&bike' and 'Das WeltAuto by Volkswagen'. "Apart from an increasing preference for personal mobility, other key factors such as rising disposable incomes and shorter vehicle replacement cycles are encouraging as well. All these factors will only invigorate the demand for pre-owned cars," the report said. Post COVID-19, the demand for used cars among new-age buyers remains high globally. In India, the story is no different. The Indian market for used cars will rise exponentially, as social taboos in relation to used cars are fast fading, it added.



# Maldives to launch India's RuPay service

PNS ■ MALE

Notwithstanding the turbulence in their bilateral ties, the Maldives will soon launch India's RuPay service, which a senior minister has said "will bolster the Maldivian Rufiyaa." RuPay, a product of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), is the first of its global card payment network in India, with wide acceptance at ATMs, POS devices, and e-commerce websites across India. Minister of Economic Development and Trade Mohamed Saeed while announcing how both India and China have agreed to use local currency in bilateral trade, spoke about the upcoming launch of India's RuPay. "The upcoming launch of India's RuPay service is anticipated to further bolster the Maldivian rufiyaa (MVR)," Saeed told state-run PSM News on Wednesday. He also emphasised that "addressing the dollar issue and reinforcing the MVR is a top priority for the current administration. However, there



has been no announcement of any date for the launch. Last week, a news portal, CorporateMaldives.com, reported that Saeed conveyed that the card will be "formally utilised for transactions denominated in rupees within Maldivian territory." "We are currently engaged in discussions with India to explore avenues for facilitating payments in rupees," the minister said. An India-Maldives joint statement during the official visit of the then President of Maldives Ibrahim Mohamed Solih to India in August 2022 said: "The two leaders welcomed the ongoing work to operationalize the usage of RuPay Cards in Maldives and agreed to consider further measures to boost bilateral travel and

tourism and economic inter-linkages." Over the last few years, multiple banks and payment companies from across various countries have partnered with NPCI International Payments Ltd (NIPL), the international arm of NPCI, to accept UPI and RuPay in one form or the other. Ever since the pro-China President Mohamed Muizzu assumed power last November, the relations between the Maldives and India have soured. The repatriation of 80 plus Indian military personnel manning three aviation platforms earlier this month from the archipelago nation at his insistence has left a bitter note on bilateral ties.

## NSE listed companies' market capitalisation surpasses US\$ 5 trillion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The market capitalisation of listed companies on the NSE surpassed US\$ 5 trillion (Rs 416.57 trillion) on Thursday on a day when the Nifty 50 index touched an all-time high of 22,993.60. The Nifty 500 index also touched an all-time high of 21,505.25 on Thursday indicating that growth in the equity market is not restricted to only the large capitalised stocks, a statement by NSE said. The journey of market capitalisation of listed companies from US\$ 2 trillion (July 2017) to US\$ 3 trillion (May 2021) took about 46 months, US\$ 3 trillion to US\$ 4 trillion (December 2023) took about 30 months and the latest US\$ 5 trillion addition took only about 6 months, the exchange said. The top five companies by market capitalisation on the exchange are Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and Bharti Airtel. Growth in market capitalisation is not restricted to the top companies but is observed across stocks, it added. The resource

mobilisation by corporates, including the small and medium enterprises in the primary market, has been encouraging and provided an effective alternative mechanism in addition to the traditional methods of fundraising, the statement said. Liquidity in the secondary market has also improved significantly in the capital market segment. The equity segment's daily average turnover has increased by over 4.5 times from Rs 17,818 crore in FY15 to Rs 81,721 crore in FY24. The achievement of this milestone is a testament to the vision outlined for the Amrit Kaal which includes a technology-driven and knowledge-based economy with strong public finances, and a robust financial sector, it said. "I would like to thank the government of India, Securities Exchange of Board of India, and Reserve Bank of India for supporting the capital market ecosystem with progressive regulatory frameworks," Sriram Krishnan, Chief Business Development Officer of NSE, said.

## 'India to get rating support if it uses RBI dividend to reduce fiscal deficit'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India can get 'rating support' over time if it utilises the highest-ever dividend of over Rs 2 lakh crore received from the Reserve Bank to reduce fiscal deficit, said an S&P Global Rating analyst on Thursday. The RBI board has decided to pay a record Rs 2.1 lakh crore dividend to the government for the fiscal ended March 2024, more than double of what was budgeted expectation of Rs 1.02 lakh crore. "The additional dividends from the RBI are around 0.35 per cent of GDP. Whether it would support the narrowing of the fiscal deficit in fiscal 2024-25 would really depend on the final budget that would be passed after the June election results," S&P Global Ratings Analyst YeeFarn Phua said. The interim budget presented in Parliament earlier in the year targets a fiscal deficit of 5.1 per cent of the GDP. The additional dividend from the RBI may not necessarily lead to a full decrease in the deficit due to potential revenue



shortfalls in areas like investment receipts or additional allocation to expenditures in the final budget, Phua said in an email interview from Singapore. However, "if it does lead to a full decrease of the deficit, we believe it will lead to a faster path of fiscal consolidation that, in turn, will provide rating support over time", Phua added. The government expects to bring down the fiscal deficit to 5.1 per cent of GDP in the current fiscal, down from 5.8 per cent in 2023-24. As per the fiscal consolidators roadmap, the deficit -- the difference between government expendi-

ture and revenue -- would be brought down to 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. In May last year, S&P Global Ratings affirmed India's sovereign rating at 'BBB-' with a stable outlook on growth but flagged weak fiscal performance and low GDP per capita as risks. 'BBB-' is the lowest investment grade rating. All three global rating agencies -- Fitch, S&P and Moody's -- have the lowest investment grade rating on India with a stable outlook. The ratings are looked at by investors as a barometer of the country's creditworthiness and impact on borrowing costs.



## For fleet operators, revenue growth to double

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Revenue growth of road transport fleet operators is expected to double to 9-11 per cent this fiscal, riding on better domestic demand amid tepid exports, CRISIL Ratings said on Thursday. It further said operating margin is seen improving 75-100 basis points on better fleet utilisation and steady fuel costs. According to the rating agency, the credit profile of operators should remain strong as well, as they may look to moderate capital expenditure (capex) towards fleet expansion, following strong additions in the past three fiscal years, as new guidelines for air-conditioned driver cabins kick in the next fiscal year. Fleet operators expanded their fleet size by 60 per cent in the three fiscal years through 2024, as demand recovered sharply post the Covid-19 pandemic and returns from fleet additions were immediate.

## Ind-Ra expects stable operating performance for most infra projects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) expects stable operating performance for most infrastructure projects in the current financial year. The rating agency on Thursday maintained its stable outlook on the infrastructure sector, including the transport segment -- which signifies low chances of rating changes for the sector in the near to medium term. The rating agency assigned a positive outlook on the airport segment which means there are high chances of rating upgrades in the near to medium term. Ind-Ra stated that the stable outlook on the infrastructure sector factors in the likelihood of a stable operating performance for most projects, long-term revenue visibility under concession agreements and power purchase pacts and expected improved cargo and traffic volumes. On the power sector, the rating agency said it expects total capacity installed to reach about 476 GW in FY25 against 440 GW as of March 2024. In a virtual press meet,



Bharat Kumar Reddy, Associate Director at India Ratings and Research, said, "On the energy front, we have seen peak demand growing by almost 13 per cent during the last fiscal. However, the deficit has reduced to 1.5 per cent compared to 4 per cent which we have seen in FY23 that is largely because of better coal supply." The overall peak demand was 243 GW in FY24 and the total capacity installed was about 440 GW as of March 2024. "This is incremental of about 26 GW largely driven by solar of about 15 GW," Reddy said. Maintaining its stable outlook on toll roads, the rating agency said it expects a moderation in toll collection growth in the range of 6-7 per cent in the current fiscal compared to double-digit growth seen in FY23 and last fiscal.

## NHAI's road assets monetisation can fetch up to Rs 60,000 cr for govt : Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rating agency ICRA on Thursday said state-owned NHAI's targeted asset monetisation of road assets could fetch the government up to Rs 60,000 crore in the current fiscal year. In April 2024, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) had released an indicative list of 33 road assets it plans to monetise in FY2025, through a mix of toll-operate-transfer (TOT) and sale to the NHAI's Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT). These assets are spread across 12 states, cumulatively spanning nearly 2,750 km and with an annual toll collection of Rs 4,931 crore.

## Peak power demand hits season's high of 235 GW

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's peak power demand hit the season's high of 235.06 GW on Wednesday mainly due to excessive use of cooling appliances like air conditioners and coolers amid severe heat waves in most parts of the country. According to the power ministry data, the peak power demand met or the highest supply in the day is recorded at 235.06 GW on Wednesday, which is the maximum so far in the summer season this year. The all-time high peak power demand of 243.27 GW was recorded in September 2023. The record is expected to be broken during this summer season. Earlier this month, the power ministry projected a peak power demand of 235 GW during daytime and 225 GW during



The power ministry data, the peak power demand met or the highest supply in the day is recorded at 235.06 GW on Wednesday, which is the maximum so far in the summer season this year. The all-time high peak power demand of 243.27 GW was recorded in September 2023.

evening hours for May and 240 GW during daytime and 235 GW during evening hours for June 2024. Besides the power ministry has also projected that peak power demand can hit the 260GW mark during this summer season. The data shows peak power demand was 224.18GW in April 2024, when the country wit-

nessed the onset of the summer season in various parts of the country. It was 221.82GW in March, 222.16GW in February and 223.51GW in January. During May, peak supply hit 233 GW on May 6 and 233.80 GW on May 21. It was 221.42 GW recorded in May 2023. Last week, the peak power supply touched 229.57 GW on

May 18, while it was around 226 GW on May 15, 16 and 17. The peak supply was 229.77 GW on May 4 and 228.71GW on May 20. The industry experts are of the view that power demand could soar further and can easily breach the all time high of 243.27 GW recorded in September 2023.

## Gold plunges Rs 1,050 to Rs 73,550/10 g

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Extending the downside for the second straight session, gold prices sharply tumbled by Rs 1,050 to Rs 73,550 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid a decline in precious metal rates globally. Gold slid sharply following the release of the Federal Reserve's hawkish meeting minutes, which indicated that the US Fed officials are in no rush to cut rates, with "many" questioning



whether a higher-for-longer policy is restrictive enough, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had settled at Rs 74,600 per 10 grams. In addition, silver prices also plummeted by Rs 2,500 to Rs 92,600 per kg. It had

closed at Rs 95,100 per kg in the previous session. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 73,550 per 10 grams, down by Rs 1,050, taking bearish cues from the overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at US\$ 2,375 per ounce, down US\$ 42 from the previous close.



## Investors become richer by Rs 4.28 lakh cr; market cap of BSE-listed firms hits new peak

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth on Thursday went up by Rs 4.28 lakh crore amid the ongoing optimistic trend in equities where the benchmark Sensex hit its lifetime peak. The 30-share BSE Sensex regained the 75,000 level in intra-day trade on Thursday. It climbed 1,196.98 points or 1.61 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 75,418.04. During the day, the Sensex zoomed 1,278.85 points or 1.72 per cent to reach the intra-day high of 75,499.91. The NSE Nifty went up by 369.85 points or 1.64 per cent to settle at 22,967.65. It jumped 395.8 points or 1.75 per cent to 22,993.60 -- the barometer's record intra-day high. Investors' wealth went up by Rs 4,28,602.18 crore with the

market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies reaching an all-time high of Rs 4,20,22,635.90 crore (USD 5.05 trillion). "Markets ended at fresh all-time high amid short-covering, improving investors' sentiment towards the election outcome and healthy macros highlighted by the record dividend payout by RBI," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd. Market-cap of BSE-listed companies too crossed USD 5 trillion making India the 5th country to reach this milestone, he added. The combined market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies hit the historic USD 5 trillion-mark for the first time at the close of trade on Wednesday.

# Leather exporters seek national policy to attract investments

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Apex body for leather and footwear exporters CLE has asked the government to formulate a national policy for the sector with a view to attract investments, boost India's shipments and create jobs. In a letter to Niti Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam, Council for Leather Exports (CLE) said that though there are schemes and support measures at central and state levels, there is a need for holistic development of the entire sector through a national policy. The elements of the proposed policy, it said, can include incentives for setting up of manufacturing units, training of workers, support measures for adoption of sustainable technologies and inno-



There is a need to fine-tune special economic zone (SEZ) policy with a focus on increasing productivity through flexible labour laws, lowering the tax burden for the sale of goods in the domestic market.

vative products. "This policy should cover the entire supply chain of the sector, starting from raw materials to finished products, including processing, product development, marketing, supply chain management, and backward integration," the council

said. Explaining the importance of the policy, CLE Executive Director R Selvam said that the sector needs a national policy as it is a labour-intensive sector, which employs about 4.4 million, with over 85 per cent women. "The sector has a huge socio-

economic benefit. The policy would help the industry in boosting exports and creating huge number of jobs," Selvam said. The council asked the government to implement the production-linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for the entire supply chain of the footwear

and leather industry and also the machinery segment. It added that there is a need to fine-tune special economic zone (SEZ) policy with a focus on increasing productivity through flexible labour laws, lowering the tax burden for the sale of goods in the domestic market. Further, the CLE suggested that the policy should include a blueprint for infrastructure development in all leather and footwear clusters; measures for logistics management; and monetary policy; credit facilities; and insurance coverage. "I would request to frame the policy to facilitate growth and development and provide additional employment opportunities to at least two million youth in the next seven years," CLE Chairman R K Jalan said.

He also called for organising a meeting of global CEOs of major leather products and footwear brands with industry secretaries of states. "Such a meeting will be helpful in attracting more investments from brands," he said adding that there is a demand for setting up plug-and-paly models of factories wherein ready-to-use factory sheds with all required infrastructure and support services are provided by the government. The industry is projected to grow at a CAGR of 18-20 per cent in the next 6 years. Its turnover is projected to reach USD 47 billion by 2030 from USD 16.7 billion in 2023-24. The sector's exports dipped by about 10 per cent to USD 4.3 billion in 2023-24.



## 'Chatting with lively vendors has enriched my travel experience'

A passionate globetrotter, Ekta Mohanani Kamra, who has travelled to different mesmerising locations, gets candid with *The Pioneer* as she shares her travel experiences this week for our *Travelogue* segment.

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Ekta Mohanani Kamra is a passionate globetrotter who has strolled through the beautiful alleys of Paris, danced the night away in Ibiza, discovered the historic charm of the United Kingdom, and soaked up the tropical beauty of Bali, among many other captivating destinations.

For her, travelling is more than just visiting new locations. It allows her to immerse herself in different cultures, meet interesting people, and get new ideas on life. "It's also a moment for self-reflection and determining what is actually important to me. Ultimately, travel enhances my life with amazing experiences and beloved memories," she says in an interview with *The Pioneer*.

As an Indian, she is used to delicious, spicy food, so savouring basic foods like tomato bread or boiled potatoes with Sriracha sauce was a thrill. She adds, "Each cuisine has its own distinct charm, making every meal a brand new adventure." She had an amazing time in Dubai and Abu Dhabi! In Dubai, she went on a desert safari and explored the breathtaking Dubai Miracle Garden. Meanwhile, in Abu Dhabi, "I had the opportunity to visit the breathtaking Qasr Al Watan palace and go kayaking in the enchanting mangroves. Both sites provided an ideal blend of adventure and culture, resulting in an amazing experience."

Aside from that, her journey to Udaipur included an exciting off-the-beaten-path excursion. She proceeded to the calm Chuda Shikar Oudi, which is around 37 kilometers from the city. "There, I took an incredible safari ride and immersed myself in the thrilling animal experience. Later, I enjoyed a delicious meal with my companions under the beautiful stars. The afternoon was packed with the thrill of a Polo

match, and I finished the day with a fun night of dancing."

Las Palmas, the vibrant capital of Gran Canaria in Spain's Canary Islands, is one such city that always surprises tourists with its culture and traditions. She says, "The Carnival of Las Palmas was a highlight, with extravagant parades, vibrant costumes, and energetic music that filled the streets for a week. I really enjoyed immersing myself in the local celebrations, where traditional Canarian music, with its own folk songs and instruments, created an unforgettable ambience."

She has not encountered any terrible situations, but one such occasion was caused by heavy traffic. She relates, "When I travelled to Bali during peak travel periods, the traffic congestion in South Kuta, Legian, Seminyak, and Ubud was absolutely insane!"

Interaction with locals frequently provides the tourist with information about the location. "Interacting with locals on my excursions has been quite enlightening. Whether it's chatting with colourful merchants at a crowded market or seeking advice from kind strangers, the genuine warmth and hospitality I've encountered have definitely enhanced all of my travels, making them unforgettable."

The most important thing to have while visiting new areas is a book travel guide, which may sound traditional, but she believes it comes in handy while travelling. "I enjoy reading short travel guides that provide unique insights into local culture and history, as well as practical recommendations and detailed maps. These guides are ideal for anyone planning a quick city getaway or a longer vacation," she says in conclusion.

### Travelogue



## Tobacco-free tomorrow



We live in an era where there is a strong emphasis on global health awareness campaigns, and Anti-Tobacco Day serves as a timely reminder of the ongoing issues faced by rising tobacco smoking among individuals. While the dangers to respiratory health are well-known, the impact on vital organs like the kidneys remains less discussed yet is equally concerning.

### UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF TOBACCO ON KIDNEY HEALTH

Tobacco is a significant risk factor for chronic kidney disease (CKD). The World Health Organisation (WHO) helps to point out the direct link between smoking and an increased risk of CKD and end-stage renal disease (ESRD). A report by the National Kidney Foundation further reveals that smokers are more susceptible to proteinuria, a sign of potential kidney damage. The relative risk of proteinuria and CKD-ESRD with smoking ranges from 2.0 to 3.2, which is alarming. Further, smoking is not only an independent risk factor but also a risk amplifier for CKD in patients with diabetes and hypertension. Interestingly, cessation of smoking reduces the risk of progression to end stage kidney failure. Thus, raising awareness about this issue is crucial.

### INDIA'S TOBACCO PRODUCTION AND DIVERSIFICATION EFFORTS

In addition to being a major consumer of tobacco, India stands as the second-largest producer globally, manufacturing 761,335 tons. The majority of this production is concentrated in three states, employing nearly 25 million people across the production value chain.

Recognising the health and economic implications, the Indian Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation, and Farmers Welfare introduced a crop diversification scheme under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana program. The government reported a diversion of 67,512 hectares, or 8.7% of designated tobacco-growing land, since 2015-2016. In 2022, India's unmanufactured tobacco production stood at approximately 2 thousand tons, representing 13.4% of the global production of 5.78 million tons. This marks an 11.9% increase from the 690.0 thousand tons produced in 2010. Moreover, India utilised an estimated 3 thousand hectares for tobacco cultivation in 2022, a 4.3% decrease.

### THE NEED FOR ANTI-TOBACCO INITIATIVES

Despite increasing awareness, tobacco-related illnesses, including kidney diseases, continue to rise. A WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic in 2023 exposed the tobacco industry's tactics to undermine smoke-free regulations. From discrediting evidence on

second-hand smoke to promoting Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) as "clean" alternatives, these tactics demand vigilance from policymakers and the public alike. The industry also influences policy-making through lobbying, aiming to weaken tobacco control measures and undermine existing laws by promoting ENDS (Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems) through traditional and social media. Regulators must remain vigilant against these tactics to protect public health.

### DRIVING CHANGE THROUGH AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

In the last 15 years, there has been significant progress in implementing smoke-free measures globally. In 2007, only 15 countries were believed to have 100% smoke-free cafés, pubs, and bars, a number that rose to 88. Despite this, these venues remain the least protected under national laws. Meanwhile, 81 countries had smoke-free healthcare facilities, and 78 had smoke-free educational facilities. These numbers increased to 142 and 149 countries, respectively. This significant increase underscores the growing global commitment to creating healthier environments by reducing exposure to second-hand smoke in crucial public spaces.

Sensitisation about the ill effects of smoking in schools and colleges is pivotal. Manufacturers of cigarettes and tobacco products need to be more explicit in displaying the hazards of smoking.

### EMBRACING A SMOKE-FREE FUTURE

There's a growing trend to extend smoke-free laws across various public venues and outdoor spaces globally. We must empower people with information on the ill effects of smoking and the benefits of quitting. Hence, by providing accessible and effective smoking cessation support services such as counselling, medications, and hotlines, one can ensure that these materials are widely available and cheap to all those who want to quit smoking.

Therefore, it is essential to create a smoke-free world that demands collaborative efforts and robust policies. As we mark Anti-Tobacco Day this year, we can renew our commitment to safeguarding public health and fostering a tobacco-free environment for future generations.

(The author, Dr. Manjunath Doshetty, is a nephrologist at NephroPlus.)

## 'When a woman runs a show, there's a different perspective'

Actress Sai Tamhankar, who has created her niche in the Hindi and Marathi film industries, speaks with *The Pioneer* as she speaks of her much-anticipated *Dabba Cartel* and more insights on her working style.

TEJAL SINHA

Sai Tamhankar has been in the film industry for 16 years, yet she is still relatively new to Bollywood. How, you wonder? Well, every time that she's on screen, she certainly brings a new face and new life to every character that she plays. For instance, her upcoming project, *Dabba Cartel*, has been creating quite a buzz ever since its announcement. Her character brings us a never-seen-before avatar of the talented actress.

With the immense anticipation for the series *Dabba Cartel*, Sai herself has also been very excited. Basically, it was the story that inspired her. And then, of course, she says, "Shibani Dandekar is the showrunner of the show. I think when a woman runs a show, it brings a different perspective, and also, this entire thing is led by

women. I really like when women drive something; it becomes multi-dimensional." *Dabba Cartel* is a riveting tale that propels five ordinary women from their routine existence in a quiet colony of Thane into the murky, unpredictable life of the underworld. A woman-led crime drama is not something that we generally get to see, and that was something that intrigued her pretty much. Sai had also gained much traction for her role as Shama, Kriti Sanon's friend, in the award-winning film *Mimi*, which was about a surrogate mother. While in the film she played her friend, it was in *Anubandh* that she herself played the character of a surrogate mother. She feels that it has certainly changed her perspective on motherhood and children over the years. "Earlier, I would love only children who would smile and be happy children, but after doing *Anubandh*, I started admiring and

appreciating seeing children in a different light. If there is a human unconditional love, it is motherhood. There is nothing else in the world. *Mujhe aisa lagta hai ki Maa apne bacche ko pyar karti hai woh unconditional hota hai* (I feel that a mother's love for her child is unconditional), and we don't see such unconditional love in human form. I think the human race is very selfish, and we think about ourselves and never think of how challenging it is for the person who is the mother. At some point, they just lose their self-identity and only look after their family. It isn't something forced; it happens naturally. That's something magical."

She's always been someone who says 'what's next' and does not delve into the glory of time. "I am always curious and want to work; I cannot sit still. If I am sitting at home for more than four days, I get really restless. I love my work from the bottom of my heart, and I am the happiest person when I am on the set. So, sometimes my friends and my loved ones have to make me realise that, Listen, girl, slow down, take a deep breath, let it sink in, appreciate a little how far you have reached."

In fact, she's someone who is rarely pleased with herself! "These are rare moments, but there are. These moments come once in a blue moon, and I like the fact that it is hard to please myself. It's only about me. *Dusro ko appreciate karne ki bari tho fatt se hota hai khud ko appreciate karne mein bahut time lagta hai* (Appreciating others happens quickly, but it takes a lot of time to appreciate

yourself), and when that moment comes, it is really satisfying, it is reassuring, and it is self-motivation does not come every day, but when it comes, it's really nice."

She even recalls a time when she literally thought of giving up and leaving everything to pursue her MBA degree. However, her destiny had different plans. And she says it's very important for one to accept their sadness, just as one accepts happiness and explores the different colours of life.

Going ahead, she recalls a time when she was extremely frightened of being typecast. "I was extremely scared after *Hunter* because I was being offered similar kinds of roles. Thankfully, I waited until I got something different than that role, and that was *Love Sonia*. So yes, it's a natural fear, and you should be able to maneuver these things or carve your own paths among these difficulties." As an actor, she's someone who has no fixed process for choosing a project. It could be due to its story, set-up, director being your friend, or a script that is challenging and brings you a different part than the ones played in the past. However, over the years, Sai, who has *Agni*, *Ground Zero*, an untitled web series on Hotstar, *Dabba Cartel*, and a few Marathi projects, says on a concluding note, "Over the years, what I have realised over time is that it is very important to what phase you are in in your life. Sometimes you choose projects as per your mental space, and what you are going through in life can also sometimes determine the choices."





# what's brewing?



Jasmine



Mahadev Lighting Studio has opened its door in Jambagh, Hyderabad. The showroom caters to discerning clients looking for unique and opulent lighting solutions to enhance their living spaces. The event was graced by several socialites from the city.



Vinita



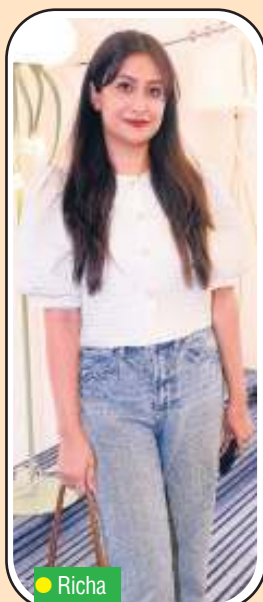
Kushboo



Lekha



Namita



Richa



Monika



Shikha



Nilima



Juweria

**PARTY**

Photos by- SV Chary

Merck in India hosted 'The Future of GenAI' at the Merck IT Centre (MITC). The event was a part of Merck's initiative 'A Day at MITC' where the young IT and technology enthusiasts get an opportunity to meet and interact with the tech leaders from the industry to engage in a conversation and have a sneak peek into the workplaces of the future. The panelists included Abhay Tandon, Co-founder & Chief Business Officer at Monet Work; Prathamesh Karmalkar, Lead Data Scientist- AI, NLP/LLM/ GenAI & Text Analytics at Merck Data & AI Organisation; Amit Naik, Editor of Analytics India Magazine and Dr. Rajan Kashyap, Assistant Professor at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences.



Navanaami Projects Private Ltd. announced its architectural magnum opus - The Megaleio - in the city. Planned as a luxurious residential project, Megaleio is envisioned to be its flagship showcase of thoughtful design thinking and a testimony of its relentless pursuit for quality, innovative designs, and true luxury architecture.

Intellect Design Arena Ltd, announces the launch of the Intellect Digital Core for Cooperative Banks in India. This comprehensive, enterprise-grade banking technology suite is composed of eMACH.ai, the world's largest open finance platform engineered by the 'First Principles' thinking for financial institutions to design future-ready technology solutions. Drawing on the composable and contextual core banking technology, Intellect brings the same expertise for cooperative banks as a Digital India initiative.

MNJ Hospital recently completed 100 robotic-assisted surgery (RAS) surgeries since the installation of the Da Vinci RAS system. In regards to this, Dr. Mukta Srinivasulu, Director of MNJ Hospital, Hyderabad, emphasised the significance of integrating advanced medical technologies, such as robotic-assisted surgery, into the curriculum for medical postgraduate students.



With an aim to solidify its growth in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana State, iQOO showcased the all-new Full Day, Fully Loaded smartphone, the iQOO Z9x, in Hyderabad. The brand's remarkable surge in the state has made it the top contributor to iQOO sales, achieving a 35% year-over-year volume growth.

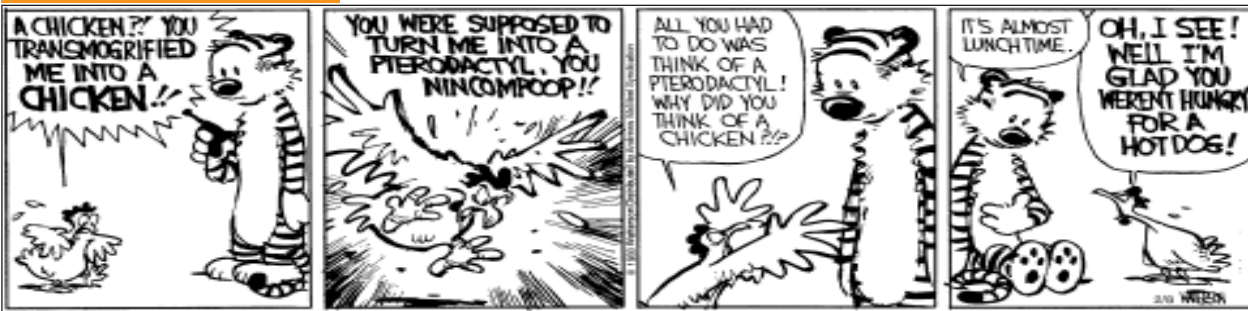


**FUN**

**ARCHIE**



**CALVIN AND HOBBS**



**GARFIELD**



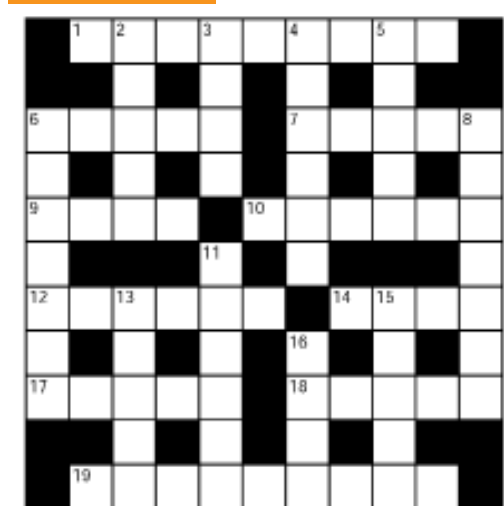
**REALITY CHECK**



**SPEED BUMP**



**CROSSWORD**



**NANCY**



**SUDOKU**

8			17					
	7		8					1
2							5	
1	8	3		5			7	
			1	4				
5	6			7	3		9	
	3							6
6			7			9		
		2	8					3

**Yesterday's solution**

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

**Rules**

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

**ACROSS**

- This type of word describes something
- The one most recently bought
- A pale purple colour
- A round mark
- Move in time to music
- Smashed into small pieces
- Got to
- Stretchy stuff in clothes
- A meal
- The throbbing of your heart felt at your wrist
- Stick things together with this

**DOWN**

- Uncooked bread
- Comes to a finish
- Use a feather to make someone laugh
- A planet



**GINGER MEGGS**







### Dhanush set to collaborate with Manjummel Boys director

In a confirmation that has set tongues wagging in the film industry, it's been informed to us by the sources that acclaimed director Chidambaram, best known for his work on the hit film *Manjummel Boys*, is all set to helm a new project starring none other than the multi-talented Dhanush.

This exciting venture is being produced under the banner of Gopuram Films, adding further anticipation to what promises to be a cinematic delight.

While fans eagerly await this collaboration, Dhanush is currently immersed in his filming commitments. Presently, he's busy shooting for *#Kubera*, and once this project wraps up, he's slated to dive into the next phases of *NEEK* and *Raayan*.

The busy schedule doesn't end there for Dhanush, as he's already charted out his future

plans with precision. Following the completion of *NEEK* and *Raayan*, the versatile actor has his sights set on two highly anticipated projects: the much-talked-about Ilayaraja biopic and a film by the acclaimed director Rajkumar Periyasamy.

With a lineup of such diverse and intriguing projects, Dhanush's fans have every reason to be excited. Whether it's his remarkable performances or his knack for choosing captivating roles, Dhanush continues to captivate audiences with each new venture.

Indeed, the confirmation of his collaboration with director Chidambaram only adds to the anticipation surrounding Dhanush's upcoming projects.

As the actor gears up for a series of big releases, including *#AO2*, the anticipation among fans is palpable.

# Prabhas: In my younger days, I fashioned myself on Kamal sir

Prabhas says Nag Ashwin's Kalki 2898 AD has turned out to be a lucky project for him as the film gave him the opportunity to collaborate with two stalwarts of Indian cinema, Amitabh Bachchan and Kamal Haasan.

Bachchan and Haasan play pivotal roles in the multilingual magnum opus that was greenlit as Project K in 2020.

The movie, which promises to transport audiences to a time never seen before in Indian cinema, is produced by Aswini Dutt, the founder of Vjayanthi Movies.

"I'm thankful to Amitabh sir and Kamal sir; as they agreed to be part of Kalki 2898 AD, they both have inspired the whole of India. I'm very lucky to act with these two legends. I think Amitabh sir, who hails from

North India, has earned a huge fan base in the South, and we all should be proud of him. Kamal Sir is also a big star. They both have fans all over India," Prabhas said at a promotional event for Kalki 2898 AD here on Wednesday night.

The 44-year-old actor recalled that as a child, he used to dress up like Haasan's characters from his movies.

"In my younger days, I fashioned myself on Kamal sir and also tried to get my clothes stitched, like the ones he wore in the 1983 film *Sagara Sangamam*," he said.

At the event, the makers introduced 'Bujji', a life-size futuristic car, which is driven by Prabhas in Kalki 2898 AD. The actor arrived at the event, which was attended by over 15,000 fans, in the customised car. Kalki 2898 AD also stars Deepika

Padukone and Disha Patani, and Prabhas expressed gratitude to both actors for being part of the movie.

"Deepika is the most gorgeous and beautiful superstar; she is doing international films and ads, and we are lucky to have her in the film," Prabhas said.

The Baahubali star said he admires his producer Dutt's passion and courage for making one of the costliest films in India with Kalki 2898 AD.

"He (Dutt) is the only producer who has been in the industry for the last 50 years, and imagine his second movie being with NTR. His two daughters also have the same passion, and we all should be inspired by them," he said.

Kalki 2898 AD will be released in theatres on June 27.



### Kajal's Satyabhama releasing on June 7

Queen of Masses' Kajal Aggarwal, in the lead role of the movie *Satyabhama*, is getting ready for a grand theatrical release worldwide on June 7. Kajal is portraying a powerful police officer, and this movie is attracting interest from all sections of the audience, especially among the female audience. Kajal's words during the promotions highlight that this is a movie women should watch. The female audience is eagerly waiting for *Satyabhama*.

Naveen Chandra plays the pivotal role of Amarendra in *Satyabhama*. This film is produced by Bobby Tikka and Srinivasa Rao Takkalapalli under the banner of Aurum Arts. Major film director Sashikiran Tikka served as the presenter and provided the screenplay. This crime thriller is directed by Suman Chikkala. The teaser and lyrical songs released so far from *Satyabhama* are receiving a positive response. The trailer for this film will be released today by Natasimham Nandamuri Balakrishna.

## Pushpa 2 duet song to release on May 29

Mythri Movie Makers, in collaboration with Sukumar Writings, has once again set ablaze the entertainment landscape with the innovative release of the announcement video for the second single from *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, titled *Sooseki (Couple Song)*. In this creatively crafted video, Rashmika Mandanna is seen on the movie set, preparing for a shot. Keshava asks her character, Srivalli, about the second single from *Pushpa*, prompting Srivalli to sing the song's lyrics. The video then dramatically reveals the iconic *Pushpa* brand logo, announcing that the song will be released on May 29th at 11:07 a.m.

Following the teaser, the release of the first song from *Pushpa 2* further amplified the excitement. This song became a massive hit across all languages, dominating music charts and garnering immense appreciation from fans and critics alike. The success of the song underscores the soaring anticipation for the film and the widespread appeal of its music.



The promotional teaser for *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, aptly titled *#Pushpa2TheRule* teaser, has stormed its way to the zenith of YouTube trends, seizing the coveted #1 spot for an unprecedented 138 hours. Garnering a staggering 110 million+ views and an astonishing 15.5 million+ likes, the teaser

stands as a testament to the electrifying anticipation for this cinematic masterpiece.

*Pushpa 2: The Rule* boasts an exceptionally talented crew. Directed by the visionary Sukumar, whose previous works have set new benchmarks in the industry, the film promises a compelling narrative and stunning visuals. The music, composed by the maestro Devi Sri Prasad, is expected to deliver unforgettable melodies and powerful scores that resonate deeply with audiences. Starring the charismatic Allu Arjun in the titular role and the talented Rashmika Mandanna, the film is set to offer stellar performances and captivating chemistry. Their combined star power, along with Sukumar's direction and Devi Sri Prasad's music, ensures that *Pushpa 2: The Rule* will be a cinematic extravaganza that enthralled audiences worldwide. Mark your calendars for August 15th, as *Pushpa 2: The Rule* is set to hit theaters on this date, promising an unforgettable cinematic experience.

## Seerat Kapoor, Sharwanand reunite after a decade in Oh Manamey

Actress Seerat Kapoor is set to star alongside actor Sharwanand in an upcoming film directed by Sriram Aditya and produced by People Media Factory. This film marks a significant reunion for the two actors, who last worked together almost a decade ago in the hit movie *Run Raja Run*.

The movie has now been officially named *Oh Manamey*, generating significant buzz and excitement among fans. This rom-com promises a delightful and heartwarming experience.

The release of the teaser for *Oh Manamey* has further amplified the anticipation surrounding the film. Audiences, already thrilled by the announcement of Seerat and Sharwanand's reunion, have seen their excitement skyrocket with the teaser's debut. Also, the songs are choreographed by none other than Raju Sundaram, who is also the mastermind of the *Run Raja Run* songs. He is

one of the top choreographers in the industry.

The trailer offers a tantalising glimpse into the film's charming narrative and the palpable chemistry between the lead actors, setting high expectations for its upcoming release.

*Oh Manamey* is shaping up to be one of the most eagerly awaited movies in recent times. The official naming of the film has added a new layer of interest, giving fans a concrete title to rally around. Sriram Aditya's direction, combined with the proven on-screen synergy between Seerat and Sharwanand, suggests that the film will be a standout in the rom-com genre.

As excitement continues to build, Seerat's fan following is eagerly waiting to see her first glimpse with regards to the movie, anticipating a charming and heartwarming story that showcases the undeniable chemistry of its lead actors.



### Manchu Lakshmi plays Jwala in Yakshini

Another intriguing web series, *Yakshini*, is coming from the collaboration of Arka Media Works and Disney plus Hotstar. This web series is produced by Shobu Yarlagadda and Prasad Devineni. Vedhika, Manchu Lakshmi, Rahul Vijay, and Ajay are playing the lead roles. Director Teja Marni is helming the *Yakshini* series.

The character Jwala, played by Manchu Lakshmi in the *Yakshini* web series, was intro-

duced today through a special poster titled 'Mysterious Jwala'. Featuring elements of fantasy, romance, and comedy, *Yakshini* promises to offer a new experience to the audience.

Arka Media Works has produced this series with significant production values, realising director Teja Marni's vision. The *Yakshini* web series is set to stream in Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Hindi, and Telugu in June.



## Shruti Haasan confesses break-up speculations

The ever-charming Shruti Haasan not long ago engaged in a candid and interactive Q&A session with her Instagram followers, providing a glimpse into her personal life while addressing a myriad of queries. Amidst the various questions that flooded in during the session held today, May 23, one topic stood out: her relationship status.

Addressing the curiosity surrounding her personal life, Shruti Haasan took a candid approach to responding to fans' inquiries. In a moment of openness and honesty, the *Salaar* actress acknowledged the ongoing speculations about her breakup with ex-boyfriend Santanu Hazarika. Without hesitation, she revealed her current relationship status, stating, "I don't like answering these questions, but I am entirely single. I am willing to mingle, only working and enjoying my life. Bye, Enough."

The revelation comes amidst heightened speculation and gossip circulating in the media and among fans regarding her romantic life. Shruti's willingness to address the topic head-on during the Instagram Q&A session showcases her candid nature and openness with her fans. While the actress continues to enchant audiences with her on-screen performances and versatile talent, her candid interactions with fans on social media add a personal touch, allowing them to connect with her on a deeper level. As Shruti Haasan navigates through both her personal and professional endeavors, her fans eagerly await her upcoming projects and continue to shower her with love and support.

## Anup Rubens has his hands full



who is enjoying top form is busy with multiple projects and is set to offer back-to-back musical treats with his upcoming bunch of films.

Meanwhile, the evergreen movie *Manam*, for which Anup Rubens provided a blockbuster album, completes 10 years after its release today. The makers are holding special screens across the Telugu states on the occasion. Anup Rubens shared a video of him playing the *Manam* tune on the keyboard, which takes us into a trance. The video is going viral on social media with a humongous response.

Currently, Anup Rubens is working on action king Arjun Sarja's Pan India movie. He is scoring music for Gowri Ronanki's project. He is also working on a project being produced by AK Entertainment, and is also part of Sumanth's next film, directed by Santhosh. He reunited with Aadi Saikumar, for whom he provided many chartbuster albums. The film *Krishna from Brindavanam* is directed by Veerabhadram Chowdary. Anup Rubens also signed Akash Puri's new movie with Vijay Konda.

The music director, who is also in talks for some other projects, will reveal them once everything is finalised.

Music plays a crucial role in the outcome of movies. Films that are musically successful have high chances of doing well at the box office as well. In fact, chartbuster songs help create buzz. Anup Rubens has given many classic hits such as *Jai, Ishq, Gunde Jaari Gallanthayyinde, Manam, Heart Attack, Temper, Soggade Chinni Nayana, Bangaraju, Gopala Gopala, Nene Raju Nene Mantri, and 30 Rojullo Preminchadam Ela*. His love, emotional, and melodic songs will always be catchy and indelible to us. Now, the sensational composer





# SRH big hitters up against RR's spin stars in battle of nerves for place in IPL final

PTI ■ CHENNAI

IPL's best power-hitters Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma will face a very different challenge in wily spinners Yuzvendra Chahal and Ravichandran Ashwin when Sunrisers Hyderabad take on Rajasthan Royals in a high-octane second Qualifier here on Friday.

"Travis' as the duo is affectionately called by the fans have taken power-hitting to a new level. Head (533 runs at 199.62) and Abhishek (470 at 207.04) have hit 72 sixes apart from 96 boundaries between them. If that's not enough, they have a swashbuckler in Heinrich Klaasen (413 runs at 180), who also has 34 maximums to his credit.

But playing on an Uppal shirtfront that resembled a

national highway or at the Kotla or Wankhede is completely from playing at the Chepauk where the strip will be sticky in nature.

The ball stops and stroke-makers do have a tough time when it comes to hitting through the line.

Ashwin, who has played all his cricket at this ground, knows the strip like the back of his hand and his form has improved towards the back-end of the tournament.

With the country's best leg-spinner Chahal for company, Royals would be hoping that Head, Abhishek and Klaasen can be disposed off quickly to gain control of the proceedings.

As for their bowling, the onus would once again be on T Natarajan, who has been SRH's top wicket-taker this season,

and playing on his home turf here, he would love to exploit the conditions.

Also, the experienced duo of Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Cummins have a lot to deal with as the former has been wicket-less in his last two games.

SRH's problems lie in not having two quality spinners. Mayank Markande is mediocre at best and Shahbaz Ahmed's primary skill is willow-wielding, not bowling slow left-arm orthodox tweakers.

As for RR, the side finally ended its five-game winless streak, thanks to its all-round show against RCB.

In batting, the top-order displayed some positive signs, especially Yashasvi Jaiswal, and he would love to continue the form ahead of the T20 World Cup in the Americas next



month. However, skipper Sanju Samson will have to do better, given that he hasn't crossed the 20-run mark in the last three contests.

In the middle order, Dhruv Jurel will be under pressure, having failed to enter the double digits in his last two outings.

The side would also be relying on its Caribbean game-changers Shimron Hetmyer and West Indies T20 skipper Rovman Powell for some power-hitting that they displayed against RCB.

Riyan Parag, who has displayed some serious form this term, is also one of their bankable batters.

**SQUADS:**  
**SRH:** Abhishek Sharma, Travis Head, Heinrich Klaasen (wk), Aiden Markram, Abdul Samad, Nitish Reddy, Shahbaz

Ahmed, Pat Cummins (c), Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jaydev Unadkat, T Natarajan, Mayank Markande, Umran Malik, Anmolpreet Singh, Glenn Phillips (wk), Rahul Tripathi, Washington Sundar, Uppendra Yadav (wk), Jhathavedh Subramanyan, Sanvir Singh, Vijayakanth, Viyaskanth, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Marco Jansen, Akash Maharaj Singh and Mayank Agarwal.

**RR:** Sanju Samson (c & wk), Abid Mushtaq, Avesh Khan, Dhruv Jurel, Donovan Ferreira, Kuldeep Sen, Kunal Singh Rathore, Nandre Burger, Navdeep Saini, Ravichandran Ashwin, Riyan Parag, Sandeep Sharma, Shimron Hetmyer, Shubham Dube, Rovman Powell, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Trent Boult, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Yuzvendra Chahal and Tanush Kotian.



## We need bowlers with specific skill set of bowling at Chinnaswamy: RCB head coach Flower

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Raw pace alone will never be enough to win T20 games consistently at Chinnaswamy where bowlers with different skill-sets, executing a specific plan will be required in RCB set-up, head coach Andy Flower said after his team's exit from IPL Eliminator.

While RCB had a brilliant run at the back-end with six straight wins and qualified for the 'Eliminator', the team lost most of its games at the Chinnaswamy with none of the pacers — Mohammed Siraj (ER 9.18), Lockie Ferguson (ER 10.62), Yash Dayal (ER 9.14), Reece Topley (ER 11.200), Karn Sharma (ER 10.58) haven't exactly set the stage on fire.

"You certainly need highly skillful bowlers at (M) Chinnaswamy (Stadium). Simply pace is not going to be the answer there. You need skilful, intelligent bowlers and people that can bowl to really specific plans at Chinnaswamy," Flower said.

With the mega auction scheduled to take place before next IPL, Flower wants RCB to pick specific kind of players.

"I don't really want to talk about that stuff yet - I'm still digesting what's happened in this game. (But) I do think though as part answer to your question the Chinnaswamy has some particular qualities that we need to be able to exploit," Flower said when asked what the franchise's approach will be for the next year.

**P O W E R - H I T T E R S**

**NEEDED:** On batting front, Flower wants players with better power game, who can keep up the tempo.

"We have all seen how the power game has affected T20 cricket recently. On the batting front, you certainly need to recruit batsmen with that sort of power that can keep up that sort of tempo," he added.

**SUPPORTS 'IMPACT PLAYER' RULE:** Flower batted for the 'Impact Player' rule saying that it allows two Indian players to participate in a game.

"It has got a few positives about it absolutely. Now there's an extra Indian playing and that's a good thing for Indian cricket. It has catalysed the batsmen," Flower said.

"It has given them a little bit of a safety net and they've taken off and attacked the game a little more this year."

The left-hander believes that even if the rule is done away with, batters won't back away from the ultra-aggressive approach seen this year.

"Even if you took the impact player rule away, I believe batsmen will still retain that very aggressive game that they're playing at the moment because they've proved to themselves that they can play that aggressively and stay in," Flower said.

**DON'T SEE REASON THAT MAXWELL CAN'T TURN THINGS AROUND:** Flower backed the struggling Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell to turn things around after he was dismissed for a duck and finished with a mere 52 runs in 10 matches.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Dinesh Karthik's international career was a classic case of what could have been after the arrival of Mahendra Singh Dhoni but on Wednesday, when he said goodbye to the game at the end of his team's IPL campaign, it was from a stage he made his own over the past 17 years.

The Eliminator between his Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Rajasthan Royals ended up being Karthik's swansong, bringing down curtains on a 20-year-old career marked by a series of comebacks across formats.

Twenty six Tests, 94 ODIs and 60 T20s over two decades don't make for eye-popping numbers but the forever fidgety 38-year-old managed to stay relevant till the very end despite spending more time in the commentary box than on the field over the past couple of years.

Ahead of the T20 World Cup squad announcement, Karthik forced himself into the selection debate for the wicket-keeper batter's role with head-turning performances for RCB but that one final comeback wasn't meant to be as selectors rightly went for younger talent.

While he was commenting on the India-England Test series in February-March, Karthik had made up his mind on retirement but the world only got to know when Michael Atherton let it slip in a podcast with the Tamil Nadu stumper.

Having played for as many as six

## Dinesh Karthik: Man of comebacks and Dhoni's understudy calls time on IPL and international career

teams in the IPL since the tournament's inception in 2008, Karthik can be proud of his record in the world's premier T20 league.

He finished as an IPL winner with close to 5000 runs over 17 seasons besides taking 145 catches and effecting 37 stumpings.

He batted at various positions all these years but his days at the RCB as a finisher over the past three seasons stood out.

In a format increasingly ruled by power-hitters, Karthik relied on his experience, game awareness and touch to find the boundaries at will.

His 330 runs at a strike rate of 183 in 2022 earned him a recall to the Indian team for the T20 World Cup but that happened to be his last time in national colours.

He scored at an even higher clip this season but despite making himself available for the upcoming World Cup, he deep down knew his comeback saga with Indian cricket had come to an end.

**KARTHIK HAD HIS MOMENTS IN STOP-START INDIA CAREER:** The Chennai-born cricketer was only 19 when he made his India debut in an ODI against England at Lord's in September 2004.



He announced his arrival on the big stage with a spectacular stumping of opposition skipper Michael Vaughan.

Three months later, he made his Test debut against Australia but his international career could never really take off due to middling performances and rise of Dhoni.

With Dhoni a certainty in the playing eleven, Karthik was asked to open the batting on the tour of England in 2007 and he made a standout contribution in the team's rare Test series win away from home.

Between 2010 and 2017, Karthik remained sought after in the world of

IPL but his stock fell sharply in the national team.

He got back in the scheme of things following India's loss to Pakistan in the 2017 Champions Trophy final.

Between 2017 and 2019, Karthik regularly played for India in the white-ball formats. His memorable knocks included the iconic last ball six that helped India seal the 2018 Nidahas T20 Trophy in Colombo.

Couple of months later, he made a Test comeback after eight years but that was short-lived.

Karthik was seen as a certainty for the 2019 ODI World Cup but by his own

admission, he was shocked to know about his exclusion from the home series against Australia, ahead of the ICC event in England.

The selectors surprisingly brought him back for the World Cup where he only got three games, including the ill-fated semifinal against New Zealand.

The final chapter of his comeback story unfolded after a stellar IPL in 2022 but like on previous instances, Karthik could not seize the opportunity and could only manage only 14 runs in three innings at the T20 World Cup in Australia.

By his own admission, his India career could have been so much more but there was no shame in being overshadowed by someone like Dhoni.

The consistency that he lacked in international cricket was his friend in the IPL and his significant contribution was duly recognised by his RCB teammates on Wednesday night including the great Virat Kohli who was the first one to acknowledge his long career.

Karthik will be back in the commentary box soon and could be seen playing the T20 leagues outside the IPL.

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Ravichandran Ashwin does not want to single out impact player rule as the only contributing factor in high scores being recorded several times this IPL, as the premier India spinner attributes it to the evolution of batters.

Ashwin also has urged bowlers to start working on their batting skills in order to meet the demands of the game.

The season has witnessed some astonishing batting records -- teams crossed the 200-run mark for a staggering 41 times whereas the 250-mark was breached on eight instances in the league round.

IPL's record highest team total of 287 was also registered in the ongoing edition.

"Even if the impact player rule wasn't there, scores would be this high," Ashwin said on JioCinema Match Centre Live after their four-wicket win over Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the

## High scores in IPL due to batters skills, not impact player rule: Ravichandran Ashwin

IPL Eliminator, here on Wednesday.

"In my opinion, batters have more confidence and pitches everywhere have been standardised."

"In the future, all bowlers will need to be hitters because we know that no matter how well we bowl, we also need to be able to bat. The game is headed in that direction," he said.

While Indian captain Rohit Sharma has criticised the rule, arguing that it hampers the development of all-rounders in the country, star batter Virat Kohli has opined that it disrupts the balance of the game.

The rule was formally adopted in the 2023 edition of the IPL after a trial in the Syed



Mushtaq Ali Trophy domestic T20s.

The BCCI secretary Jay Shah recently said the impact player rule was implemented on a 'test case' basis and is not

a permanent one. Shah has also said the board authorities will talk to the stakeholders before taking a final call on the debatable rule.

Coming off a gruelling five-

match home Test series against England where he was the leading wicket-taker in India's 4-1 win, Ashwin said he had to overcome an abdominal injury and started bowling in his elements only in the business end of the competition.

"My tournament has gone in two halves. The first half was coming off the Test series, so my body didn't feel fresh. My arm speed wasn't there and I also had an injury, an abdomen tear. I played through the injury but didn't get much bowling time or repetitions.

Ashwin was adjudged man-of-the-match for his miserly 2/19 that restricted Royal Challengers Bengaluru to 172/8.

"I am someone who depends on bowling repetitions. Over the last 6-7 games, I feel like my rhythm came back. I was able to bowl off spin. I changed my action slightly. My plan was simple. I came with a single-minded focus on changing the line and length of my deliveries and it was executed well," added Ashwin.

Ashwin has also hailed Riyan Parag's maturity and said the Assam batter has come a long way since making his debut as an 18-year-old in IPL 2019.

"It's important to give batters, especially junior batters, role clarity. Riyan came into the team as a 17-year-old child and he's matured over the years, getting role clarity for the first time this season.

"I never doubted his ability. The shot he hit over the covers tonight, not many batters can hit that. Based on his talent and how his season has gone, I think he can reach wherever he wants to," he said.

# Avesh Khan Way: Sleep well, eat well and bowl well

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Eat, sleep. Bowl and repeat.

Avesh Khan has simplified the mantra of success and it is paying dividends as one saw his performances during key games for Rajasthan Royals in this year's IPL.

With 16 wickets from 15 matches, mostly played on flat decks, an economy rate of 9.81 is praiseworthy and his control at the death has made him look a different bowler this time around.

"I have simplified my cricket - I have to sleep (well), I have to eat (well) and I have to bowl (well) and there is nothing else to it," said Avesh, who took a three-for to help Rajasthan Royals reach Qualifier 2 in IPL here on Wednesday.

"The more you would think... cricket is like a circle, the smaller you keep it, the better it will be. You expand this circle more and you will

find (more and more) gaps," he added.

"This has changed my life too and also impacted my cricket," he said.

The 27-year-old, who is among India's reserve players for next month's T20 World Cup in the Caribbean and the USA, on Wednesday revealed that analysing his strengths and weaknesses after a heavy domestic season followed by IPL last year helped him find the better version of himself.

"Last year when I played for LSG, I had played 10 matches of Ranji Trophy wherein I bowled about 320 overs. The body was not responding to the efforts I was putting in," he said.

He also needed to be aware that playing too much can cause wear and tear.

"It happens, sometimes as a bowler you just end up playing so much. Even in the IPL, you may think that it's a four-over game or a 20-over



game but still, there is a lot of effort that goes in. The body starts giving up and there are mental and physical fatigues too," he added.

"Your execution could go off the mark, but if you are mentally and physically fresh you will be able to execute better. I was not fresh last year so I did not have a successful IPL. I (also) realised later that there is no good in taking so much tension," he added.

Avesh said going back to the drawing board and working with his coach in order to work on his bowling action and setting up right routines for training and recovery have helped him immensely.

"I could not find the answers back then, but after the IPL last year, I analysed that there were some technical changes in my bowling. I worked with my coach Anand Rajan and I did well with him," he said.

"I played in the Deodhar Trophy and Duleep Trophy

which was followed by my comeback into the Indian team."

Avesh said leaving LSG for Rajasthan Royals also had specific benefits for him as a bowler.

"I understood my body and when the trade was made this year, I was also happy because anything can happen to you at any time in IPL," said Avesh.

"The trade was not in my hands, but I took it positively, and Rajasthan's (home) ground is also quite big, the team is also good... as a bowler you need such margins," he said.

While acknowledging that various methods help player develop mental toughness, Avesh said there is no better teacher than going through the grind regularly.

"I get up only at 2:00pm on match days so there is no time to think that much," Avesh replied when asked what he does to develop mental

toughness.

"You can do whatever you can to build mental toughness but until you are not in a position to have faced the challenges repeatedly, you cannot overcome them. I acknowledge all that, but when (as a batter) you need 10-12 runs in an over, you forget everything and focus on execution," he added.

The pacer acknowledged RR's dugout was tense during a close finish against RCB in the Eliminator here but he said the team perhaps remembered head coach Kumar Sangakkara's message before the game.

"The talk was simple — either we would win or go back home. We had to give it our all," he said.

"We were top two till the last game of the (league stage) and we finished third. (Kumar) Sangakkara said whether we win or lose, there should be no regrets," Avesh added.