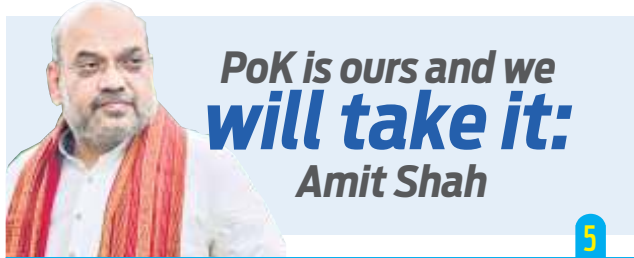




# sunday pioneer

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**PoK is ours and we will take it:**  
**Amit Shah**

5



Reliance Industries seeks  
**CCI NOD FOR**  
Viacom18-Star India merger

6



Getting homeopathy  
**A PADMA**  
award

Dil se

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  


**Even if there are celebrities in a drug case, no matter how big they are, don't spare them. Break the supply chain of ganja and narcotic drugs. People should be afraid to sell drugs and even to mention the word drugs**

— Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister, TG

P4

**DON'T MISS...****Pilgrim rush continues in...**

The summer vacation rush coupled with the weekend is continuing in Tirumala on Saturday as serpentine queue lines are spread up to Batangamma temple. TTD has made elaborate arrangements in outside queue lines for the benefit of the devotees. From Octopus Circle to Krishna Teja Circle, TTD has set up 27 water distribution points and four Annaprashadam distribution points besides 25 vigilance guards and three sevaks at each point in each shift have been posted to offer services to...

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**First-time voters cast their ballot...**

Excited first-time voters in Delhi flaunted their inked fingers after exercising their ballot in the Lok Sabha polls and were unanimous in their demand for better employment opportunities in the government sector and changes in the country's education system. Over 2.52 lakh first-time voters cast their maiden votes in the elections in the city. At many polling booths, the first-time voters were also awarded certificates. Senior Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's daughter Miraya, a first-time voter, cast the ballot along with her...

-PAGE: 5

**'Indian startup ecosystem is...**

The Indian startup ecosystem is mature, with multiple tailwinds that are poised to escalate India to become the third largest economy in the world, said AWS' Kumara Raghavan. In a conversation, Raghavan, Head, Startups, Amazon Web Services (AWS) India, and South Asia, discussed the vibrant Indian startup scene, noting its strength and innovation potential. "We are the 5th largest economy, we are trending towards becoming the 3rd largest... factors that will contribute to it are labor addition, infrastructure growth, and efficiency..."

-PAGE: 6

**One in two adolescents with...**

One in every two adolescents having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may have trouble managing their emotions, which can come out as explosive outbursts, depression or anxiety, according to a new study. People with ADHD have short-attention spans, along with hyperactivity, or restlessness, and impulsivity. Being a neurodevelopmental disorder, it is commonly diagnosed in children and adolescents but can persist into adulthood. It is known that people with ADHD have problems with self-control, which affects their ability to regulate and manage emotions. While these problems of emotion dysregulation were thought to be due to ADHD symptoms which impact an individual's...

-PAGE: 10

**FOR SMOOTH COUNTING PROCESS IN AP...**

## DGP names 56 spl officers

**Palnadu alone gets 8 officials in view of recent violence in the district**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In preparation for the vote-counting process in Andhra Pradesh on June 4, the AP Police Department has taken robust measures to maintain order. AP DGP Harish Kumar Gupta has appointed 56 special officers across all districts of AP. This action comes in the wake of significant violence that occurred on polling day and in the aftermath across various districts, including Palnadu. Consequently, the AP police have enforced restrictions in the vicinity of counting centers to safeguard law and order.

Palnadu district, particularly affected by poll-related violence, sees the highest deployment of eight special officers. The appointed officers for Palnadu district are P. Somasekhara Rao, ASP, SEB, EG; Ch. Papa Rao, ASP, CID; V. Gopala Krishna, ASP, CID; GBR. Madhusudhan Rao, ASP, Marine; Rajasekhara Rao, ASP, CID; DV Ramana Murthy, ASP, APPA; D. Laxman Rao, DSP, CID; and A. Laxmi Narayana, DSP, CID. For Anantapur district, Karimulla Sharief, SP (NC) and V&E; D. Srihari Raju, DSP, ACB; and Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar Rao, DSP, Railways have been appointed as special officers. Similarly, D. Gangadharan, Additional SP, SEB, Srikakulam, and K. Venkateswara Rao, DSP, CID, have been designated for Sri Satya Sai district. K.



FILE PHOTO

■ The roles of special officers include maintaining law and order, overseeing security measures, and ensuring a peaceful counting process.

■ Each district has a specific team of special officers, with their expertise tailored to the unique challenges and circumstances of the area.

Eswara Rao, SP (NC), V&E, and M. Venkateshwara Rao, ASP, SEB, Guntur, have been assigned to Chittoor district. In Tirupati district, KGV Sarita, SP (NC), CID; M. Mahendra, ASP, ACB;

and S. Sirisha, DSP, ACB have been appointed. For YSR Kadapa, B. Mohan Rao, DSP, Railways, and SS Bhaskar Rao, DSP, CID are designated. K. Sai Prasad, DSP, CID, is appointed for Kurnool district, along with Deva Prasad, ASP, ACB; KTTV Ramana Rao, DSP, CID; and Shaik Abdul Kareem, DSP, CID, who have been assigned to Nandyal.

Other appointments include B. Uma Maheswara Rao, ASP, CID, for Nellore; Varma PVRSSMVR, ASP, CID; D. Himavathi, SP (NC), V&E; and K. Sreelakshmi, ASP, SEB, Kakinada, for Prakasam district. G. Srinivas, DSP, CID, and U. Bangara Raju, DSP, ACB, have been appointed for Bapatla, while C. Jayarama Raju, ASP, CID; K. Venu Gopal, DSP, CID; and B. Laxmi

Narayana, DSP, CID, have been assigned to Guntur.

For Krishna district, M. Rajani, SP (NC), Marine; AV. Subbaraju, ASP, SEB, Chittoor; and Ch. Penta Rao, DSP, CID, are designated. In NTR Police Commissionerate, Vijayawada, K. Lavanya Lakshmi, SP (NC), TRANSCO, and Somanna, DSP, CID, have been appointed. N. Poojitha, ASP, V&E, Kurnool, and L. Ajay Prasad, ASP, CID, are designated for Eluru.

For West Godavari, Sheik Masum Basha, ASP, V&E, and BVS. Nageswara Rao, DSP, Railways, have been appointed, while N. Ramya, DSP, ACB, and Tirupathiah, DSP, Octopus, have been designated for East Godavari. G. Venkat Ramudu, ASP, SEB, Kadapa; Ch. Ravi Kumar, DSP, CID; Rajendra, ASP, SEB, Tirupati; and T. Narasimha Rao, DSP, Octopus, have been appointed for Kakinada.

Additionally, L. Mohan Rao, DSP, Railways, has been appointed for Anakapalli, while N. Surendra, DSP, CID; B. Sri Bhavani Harsha, ASP, V&E, Ongole; V. Giridhar, DSP, ACB; and Hussain Peera, DSP, PTC, have been assigned to BR Ambedkar Konaseema district. Appa Rao, DSP, PTC, is designated for Vizianagaram, while KSS. Srinivasa Rao, DSP, Octopus, is appointed for Parvathipuram Manyam, and N. Suryachandra Rao, ASP, SEB, is designated for Srikakulam.



## 27 killed in Rajkot game zone fire

PNS ■ RAJKOT

At least 27 persons, including children, were killed in a massive fire that swept through a game zone teeming with people enjoying a summer vacation outing in Gujarat's Rajkot city on Saturday evening, officials said.

Relief and Rescue operations have been underway at the affected TRP game zone for more than five hours after the blaze erupted at a fibre dome constructed for gaming activities at around 4:30 pm, officials said, adding that the structure collapsed due to the huge fire.

"So far we have confirmed the death of 22 persons in the fire incident. The bodies are completely charred and it is difficult to identify them," said Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Vinayak Patel.

Continued on Page 2

**PM Modi expresses grief at loss of lives**

administration is working to provide all possible assistance to those affected. Modi said on X, "Extremely distressed by the fire mishap in Rajkot. My thoughts are with all those who have lost their loved ones. Prayers for the injured. The local administration is working to provide all possible assistance to those affected."

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday expressed grief at the loss of lives in a fire tragedy in Gujarat's Rajkot and said the local

**YSRCP worker murdered**

PNS ■ KADAPA

In a shocking incident, a YSRCP activist Punganur Seshadr was brutally murdered at his residence in Madanapalle of Annamaya district on Saturday. Reports indicated that unidentified assailants entered Seshadr's home and attacked him in the wee hours of Saturday, resulting in his death.

Police responded swiftly by initiating an investigation into the matter. The body of the victim was shifted to the GGH for postmortem examination and a case was registered.

It is learnt that the murder is linked to recent violence in the aftermath of general elections.

## 'INDIA performing 'mujra' for its vote bank'



PNS ■ BUXAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday vowed to thwart alleged attempts to rob Dalits and backward classes of reservations by the INDIA bloc which he accused of "enslavement" and performing "mujra" for Muslim vote bank.

Addressing back-to-back rallies in Buxar, Karakat and Patliputra Lok Sabha constituencies in Bihar, the prime minister also charged the opposition coalition with indulging in "scaremongering", and claimed that he had been working "without

fear" to wipe out terrorism and root out corruption.

"Bihar is the land which has given a new direction to the fight for social justice. I wish to declare on its soil that I will foil the plans of the INDIA bloc to rob SCs, STs and OBCs of their rights and divert these to Muslims. They may remain enslaved

and perform 'mujra' to please their vote bank," the PM said. Modi also alleged that the people of Bihar have been hurt by insulting remarks against migrants of the state from leaders of the Congress in Punjab and Telangana and the DMK and the TMC in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal respectively, and claimed.

Continued on Page 2

**'Modi should maintain dignity of PM post'**

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Saturday hit out PM Narendra Modi for his "mujra" remark to target the INDIA bloc, and said no prime minister has ever used such words for opposition leaders in the history of the country.

She said the entire country



respects the post of prime minister and it his responsibility to maintain the dignity of the post.

Continued on Page 2

**APPSC test for DyEO posts peaceful**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission Secretary J Pradeep Kumar on Saturday said a Screening Test (Online Mode) for the recruitment to the post of Deputy Educational Officer was held peacefully.

Pradeep Kumar said the examination was held at 128 venues across the State. Against 28,451 candidates registered for the examination, 21,991 downloaded the hall tickets and 18,037 candidates (82.02%) appeared for the examination.

**Widespread rains cause damage to property in Kerala**

P5

## Port city poised to be India's first hydrogen hub

JAVVADI LAKSHMANA RAO ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam is poised to become India's first hydrogen hub city, leveraging its abundant water resources, according to Shalivahan Srivastava, Director of the Indian Institute of Petroleum and Energy (IIPE).

Speaking to 'The Pioneer', Srivastava emphasised hydrogen's critical role in global decarbonisation efforts. "Hydrogen will diversify energy sources, drive long-term economic growth through business and technological innovation, and decarbonise challenging sectors," he stated.

Highlighting a significant stride in India's clean energy journey, Shalivahan noted the recent laying of the foundation stone for a sea-



water-to-green-hydrogen plant at NTPC Simhadri by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This project aims to directly supply hydrogen fuel to nearby industries

Highlighting a significant stride in India's clean energy journey, Shalivahan noted the recent laying of the foundation stone for a seawater-to-green-hydrogen plant at NTPC Simhadri by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This project aims to directly supply hydrogen fuel to nearby industries for everyday operations.

IIPE-Visakhapatnam has initiated a pilot project to produce green hydrogen, supporting the Union government's goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2070, in collaboration with NTPC Simhadri. The project involves producing one tonne per day (1 TPD) of hydrogen using desalinated

water through electrolysis, with an estimated investment of Rs 34.63 crores. An MoU was signed between IIPE and NTPC Simhadri in September 2023, and the hydrogen plant is being set up on a five-acre site belonging to NTPC Simhadri. Hydrogen production is slated to commence in March 2025.

"This pioneering initiative is crucial for reducing carbon footprints and promoting sustainable energy alternatives," Srivastava remarked. IIPE Associate Professor and project coordinator Somnath Ghosh described the project as the first of its kind in India with a 1 TPD capacity and flue-gas-based hydrogen production.

"IIPE will design, install, and operate the project for five years before NTPC takes over. The hydrogen produced will benefit nearby industries like HPCL, Vizag Steel Plant, NTPC, and fertilizer companies," Ghosh said. The project equipment is currently being installed, and hydrogen production will begin in March 2025.

2

**OBTUSE ANGLE**



## Revanth's stamp on CMO files

A former chief minister of combined Andhra Pradesh is notorious for his notation 'not approved' on almost all key files that reached his table. To avoid losing their files in the heap of such files on his desk, people concerned used to give him whatever he wanted so that the CM could simply add 'e' to the original notation for file movement. Thus, the file, with 'not approved' modified seamlessly as 'note approved', used to move with lightning speed. Likewise, other chief ministers had their own style of clearing files. 'Yatha Raja tatha praja'; so, in government offices it is common to find dust-laden files kept pending for years, whatever the reason. But TG Chief Minister Revanth Reddy seems determined to set a new trend. The files that reach his table are cleared in a maximum of two or three days. He either clears them or records his comments. People in the know of how CMO works say Revanth is unlike his immediate predecessor K Chandrasekhkar Rao, who at one point of time had 12,000 pending files! Revanth in fact has upped the ante so much that his ministerial colleagues and their respective teams are finding it hard to catch up with him. While a few are trying to match his speed, other seasoned leaders wink at the need for keeping pace with him. Several ministers are keeping their files pending, while prioritising some of them on the basis of whether the individual concerned is manavaadu.

### Keeravani was CBN's choice for TG state anthem score

Most Telanganites are no doubt elated that Oscar Award-winning music composer MM Keeravani is set to compose the state anthem for Telangana based on writer and playback singer Ande Sri's hugely popular Jaya Jaya He 'Telangana' song that had amplified people's voice during the statehood movement. Interestingly, there is an 'Andhra' background score to what is now emerging as a Keeravani musical. It is learnt that AP's former CM and TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu recommended the Oscar-winning composer for the TG song. CBN has a penchant for involving artistes in works that appeal to the public so that the required hype is on autopilot. It may be recalled that CBN

had roped in director S S Rajamouli for his designs to build Amaravati. The saving grace is that even BRS top leadership has so far not objected to the decision to engage AP-born Keeravani for the state song.

### BRS leaders still do not know their job as opposition party

Reporters ought not to struggle to get responses from opposition leaders, who, by default, may not be as busy as leaders of the ruling party. However, BRS bigwigs, despite switching sides in the Assembly, continue to behave as if they are still the ruling party. They are usually tight-lipped when asked to comment on burning issues or simply remain inaccessible. They unabashedly drive the narrative 'Media is against us'. When they feel like reaching out to the media, they do so with a single-point agenda and refuse to take questions related to other subjects. This happens more often with

According to Jagga Reddy, Modi has never done this before. "Modi is doing it in this manner because he is afraid of his defeat this time," he added, while distributing photographs of the PM wearing North East States' traditional clothes as proof. While shutterbugs accepted the evidential visuals dutifully, one of the scribes raised a point of order, saying that AICC former president Rahul Gandhi too wore traditional clothes and danced with local folks. Realising his gaffe, Jagga Reddy asked the photographers to discard their pieces of evidence, saying the scribe had a point. He then conceded that Rahul wore traditional clothes and even danced with local folks in Sangareddy during the Telangana leg of his Bharat Jodo Yatra.

### Clean break with name or surname?

Netas do make novel pledges or throw formidable challenges to win public admiration. In the high-profile keenly-fought electoral contest in Pithapuram, seasoned politician Mudragada Padmababham pledged

during his campaign that he would change his name should Jana Sena President Pawan Kalyan win from the seat. From YSRCP former MP Vanga Geetha contested from this seat. Although it is not clear as to who will win from the seat, the followers of both the parties are claiming victory of their respective leaders. The larger, more interesting question doing the rounds in political circles is: How should Mudragada Padmababham modify his name if Pawan Kalyan wins. Should he make a clean break with his first name or surname? Or, settle for a new combo? Anti-Mudragada people say that he should change his name to 'Padmanabha Reddy' since he had joined YSRCP headed by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. The followers of Mudragada are very confident that such a situation will not arise for their leader in the first place. In the worst case scenario, they say, their leader must go with 'Nabham MP' (Mudragada Padma implied), considering his role as an ace parliamentarian!

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

## REPORTERS' DIARY

### Neta accepts scribe's point of order

During Assembly or Parliamentary sessions, when a member thinks that the rules of the House are being violated, he or she can make a Point of Order (that is, 'raise a question of order') thereby calling upon the chair for a ruling and an enforcement of the regular rules. Scribes too cheekily raise 'points of order' during their interactions with netas outside the House. On Friday, TPCC working president Jagga Reddy observed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been wearing traditional clothes during his election campaign out of diffidence.

## Port city...

Continued from Page 1

NTPC Simhadri Project head Sanjay Kumar Sinha said, "We utilise flue gas to desalinate seawater from the Bay of Bengal, providing IIFE with 10-20 tonnes of desalinated water daily. This water is then demineralized for hydrogen production through electrolysis, with the hydrogen stored at 200 bar pressure in vessels with a total capacity of two tons. Producing one kilogram of hydrogen requires nine kilograms of demineralized water or 12-13 kilograms of normal water. Demineralised water for electrolysis offers numerous advantages, including reduced carbon intensity in desalination, minimal chemical usage, no reliance on fresh water, and waste flue gas heat. Currently, India's hydrogen demand stands at six million metric tons per year, primarily for fertilizers, refineries, and steel. By 2030, this demand is projected to reach 11 million metric tons annually, necessitating 110 billion litres of demineralized water per year. "The Government of India is focusing on hydrogen production technologies," Srivastava said. "IIFE aims to lead in green energy technologies, and this green hydrogen project, supported by NTPC Simhadri, could be a game changer."

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Krishna Paksha

Tithi:

Tritiya:

May 25 06:58 PM to May 26 06:06 PM

Chaturthi:

May 26 06:06 PM to May 27 04:53 PM

Nakshatram:

Moola:

May 25 10:36 AM to May 26 10:36 AM

Purva Ashadha:

May 26 10:36 AM to May 27 10:13 AM

Rahukalam:

5:04 PM to 6:41 PM

Yamagandam:

12:13 PM to 1:50 PM

Varjyam:

08:03 PM to 09:37 PM

Gulika:

3:27 PM to 5:04 PM

Amritakalam:

None

Abhijit Muhurtham:

11:47 AM to 12:39 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Cloudy

Temp: 41<sup>st</sup>

Humidity: 54%

Sunrise: 5:34 AM

Sunset: 6:35 PM

Updated: May 25 2024 5:00 PM

## 59.06 per cent polling, Bengal's Jangal Mahal region logs 78.19

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An approximate voter turnout of 59.06 per cent was recorded in the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha elections on Saturday in 58 constituencies across six states and two Union territories with the polling percentage in the Jangal Mahal region of West Bengal touching 78.19.

Incidents of minor clashes and protests were reported from West Bengal while there were instances of EVM malfunctioning at some places, including Delhi. Jharkhand recorded a turnout of 62.74 per cent, Uttar Pradesh 54.03 per cent, Bihar 53.30 per cent, Jammu and Kashmir 52.28 per cent, Haryana 58.37 per cent, Odisha 60.07 and Delhi 54.48 per cent, according to the figures released by the Election Commission (EC) as of 7.45 pm. The EC said polling percentage in the Anantnag-Rajouri seat in Jammu and Kashmir is the highest in many decades.

With the conclusion of this phase, polling is now complete in 486 seats in 28 states and Union territories. The last of the seven phases



of polling is scheduled on June 1 and counting of votes will be taken up on June 4. With large parts of India sweltering under a heatwave, arrangements for cold water, coolers, fans and tents were made at several polling stations. Wheelchairs were also kept for the assistance of elderly voters.

The EC had directed election officials and state machineries to take adequate measures to manage the adverse impact of hot weather. Over 11.13 crore voters - 5.84 crore male, 5.29 crore female and 5120 third gender - were eligible to exercise their franchise in this phase. The Election Commission (EC) deployed around 11.4 lakh polling officials at 1.14 lakh polling stations.

Peoples Democratic Party

(PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti, who is contesting from the Anantnag-Rajouri seat in Jammu and Kashmir, staged a sit-in outside Bijbehara police station on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway in Anantnag district against alleged detention of her party workers and polling agents. She also claimed outgoing calls on her mobile number were suspended.

Police, however, said those detained were overground workers (OGWs) and the action was taken to ensure smooth conduct of elections.

Mehbooba's daughter and PDP leader Iltija Mufti alleged polling was deliberately slowed down at a booth in the Anantnag-Rajouri constituency, a charge denied by the administration.

## 27 killed in Rajkot...

Continued from Page 1

According to eyewitnesses, several people, including children were playing games at the game zone, located on Nana-Mava Road, when the tragedy struck. Rajkot Collector Prabhav Joshi said the Fire Control Room received a call at around 4:30 pm regarding the blaze at the game zone. "Fire tenders and ambulances rushed to the spot to douse the flames. The fire caused the collapse of the structure, and debris is being cleared," Joshi added. However, the exact cause of the massive fire is not known. The state government has assigned the investigation to a Special Investigation Team (SIT). Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed grief at the loss of lives in the fire tragedy and said the local administration is working to pro-

vide all possible assistance to those affected. Modi spoke to Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel to enquire about the rescue and relief efforts. "The fire tragedy in Rajkot has saddened us all. In my telephone conversation with him a short while ago, Gujarat CM Bhupendrabhai Patel Ji told me about the efforts underway to ensure all possible assistance is provided to those who have been affected," he said on X. Patel has announced an ex gratia of Rs 4 lakh to the kin of each of the deceased and Rs 50,000 to each injured. He also set up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the incident. After the fire broke out, Rajkot Police Commissioner Raju Bhargav told media persons that the cause of the blaze would be investigated and that a message had been issued to all the gaming zones in the city to close operations.

# AP to introduce NCERT books for Class X students

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a landmark move, nearly six lakh Class X students in Andhra Pradesh's state board and CBSE-affiliated state government schools will receive NCERT textbooks for the first time this academic year.

The state's education department has initiated this change as around 1,000 state schools have recently obtained CBSE affiliation. Despite this shift, students from non-CBSE-affiliated schools will continue to take state board exams during the 2024-25 academic year, while those from the newly affiliated schools will appear for CBSE exams.

The distribution of textbooks has already begun, with approximately 4.2 crore textbooks printed for free supply to students across all classes. This substantial effort marks a



significant increase from 2021, when only around 350 CBSE schools existed in Andhra Pradesh, primarily comprising privately managed institutions, Kendriya Vidyalayas, and Jawahar Navodaya schools. The state embarked on a mission to convert government high schools into CBSE schools starting with Class VIII in the academic year 2022-23. This initiative extended to Class IX in 2023-24 and will now include Class X for the 2024-25 academic year.

Consequently, students from these 1,000 schools will take the CBSE board exams for the first time in 2025.

K Ravindranath Reddy, the Director of Textbooks, highlighted the provision of bilingual textbooks to students. "Each textbook will alternate between Telugu medium lessons and English medium lessons on consecutive pages. A total of 4.2 crore textbooks have been published for the 2024-25 academic year, and the supply has commenced to

mandal headquarters. We aim to ensure availability for students by June 12, which marks the start of the new academic year," he said.

Ravindranath Reddy also noted the significant improvement in the supply of textbooks to schools in recent years. "Students of Class VI and VII will receive NCERT textbooks for English, mathematics, and science for the coming academic year. NCERT books will be supplied for Classes VIII, IX, and X. Notably, Class X students are receiving NCERT books for the first time this year," he added.

This initiative underscores Andhra Pradesh's commitment to enhancing the quality of education by aligning with national standards, and providing students with a uniform and high-quality learning experience.

## 'No interruption...

Continued from Page 1

He highlighted significant expansions in the program, including an increase in medical procedures from 1,059 to 3,257 and the expansion of network hospitals from 919 to 2,371, among other improvements.

Regarding financial transparency, Vishnu contrasted the previous regime's alleged misappropriation of Aarogyasri funds with the current transparent payment system facilitated through the green channel. Under the YSRCP government, 42.91 lakh individuals have received medical services valued at Rs 13,471 crore through Aarogyasri over five years.

Moreover, Vishnu questioned why the TDP failed to implement initiatives such as the Family Doctor program and Jagananna Arogya Suraksha during its tenure.

## Botsa Jhansi urges caution in overseas education

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Botsa Jhansi Lakshmi, former Member of Parliament and YSRCP MP candidate from Visakhapatnam Lok Sabha seat has called for increased vigilance from the Ministry of External Affairs to prevent a recurrence of incidents like those in Cambodia and Kyrgyzstan. Her statement, released on Saturday, highlighted the challenges faced by Indian students abroad and fraudulent employment schemes.

Dr Jhansi Lakshmi emphasised that similar to the thousands of Indian students who went abroad to study medicine, many students from Visakhapatnam chose Kyrgyzstan for their education. She noted that the violence



individuals involved in fraudulent schemes that misled around 100 candidates from Visakhapatnam with false promises of data entry jobs in Cambodia.

She praised the Visakha Police Commissionerate for successfully dismantling this racket and safely repatriating 60 individuals.

She appealed to the central government to expedite efforts to bring back the remaining victims. Dr.Jhansi Lakshmi also advised the youth to exercise caution regarding overseas education and job opportunities. She urged the government to enhance special monitoring measures to safeguard against such fraudulent activities and ensure the well-being of Indian nationals abroad.

in Kyrgyz universities has left these students in precarious situations. She urged the Indian Embassy in Kyrgyzstan to ensure that these students receive immediate assistance, stressing that high-standard medical education has become increasingly expensive. Moreover, Dr Jhansi Lakshmi called for strict action against

# Chief Secretary refutes Jana Sena's charge of assigned land acquisition

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Dr KS Jawahar Reddy has refuted the unfounded and false accusations put forth by Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation's Jana Sena Party corporator, Peethala Murthy Yadav. He unequivocally stated that neither he nor any of his family members have acquired any assigned lands in or around Visakhapatnam.

In a press statement issued by Dr Jawahar Reddy on Saturday, he denounced the act of levying allegations against an official holding a position of responsibility in the state, terming it a grievous offence. He emphasised that neither he nor his family have any



involvement in the alleged land matter. Dr Jawahar Reddy further demanded that Corporator Murthy Yadav retract his allegations and issue a public apology in the presence of the media. Failure to do so, he cautioned, would result in legal action, including a defamation lawsuit and criminal proceedings against Murthy Yadav. He asserted that the accusations were part of a malicious agenda to tarnish his reputation, orchestrated over the past two months.

Addressing the specific allegation that he had unlawfully occupied 800 acres of assigned

lands worth Rs 2,000 crore, Dr Jawahar Reddy clarified that while a Government Order pertaining to Amendments of Assigned Lands had been issued following a bill passed in the state legislature assembly, it bore no personal relevance to him.

"I visited Visakhapatnam for two days last Sunday and Monday. My visit was to offer blessings to a newly married couple, the daughter and son-in-law of a retired Army Officer, who is a friend of mine. The subsequent day, I inspected the Bhogapuram Airport construction site," he

elaborated. Regarding the accusation that approximately 400 acres of assigned lands designated for SC and BC category individuals were unlawfully acquired in his son's name, Dr. Jawahar Reddy categorically denied these claims. He clarified that his visits to Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram districts were solely to inspect developmental projects in those areas. Additionally, Dr Jawahar Reddy dismissed allegations suggesting his involvement in organising the oath ceremony of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy as baseless. He attributed such false accusations to deliberate attempts by certain factions to undermine his stature intentionally.

## 'YSRCP leaders...

Continued from Page 1

Rao further accused ruling party leaders of colluding to appropriate 2000 acres of land using GO 596, implicating the Chief Minister's family members, Vijayasai Reddy's relatives, and YV Subba Reddy's relatives in the land grab. The TDP leader condemned purported violence by YSRCP supporters during elections, insisting that TDP had demanded re-polling in affected areas. He criticized YSRCP leaders for deflecting blame onto the courts rather than addressing electoral misconduct.

In light of these allegations, Rao called for immediate intervention from the Election Commission and urged relevant authorities to respond to these concerns promptly.

## 'INDIA performing 'mujra' for...

Continued from Page 1

"These RJD people who keep doing 'mujra' with their lantern (poll symbol) do not have the courage to speak a word in protest," He also alleged that the opposition alliance has "decided that if they are voted to power, the first thing they would do is to change the Constitution so that even the court is unable to overrule their attempts to divert reservations to Muslims. I have been challenging them to refute me in writing but they have been reluctant because they have a guilty conscience". He spelt out names of sev-

eral deprived castes, including Yadavs who have been traditionally RJD supporters, which "could end up losing their constitutional rights if the INDIA bloc succeeded in its alleged plans".

## 'Modi should maintain dignity...

Continued from Page 1

The prime minister has become nervous and has forgotten he is a representative of the country and of people, and such words should not have come out of his mouth, Vadra said here. Earlier in the day, addressing rallies in neighbouring Bihar, Modi asserted he will foil opposition INDIA bloc's "plans" to rob SCs, STs and OBCs of their quota and divert these to Muslims. "They (the opposition bloc) may remain enslaved and perform 'mujra' to please their vote bank," the PM said. Vadra responded to his statement at a joint election rally with SP chief Akhilesh Yadav in Gorakhpur in support of INDIA bloc candidate Kajal Nishad and Bangsaon candidate Sadal Prasad. "Modi ji gave a speech in Bihar and uttered such words for opposition leaders which no prime minister in the history of the country would have said," Vadra asserted as she greeted the crowd with "Raua sabhe ke Ram-Ram" in Bhojpuri.



# Heavy rain lashes NTR district

DOWNPOUR LEAVES MANY STREETS WATERLOGGED IN V'WADA

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada and several areas in the NTR district experienced heavy rainfall on Saturday, resulting in waterlogged streets and inconvenience for the public. Key locations such as Pandit Nehru Bus Station (PNBS), Low-Bridge, Moghalrajapuram, Patamata, and Benz Circle were among those affected, leading to traffic disruptions along National Highway 65 from Vijayawada to Kolkata between Benz Circle and Ramavarappadu Ring.

Officials from the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) have indicated that southwest monsoon winds are likely to reach the Andaman Sea by the end of



May, with a likelihood of reaching Kerala by month's end and possibly Andhra Pradesh in the first week of June.

Continuous rainfall throughout the morning resulted in submerged roads, complicating commuting for residents. The inadequate maintenance of the city's

drainage system exacerbated the situation, leading to overflow onto roadways, and hindering vehicular movement.

The sudden heavy downpour also caused power outages, posing challenges for students taking Class 10 and Intermediate supplementary exams. Many schools lacked generators, leaving students

to write their exams without proper lighting, as alternative arrangements were not made by education authorities.

Vijayawada endured heavy rainfall lasting over three hours in the morning, significantly impacting daily routines. Multiple low-lying areas experienced waterlogging, including Benz Circle, Ramesh Hospital Junction, Andhra Loyola College, and Ramavarappadu, among others.

In response, VMC authorities mobilized teams and machinery to address the waterlogged areas, particularly focusing on low-level railway bridges at Kaleswara Rao Market. Despite the continuous rain, VMC workers worked diligently to clear drainages and mitigate the effects of the downpour.

## Awareness camp held for returning officers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Krishna district administration is gearing up for the vote counting of Machilipatnam Lok Sabha and its seven Assembly constituencies, scheduled to take place at Krishna University in Rudravaram near Machilipatnam on June 4. Elaborate arrangements have been made for the vote counting to be held at the Dr. BR Ambedkar Administrative Block on the university premises.

Apart from the Machilipatnam Lok Sabha constituency, vote counting for Assembly constituencies including Gannavaram, Machilipatnam, Gudivada, Pedana, Avanigadda, Pamarru, and Penamaluru will also occur at Krishna University.

District Collector and District Election Officer (DEO) DK Balaji organised an awareness programme for Returning Officers (RO) and Assistant Returning Officers (ARO) regarding the vote



Krishna District Collector Balaji on Saturday giving instructions to the counting officials regarding vote counting in Machilipatnam.

counting process.

The vote counting will take place simultaneously for both Parliament and Assembly constituencies at different tables within the Dr. BR Ambedkar Administrative Block. Necessary arrangements have been made to ensure a smooth process.

As per district administration information, the counting will occur at various locations within the Administrative Block including the ground

floor, second floor, and Central Library room. Required tables have been arranged for the counting process. Notably, the prestigious Gannavaram Assembly Constituency's counting will be held in Room No.301 B, while the Parliamentary Constituency's counting will occur in Room No.301 A on the second floor.

Similarly, the Gudivada Assembly constituency's vote counting will take place in Room No.101 B, with Lok

Sabha vote counting in Room No.101 A at the Tagore Seminar Hall on the ground floor. Subsequently, the Pedana segment's counting will occur in Room No.134B and 134A at the Conference Hall on the ground floor, and the Machilipatnam segment's counting will be in Room No.118 B and 118A respectively in the Central Library Room on the ground floor.

Additionally, the Avanigadda assembly segment's counting will be in Room No.322A and 322B on the second floor. The Pamarru assembly segment's counting will occur in Room No.129B and 129A at the Conference Hall on the ground floor, and the Penamaluru assembly segment's counting will be in Room No.201B and 201A respectively on the first floor of the Administrative Block. Given recent post-poll incidents, the Krishna district administration is taking precautionary measures to ensure a peaceful vote-counting process on June 4. Collaborating with the Police Department.



## City girl in Indian roller-skating team

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Matrapu Jessy Raj, a ninth-class student at city-based NSM Public School, has earned a coveted spot on the Indian Artistic Roller-Skating team. She will represent India in the upcoming World Skate Oceania Artistic Skating Championship and Pacific Cup Artistic Open Invitation Competition, slated to take place at the TSB Stadium in New Plymouth, New Zealand, from June 13 to 17.

At just 14 years old, Jessy Raj emerges as the sole representative from Andhra Pradesh to compete on this prestigious international platform.

## 'Vizag geared for vote counting

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Election Officer and Collector Dr A. Mallikarjuna lauded the exemplary cooperation from all sections of the society, including leaders and candidates, for their involvement in the electoral process. Stressing the importance of continued collaboration, he urged candidates to maintain similar cooperation during the forthcoming vote-counting process scheduled for June 4th. A meeting was convened this morning, where candidates contesting in the parliamentary constituency discussed security concerns and logistical aspects related to the vote-counting process at the strong rooms.

Collector Mallikarjuna said the enthusiasm of the electorate in Visakhapatnam district surpassed previous elections, with a notable increase in voter turnout. Out of the 20,12,373 eligible voters, 14,09,316 exercised their franchise, constituting a polling

Collector Mallikarjuna said the enthusiasm of the electorate in Visakhapatnam district surpassed previous elections, with a notable increase in voter turnout.



rate of 70.03 percent. Additionally, 23,981 voters opted for postal ballots. The district recorded an overall polling rate of 71.2 per cent. In the parliamentary constituency, out of 19,27,303 voters, 13,70,484 individuals cast their votes, with 22,454 opting for postal ballots, resulting in a polling rate of 72.3 per cent.

As part of the preparation for the vote counting day, the District Collector emphasised the need for candidates to submit details of counting agents by May 31st. Only individuals

above 18 years who are not associated with government entities or receiving government income are eligible. Compliance with Election Commission regulations is mandatory, barring individuals receiving income from government or affiliated organizations from serving as agents. Officially recognized agents are instructed to arrive at the counting centres ninety minutes before the commencement of counting. The transfer of service postal ballots to designated strong rooms will take

place on June 2nd, adhering to Election Commission guidelines. This process aims for transparency and adherence to regulatory standards.

On the day of counting, which starts at 8:00 am, specific counting centres have been designated for different constituencies. For instance, at the Andhra University College of Engineering E.E.E., postal ballot counting will occur in the block seminar hall, while parliamentary votes will be counted in designated rooms within the same complex.

Similar arrangements have been made for other constituencies, with specific rooms allocated for the counting of both assembly and parliamentary votes. Participants at the meeting included District Revenue Officer K. Mohan Kumar, election department officials, candidates, polling agents, and other stakeholders, underscoring a collective effort towards ensuring a smooth and transparent vote-counting process.

## Seminar on survival techniques for techies ends

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The three-day seminar titled 'Navigating the Software Industry' hosted by the Department of Computer Sciences at PB Siddhartha Arts and Science College in Vijayawada, concluded successfully on Saturday. The closing session featured distinguished alumni from PB Siddhartha Arts and Science College as speakers.

The seminar's chief guest was the founder of Skanda Styles Private Limited, based in Hyderabad, who emphasised the importance of presenting one's unique style with confidence in today's dynamic landscape, paving the way for success. Additionally, industry leaders including the Delivery

Director of Clean Harbours India, Hyderabad, Sharma, Director of Bectran Software Private Limited, Hyderabad, T Karuna, Founder of Yalavarthi Software Solutions, Hyderabad, Y Samarasa, and Shaik Sanavulla, Project Manager at Tata Consultancy Services, Hyderabad, shared invaluable insights and advice with the attending students.

The event was attended by Dr Meka Ramesh, Principal of PB Siddhartha College, Director Vemuri Babu Rao, Dean Rajesh C Jampala, Head of the Computer Science Department Dr TS Ravi Kiran, faculty members, and postgraduate students from the Computer Science Programme.

## GVMC cracks down on posters

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) has reignited its campaign to eradicate posters and graffiti from public spaces within the city. This initiative underscores the GVMC's unwavering commitment to preserving Visakhapatnam's reputation as a pristine and aesthetically pleasing urban centre. "The unpermitted placement of posters, murals, and scrawling on public property undermines the GVMC's beautification efforts," declared Chief City Planner Suresh Kumar. "To enforce compliance, the GVMC will levy fines of up to Rs 1 lakh against violators under the 1997 Act."

This renewed campaign aligns with the GVMC's dedication to maintaining Visakhapatnam's cleanliness



and visual appeal, a characteristic frequently lauded by international visitors. The city allocates significant resources towards beautification projects, and these efforts are hampered by the rampant use of unauthorized posters, banners, and graffiti. An awareness program was recently conducted at the GVMC headquarters to educate relevant

stakeholders. Representatives from the Printing Press Association of Visakhapatnam, religious organizations, and educational institutions participated in the program.

Kumar emphasized the importance of keeping electrical poles free of extraneous markings, particularly contact information for septic tank cleaning services.

## VMC leaves three-wheeler garbage disposal vehicles in state of disrepair

CPM LEADER EXPRESSES CONCERN AND URGES CIVIC AUTHORITIES TO ACT

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Member of the CPM State secretariat, Ch Babu Rao, has expressed concern over the neglect of three-wheelers used for garbage removal in the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC), citing their prolonged state of disrepair. He said that the vehicles have been left idle at various locations across the city, placing an undue burden on sanitation workers due to what he perceives as negligence on the part of VMC officials.

Following the conclusion of election polling, Babu Rao, who ran for the Vijayawada Central Assembly constituency under the CPM banner, conducted inspections across several VMC divisions in the vicinity. During his visits to



Rajiv Nagar, Vaddera Colony, New Rajiv Nagar, and other places, he observed the dismal condition of the unused three-wheelers designated for waste collection. Rao noted the apparent lack of initiative from VMC authorities in addressing the maintenance needs of these

vehicles, which exacerbates the workload of sanitation personnel.

Babu Rao pointed out widespread issues such as deteriorating tyres and vehicle body damage among the neglected three-wheelers. He said that these vehicles were procured

under the Swachh Bharat and Swachh Survekshan initiatives, yet their upkeep has been severely overlooked. Despite complaints from sanitation workers to VMC officials, Rao lamented the absence of remedial action.

Moreover, Babu Rao highlighted the financial burden placed on sanitation workers, who reportedly foot repair bills while VMC officials remain unresponsive to their grievances. He alleged that although VMC disburses payments to contractors managing CLAP vehicles for waste collection, no corresponding allocation is made for three-wheeler repairs. Babu Rao urged VMC authorities to address the matter earnestly and allocate funds for the necessary repairs without further delay.



## Salary hiked for ACA match officials

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a move aimed at recognizing their valuable contributions, the Andhra Cricket Association (ACA) announced a salary increase for umpires, scorers, and other match officials. This revised compensation structure will come into effect immediately, starting today, May 25th, 2024.

The ACA Secretary, S.R. Gopinath Reddy, said that this initiative will not only enhance the financial security of match officials but also foster improved management of cricket events within the state.

## JOB ACHIEVERS DAY CELEBRATED

# 12,000 students get placements in 2023-24

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Technical Education Commissioner Ch Nagarani said that the campus placements reflect the industry's confidence in the skills and abilities of polytechnic students in the state. The aim is to employ every student who completes polytechnic courses. Job Achievers Day was organized on Saturday in government polytechnics across the state. Commissioner Nagarani attended as the chief guest of the programme at Vijayawada Polytechnic and said that 12,000 students who completed the polytechnic in the academic year 2023-24 have secured campus placements in various leading institutes. She said that polytechnic students should make use of the employment opportunities that come their way and complete their higher studies while working and the respective institutions are providing opportunities for that.



Commissioner Nagarani said that the employment wing under the technical education department has performed better in this regard. She said that the plan has been implemented to provide opportunities to the students by continuously coordinating with various organizations. Salary allowances for students recruited through campus placements are also substantial, with many students receiving annual salary offers of Rs 8 lakhs and the average salary package being 3 lakhs, she said adding the Department of

Technical Education is committed to providing excellent placement opportunities to polytechnic students.

The top recruiting companies/industries and firms are Texas Instruments, Thoughtworks, MEIL, GE Aerospace, MosChip, Suzlon, Amararaja, AM/NS India, Efftronics, Medha Servo, Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Shapoorji Pallonji, Tata Projects, Alfa Laval, Maruti Suzuki, Royal Enfield, Wheels India, SmartDV Technologies, NFCL, HL Mando Anand India etc.

## Chaganti has darshan of Goddess Durga

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Renowned spiritual scholar Chaganti Koteswara

Rao and his family had the darshan of Goddess Kanaka Durga at the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop the Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada on Saturday. They were warmly welcomed by Executive Officer

of the temple, KS Rama Rao.

Following their darshan of Goddess Durga Devi, the temple's Vedic scholars bestowed their

blessings upon the visitors at the Veda

Ashirvachanam Mandapam. Additionally, EO Rama Rao honoured Chaganti Koteswara Rao

with 'Sesha Vastram', 'Laddu Prasadam', and a portrait of Goddess Durga Devi. Furthermore, they were presented with the book 'Sri Kanaka Durga Vaibhavam'.

Subsequently, Chaganti Koteswara Rao and his family members paid their respects at the Sri

Malleswara Swamy and Sri Valli Devasena Sameta Subrahmanyeswara Swamy temple, partaking in special poojas to mark the occasion.



## New lease of life to techie through VA-ECMO

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

For the first time in Andhra Pradesh, a patient who suffered from Cardiogenic Shock and Pulmonary Edema, was given a new lease of life through VA-ECMO (Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation) at Aster Ramesh Hospital, Guntur.

A 35-year-old software engineer experienced severe chest pain after a morning temple visit in Mangalagiri. Initially mistaking it for gas pain, he took an antacid. When the pain intensified, he visited a local nursing home in Mangalagiri, where an ECG confirmed a heart attack. He was referred to a hospital with cardiac specialisation. Consulting a family physician in Guntur, more tests confirmed a severe heart attack, prompting a referral to Aster Ramesh Hospital for Emergency Primary Angioplasty.

The patient was swiftly examined by a cardiac team led



by senior cardiologist Dr Ramarao. Diagnosed with cardiogenic shock and pulmonary edema, he was put on a ventilator and transferred to the cath lab. An intra-aortic balloon pump was inserted, and an angiogram revealed a 100% blocked main artery. Emergency angioplasty was performed to remove the clots.

Despite these efforts, the patient showed signs of multi-organ failure, including rapid heart rate, low blood pressure, reduced urine output, inadequate oxygen levels and heart

pumping was low as it was a massive heart attack and he was in cardiogenic shock. The medical team suggested ECMO (Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation) as a last resort. With family consent, the patient was connected to the ECMO machine.

Dr. Ramarao stated that the patient's life was saved through emergency angioplasty, intra-aortic balloon pump, and ECMO support. This marked the first time such a procedure was performed in Andhra Pradesh at Aster Ramesh Hospitals.



# Seeing through ‘expiry’ and ‘use by’ dates and those who determine them

Barring alcoholic drinks like whiskey, brandy, wine, except beer, and fresh fruits, vegetables, coconuts etc., perhaps every edible consumer item these days has an ‘expiry’ or ‘best before’ date stamped on it, indicating longevity of the finished product in terms of its quality and efficacy. Using a product beyond the date so stamped not only diminishes its quality or efficacy, but also exposes the consumer to risks springing from ingredients that may have gone bad. A ‘use by’ or ‘expiry’ date often ranges from a couple of days (in the case of say bread or milk) to a maximum of six months. Durable life is the period a food item will retain its normal wholesomeness, palatability, and nutritional value, starting from the day a food item is packaged for retail sale to the use by or expiry date stamped. Characteristically, food items may be safe to eat for 10 days after expiry, if

refrigerated properly, according to some experts.

Most of the ‘shelf-stable foods’ that can be stored at room temperature in a sealed container are safe indefinitely. These include processed and refrigerated ones, so that they can be safely stored at room or ambient temperature for a usefully long shelf life. In fact, canned goods will last for years, as long as the can itself is in good condition (no rust, dents, or swelling). Packaged foods (cereal, pasta, cookies) will be safe past the ‘best before’ or ‘use by’ date, though they may eventually become stale without flavor.

Experts say that ‘durable life dating’ is critical to safe food handling by the consumer. Again, such durable life date is valid only for unopened products. Once opened, the product should be consumed at once. Foods susceptible to spoilage should not be consumed if the ‘best before’ or ‘use by’ has passed. For, even

**Most of the ‘shelf-stable foods’ that can be stored at room temperature in a sealed container are safe indefinitely. These include processed and refrigerated ones, so that they can be safely stored at room or ambient temperature for a usefully long shelf life. In fact, canned goods will last for years, as long as the can itself is in good condition (no rust, dents, or swelling). Packaged foods (cereal, pasta, cookies) will be safe past the ‘best before’ or ‘use by’ date, though they may eventually become stale without flavor**

if a food shows no signs of spoilage, it can harbor organisms capable of causing food-borne diseases known as ‘pathogenic microorganism.’ Foods that are not susceptible to spoilage may be consumed past their ‘best before’ or ‘use by’ date’ though they may have lost their original flavor and nutritional value. Consumers need to use their senses (sight, smell) and common sense to decide whether

such food item is appropriate to eat.

Likewise, the ‘drug expiration date’ is the last day before which the finished product remains stable, retaining its strength, quality, and purity, subject to storage stipulations. Medicines after the ‘expiry date’ may not be either safe or efficacious, which makes it obligatory for users to check it before taking it.

The paradox is that only



**VANAM JWALA NARASIMHA RAO**

consumer education and awareness on this front.

Fascinatingly, there is no ‘expiry date’ for any hard liquor. The reason could be that ‘alcohol is a preservative,’ and most liquors like whiskey, rum, brandy, gin, and vodka are generally 40 per cent alcohol (or 80 proof), and do not have a high enough sugar content in them to kick-start oxidation. This is good enough to preserve it indefinitely. Their high-alcohol levels keep bacteria from growing in the unopened bottles and if stored properly, they will be good for years to come. Liquor lasts the longest, whereas wine and beer are less shelf-stable.

Curiously, in good old days, food stuff like chutneys (mango, tamarind, amla, lemon etc) and pickles (predominantly mango) made at home by grandmothers lasted far longer with quality and taste intact. People used to relish them for months or for

even more than a year. In fact, ‘tamarind chutney’ used to become tastier after a year would last for about two years. The oil (sesame or groundnut, cold-pressed) as well as condiments and spices used then made all the difference, perhaps. Of course, grandma knew the right proportions in which they need to be used.

Marshall Allen, an American journalist, investigating the cost and quality of health care, in an article in Jul 25, 2017, ‘Are Expiration Dates on Medicines Just a Myth’ cited an instance and expressed his view that if some drugs remain effective well beyond the date on their labels, why has not there been a push to extend their expiration dates? He had noticed a box of prescription drugs, 30 to 40 years past their expiration dates, possibly toxic, probably worthless, which were forgotten in a back closet of a retail pharmacy!

Californian Professor of

Clinical Pharmacy, Dr Lee Cantrell, commenting on this, said that the cache was an opportunity to answer an enduring question about the actual shelf life of drugs. When referred for the opinion of Roy Gerona, another Californian researcher, who saw people recover from sickness by taking expired drugs with no apparent ill effects, meaning, ‘expiration date’ was a misnomer, his prompt response was ‘This was very cool.’ The dates on drug and food labels are simply to guarantee their effectiveness, and do not necessarily mean they are ‘ineffective immediately after they expire’.

The significance or insignificance of expiry dates as well as the potential mischief of manufacturers need to be better handled by the authorities concerned, presuming they are properly manned and fully equipped.

*(The writer served as CPRO to former CM of TG)*

## Cordon and search operations intensified; vehicles seized

**PNS ■ TIRUPATHI**

On the directions of SP Harshavardhan Raju, the police have intensified the cordon and search operations in the district to avoid violence incidents during and after the counting of votes on June 4.

SP Harshavardhan Raju instructed the police officials to oppress with iron hand the anti-social elements and their anti-social activities as they damage peace and tranquillity.

“The police officials should give importance to ensuring that no untoward incident takes place during and after the counting of votes. The rowdy sheeters, trouble mongers, suspects and other such anti-socials should be detained and focus should



**SP Harshavardhan Raju instructed the police officials to oppress with iron hand the anti-social elements and their anti-social activities as they damage peace and tranquillity.**

be laid on their movements,” the SP told the police officials here on Saturday.

SP Harshavardhan Raju said that several police teams led by DSPs, CIs and Sis conducted cordon and search operations at various problematic places aiming to

ensure that the counting of votes should be held without any disturbances.

The police teams during the cordon and search operations seized 12 two-wheelers at Mopuru village as the owners failed to produce relevant records of the vehicles and

two bikes were also seized at Bommagunta village for the same reason. The police officials during the cordon and search operation held meetings with the elders of the respective villages and explained to them that the election code of conduct is enforced and all should follow the rules. They were instructed not to participate in victory rallies after election results were declared.

The SP also directed the police officials to conduct checks on firecracker godowns. He said that firecracker godown owners in Srikalahasti, Puttur, Naidupet, Chandragiri, Renigunta, Tirupati and Gudur obtained licences and they should be instructed not to sell firecrackers till completion of the counting of votes.



**APPSC examination held peacefully: DC**

**PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY**

The APPSC examination was held peacefully in East Godavari district on Saturday.

Informing this to the media here, district Collector K Madhavilata said that 960 candidates applied for the examination of which 612 attended the examinations which was held at Ayan Digital Zone Luthergiri.

The Collector said that DRO G Narasimhulu personally monitored the examination. The examination was conducted by the APPSC for the Deputy District Educational Officer post.

## Gear up for counting of votes: Collector to officials

**PNS ■ ELURU**

Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh asked the officials to be prepared to take part in conducting votes on June 4, stating that the process should be held transparently and flawlessly.

The Collector convened an interaction meeting with the officials for which SP D Mary Prashanthi, Joint Collector B Lavanya Veni, Additional SP Swaroop Rani, SEB Joint Director N Suryachandra Rao, DRO D Pushpamani, ITDA PO M Suryatena and a host of other police and revenue officials attended.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Prasanna Venkatesh told the officials that counting of votes should be carried out transparently and flawlessly and the officials should take all steps for the same.

He appreciated the officials



for conducting the polling on May 13 successfully and efficiently. The officials had worked efficiently from preparing the voters list to conducting the polling, he lauded them.

The Collector praised that due to the efforts of officials, 84.81 polling per cent of postal ballots were recorded in the district. The Collector extolled SP Mary Prashanthi for leading the police team efficiently and conducting elections without untoward incidents.

The Collector asked the SP to complete the process of counting votes with the same spirit.

“The rules and guidelines of ECI must be followed in the counting centres. Secrecy of the vote is very important in the counting process. The election staff should keep in mind the randomisation, postal ballot counting arrangements and precautions to be taken while sealing.”

## Firecrackers seized; one arrested



**PNS ■ ANANTAPUR**

The police seized a huge quantity of firecrackers while being transported at Mudigubba on Saturday.

CI P Yatindra told the media that on a tip-off, a police team conducted a checking of vehicles at the HP Petrol filling station at Mudigubba. The police team found a person Somala Nagarjuna was transporting a huge quantity of firecrackers

on a vehicle.

The firecrackers worth over Rs 1.50 lakh were seized and the police held Nagarjuna. The firecrackers are hoarded to be used after election results are declared during the victory rallies. Stocking firecrackers without permission is an offence, the CI said. Taking out victory rallies and bursting firecrackers after the election results are declared are prohibited, the CI made it clear.

## Pulivarti Nani not injured in attack, claims Chevireddy

**PTI ■ TIRUPATHI**

YSRCP leader and MLA Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy has made it clear that he has nothing to do with the attack on TDP Chandragiri candidate Pulivarthi Venkata Mani Prasad Nani and alleged that Nani was not injured in the attack on him.

Talking to the media here on Saturday, Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy also claimed that he had considered Pulivarthi Nani as only a political rival. “Pulivarthi Nani slapped my brother-in-law. They attacked my car during the filing of the nomination. Though they harassed me severely, I did not file a case against them,” Chevireddy asserted.

Stating that Pulivarthi Nani was not injured in a clash that took place at Sri Padmavathi Women’s University on May 14, Pulivarthi Nani was active and



safe after the clash. But two hours later, he was seen sitting in a wheelchair. Pulivarthi Nani enacted a drama and pretended that he was injured in the clash,” Chevireddy argued. Pulivarthi Nani’s drama dented the peace and tranquillity in the constituency, he lashed out.

Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy recalled that when Nara

Lokesh conducted his padayatra through the Chandragiri constituency no untoward incident took place. The visit of Nara Bhuvaneshwari was held peacefully, he added.

Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy alleged that Pulivarthi Nani and his wife abused him and the car of his son Mohit Reddy was burnt on polling day.



**Poster on Intl Event Manager’s Day released**

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Andhra Pradesh Chamber of Events Industry State president V Ravi Shankar has said that a State-level event will be organised on the occasion of International Event Manager’s Day on May 31 at Novotel Hotel in Vijayawada.

During a press conference under the auspices of the Andhra Pradesh Chamber of Events Industry on Saturday, Ravi Shankar along with other organisers unveiled a poster.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that the event management sector is being trained with the aim of providing employment opportunities to the youth. He said that the event is being held for the first time in the State.

## 16 red sanders logs seized; 4 arrested



**PNS ■ TIRUPATHI**

The police seized 16 red sanders logs while they were being transported in a vehicle illegally at Rapur village in Penchalakona mandal on Saturday. Circle Inspector Srinivasulu told the media that on the directions of SP P Srinivas and under the supervision of DSP Chenchu Babu, a police team led by RSI KSK Lingadhar and K Suresh Babu,

conducted checking of vehicles.

They noticed two vehicles moving suspiciously in the Yeguvapalli forest area. After seeing the police, some of the red sander smugglers escaped into the forest. However, the police chased and arrested four smugglers Ashf Basha, Muttu, Selvam and Anbugal.

The police seized 16 red sanders logs, a tempo vehicle, a car and three mobile phones - all worth Rs 40 lakh.

## Pilgrim rush continues in Tirumala

**PNS ■ TIRUMALA**

The summer vacation rush coupled with the weekend is continuing in Tirumala on Saturday as serpentine queue lines are spread up to Batangamma temple.

TTD has made elaborate arrangements in outside queue lines for the benefit of the devotees. From Octopus Circle to Krishna Teja Circle, TTD has set up 27 water distribution points and four Annaprasadam distribution points besides 25 vigilance guards and three sevaks at each point in each shift have been posted to offer services to the multitude of visiting pilgrims.

In the last ten days, around 2.60 lakh pilgrims trekked the Alipiri and Srivari Mettu footpaths alone and had darshan of Srivaru. By 5 pm statistics on Saturday, 46,486 pilgrims had darshan.



For the benefit of devotees, TTD has operated free buses to transport devotees who are entering the queue lines at Octopus circle to Silatoranam circle much to their comfort and appreciation under the supervision of vigilance authorities.

Supply of Annaprasadam and water at MTVAC, outside queue lines, food courts etc. in Tirumala was the order of the day. Senior officers supervised the facilities of the devotees round the clock and ensured smooth arrangements.

**Supply of Annaprasadam and water at MTVAC, outside queue lines, food courts etc. in Tirumala was the order of the day.**

## Break supply chain of narcotics: Revanth

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy took serious note of the drug menace during a review meeting on Saturday. The CM asked officials about the progress in eradicating ganja and drugs during the review meeting.

“We need to clamp down on cannabis and drugs in the state. We should work more actively regarding this. Conduct special drives in suspect areas. Keep special vigil in border areas. Break the supply chain of ganja and drugs,” the CM said. They should be scared to supply drugs, the CM said.

“Even if there are celebrities in a drug case, no mat-



ter how big they are, don’t spare them. If necessary, set up anti-drug teams. Encourage those who work effectively to eliminate drugs,” he said.

“Whatever it takes end the drug menace with an iron

fist. Action should be taken to make people scared even to hear the word drugs. Telangana should be made drug-free. The TGNAB should be an example for other states in the country,” he said.

## ’UK University Fair’ in V’wada on May 29

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

SI-UK India has announced a day-long UK University fair in Vijayawada on May 29 at Novotel between 11:00 am to 4:00 pm for students who wish to pursue higher education abroad. This year, representatives from over 10 esteemed UK universities such as University College London, University of Surrey, University of Birmingham, University of Wolverhampton, London Metropolitan University, Northumbria University, and many more will be seen under one roof at the fair. Students can delve into comprehensive details about their academic offerings.



# PoK is ours and we will take it: Amit Shah

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) is a part of India and "we will take it", Home Minister Amit Shah asserted on Saturday as he castigated the Congress for trying to "frighten" the BJP by saying the neighbouring country possesses atom bombs.

Addressing a rally at Amb in Una district, the heartland of soldiers, he also appealed to people to ensure the victory of the BJP in the bypolls to six assembly seats for the formation of a BJP government in the hill state, currently ruled by the Congress.

Shah said that only a strong government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi can fight terrorism, ensure economic growth and take care of the poor.

"The Congress is trying to frighten us by saying that



Pakistan has an atom bomb," Shah told the rally in support of Union minister Anurag Thakur, the BJP candidate for the Hamirpur Lok Sabha seat. "And, today I speak from... Himachal that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) hamara hai, hamara rahega aur hum ise lekar rahenge (PoK is ours and it will remain ours. We will take it)."

He said that even when Article 370 was scrapped in 2019, Congress leaders said it would lead to a bloodbath but not even a single stone was

pelted In Jammu and Kashmir.

During the Congress regime, terrorists from Pakistan used to intrude into India, trigger blasts and return, Shah said, adding this completely changed under the Modi government.

"We conducted surgical strikes and wiped out terrorists in their homes which put an end to such tactics," he said, referring to Uri and Pulwama incidents during the BJP rule.

Only a leader like PM Modi can put an end to terrorism and Naxalism, he added.

"Ensure the victory of BJP candidates in six assembly byelections for the formation of a BJP government and see the lotus (BJP's poll symbol) blooming in Himachal," he said. He also mocked the Congress by asking the crowd as to who will be the prime minister if the grand old party comes to power.

## LIQUOR POLICY ROW IN KERALA

### UDF demands resignation of excise, tourism ministers

PNS ■ PALAKKAD (KERALA)

The opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) on Saturday stepped up its attack against the Left government in the state over its liquor policy and demanded the resignation of Excise and Tourism ministers over alleged corruption in this regard.

The Congress-led front said a crime branch probe would not bring out the real truth behind the alleged graft to the tune of several crores in connection with the liquor policy and therefore a judicial probe should be carried out.

The demand came a day after reports of the state government mulling scrapping the 'dry day' norm (not selling alcohol in the state on the first day of every calendar month) with respect to alcohol sales had kicked off a political storm in the state.

While the UDF has accused the LDF dispensation of tak-

ing bribes to 'favour' bar owners, the Left claimed that it has not yet held any deliberations over its liquor policy.

Addressing mediapersons here, UDF Convenor M M Hassan said the reported crime branch probe, based on the complaint of Excise Minister M B Rajesh, would not bring out the "real truth". He alleged that Rajesh directly lodged a complaint with the police with an intension to protect Tourism Minister P A Mohammed Riyas, who had influenced and pressurised for the changes in the liquor policy.

Mohammed Riyas is the son-in-law of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

"No one thinks that the tourism and excise ministers would give such an assurance to the bar owners (with regard to scrapping of dry day) without the knowledge and consent of Chief Minister Vijayan," Hassan charged.

## PUNE CAR CRASH

### Minor's grandfather held; pressure on driver to take blame, say cops

PNS ■ PUNE

Pune police on Saturday arrested the grandfather of the 17-year-old involved in a car crash here that killed two persons while claiming that both the teenager's father and grandfather put pressure on the family's driver to take blame for accident by offering him money and giving threats.

The teenager's grandfather was arrested for 'illegal confinement' of the driver, and a court subsequently remanded him in police custody till May 28. The minor's father, in judicial custody in another case registered in connection with the May 19 accident, too was named in the First Information Report.

"After the accident, the driver gave a statement at the Yerawada police station that he was at the wheel....But it was revealed that a teen was driving the car," police commissioner



Amitesh Kumar told reporters.

After the driver left the Yerawada police station, the teenager's father, realtor Vishal Agarwal and his grandfather whisked him in a car to his house on the premises of their bungalow, confiscated his phone and confined him there, the senior police official said.

"He was pressured to give a statement to police as per their directions," Kumar said, adding that the driver was offered gifts and cash for owning up to the crash of the Porsche driven by the teenager, and also threatened.

The driver's wife reached the place the next day and freed him, said the commissioner.

"The driver was frightened. He was summoned and his statement was recorded on Thursday (May 23). After corroboration of facts, an offence was registered against the juvenile's father and grandfather (on the driver's complaint)," Kumar said.

Vishal Agarwal and his father were booked under Indian Penal Code sections 365 (kidnapping) and 368 (wrongfully concealing or keeping in confinement).

The driver gave a statement to the police saying he was not driving the car when it knocked down two IT professionals on a motorbike in Kalyani Nagar area of the city in the early hours of May 19, the commissioner said.

The driver and his family will be provided police protection, Kumar added.

## Govt in touch with India, US, Nepal to get MP murder case suspect: B'desh Home Minister

PNS ■ KOLKATA/DHAKA

Bangladesh Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan claimed that businessman Akhtaruzzaman Shahin is the key suspect in the murder of parliamentarian Anwarul Azim Anar and his ministry was working with India and the US to get and put him on trial for the alleged crime.

Speaking exclusively to PTI from Dhaka on Saturday, Khan said, "Of course, we are looking for Akhtaruzzaman Shahin. He is a key suspect and wanted. We have sought help from Indian, Nepal and US law enforcement agencies to put him on trial."

"We are working on a system to bring Shahin back...We are in touch with all the agencies concerned including the Interpol to ensure justice to our parliamentarian's family. We have already arrested three persons including a woman. Two of them have criminal backgrounds and we are checking the antecedents of the woman," he said.

Asked about the motive behind the murder, the home minister said, "We will reveal it soon."

Repeated attempts to contact Shahin in the US went in vain, but his brother Md Shahiduzzaman, mayor of Kotchandpur municipality in

Bangladesh's Jhenaidah, demanded stern action against his brother if found guilty.

Speaking to PTI from Jhenaidah, Shahiduzzaman said, "We grew up together and it is hard to believe that he is involved in such a heinous crime. If he is at all indulged in the crime, he should be punished."

He said, "I spoke to him two weeks ago over phone and he sounded happy...I believe he is in the US now."

Shahiduzzaman, however, claimed that he had no knowledge of his brother's business dealings or his relationship with the murdered MP. "All I know is that my brother is very rich...But I have no clue about his business," he said.

Meanwhile, a senior police officer in West Bengal said, "Bangladesh does not have any extradition treaty with the US government but India has. We are planning to extradite Shahin to India because the crime occurred in our state."

Shahin, a close friend and reportedly a business partner of Anar, is believed to be in New York City, where he holds US citizenship.

Anar, a three-time parliamentarian from Jhenaidah-4, was the president of Awami League's Kaliganj sub-district unit.



## China encroached on our land but PM Modi is silent: Kharge

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday alleged that China has encroached on India's land and is constructing houses and roads but Prime Minister Narendra Modi is silent.

Where is the 56-inch chest, Kharge asked, taking a dig at the prime minister in his address at a rally in Himachal Pradesh's Rohru.

The Congress chief said his party is

fighting to save the people of the country and the Constitution. If the Constitution is not saved, democracy and the rights granted under it would be snatched, he alleged.

The Modi government supports the rich, while the Congress is with the poor. India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru built infrastructure which helped the poor and Modi is asking the Congress to give an account of 55 years, Kharge said.

"We will give account of every penny, but Modi should first give account of his tenure."

Kharge said, "We fought against Pakistan and got independence for Bangladesh. China encroached on our land and is constructing houses and roads and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is silent. Where is the 56-inch chest? The Congress chief also hit out at the Centre for allegedly not providing aid to the Himachal Pradesh

government in the aftermath of the natural calamity during the monsoon last year.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu had sought Rs 10,000 crore aid from the Centre after the floods but got only stones, Kharge claimed.

At the rally in the apple belt in Shimla district to garner support for Congress candidate from Shimla (SC) parliamentary constituency Vinod Sultanpuri, the party president said PM

Modi had promised to ensure remunerative returns to apple growers but he reduced import duty.

"Modi tells lies. He says something and does the opposite," Kharge alleged.

He asked people whether they got Rs 15 lakh which PM Modi had promised to give by getting black money parked in Swiss banks back to India, whether 20 crore jobs were given and whether the income of farmers doubled.

## Widespread rains cause damage to property in Kerala

### Yellow alert in seven districts

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The ongoing spell of heavy rains in Kerala has hit normal life, with scores of houses being damaged, roads being submerged, trees uprooted, flood water entering houses and trains running late as a result of the steady downpour that continued to lash the state on Saturday.

Flood water entered houses, schools and shops located in low-lying areas of Kuttanad in coastal Alapuzha district.

Potholes appeared on roads, posing a threat to vehicle users in many places there.

At Kakkulangara in Kollam district, a family of four had a narrow escape as the tiled roof of their house collapsed due to heavy showers.

Residents of the house escaped with minor injuries and were



taken to a nearby hospital, police said.

Another house in Kannettumukku here was completely damaged following downpour in the small hours today, they said.

However, the elderly woman living in it said she had a miraculous escape as she ran out to the courtyard hearing a sound in the night.

Several roads were battered and houses damaged in the coastal village of Pozhiyur, which witnessed intense sea incursion on Friday evening.

## Three Naxals killed in encounters with security forces in Chhattisgarh

PNS ■ RAIPUR/BIJAPUR

Three Naxalites were killed in encounters with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's south Bastar region on Saturday, police said.

Two Naxalites were gunned down in Bijapur district, while another was neutralised in neighbouring Sukma district, they said.

In Bijapur, the gunfight occurred in a forest near Jappemarka-Kamkanar villages under the Mirtur police station limits, where a team of District Reserve Guard (DRG) was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, an official said. The operation was launched based on a tip-off about the presence of Pandru, the in-charge of the west Bastar division supply team of Maoists, and Bhairamgarh area committee member Joga, along with 10 to 15 armed Maoists in the area, he said.

## EC releases LS seat-wise data on number of votes cast so far

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Saturday came out with Lok Sabha constituency-wise data on the number of votes cast in the first five phases of the elections and asserted that there is a pattern in creating false narratives and mischievous design to vitiate the electoral process. It said that any alteration in the number of votes polled is not possible.

The poll panel came out with the absolute number of voters on its own a day after the Supreme Court refused to issue directions to it on an NGO's plea for uploading polling booth-wise voter turnout data on its website. The EC said it has decided

to further expand the format of turnout data to include the absolute number of voters in every parliamentary constituency.

The absolute numbers are discernable parliamentary constituency-wise by all citizens by applying the turnout percentage to total electors, both already made available in the public domain, the poll panel said.

Electors are those who are part of the electoral roll and eligible to voters. Voters are those who actually cast their vote in an election. While EC had been issuing turnout percentage, there had been demands to make the actual number of voters in every phase public.

## With no poll boycott call, electors in Jharkhand's Tundi cast vote freely

PNS ■ DHANBAD (JHARKHAND)

Fifty-five-year-old Devyanti Majhia was among many who on Saturday exercised their franchise freely in Maoist-hit Tundi block in Jharkhand's Dhanbad district as the red rebels did not give a poll boycott call for the first time since 1984, officials said.

Enthusiasm was witnessed among people of Tundi, which falls under Giridih Lok Sabha seat, as peaceful voting was witnessed and 56.77 per cent turnout recorded in the block till 3 pm, Dhanbad Deputy Commissioner (DC) Madhvi



Mishra said in a press communiqué.

Since 1984, Maoists have been putting up posters on school buildings and walls of houses asking people to refrain from casting their votes. They had called for boycotting the

2019 Lok Sabha polls as well, an official said.

However, this time, they did not give a poll boycott call in the area for the first time in four decades, he said.

"The base area of the Maoists has shrunk in the state and they are now restricted to only a few pockets. This is one of the reasons behind high voter turnout in red zones," a senior police officer said.

Voters' confidence to freely exercise their franchise was also boosted by frequent visits of Dhanbad Senior Superintendent of Police H P Janardhan and his team to vulnerable booths, the official

claimed.

The district administration declared 34 of the 85 booths in the block as Maoist-affected.

Dinesh Mahtha, one of the voters, said that long queues, especially of women, were seen at polling stations after many years.

Dhaneswar Singh, a Maniadih resident whose younger brother was killed by Maoists for refusing to give levy in 1984, said there was no fear of the red rebels in the region.

Sunil Choudhary, a school teacher in Tundi, claimed that Maoists have been completely wiped out from the region.



been following the developments related to elections like the announcement of candidates and poll alliances even before the polls were

announced.

"I am proud to have cast my vote today," she said.

Radhika Shukla, a first-time voter and a student of Miranda

House, said, "We cannot ask the government for everything. In addition to other issues like development opportunities and women's safety, this generation's youth also wants that environmental issues should be addressed." She is the daughter of Special Commissioner of Police (crime) in Delhi Police Shalini Singh. Her father Anil Shukla is also an IPS officer.

Vibha Kumari, who is pursuing her graduation from the Delhi University, cast her vote at the Nirman Bhawan polling booth. "I am a first-time voter and it was a very smooth experience," she said.

The polling authorities had made good arrangements. After casting our votes, we were given coconut water packs to beat the heat," she said.

There were several first-time voters who made their choices after reading the manifestos of various parties and doing their research.

Madhu Kumari, who exercised her franchise at the polling booth in Nirman Bhawan, said, "If you want a better country, each and every vote is very important. I am proud to be a first-time female voter."



The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday filed a charge sheet against three Naxalites for killing three civilians on suspicion of being police informers. All the three accused are members of CPI (Maoist) and were found to be involved in the group's criminal conspiracy related to abduction of six civilians from Morkhnadi village of Kanker district in Chhattisgarh, an NIA statement said. Three of them were later killed after labelling them as police informers at a self-styled 'jan adalat' - a kind of parallel judiciary conducted by CPI (Maoist) cadres and their associates in Modemarka forest on November 1, 2023, it said. The three accused have been identified as Sannu Ram Atiani alias Sunil, Suresh Katlami alias Kachlami and Sanker Nureti alias Shanker, it said. In its charge sheet filed before a special court in Jagdalpur, the NIA charged the trio under various sections of Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. They were actively involved in the conspiracy of abducting and killing of three innocent civilians and promoting and propagating the terror agenda of CPI(Maoist) operating in that area through various fronts including Krantikari Kishan Committee, Mahila Mukti Manch, Revolutionary People's Council (RPC), Jantana Sarkar etc., the probe agency said.

## Priest booked for placing camera in women's bathroom



Police have booked a priest of a temple for allegedly putting up a camera over a roofless women's bathroom here, police said on Saturday. According to police, the said temple is located adjacent to the Muradnagar Ganga canal. People usually offer prayers after taking a dip in the canal. The matter came to light when a woman who went to the temple with her daughter on May 21 noticed a CCTV camera pointed at the roofless bathroom, police said. "The woman noticed that the CCTV camera installed on the top was focused on the room where women change their clothes," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Rural) Vivek Chandra Yadav. The display of the CCTV was linked with the mobile phone of the Mahant on which he would watch the ladies, DCP said. The woman immediately contacted Mahant Goswami and asked about the CCTV camera on which he got angry and hurled abuses.



# WIPO concludes new treaty to protect genetic resources

India plays key role

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Members of Geneva-based World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) have concluded an agreement under which it will be mandatory for patent applicants to disclose country of origin or source of genetic resources if the claimed invention is based on those materials or associated traditional knowledge.

The treaty will provide additional protection for Indian genetic resources and traditional knowledge. Although these are currently protected within India, they are prone to misappropriation in countries, which do not have disclosure obligations.

The current patent legislation does not have a mandatory provision requiring patent appli-



The WIPO treaty on "intellectual property, genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge" is a significant win for countries of the global South and for India, which is a hub of biodiversity hotspots with abundance of traditional knowledge, and wisdom.

cants to disclose the country of origin or source in case where the invention is based on genetic resources. At present, only 35 countries have some form of disclosure obligations, most of

which are not mandatory and do not have appropriate sanctions or remedies in place for effective implementation.

The new treaty was adopted on May 24 at the WIPO headquarters in Geneva after 192 countries and 86 observers

changes in their existing legal framework for enforcing disclosure of origin obligations on patent applicants.

Genetic resources (GRs) are present in things like medicinal plants, agricultural crops, and animal breeds. While genetic resources themselves cannot be directly protected as intellectual property, inventions developed using them can, most often through a patent.

Some genetic resources are also associated with traditional knowledge (ATK) through their use and conservation by indigenous peoples as well as local communities, often over generations. This knowledge is sometimes used in scientific research and, as such, may contribute to the development of a protected invention.

participated in the two-week negotiations from May 13-24 at a Diplomatic Conference.

This treaty will require contracting parties, including the developed world, to bring

## India seeking FTA with Maldives: Min

PNS ■ MALE

Maldives on Saturday said India has initiated efforts to create a Free Trade Agreement between the two countries and deliberations are ongoing for achieving it.

"They (India) want there to be a Free Trade Agreement with Maldives, in addition to SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Agreement)," Minister of Economic Development and Trade Mohamed Saeed told a press conference here.

The Maldives President has offered this opportunity to all countries, Saeed said, adding that the government aims to enter into agreements with as many countries as possible to offer ease in trade activities.

India's reported effort at seeking an FTA with the Maldives comes in the backdrop of an ongoing diplomatic row between the two countries since November last year when President Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings,



took the oath. Within hours of his oath, he had demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country. The last of the Indian military personnel were replaced by civilians earlier this month.

Meanwhile, the 1981 India and Maldives trade agreement provides for the export of essential commodities. According to the records from the Indian High Commission, growing from modest beginnings, India-Maldives bilateral trade crossed USD 300 million for the first time in 2021, which further crossed the USD 500 million mark in 2022.

Even without an FTA, India has offered concessions on several products to the Maldives, news portal Edition.mv quoted the minister as saying.

## MONEY MATTERS

### I-T deptt notifies cost inflation index for current fiscal



The income tax department has notified the Cost Inflation Index for the current fiscal beginning April 2024, for calculating long-term capital gains arising from sale of immovable property, securities and jewellery. The Cost Inflation Index (CII) is

used by taxpayers to compute gains arising out of sale of capital assets after adjusting inflation. The CII for financial year 2024-25, relevant to assessment year 2025-26, stood at 363, as per a notification of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT). The CII number for last fiscal was 348 and for 2022-23 financial year it was 331. Moore Singhi Executive Director Rajat Mohan said the CII reflects the inflation in the economy, which causes the prices of goods and services to increase over time. For the financial year 2023-24, the CII was set at 348. The index for the following financial year, 2024-25, has been updated to 363, marking an increase of 15 points, which corresponds to an annual inflation rate of approximately 4.3 per cent. "This is consistent with the retail inflation rate of 4.83 per cent recorded in April 2024."

### Bengal govt plans new AI and ML-focused data centre



The state government is setting up a powerful, high-capacity data centre that will allow 2,300 concurrent users to run artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) applications, an official said on Friday. This

facility will enable the practical application of data science by providing infrastructure to support advanced data analysis, the official said requesting anonymity on the sidelines of the Data Science 2024 Conference. "Our state is already equipped with advanced infrastructure, supporting over 5,000 users in real-time," the official noted. One more data centre with a focus on AI and ML is being built with a capacity of 2,300 concurrent users, he said. "To address capacity and growing demand, we are establishing this new data centre with greater capacity. Once operational, the data load will be split between the two centres," the official said. While the primary beneficiary of this new facility will be the government, there are plans to offer some startups access to the infrastructure for advanced data analytics, he said.

### Busy Bee Airways withdraws bid for Go First



More than three months after jointly bidding for Go First, travel portal EaseMyTrip's CEO Nishant Pitti on Saturday said he was withdrawing the bid for the bankrupt airline. Busy Bee Airways, majority-owned

by Pitti, along with SpiceJet Chief Ajay Singh, had put in a bid for Go First, which is undergoing an insolvency resolution process, in February. Pitti said after careful consideration, he decided to withdraw the bid for Go First in his personal capacity. "The decision allows me to better focus on other strategic priorities and initiatives that align with our long-term vision and growth objectives," he said in a statement. The latest move also comes less than a month after the Delhi High Court allowed lessors to take back 54 planes leased to Go First. On April 26, Pitti had said he will consider any necessary adjustments to its proposed offer for the grounded airline after reviewing the court order. It could not be immediately ascertained whether Ajay Singh will be pursuing the bid since the joint bidder Busy Bee Airways has opted out.

## Reliance Industries seeks CCI nod for Viacom18-Star India merger

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani-promoted Reliance Industries has sought approval from fair trade regulator Competition Commission of India (CCI) for the USD 8.5-billion merger of Viacom18 and Star India Pvt Ltd (SIPL).

"The proposed transaction aims to combine the entertainment businesses (along with certain other identified businesses) of Viacom18, part of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) group and SIPL, wholly-owned by The Walt Disney Company (TWDC).

"As a result of the transaction, SIPL, currently a wholly-owned entity of TWDC through its subsidiaries, will become a joint venture (JV) which will be jointly held by RIL, Viacom18 and existing TWDC subsidiaries," a notice filed with the CCI said on Friday.

The proposed transaction

will not cause any appreciable adverse effect on competition in India, RIL said in the notice.

However, to facilitate the CCI's assessment, they have identified several key markets where horizontal overlaps were significant such as licensing of audio visual content rights, distribution of broadcast TV channels, provision of audio visual (AV) content, and supply of advertising space in India.

SIPL is engaged in a range of media activities, including TV broadcasting, motion pictures and operation of an OTT platform. It is a wholly-owned entity of US-based The Walt Disney Company (TWDC). Viacom18 is engaged in the business of broadcasting of television (TV) channels, operation of an over-the-top (OTT) platform, in India and worldwide.

It is also engaged in the business of production and distribution of motion pictures.



## Reliance Power reports Rs 397 cr loss in Q4

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Power Ltd on Saturday reported a consolidated loss of Rs 397.66 crore during the March quarter, mainly on account of increased cost of fuel consumed.

It had posted Rs 321.79 crore profit in the year-ago period, the company said in an exchange filing.

The company's total income, however, increased to Rs 2,193.85 crore from Rs 1,853.32 crore a year ago.

Among expenses, its cost of fuel consumed increased to Rs 953.67 crore during the quarter from Rs 823.47 crore in the

January-March period in 2022-23.

For the full fiscal year, the company's losses widened to Rs 2,068.38 crore from Rs 470.77 crore loss in FY23.

The board of the company also "approved authorisations of members for issuance of foreign currency convertible bonds (FCCBs) and securities through qualified institutional placement (QIP). These shall be in terms of the applicable rules, regulations, guidelines, and laws, including Securities and Exchange Board of India".

Reliance Power has close to 6,000 MW of operational power generation assets.

## ‘Submit timely notifications on sugar subsidies in WTO’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A group of WTO member countries, including Brazil, Canada and the European Union, have urged India to submit timely notifications on sugar subsidies in the World Trade Organisation, an official said.

The issue came up for discussion during the meeting of the WTO's agriculture committee on May 23-24 in Geneva.

These countries are also major sugar exporters like India and they allege that support measures by India distort



global sugar trade.

Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Paraguay, New Zealand, the EU, and Guatemala have "urged India to submit timely notifications on the subsidies",

the Geneva-based official said.

India has stated that the Indian central and state governments neither paid for nor procured sugarcane from farmers, as all purchases were



### AI's Mumbai-San Francisco flight takes off after inordinate delay

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Air India's flight to San Francisco from the city took off on Saturday evening after an inordinate delay due to multiple reasons.

The flight, which was originally scheduled to take off at 1600 hours on Friday, was delayed by over 25 hours, due to multiple reasons and rescheduled for Saturday.

Again on Saturday, the flight was initially expected to fly out in the morning but finally took off for San Francisco around 1730 hours, according to an official. Details about the number of passengers could not be ascertained. On Friday, passengers had to wait inside the aircraft for more than five hours before the flight was rescheduled for Saturday. An airline official had said the Boeing 777 plane, which was scheduled to take off at 1600 hours, was first delayed due to a technical glitch, then some passengers disembarked and subsequently, another passenger fell ill.

After disembarking the passenger who started feeling unwell around 1917 hours, it was noticed that by the time the flight would have reached San Francisco, there would be night-landing restrictions and also, the crew would have crossed the flight-duty limitations, the official had said on Friday.

### Aurobindo Pharma Q4 net profit rises 79.6% to Rs 909 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aurobindo Pharma on Saturday reported a 79.6 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 909 crore for the March quarter.

The drug firm had reported a net profit of Rs 506 crore in the January-March quarter of the FY23 fiscal.

Revenue from operations rose to Rs 7,580 crore in the period under review as compared with Rs 6,473 crore in the year-ago period, Aurobindo Pharma said in a statement. For the financial year ended March 31, 2024, the drugmaker reported a net profit of Rs 3,173 crore as against Rs 1,927 crore in FY23.

The company's revenue from operations rose to Rs 29,002 cr in the last fiscal as against Rs 24,855 cr in FY23

## New plant of Indian pharmaceutical company inaugurated in Bangladesh

PNS ■ DHAKA

India has been a credible partner in the growth story of Bangladesh's pharmaceutical industry, its envoy here said on Saturday as a new plant of a leading Indian pharmaceutical company was inaugurated in this country.

Private Industry and Investment Adviser of Bangladesh Prime Minister Salman F Rahman and Indian High Commissioner to



Bangladesh Pranay Verma jointly inaugurated the new plant of Sun Pharma at Meghna Industrial Economic Zone in the Sonargaon upazi-

la of Narayanganj district at the bank of the river Meghna adjacent to the Dhaka-Chittagong highway, the UNB news agency reported.

## India Global Forum to spotlight UK-India ties as bridge between elections in both countries

PNS ■ LONDON

The annual India Global Forum (IGF) in London is set to spotlight UK-India strategic ties bridged between general elections in both countries next month, with a line up of senior ministers, entrepreneurs and analysts weighing up the future trajectory of bilateral ties under newly elected governments.

IGF London, confirmed this week to be held between June 24 and 28, will cover the full spectrum of the partnership including the course of the free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations. The India-UK FTA talks began in January 2022 and are now stalled in the fourteenth round of talks as both countries stepped into their general election cycles this year.

"Regardless of which govern-



ments come to power, a series of opportunities, and certainly challenges, await them; that's why IGF London 2024 is set to be a crucial event in the diary, serving as a major economic and geopolitical stocktake, offering vital insights and informing the strategic direction," said Manoj Ladwa,

Founder and Chairman of UK-headquartered strategic events platform India Global Forum.

"As the world looks to India and vice versa, IGF London will be instrumental in shaping perspectives and strategies on both sides. It will not only analyse the current geopolitical climate but also create the essential pathways for collaborations and

innovations, far into the future," he said. The week-long event now in its sixth year, addressed by both British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Opposition Leader Keir Starmer in the past, will look ahead to the UK general election on July 4 and analyse the results of the Indian elections — out on June 4.

It is conceived as a platform for evaluating and course-setting for future UK-India relations and review the progress of the 2030 Roadmap, with thousands of high-level speakers and participants across 15 events at iconic venues in London and nearby in Windsor. IGF London will culminate in the annual UK-India Awards, which celebrate individuals and organisations driving the bilateral partnership forward.

## ‘Indian startup ecosystem is mature, set to bolster economy’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian startup ecosystem is mature, with multiple tailwinds that are poised to escalate India to become the third largest economy in the world, said AWS' Kumara Raghavan.

In a conversation, Raghavan, Head, Startups, Amazon Web Services (AWS) India, and South Asia, discussed the vibrant Indian



startup scene, noting its strength and innovation potential.

"We are the 5th largest economy, we are trending towards becoming the 3rd largest... factors that will contribute to it are labor addition, infrastructure growth, and efficiency improvements, where technologies like GenAI will play their part, a large developer ecosystem, the ability to build products

in the country and serviced all over the world, then there are regulatory tailwinds like Make in India and Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme as well," he said.

Raghavan lauded the maturity of the Indian startup ecosystem, noting the significant contributions of experienced founders who have embarked on multiple entrepreneurial ventures. "We are

the third largest startup ecosystem in the world. And there are a couple of tailwinds going for us," he said.

He gave credit to various factors for driving India's growth as a startup ecosystem.

"Over the last decade, we have seen founders launch multiple startups over the last 7-8 years," he said, adding that this wealth of experience has not only accelerated the

lifecycle of startups but has also enhanced their chances of success.

India's strong developer ecosystem has further bolstered the startup scene, offering a competitive advantage and fostering a culture of innovation, he added.

"These combine to give us a very strong momentum... India is one of the most vibrant and open markets. And there are so many

opportunities to solve," he noted.

Raghavan also pointed out the increasing interest of startups towards embracing GenAI, and gave instances of Yellow.ai, Healthify, Fibe (formerly EarlySalary) adopting and utilising AWS' generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) capabilities to revolutionise customer experiences, internal operations, and scalability





# EXPLORING THE GARDEN OF JADE

**PAWAN SONI**  
embarks on a  
delightful journey  
through Chinese  
cuisine  
with innovative  
twists adding a  
new dimension to  
the experience



**R**eminiscing about my unforgettable dining experience at Jade under the mastery of Chef Vivek Rana, I recently revisited this iconic Chinese restaurant, now under the stewardship of Chef Ankur Gulati. The restaurant has undergone a transformation, now boasting a spacious layout flooded with natural light, offering a refreshing and open ambience. As I settled into one of the three Personal Dining Rooms (PDRs), I pondered if the meal would succeed in replicating my prior experience. Skipping drinks and soup, we dove straight into the Golden Fried Prawns,

**FACT SHEET**  
Address: Jade, 102, The Claridges, 12, Dr APJ Kalam Road, New Delhi Phone: 011-39555000

**RATINGS**  
Food: 4.25/5 | Service: 4/5 | Ambience: 4.5/5 | Overall: 4.25/5



a new addition to the menu of this classic dish. The large sized prawns were perfectly chunky, coated in a light batter of potato starch, and paired excellently with a spicy-sweet pineapple chili sauce. A variety of dim sum followed, each a masterpiece in its own right. The soupy pork and ginger, steamed lobster and scallop, lettuce wrapped prawn, truffle mushroom, and cream cheese in a carrot-shaped skin were all exquisite. The lettuce wrapped prawn stood out for its subtle flavors, although the chicken dim sum in coconut milk-based broth, while delicious, seemed more suited to Thai cuisine. The lamb chops, a departure from traditional cumin based Chinese fare, were a surprising delight. Paired with a Chinese-style sauce featuring butter, garlic, ginger, and a hint of ketchup, they offered a unique and satisfying blend of flavors. For the mains, the steamed Chilean seabass in a wine-based soy sauce was a standout, offering a light yet flavorful experience. The mushroom crab, while promising, fell short due to the use of frozen crab meat, which compromised its sweetness and freshness. The meal concluded with a serving of coconut ice cream accompanied by liquid jaggery, a sweet yet refreshing end to a memorable dining experience. However, the single scoop served for Rs 695 felt slightly lacking, and I would have appreciated a larger portion. The meal at Jade was a delightful journey through Chinese cuisine, with Chef Ankur Gulati's innovative twists adding a new dimension to the experience. The ambience, now more spacious and airy, complements the culinary offerings, making Jade a must-visit destination for aficionados of Chinese cuisine.

## Home Chefs push Food Frontiers

FOODFREAK



PAWAN SONI



**I**n the dynamic world of gastronomy, a fascinating trend is unfolding: the ascent of home chefs transitioning into the professional sphere, offering a taste of home to professionals far from their roots. This trend not only reshapes the culinary landscape but also enriches the dining experience for food enthusiasts globally. Eleven years ago, recognising the talent of home chefs and bakers, I created a platform through our awards — The Big F Awards. While most awards still focus on restaurants and hotels due to their financial considerations, the role of home-based chefs is gaining recognition, with professional platforms like ChefPin becoming the Zomato of the home chef arena. ChefPin app help diners discover hidden talents by using the app that can be downloaded from Android playstore and Apple Appstore. Rocky Mohan, founder of ChefPin says, "Platforms like ChefPin are leading this culinary revolution, dedicated to discovering and showcasing talents from home kitchens. Through ChefPin's innovative approach, home chefs not only display their culinary skills but also immerse themselves in the world of professional cooking. Collaborating with seasoned chefs in renowned hotels such as Shangri-La, these aspiring cooks learn high-end cuisine intricacies, refine their techniques, and gain invaluable experience." I have personally attended many of these pop-ups at hotels, particularly Shangri-La, and have been impressed by the regional cuisines they offer. Recently, I experienced a pop-up by home chef Sai Priya, unveiling hidden Oriya cuisine dishes. Past events featured Rekha Rigo's South Indian flavours, Surabhi Bhandari's vegetarian Marwadi cuisine, including traditional gluten-free dishes, mango peel-based delicacies, and

Gul Ali's Awadhi dishes. Such pop-ups help document many unknown dishes, preserving their heritage. Abhishek Sadhoo, General Manager at Shangri-La Eros, New Delhi, highlights, "As a part of bringing the World on a Platter at Tamra, these collaborations not only allow a gourmet of multiple cuisines of home food for our guests but also enhances culinary team members to explore new regional cuisines, techniques, and ingredients, enriching their culinary knowledge and adding a new dimension to their expertise." Furthermore, these pop-up events offer hotel guests a unique dining experience, indulging in homely, traditional dishes prepared with love and care by home chefs. This break from the standard hotel menus not only enhances the hotel's appeal but also creates a buzz among food enthusiasts, attracting more guests to experience this culinary fusion. Over the years, I have witnessed many home chefs grow and achieve professional success. One such example is Abhilasha Jain, also known as *Marwadi Khana*. From preparing authentic Rajasthani cuisine at home, she now operates a small professional setup, offering deliveries, *laddoos*, *gujiya*, and stylish catering while maintaining a homely touch. The emergence of home chefs in the professional culinary scene, facilitated by platforms such as ChefPin, demonstrates the evolving nature of gastronomy. It breaks barriers, fosters cultural exchange, and redefines the food experience. As this trend continues, it promises to bring new levels of creativity and diversity to the world of fine dining.

— Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com

## DREAMY DARJEELING

# Serene Himalayan Hideaway

For many years, filmmakers have been captivated by the enchanting allure of DARJEELING nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas. It possesses a charming blend of grandeur, cinematic appeal, and intimacy, making it ideal for both visual storytelling and as a muse for writers seeking creative inspiration.



BY **AKANKSHA DEAN**

**S**ince childhood, I dreamed of visiting Darjeeling. Nestled in the Himalayan foothills in West Bengal, India, it captivates with lush tea gardens stretching over rolling hills, set against snow-capped mountains. Perched high at 6,710 feet, towering above its neighbouring regions. I imagined myself enjoying tea amidst the mountains, enveloped by the serene beauty of nature. After a two-hour flight and a two-hour drive from steamy Delhi, I find myself in Ghoom, where staff dressed in charming smiles graciously serves me delightful tea besides breath-taking views of the Kanchenjunga, India's loftiest peak at 28,169 feet (8,586 meters) at this lavish 6.4-acre haven aka The Sterling Darjeeling, just steps from Yiga Choeling Monastery, making it a dreamy retreat for my getaway. To my surprise, Darjeeling's history wasn't always intertwined with tea.



Back in 1835, the British obtained the lofty ridge, standing tall at 7,000 feet (2,134 meters), from the rulers of Sikkim. Initially intended as a sanctuary to rejuvenate weary colonialists fatigued by the plains' sweltering heat, this haven quickly transformed into a popular destination for the elite British community from Kolkata (Calcutta), seeking respite and breath-taking views of Kanchenjunga. The infusion of tea culture didn't grace Darjeeling until the 1840s, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Campbell, a Scottish physician who introduced tea bushes from China to the region.

### PLAYING TOURIST

Apart from being located at an amazing location with brilliant services, The Sterling Darjeeling boasting 101 rooms has easy access to a number of tourist attractions. My Privilege Suite at the Sterling has a valley view that I never get tired of rising to, while giving the warmth of a heritage hotel with the luxuries of a slicker. Embarking on a holiday at Sterling also means a delightful array of exclusive Discoveries & Experiences, both within the resort's confines and beyond, allowing you to immerse yourself in the rich tapestry of local art, culture, cuisine, history, nature, and activities. From

savouring authentic culinary delights to embarking on enlightening culture trails, Sterling is dedicated to providing guests with a multitude of avenues to enjoy a distinctive and memorable holiday experience. As I begin my day at the bustling Batasia Loop Market, I find myself mesmerized by the vibrant displays of jewellery and colourful clothing that flank the Gorkha War Memorial and Batasia Eco Garden. Immersing myself in the local culture, I embark on a nostalgic journey aboard the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, known fondly as the Toy Train, evoking precious

childhood memories that inspire me to capture the essence in my writing. Thrill-seekers can opt for a thrilling rafting adventure on the Teesta River, while history enthusiasts will be enchanted by the remarkable architecture of Zang Dhok Palri Phodang perched on Durpin Hill.

### CHILL ZONE

Chowrasta, the lively hub situated on Nehru Road in the old town became our favourite haunt and we would go there literally every evening. This bustling area features a promenade where visitors and locals gather to shop, dine, or simply enjoy the scenery. Seizing the opportunity to observe people, I savour a cup of tea amid the vibrant atmosphere. As Bollywood tunes filled the air and families interact with vendors, I soak in the sights and sounds of the bustling streets. Amidst the fragrant pine trees, I encounter women vendors selling corn on the cob. Engaging with one, I learn about Chowrasta's significance: symbolizing an intersection, the four roads branching out from the mall lead in different directions. The days gracefully wind down at Glenary's bakery and café, where we watch the sun set beyond the panoramic windows, savouring a comforting cup of tea as we reflect on the remarkable experiences of the day. Back at the Sterling Resort, in the evenings the Holiday Activity



Centre offers a plethora of entertainment options, from engaging in table tennis and carrom to diving into board and fun group games. Upon my request, I am treated to enchanting themed nights and have the pleasure of attending events at the charming amphitheatre, adding a touch of magic to my stay.

### THE LAST LEG

For those seeking to delve into Darjeeling's tea culture, a stay at upscale tea estates like the Glenburn Tea Estate offers an unrivalled retreat steeped in rich heritage. Beginning from its 1860 inception under the stewardship of the esteemed Prakash family,

this working tea estate seamlessly blends tradition with modern luxury. Nature envelops you here, with 1,000 acres of private forest and two rivers meandering through the estate. Choose between the Burra Bungalow and the Water Lily Bungalow, each offering four elegant suites. We enjoy our days hiking, fishing, and exploring the tea-growing process and embracing the tranquillity with a book and a calming cup of tea. Crossing to Sikkim via a charming hanging bridge unveils a world of ancient forests and village life awaiting exploration. While winding our way back to the airport, we pause at Timboor on the Trail, renowned for its Nepalese cuisine amidst a garden ablaze with azaleas and petunias. Yearning for a taste of traditional Nepalese thali, I sought to revisit cherished meals from my travels among Nepalese friends. Perfect ending to my Darjeeling trip. Akanksha Dean is an independent food & travel writer, a chef and a catalyst and is the first Indian to have trained at Osteria Francescana, in Modena, Italy, rated as the world's best restaurant in the World's 50 Best Restaurants, in 2016 and 2018 and currently in the Best of The Best Category.



"Until you dig a hole,  
you plant a tree, you  
water it and make it  
survive, you haven't  
done a thing. You are  
just talking"  
— Swami Vivekananda



As we navigate life’s twists and turns, we can draw inspiration from the timeless wisdom from nature to embrace the changes that come our way, always making room for new growth and opportunities, write **BKP SINHA** and **ARVIND KUMAR JHA**

# GENESIS OF GROWTH FROM BUD TO BRANCH

As you stand beneath the towering majesty of a tree, your gaze is naturally drawn upwards, captivated by the intricate network of branches that crisscross the sky. Each branch, unique in pattern and structure, defines the tree's character and beauty. Yet, behind this awe-inspiring spectacle lies a more fascinating tale of growth and transformation. The narrative unfolds with the emergence of a bud from the tree's trunk. Given the right balance of sunlight, water, and nutrients, this bud slowly grows and develops into a mature branch. The genesis of a bud, or bud set, is initiated in regions of the plant rich in meristematic cells. These cells, found at the tips of stems and roots, have the unique ability to divide and differentiate into various types of plant cells, leading to the formation of new organs such as leaves, flowers, and branches. When these meristematic cells, or apical buds, are exposed to sunlight, they initiate new growth. This is where the plant hormones auxin and cytokinin come into play. Auxin, originating from the shoot apex, inhibits the outgrowth of axillary buds, allowing the apical bud to grow faster and taller. This phenomenon, known as apical dominance, ensures that the central stem of the plant grows more strongly than the side stems. Cytokinin, on the other hand, which is stimulated by the removal of the shoot apex, promotes the outgrowth of axillary buds by providing them with more nutrients.

This tug-of-war between auxin and cytokinin is crucial for the plant's growth strategy. It allows the plant to adapt to its environment, growing taller to reach for sunlight or spreading out its branches to occupy more space. As the bud grows, the meristematic cells divide and differentiate, giving rise to different types of cells that constitute the branch. Some cells form the outer layer, transforming into bark cells, while others form the wood, turning into the xylem and phloem. As the cells continue to divide and differentiate, the bud gradually elongates, evolving into a twig. Over time, the twig undergoes lignification, a process involving the deposition of lignin, a complex organic polymer that provides rigidity to the plant's cell walls. This process gradually transforms the flexible, green twig into a hard, brown branch. Lignin is a key component of the plant's defense mechanism. It forms a physical barrier in the cell walls that protects the plant against pathogens and pests. This barrier also makes the plant resistant to decay, thereby increasing its lifespan. Moreover, lignin is essential for the plant's water transport system. It makes the plant's vascular tissues waterproof, preventing the leakage of water and nutrients, and facilitating their upward movement from the roots to the leaves. This waterproofing property also prevents the absorption of excess water, protecting the plant from waterlogging and associated diseases.

The anatomy of a branch reveals a marvel of plant architecture. At its very base lies the branch collar, a swollen area where the branch attaches to the main trunk. This specialized structure houses tissues that are instrumental in wound healing and act as a protective shield against the invasion of pathogens. Progressing from the branch collar, we come across the branch junction. This crucial juncture signifies the point where the branch diverges from the trunk, paving the way for the branch's outward expansion. From this point, the branch unfurls, giving rise to lateral shoots known as secondary branches or twigs. These offshoots, in turn,



BKP SINHA



ARVIND K JHA

“OVER TIME, THE TWIG UNDERGOES LIGNIFICATION, A PROCESS INVOLVING THE DEPOSITION OF LIGNIN, A COMPLEX ORGANIC POLYMER THAT PROVIDES RIGIDITY TO THE PLANT'S CELL WALLS. THIS PROCESS GRADUALLY TRANSFORMS THE FLEXIBLE, GREEN TWIG INTO A HARD, BROWN BRANCH. LIGNIN IS A KEY COMPONENT OF THE PLANT'S DEFENSE MECHANISM. IT FORMS A PHYSICAL BARRIER IN THE CELL WALLS THAT PROTECTS THE PLANT AGAINST PATHOGENS AND PESTS



branch out into finer limbs, culminating in the production of leaves, flowers, or fruits. Branching patterns in trees are an intriguing aspect of plant biology, reflecting both the genetic makeup of the species and the environmental conditions in which they grow. One such pattern is 'alternate branching', seen in certain species. In this arrangement, branches are staggered along the main stem, reducing overlap and creating spaces between branches. This results in a more open canopy structure, which is not only an architectural marvel but also a strategic adaptation. The open structure allows sunlight to penetrate evenly, reaching the lower branches and the forest floor. This not only benefits the tree itself by ensuring all parts receive adequate sunlight for photosynthesis but also nurtures the understory plants with filtered light. However, this strategy is not without its challenges. The staggered arrangement of branches creates a less rigid framework, which, while potentially allowing for more movement during wind events, might also increase the tree's susceptibility to structural damage in severe storms. On the other hand, some species showcase 'opposite branching', with pairs of branches sprouting in symmetrical opposition. Trees with opposite branching patterns often experience higher levels of shading within their canopies due to the symmetrical arrangement of branches. This leads to a denser and overlapping canopy structure, akin to a natural umbrella that provides shade and conserves moisture. The increased density results in shading between opposite branches, limiting the penetration of sunlight to lower branches and the interior of the canopy. However, this denser structure often provides increased mechanical stability against wind or storms. Branches inherently exhibit negative geotropism, meaning they grow in the opposite direction of gravity, reaching upwards and outwards for sunlight. This strategic adaptation enables them to maximise their exposure to sunlight and secure their place in the fierce competition for resources. In dense forests, where sunlight is scarce, trees adopt a different strategy known as 'self-shading avoidance'. They grow more vertically to minimize the shading of their lower leaves and reach toward the scant light available in the canopy. Wind, the invisible sculptor, also plays a significant role in shaping tree growth. In windy environments, trees often adopt narrower branching angles, resulting in a more streamlined shape that reduces wind resistance. These branches, often perceived as mere offshoots, are in fact, the vital lifelines of trees. Much like arteries in the human body, branches serve as crucial conduits within the arboreal world, playing an indispensable role in the survival and well-being of the tree. They perform the critical function of transporting water and nutrients from the roots to the leaves, while also carrying back the sugars produced during photosynthesis from the leaves to the rest of the tree. They also provide habitat and support for a diverse range of organisms. Birds build nests on them, insects and lichen find refuge on the bark and leaves, and mammals use branches for shelter and as a pathway for movement. This biodiversity creates a mini-ecosystem within the branches themselves, contributing significantly to the overall health of the tree and the complex web of life that surrounds it. Many trees have flowers and fruit on their branches, which are essential for reproduction. Flowers attract pollinators, and fruits, containing seeds, are eaten by animals who then disperse the seeds in their droppings, aiding in the spread of the tree species. Some seeds are even equipped with wings or fluff, enabling them to be carried by the wind, thus allowing plants to disperse

their offspring over a wide area. In some remarkable instances, branches themselves become the genesis of new life. This is observed in the process of vegetative propagation, where fragments of branches can give birth to entirely new trees. This form of asexual reproduction results in a new tree that is genetically identical to the parent tree. Trees, in their wisdom, are active architects of their growth. They strategically shed lower branches that are no longer efficient at photosynthesis. This calculated act of self-pruning allows trees to channel their energy and resources toward the higher branches, which are better positioned to capture more sunlight. But how does the tree accomplish this? When a branch becomes unproductive, the tree gradually severs its supply of water and nutrients. The branch then loses its bark and becomes frail and susceptible to fungi. Eventually, the branch falls off, leaving behind a stump that is sealed by resins or gums. This seal protects the tree from harmful pathogens that could infect the wounded area and jeopardize its health. As the fallen branch decomposes, it bestows its accumulated nutrients back into the soil, a final act of nourishment for the tree that once gave it life. This process enriches the surrounding ecosystem, fostering new life and affirming that in every ending, there is a new beginning. This ongoing cycle of growth and retreat mirrors life's profound truth: Change is the only constant. It serves as a reminder that life isn't merely about relentless growth, but also about the wisdom of knowing when to let go. Much like a tree that sheds an unproductive branch to conserve energy for new growth, we too should find the courage to let go of what no longer serves us. As we navigate life's twists and turns, we can draw inspiration from this timeless wisdom from nature to embrace the changes that come our way, always making room for new growth and opportunities.

(Former Principal Chief Conservators of Forests, UP and Maharashtra)





# A SYMPHONY OF DREAMS, LOSS AND A NATION'S AWAKENING

**KAMINI PURI'S** words breathe life into the pages of *The Red Munia* as she intricately interweaves the personal and the political, offering readers an exploration of love, loss and the human spirit amidst India's transformative history, writes **SAKSHI PRIYA**

**T**he *Red Munia* by renowned author Kamini Puri delves into the history of India, beautifully exploring the themes of family, love, Indian history and loss amidst a transforming nation. Puri's novel is a compelling journey of self-discovery set against the vibrant landscapes of India. The story is as much about the characters as it is about the cultural and natural beauty that surrounds them. The novel reflects contemporary reality, illustrating how "Politics is something we are unknowingly growing up on without even understanding the meaning of it." The novel's charm lies in its rich descriptions and the deep emotional resonance of its characters as they navigate the complexities of love, identity, and freedom. In the prologue, Puri introduces the *red munia* bird, an enchanting creature with deep red wings speckled with brown and white. This bird, despite its beauty is often captured and caged, symbolising India's own history of being subjugated for its riches and splendour. The red munia's plight mirrors the nation's suffering under British rule establishing a resonant and evocative framework for the story. Laila, the vibrant heart of the novel, takes readers on a voyage from her

childhood in Kapurthala, Punjab. Her determination is well-portrayed by Puri, showcasing her dreams and emotional connection with her sister. As Laila grows up, she leaves her sheltered life in Kapurthala to pursue journalism in Bombay. Her quest for independence and self-expression leads her to London, where she dreams of meeting the Queen of England. In London, she meets Jai, whose carefree attitude and understanding of love transform her perspective on life. Their romance faces numerous challenges, reflecting the complexities of cultural integration and personal ambitions. The first chapter, 'Childhood Bliss,' introduces readers to the blissful world of Laila in 1942 Kapurthala, Punjab. Laila, her sister Dia, and their friend Maya live a life filled with joy and adventure epitomised by their games, horse riding and the warmth of family traditions. The vivid descriptions of their home, particularly the beloved divan in the verandah, evoke a sense of nostalgia and comfort. Laila's narration brings to life the household dynamics, with Papaji's morning rituals and Bijji's attachment to old furniture adding layers of authenticity to the family portrait. The playful interactions between Laila and Dia, their mimicry of Papaji's shaving routine and their

**THE RED MUNIA**  
Author: Kamini Puri  
Publisher: StoryMirror  
Infotech  
Price: ₹349



uncontrollable laughter highlight the innocence and joy of childhood. However, beneath this idyllic surface, there are hints of the larger political context. Laila's awareness of her father's concerns about the anarchic state of India adds a layer of depth to her character, foreshadowing her eventual journey toward personal and political awakening. At 18, Laila leaves her hometown to pursue journalism in Bombay (Mumbai), a decision that marks the beginning of her journey toward self-discovery. The portrayal of Bombay in the 1940s is vivid and immersive, showcasing the city's bustling streets, diverse culture, and vibrant atmosphere. The chapter 'Bombay Dreams' is particularly special for every reader as it captures Laila living in the city of dreams to pursue her ambitions. Through Laila's experiences, Puri masterfully captures the essence of the city, highlighting its role as a melting pot of dreams and aspirations. One of the novel's most compelling aspects is Laila's relationship with her family. Despite her physical distance from them, Laila's emotional connection to her family, particularly with her sister Dia, is heartwarming, as it serves as a source of strength and support for both sisters as they navigate life's challenges.

Central to the novel is the theme of grief, portrayed with raw honesty and sensitivity. The protagonist's struggles to come to terms with loss, both personal and collective, is depicted with heartbreaking realism. Puri explores different facets of grief - anger, denial and eventual acceptance — with nuance, making it a deeply relatable and poignant read. In the chapter 'Unforgettable Meeting,' where Laila interviews Jawaharlal Nehru, her achievement is significant, yet she misses the sharing that comes from a soulful relationship. This moment describes the emotional depth of the book, as she has no one to share her accomplishment with apart from her father, highlighting the emptiness she feels despite her success. The novel also shines in its portrayal of the impact of historical events on individual lives. Through the protagonist's journey, Puri illuminates how larger political events, such as India's struggle for Independence and the assassination of Gandhi, reverberate in the lives of ordinary people, shaping their choices and beliefs. Character development is another strong suit of the novel. The protagonist's growth and transformation are beautifully rendered, making them fully realised and empathetic characters

The novel is more than just a personal journey, as it explores the complexities of finding your voice and chasing your dreams amidst societal constraints. Laila's burning ambition to become a journalist is juxtaposed against the expectations placed upon young women of her times. This internal conflict is further amplified as she grapples with the cultural shifts and social changes sweeping across India. The titular red munia bird emerges as a powerful symbol. Is it a representation of the freedom and resilience that Laila aspires to? Or perhaps, a reminder of the beauty and fragility of her homeland? The ambiguity adds depth to the story, inviting readers to contemplate the symbolism throughout the narrative. Arguably, *The Red Munia* is a beautifully written novel that offers a compelling portrait of pre-Independence India. Through its vivid imagery, well-developed characters and touching storytelling, Kamini Puri creates a narrative that is both appealing and thought-provoking. It is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the enduring power of hope and determination, making it a must-read for anyone interested in journeys of self-discovery and the rich history and culture of India.

## At His Majesty's Service

Chander Lall's book offers a panoramic view of the Constitution, the history of India's Independence movement, and the social milieu of that era in an inimitable style, writes **KUMAR CHELLAPPAN**

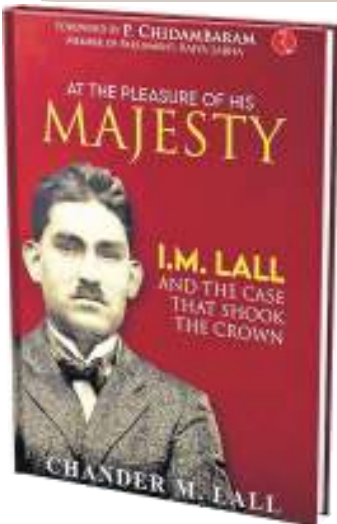
**H**aving worked with Central Government Establishments for close to a decade and a half, this writer has come to the conclusion that a Government job is a safe haven for those with an IQ below par. Apart from the obvious security and regular salaries that accompany such a job, it also leads to some individuals barely doing any work worth its name. In fact, it is this sense of security that draws countless aspirants to seek a position in State/Central Government departments. Recently, I came across the case file of a driver employed with the Andaman Lakshadweep Harbour Works whose service was terminated following unauthorised absence from duty for a period of eight years. It took years for the Central Administrative Tribunal to concur with his superiors that his continuous absence from duty for such a long period was devoid of any justification and uphold their decision to terminate his services. This is just one such instance of the freedom enjoyed by Government servants who are blissfully unaware of the landmine-paved paths of the private sector. While modern-day Government employees are fortunate to enjoy complete freedom at their work places, things were not as smooth during the tenure of the British administration. Anyone, including officers of the high profile and elite Indian Civil Services, could be relieved of their responsibilities for the most innocuous of reasons. It took a daredevil ICS officer like Inder Mohan Lall to take on the British administration by the horns and tutor them on the fact that there is due procedure to be followed in taking disciplinary

action against any errant Government officer or lower staff. The Civil Service Regulations had given enough power to the then Federal Public Service Commission as well as the Government of India's Home Department under the Government of India Act 1935 to "fire" anyone accused of misconduct while in service. The draconian rule did not have any provision to furnish the accused with a chargesheet, his version of the story holding no relevance. This rule was challenged by Lall, taking on His Majesty's Government from 1939 to 1948. The case culminated in Lall's victory as the Court ordered that the Government of India Act should have Article 311 which ensures that "no person who is a member of the civil service of the Union or an all India Service or a civil service of a State shall be dismissed or removed by an authority subordinate to that by which he was appointed." No such person as aforesaid shall be dismissed or removed or reduced in rank except after an enquiry in which he has been informed of the charges against him and given a reasonable opportunity of being heard in respect of those charges, the Court ordered. Lall had faced a series of charges for his decision to appoint Sundar Das, his wife's nephew, as a subordinate staff in the court where he worked as district judge of the Hoshiarpur district. This antagonised some of the junior staff members who had eyed the post for themselves. Lall had taken stringent action against many Government employees for their corrupt practices so they were waiting for an opportunity to strike back. Sundar Das came served as the right opportunity for them to take it up with the Secretary of

State. The latter appointed two commissions of enquiry, one after another, to foist cases on Lall in order to get rid of him from His Majesty's Service. The enquiries and the ensuing legal battle form the plot of his book. What author Chander M Lall has done is to chronicle the events in a reader-friendly manner. He commences with his family history that includes Lall's life as a soldier in the British Indian Army during the First World War and how he made it to the ICS from where he was removed, based on the reports submitted by the enquiry commissions. We seldom go into the details of a new legislation enacted by law making

bodies like the Parliament or legislative assemblies. However, each and every law enacted addresses a specific concern. The first time the Constitution was amended was to address certain difficulties arising out of rulings by the Supreme Court. Famous cases like Golak Nath versus State of Punjab or Keshavananda Bharati versus State of Kerala were a follow up to the restrictions placed on the land ownership of individuals. Henry and William Golak Nath, two brothers, owned hundreds of acres of prime land in Jalandhar. But the Punjab Government declared that each brother could own only 30 acres of land and declared the rest as surplus land. The brothers challenged the Act and the apex court upheld the decision of the State of Punjab. Similarly, Keshavananda Bharati, the pontiff of Edneer Mutt, challenged the Kerala Government's move to take over vast stretches of land owned by the Mutt (monastery) as per the Land Reforms Act. A constitutional Bench in a split verdict upheld the Kerala Government decision but ruled that Parliament cannot amend the basic structure of the Constitution while making such legislations. The Kerala Government's action was a specific move against Hindus as it left untouched thousands of acres of plantations belonging to other communities. No surprise that the title of Fali Nariman's last book was, *You Must Know Your Constitution*. Chander Lall's *At the Pleasure of His Majesty* is an important work. It offers the readers a panoramic view of the Constitution, history about India's Independence movement, and the social milieu of that era in a truly splendid style.

**AT THE PLEASURE  
OF HIS MAJESTY**  
Author: Chander M Lall  
Publisher: RUPA  
Price: ₹295

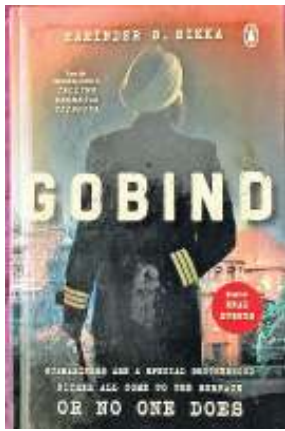


## TALE OF VALOUR, LOVE, AND REDEMPTION

**HARINDER SIKKA** tells Gobind's story with rare passion and candor, highlighting the protagonist's ability to uphold his promises, says **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

**H**arinder Sikka, the acclaimed author whose book *Calling Sehmat* inspired the 2018 film *Raazi* starring Alia Bhatt, explores the depths of human emotion and resilience in his latest novel, *Gobind*. This compelling story is set against the dual backdrops of Bihar's poverty and the valorous spirit of the Indian Navy. Through a rich narrative, Sikka delves into themes of love, loyalty, and redemption, offering readers a deeply personal and stirring literary experience. For Sikka, *Gobind* is more than just a story; it is a personal literary voyage that weaves together themes of love, selflessness, and unwavering determination," he explains. The novel is based on true events that transpired between the late 1970s and early 1990s, providing a rare and profound insight into the disciplined and highly motivated Armed Forces of India, particularly the Indian Navy. Through meticulous storytelling, Sikka highlights the rigorous training, passion, and dedication of naval officers, weaving in shocking incidents that occurred in St Petersburg, Russia, and India. *Gobind* centres around its titular character, a man born into abject poverty to parents who held deep faith in Guru Gobind Singh. Named after the revered saint, Gobind realises early on that it is up to him to change his family's circumstances. With no means or support beyond the values instilled by his parents, Gobind works tirelessly to gain admission to the Indian Military Academy (IMA), eventually qualifying for recruitment into

**CALLING SEHMAT**  
Author: Harinder Sikka  
Publisher: Penguin  
Price: ₹499



the Indian Navy. Although Gobind achieves professional success, his personal life is marred by tragedy. The girl he loves commits suicide after her landlord father arranges her marriage to another man. This devastating loss leaves Gobind shattered, despite being celebrated in his village for his professional achievements. Yet, he rises from this personal devastation with renewed determination. Gobind's journey takes him to Russia as part of a team tasked with purchasing submarines for the Indian Navy. Despite the immense responsibility, he performs his duties with unwavering diligence. His integrity shines through when a

senior officer, compromised by a Russian honey trap, approves the quality check on a submarine. Gobind refuses to concur, standing firm in his commitment to duty and integrity. His moral fortitude is further tested when he falls in love with a Russian girl, a relationship that challenges his fundamental rights. Sikka tells Gobind's story with rare passion and candour, highlighting the protagonist's ability to uphold his promises and appeal to the higher principles of those around him. Through Gobind's journey, Sikka presents a thrilling yet deeply sensitive narrative that provokes thought while delivering a profound message. The story inspires and entertains, making it a multifaceted read. *Gobind*, published by Penguin, was recently launched and has already garnered significant attention. Harinder Sikka, who was commissioned into the Indian Navy in January 1981 and took premature retirement in 1993 as a Lieutenant Commander, brings his firsthand experience and insights into the narrative. Besides *Calling Sehmat*, Sikka has also authored *Vichhoda*, further establishing his prowess in weaving powerful stories. In *Gobind*, readers will find a powerful tale of a man who dared to challenge the world for the principles he stood for. Sikka's narrative not only tells the story of a determined naval officer but also explores the broader themes of love, selflessness, and unwavering determination, offering a deeply enriching reading.



HOW TO RESPOND TO NEXT EMERGENCY

# Efforts to draft a pandemic treaty falter as countries disagree

PNS ■ GENEVA

A global treaty to fight pandemics like COVID is going to have to wait: After more than two years of negotiations, rich and poor countries have failed — for now — to come up with a plan for how the world might respond to the next pandemic.

After COVID-19 triggered once-unthinkable lockdowns, upended economies and killed millions, leaders at the World Health Organization and worldwide vowed to do better in the future. In 2021, member countries asked the U.N. health agency to

oversee negotiations to figure out how the world might better share scarce resources and stop future viruses from spreading globally.

On Friday, Roland Driece, co-chair of WHO's negotiating board for the agreement, acknowledged that countries were unable to come up with a draft. WHO had hoped a final draft treaty could be agreed on at its yearly meeting of health ministers starting Monday in Geneva.

"We are not where we hoped we would be when we started this process," he said, adding that finalizing an international agreement on how to respond to a pandemic was critical "for the

sake of humanity."

Driece said the World Health Assembly next week would take up lessons from its work and plot the way forward, urging participants to make "the right decisions to take this process forward" to one day reach a pandemic agreement "because we need it."

The draft treaty had attempted to address the gap that occurred between COVID-19 vaccines in rich and poorer countries, which WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said amounted to "a catastrophic moral failure."

Addressing a sullen final day of negotiations, the WHO chief insisted, "This is not a failure."

"We will try everything — believing that anything is possible — and make this happen because the world still needs a pandemic treaty," he said. "Because many of the challenges that caused a serious impact during COVID-19 still

exist."

accord's aim was to set guidelines for how the WHO's 194 member countries might stop future pandemics and better share resources. But experts warned there were virtually no consequences for countries that don't comply.

The co-chairs of the treaty-drafting process didn't specify what caused the logjam, but diplomats have said vast differences remained over sharing of information about pathogens that emerge and the sharing of technologies to fight them.

The latest draft had proposed that WHO should get 20% of the production of pandemic-related products like tests, treatments and vaccines and urges countries to disclose their deals with private companies.



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## Chinese military ends biggest, closest drills around Taiwan

PTI ■ BEIJING

The Chinese military has ended its two-day joint drills surrounding Taiwan, stated to be the biggest and closest exercises held around the prosperous self-ruled island that China claims to be part of its mainland.

The drills on Thursday and Friday were held in retaliation to Taiwan's new President Lai Ching-te's remarks rejecting Beijing's sovereignty claims over the island and tested the Chinese People's Liberation Army's (PLA) ability to seize power.

China views Taiwan as a rebel province that must be reunified with the mainland

even by force. While there was no official announcement that the drills ended, the Chinese social media WeChat account of the PLA's Eastern Theatre Command on Saturday said the exercises lasted two days from Thursday.

It said the exercises by land, navy, air force and missile forces were "punishment" for "Taiwan separatists" and a "severe warning" to outside forces intent on interference and provocation. The drills, called Joint Sword-2024A, involved "advancing", "besieging", "blockading", "attacking", "destroying" and "cutting off", the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post quoted the WeChat post.

# UN court order demanding Israel to halt Gaza offensive further isolates US position

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

A ruling by the top United Nations court ordering Israel to halt its military offensive in the southern Gaza city of Rafah has deepened its disconnect with the United States over an operation that faces mounting international condemnation but that American officials describe, at least for now, as limited and targeted.

The decision Friday by the International Court of Justice in The Hague adds to the pressure facing an increasingly isolated Israel, coming just days after Norway, Ireland and Spain said they would recognize a Palestinian state, and the chief prosecutor of a separate international court sought arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as well as leaders of Hamas.

The Biden administration stands apart from the global community - though it is opposed to a major offensive in Rafah, the administration also insists that the steps its close ally Israel has taken so far have not crossed red

terms of Israel's military operations in that area has been more targeted and limited, has not involved major military operations into the heart of dense urban areas," national security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters at a White House briefing this week. But, he added, "We now have to see what unfolds from here."

A State Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity to describe the administration's internal assessment of the situation, said the operation in Gaza had "not yet moved into the core heart of Rafah that gets us to the densest of dense areas."

Earlier this month, the White House announced it was pausing a shipment of some 3,500 bombs, including massive 2,000-pound explosives that the Biden administration said were leading to civilian deaths.



Administration officials so far have appeared determined to press on with military and political support for Israel following the deadly Hamas attack it endured last October, while also pressuring its ally to avoid a full-scale military operation in densely populated Rafah.

"What we have seen so far in

## Rio de Janeiro bay reforestation shows mangroves' power to mitigate climate disasters

PNS ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

At the rear of Rio de Janeiro's polluted Guanabara Bay, thousands of mangroves rise as tall as 13 feet (about 4 meters) from a previously deforested area.

The 30,000 trees, planted by non-profit organization Instituto Mar Urbano over four years in the Guapimirim environmental protection area, stand as an example for cities seeking natural means to improve climate resilience.

Such ecosystems are vital for protection against floods that have become increasingly frequent around the world. Brazil's southern state of Rio Grande do Sul is still reeling from a devastating flood earlier this month that wreaked havoc and took lives, with waters far from subsiding to normal levels.

Mangroves slow sea water's advance into riverbeds during storm surges by soaking it up, and protects the land by stabilizing soil that otherwise could be washed away. They also act as a carbon sink. The reforestation in Rio's bay

improved the cleanliness of water that's a breeding ground for marine species. Crabs have returned, providing extra income for the local crab pickers who helped plant the trees.

"To plant a tree in this mangrove is an act of environmental recovery and also an act in the fight against climate change,"

Ricardo Gomes, a director at the non-profit, told The Associated Press on Thursday. "Today we can be sad, because of all that has been lost (in Brazil's South), all that was destroyed. But we never had so much knowledge, so much technology and resources to recover our environment."

A lack of mangroves wasn't the cause of flooding around Rio Grande do Sul's capital, Porto Alegre, that sits

beside a lagoon. The flooding largely stemmed from water that flowed down rivers into the area.

The coastal risk map created by Climate Central, a nonprofit science research group, forecasts areas west and north of Porto

Alegre will be underwater by 2100. In Rio, it shows two large areas in the back of its bay — one of which includes the Guapimirim protected area — will be underwater by 2050. That underscores the need for action to mitigate

sea water's encroachment. Natural vegetation like that of Guapimirim "is like a true sponge," avoiding or mitigating floods by reducing the energy of the waters,

Mauricio Barbosa Muniz, the manager of a reserve at Brazil's federal agency Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation, said. Vegetation in the region safeguards 1 million residents in the city of Sao Goncalo, in Rio's metropolitan

region, and others.

"In places that were occupied irregularly, such as cities, it is possible to restore those areas and make human settlements that are resilient and prepared for the effects of climate change," Muniz said.

Since 2000, flood-related disasters across the planet have increased by 134% over the two previous decades, according to a 2021 report by the World Meteorological Organization.

Environmentalists say the loss of natural vegetation due to agriculture and cattle ranching in Rio Grande do Sul state amplified the flooding. A recent study by MapBiomass, a network that includes non-profit organizations, universities and start-ups, says the Brazilian state lost 22% of its native vegetation between 1985 and 2022, equal to an area greater than the U.S. state of Maryland.

Federal, state and municipal authorities seem to be in agreement since tragedy struck that a massive reforestation effort will be needed in Rio Grande do Sul, but the scope of the investment.



The 30,000 trees, planted by non-profit organization Instituto Mar Urbano over four years in the Guapimirim environmental protection area, stand as an example for cities seeking natural means to improve climate resilience

# Selfie points, pink booths, creche facilities elevate voting experience

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The specially designed pink and model booths were a hit among the voters, who not only cast their votes with ease but also enjoyed clicking selfies on the polling day.

The seven Lok Sabha constituencies in Delhi went to polling in the sixth phase on Saturday.

A vibrant effort to enhance the voting experience, the polling stations featured model encouragement facilities, including pink sofas, spacious waiting areas with water fans, pitcher water, colourful rangoli, beautiful hanging decorations, selfie booths, carpets and wheelchairs to help the disabled.

Speaking about the pink booth arrangement, Priyanka Vajpayee, a voter, said, "I was surprised when I entered the booth because it was not like the last time. It was all decorated with flowers and balloons."

The pink booth was managed by female staff and it was decorated with lots of cutouts, motivational quotes and beautification work to enthuse people. Talking about the decoration, another voter Geeta said, "The booth is so colourful that it feels like we are here to attend a cultural programme, giving us a moment of joy as we participate in the election. These new booths are adding extra excitement to the election."

At some polling stations in Matia Mahal, soft toys and souvenirs were also given to

the voters as tokens of appreciation.

Additionally, mugs with the message "Am I a proud voter" were given to the voters who exercised their voting rights.

On the other hand, model booth selfie corners were overloaded with people getting clicked on the selfie points right after performing their voting duty.

Speaking about the selfie stand at the CPWD Service Centre in North Avenue,



where the center was decorated with colourful fabrics and flowers, another voter Anuradha said, "Voting is our responsibility and we step out to fulfil that. But seeing this arrangement has filled us with excitement."

managed. It was a swift voting experience for me. I have been casting my vote for 15 years. It is well coordinated this time," she told PTI.

On the other hand, there are seven PWD polling stations which was managed by the PWD staff.

A long carpet stretched from outside the

center to the polling room in the model polling station, adorned with long-hanging decorative pieces.

Talking about the experience at these special booths, Ashok Kumar, a handicapped voter, said these special arrangements have made the voting exercise easy and convenient.

"But voting is our power, so we should not think about being in comfort. The booths are near our house and there are arrangements to give you some comfort. So when we have such an important power to choose who will rule over us, we should come forward to vote and elect our candidates," Kumar said.

"And now there are so many facilities here to give you convenience. If we can step out with the support of my family and wheelchair, why can't others?" he asked.

Rakesh and Sanyam, who were blind, came to cast their votes in Kalkaji. "It took us less than five minutes to cast our votes," Rakesh told PTI.

Shaded areas have been set up at each polling station due to the heat and the waiting areas have been fully covered. Coolers and fans have been installed to mitigate any discomfort.

A family, present to cast their votes, said, "It's Saturday and our entire family is here to give our votes. The best part is we were worried about our dadi maa (grandmother) who suffered from paralysis a few years ago, and still her lower body does not function properly. We were concerned about

# One in two adolescents with ADHD have trouble managing emotions, finds study

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

One in every two adolescents having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may have trouble managing their emotions, which can come out as explosive outbursts, depression or anxiety, according to a new study.

People with ADHD have short-attention spans, along with hyperactivity, or restlessness, and impulsivity. Being a neurodevelopmental disorder, it is commonly diagnosed in children and adolescents but can persist into adulthood. It is known that people with ADHD have problems with self-control, which affects their ability to regulate and manage emotions. While these problems of emotion dysregulation were thought to be due to ADHD symptoms which impact an individual's motivation and their ability to think (cognition), researchers showed that such people can have trouble managing their emotions regardless of those symptoms.

This was something new for the voters and they were quite happy to see the vibrant energy and vibe outside the polling booth.

There are total 13,641 polling stations across Delhi.

The team of researchers from the University of Cambridge, UK, and Fudan University, China, also found strong evidence that high levels of emotion dysregulation

raises the likelihood of developing more ADHD symptoms. The findings are published in the journal Nature Mental Health.

"Parents and teachers often say they have problems controlling children with ADHD, and it could be that when the children can't express themselves well -- when they hit emotional difficulties -- they may not be able to control their emotions and have an outburst rather than communicating with the parent, teacher or the other child," author Barbara Sahakian from the University of Cambridge said.

For the study, the researchers included data from the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) study, tracking brain development and mental health of children and adolescents across the US.

The researchers developed an ADHD-symptom score, based on data available for over 6,000 individuals from the ABCD study. The score indicated an individual's chances of having the disorder.

Of the group, the team also identified 350 participants having high symptom scores that met the clinical criteria for ADHD.

By responding to questionnaires, parents or guardians had previously provided information on how well or not their children coped when feeling upset, the researchers said. The responses were evaluated to score participants on their emotion dysregulation.

The authors found that more than half of those in the high-symptom group (51 per cent) showed signs of emotion dysregulation, regardless of problems with their cognition and motivation. Emotion dysregulation was also found to be a strong risk factor for developing more ADHD symptoms. Of all the participants, children showing low symptoms of ADHD at ages 12 and 13 but having high emotion dysregulation at age 13.

