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**Country's freedom, Constitution, democracy in danger: Kejriwal**



**'FOR ME, HUMOUR IS ALL ABOUT CLEAN STAND-UP COMEDY'**



**'In Gangs of Godavari, Vishwak is loud, but my character is LOUDER'**



**QUOTE OF THE DAY**

**Where did companies go from Telangana? Keynes is waiting for incentives from the Centre and Corning didn't sign an MoU with TG. The state attracted investments worth Rs 9,000 crore after bagging Rs 40,000 crore at the Davos Summit. If any company goes to another state due to PMO pressure, with our human resources, environment and confidence we will bring more companies and investments and create employment**  
**— D. Sridhar Babu, Industries Minister, Telangana**



P4

**DON'T MISS...**

**Demand for extension of Hyd...**

As the ten years stipulated by the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act for Hyderabad to serve as the common capital for Telangana and Andhra Pradesh draws to a close, voices from Andhra Pradesh are calling for an extension. The former Joint Director of the CBI and President of Jai Bharat National Party, VV Lakshminarayana, has taken to Twitter to highlight Section-5 of the Joint Andhra Pradesh Partition Act, which mandates Hyderabad to be the joint capital for at least ten years post-bifurcation. In his tweet, Lakshminarayana...

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**Rise in cancer incidences...**

Twenty per cent of cancer patients who called an NGO-run helpline to seek a second opinion were below 40 years of age, indicating a rise of cancer incidences amongst younger people, data from the organisation stated. There were 1,368 callers between March 1 and May 15, according to the Cancer Mukh Bharat Foundation, launched by a group of oncologists. The study showed that 60 per cent of the cancer patients below the age of 40 years were men. It also found that the most prevalent cases were head...

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**Assam small tea growers facing...**

Small tea growers in Assam, who account for nearly half of the tea grown in this North Eastern state, are staring at uncertainty with the bought leaf tea factories (BLFs) to stop procuring their green leaves from next month over quality compliance regulations. The Assam Bought Leaf Tea Manufacturers Association (ABLMTA) had announced shutting down its factories from June one as it is not possible to produce FSSAI-compliant teas from untested green leaves provided by small growers...

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**England have missed trick by...**

Former skipper Michael Vaughan feels England 'missed the trick' by recalling its cricketers from the IPL to play a T20 series against Pakistan, saying it had denied them experiencing pressure-cooker situations of the playoffs, which could have helped them prepare better for the upcoming T20 World Cup in the Americas. Top England players, including skipper Jos Buttler (Rajasthan Royals), Phil Salt (Kolkata Knight Riders) and Will Jacks (Royal Challengers Bengaluru) were among the players...

-SPORTS

**Seven newborns perish in east Delhi hospital fire**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A massive fire broke out at a private children's hospital in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar, leaving seven newborns dead, officials said on Sunday.



The officials of the Delhi Fire Services (DFS) said the blaze broke out at the Baby Care New Born Hospital at around 11:30 pm on Saturday and soon spread to two other adjacent buildings.

Sixteen fire tenders were pressed into service to douse the blaze, Divisional Fire Officer Rajendra Atwal said. Oxygen cylinders kept in the two-storey building exploded due to which the adjacent buildings were damaged, he said.

Another fire official said two boutiques, a portion of IndusInd Bank operating from an adjacent building

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**AS HYD SET TO CEASE TO BE JOINT CAPITAL**

**Uncertainty over capital city stares at AP**

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

As Hyderabad is all set to cease to be the joint capital of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana on June 2, the fate of a capital city and its geographical location for the residual Andhra Pradesh hangs in balance even 10 years after the bifurcation.

While matters such as the apportioning of public assets worth up to Rs 1.4 lakh crore are still pending to be

resolved, Andhra Pradesh's ruling YSRCP and principal opposition TDP continue to toe their respective positions of single and multiple capital cities.

Enacted on March 1, 2014, the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014 mandated that Hyderabad shall be the common capital for both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh 'for such period not exceeding 10 years', and accordingly, effective June 2, 2024, Hyderabad will be the capital city only

for Telangana. Though the legislation envisages a new capital and makes the 10-year deadline clear, there appears to be no light at the end of the tunnel for Andhra Pradesh, considering the conflicting stances and initiatives of the two dispensations in the past ten years.

When YSRCP chief and incumbent Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy captured power in 2019, dislodging the N Chandrababu Naidu-led TDP

regime (2014-19), he shattered the Amaravati capital dreams of his predecessor by coming up with the proposal to have three capital cities.

Championing decentralisation and welfare-centric governance, Reddy projected Amaravati as the legislative capital, Kurnool as the judicial capital and the port city of Visakhapatnam as the executive capital, from where he would function.

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**Postal ballots with RO's sign valid, CEO clarifies**

Says ballots should not be rejected solely due to improper seals

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena has conveyed Election Commission (EC) guidelines to all district electoral officers (DEOs), saying that postal ballots must not be rejected solely based on improper seals, but should be accepted if they bear the signature of the Returning Officer (RO).

The CEO clarified that if a gazetted officer signs the postal ballot declaration and lacks a seal, it should still be considered valid. The focus, he stated, should be on verifying whether the voter has correctly cast his/her vote on the ballot paper.

According to the EC, postal ballots bearing the signature of the RO are deemed valid. Form 13A, containing all necessary details, must be signed by the RO. The ballot, including the RO's signature, should then be cross-referred with the validating register. However, Form 13A may be rejected if it lacks the voter's signature, the RO's signature, or the serial number of the ballot.

The general elections held on May 13 in Andhra Pradesh witnessed a



● A record-breaking 5,39,189 postal ballots were reported by the polling date, with a good number of them coming from districts such as Srikakulam, Nandyal, and Kadapa.

● Election Commission officials are discussing the setup of counting tables in response to the surge in postal ballot votes. This indicates the anticipation of postal ballots playing a significant role in the election results.

● Analysts suggest that the substantial turnout of postal ballot votes reflects dissatisfaction among government employees. The opposition TDP alliance interprets these votes as opposition to the government's policies, while the ruling YSRCP sees them as support for their initiatives.

notable turnout of 81.89%, with a record-breaking 5,39,189 postal ballots reported by the polling date. Notable figures include 38,865 postal ballot votes in Srikakulam district, 25,283 in Nandyal district, and 24,918 in Kadapa district, with the lowest count of 15,320 postal ballot votes in Narasapuram. Election Commission officials are currently deliberating on the setup of counting tables in the districts in response to this surge in postal ballot votes.

Postal ballot votes are anticipated

to play a significant role in the AP elections, particularly amidst the intense competition between the ruling YSRCP and the opposition TDP alliance.

Analysts suggest that a substantial turnout of postal ballot votes indicates dissatisfaction among government employees. While the TDP asserts that these votes signal opposition to the government's policies, YSRCP members argue that they reflect support for the government's initiatives.

**EC, Police biased towards Oppn: Perni**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister Perni Venkataraoiah (Nani) has voiced strong criticism against the Election Commission (EC) and the Police department, accusing them of bias in favour of the opposition bloc during the recent Andhra Pradesh elections.

Nani asserted that the behaviour of the EC was inappropriate and that police officers acted with undue aggression. He alleged that incidents of violence occurring during and after the polling on May 13 were disregarded by the police.

Speaking at a press conference in Vijayawada on Sunday, Nani claimed that the police displayed a bias favouring leaders of the TDP, even in cases involving attempted murder. On the other hand, he asserted that cases were selectively filed against leaders and activists of the YSRCP.



Nani alleged that TDP leaders obstructed YSRCP workers from voting. He highlighted incidents of unrestrained violence at the Palvai Gate polling booth in Rentachintala mandal of Palnadu, questioning the lack of police intervention to maintain law and order. Nani raised concerns about the absence of a complaint from the TDP regarding the alleged damage to the VVPAT machine during polling and the failure to register a case.

Perni Nani further claimed that innocent people were being targeted with legal action, while those responsible for violence were being shielded. He also criticised the delayed response of the police to reports of violence.

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**Water levels in AP reservoirs dip**

DASARI SRINIVASA RAO ■ VIJAYAWADA

Water levels in reservoirs across the State have plummeted, reaching critical lows, raising concern over farming activity during the upcoming Kharif season. The Pulichintala Project, a vital component of the region's water infrastructure, is alarmingly below capacity, storing only 0.43 TMCs of water, which is substantially lower than its Full Reservoir Level (FRL) of 44.77 TMCs.

Presently, the Srisailem reservoir stands at a mere 14% of its total storage capacity, while the Nagarjuna Sagar project fares slightly better at 39%. The decline in reservoir levels poses significant challenges for water management, particularly as the Kharif season approaches. The Srisailem, Nagarjuna Sagar, and Pulichintala projects, crucial lifelines



fed by the River Krishna, have all reached dead storage levels.

With a total storage capacity of 589.67 TMCs across various major and medium reservoirs on the river Krishna, the current storage stands at a meagre 160.17 TMCs (27.16%), representing a substantial decrease from last year's levels. This year's storage deficit of 66.50 TMCs compared to the previous year exacerbates concerns.

The absence of proactive water storage management has exacerbated the situation, with reservoirs prematurely reaching dead storage levels. Consequently, the release of water for agricultural purposes during the Kharif season may face delays. Making matters worse, the Water Resources Department's focus on recent elections has further complicated water release scheduling.

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**Thunderstorms likely over next 24 hours**

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds, reaching speeds of 30-40 km/h, are expected in isolated areas of North Coastal Andhra Pradesh within the next 24 hours, as per the latest update from the Meteorological Centre on Sunday.

In the forecast, thunderstorms with lightning are also predicted to occur in isolated areas of South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next 24 hours, with North Coastal Andhra Pradesh likely to experience these conditions on May 27. Rayalaseema may witness light to moderate rainfall or thundershowers in one or two places over the next 48 hours, extending until May 31 and into June 1.



Continued on Page 2

**Kolkata Knight Riders crush SRH by 8 wickets to win third IPL title**

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Kolkata Knight Riders lifted their third trophy in the Indian Premier League with a crushing eight-wicket win over Sunrisers Hyderabad in a completely one-sided final here on Sunday.

Having lost the toss, KKR produced a clinical effort with the ball to dismiss SRH for 113, the lowest ever total in an IPL title clash. KKR chased down the target of 114 with as many as 57 balls to spare. Venkatesh Iyer remained not out on 52 off 26 balls.

Mitchell Starc (2/14), Andre Russell (3/19) and Harshit Rana (2/24) were the most successful bowlers for the Knight Riders, as SRH simply failed to turn up for the big game.



Opting to bat first, SRH were off to a disastrous start as they lost their top guns Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head with just six runs on the board, with the latter getting dismissed for a first-ball duck to a beautiful outswinger.

Before that, Abhishek was bowled by Mitchell Starc on the fifth ball of the first over, a peach of a delivery opening up the left-hander before hitting the top of the off stump.

Continued on Page 2

**Severe cyclone 'Remal' barrels towards Bengal coast**

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Severe cyclonic storm 'Remal' has intensified and is expected to make landfall between the coasts of Bangladesh and adjoining West Bengal around Sunday midnight, prompting the evacuation of over 1 lakh people from vulnerable areas of the state to safety.

Bengal's coastal areas have been put on high alert as the cyclone, accompanied by high-velocity winds, has already triggered rain in several parts of the state.

According to an India Meteorological Department (IMD) bulletin, the 'Remal' was centred 160 km south-southeast of Sagar Island at 6pm.

The cyclone, which has a maximum sustained wind speed of 100-110 kmph, gusting to 120 kmph, is likely to hit land between Sagar Islands in West Bengal and



Khepupara near Mongla port in Bangladesh by Sunday midnight, officials said.

By 3 pm, the West Bengal government had evacuated around 1.10 lakh people from coastal and vulnerable areas and shifted them to cyclone shelters, schools, and colleges. Prime Minister Narendra Modi

on Sunday chaired a meeting to review response and preparedness for cyclonic storm 'Remal'.

State minister Akhil Giri said, "Our experience in tackling Cyclone Amphan and Cyclone Yaas will be put to good use."

West Bengal Governor Dr CV Ananda Bose said he is closely monitoring the situation and is in

constant touch with state and central experts to ensure a coordinated response to counter it.

Bose emphasised the importance of safety for residents in the coastal regions of Bengal, urging them to adhere to the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for cyclones.

The cyclone has already caused light rain and winds in areas like

Digha, Kakdwip, and Jaynagar, which are expected to intensify on Monday.

IMD's eastern regional head Somnath Dutta said from Sunday evening, districts in south Bengal would experience squally winds of 45-55 kmph, gusting to 65 kmph, affecting Kolkata, Howrah, Hooghly, and Purba Medinipur.

"This will gradually increase to gale wind speed, reaching 70 to 80 kmph gusting to 90 kmph," he told reporters.

Dutta warned that surface wind speeds in coastal areas of West Bengal could reach 100-120 kmph, gusting to 135 kmph from Sunday evening to Monday morning.

However, he mentioned that the damage caused by 'Remal' would be less severe compared to the destruction wrought by Super Cyclone Amphan in 2020.

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# Monday Mirchi

## ADITYANATH TO BE ADVISOR TO REVANTH?

Retired bureaucrat Adityanath Das, who has penned an anthology of poems titled 'Dancing with dreams', could soon land a dream position in Telangana, after having served as Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh with a good track record. Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is of the opinion that his services are needed for the state. Grapevine has it that Adityanath Das is going to be Advisor to Revanth Reddy. Revanth, who had become CM directly after being in the Opposition for nearly two decades, has been on the hunt for a consummate administrator with expertise in multiple areas. For newbies, Adityanath Das is credited with taking up various irrigation works in the Rayalaseema region and expediting the Polavaram project. Of course, whether Adityanath will stay back in AP or move to Telangana depends on the election results in Andhra Pradesh.

## WHO COULD BE THE NEW CS IN AP?

With surveys indicating change of regime in Andhra Pradesh and the imminent comeback of TDP, questions are being raised over who could become the new chief secretary. On the face of it, front-runners among seniors for the post are not in the good books of TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu, be it Sri Lakshmi, Rawat or Poonam Malakondaiah. If seniority is given the go-by, the new incumbent will have to be an underdog to be considered for the position of CS. So, bureaucratic circles are wondering who could be the dark horse to occupy the coveted position.

## WILL REVANTH UNDO KCR'S MISTAKE IN THE CASE OF SEC?

The Congress government has taken the question of elections to local bodies very seriously and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy wants to conduct them at the earliest. What could upset the applicant for the Revanth government is that State Election Commissioner C Parathasarathi is in a peculiar situation with regard to his term. Generally, the orders for SEC are issued for a 5-year term. However, under the KCR regime, Parathasarathi was initially given a 3-year term. At the end of his term, he got one-year extension. Whispers in the corridors of power are that Parathasarathi, being a Telangana person with experience of conducting polls to local bodies, would be a better fit. The larger question is: Will Revanth undo KCR's mistake in the case of SEC, as part of his slew of measures intended for course correction?

## BABUS IN AP DIVIDED

Like politicians, bureaucrats with political

antennae are keenly awaiting the results of the Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections. Although the results will be out on 4th June, bureaucratic circles are already busy guessing who will occupy the Chief Minister's gaddi. The overenthusiastic ones among them have in fact started taking sides. While some babus expect YSRCP to retain power, others are confident that the TDP-led alliance will come to power. Interestingly, some top bureaucrats are in touch with former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu as they hope that he would return to power as the next chief minister. Therefore, the babudom in AP is unofficially divided into two major groups that have taken sides as well as a splinter group that is neutral. This neutral group is watching the whole drama, cutting jokes on how officers in one of the two major groups would have to eat a humble pie depending on the results vis-à-vis their predictions.

## THE MEDIUM SHOULD SUIT THE MESSAGE

For an administrator, it is one thing to ask people to help conserve environment and quite another to choose a proper medium to convey that message exemplifying his own commitment. While exhorting people to take up measures that would help contain pollution, GVMC Commissioner Saikanth Verma suited action to the word and reached the GVMC headquarters on a bicycle from his camp office on Monday. The Commissioner pointed out that, in view of the increasing pollution in the city, GVMC officials and employees had been using public transport one day in a week as per an internal decision. No wonder, people have begun to take most of GVMC's environment-friendly programmes seriously.

## VIZAG POLICE SHINE IN SOME AREAS

People may pan Visakhapatnam Police for not being able to effectively control the drug menace. Still, they have proved their mettle in tackling cross-border, international crimes. Thanks to their daring rescue operation, 25 AP-origin young men were brought back from Cambodia, where they had been held captive and forced into cybercrime by Chinese criminals. These men were lured with promises of legitimate jobs, but tortured and coerced into committing cybercrimes against Indian nationals. The Vizag Police had formed 20 teams that fanned out with as many leads about the traffickers. It seems the traffickers had nearly 70 agents and sub-agents in Visakhapatnam alone. An estimated Rs 120 crore has been swindled just from Visakhapatnam.

-- Yours truly

## Kolkata Knight...

Continued from Page 1

SRH were in all sorts of trouble as Starc accounted for the wicket of Rahul Tripathi to leave them reeling at 21/3 in the fifth over, the swing doing the trick for KKR bowlers early on.

First-change bowler Harshit Rana continued the good work and got rid of Nitish Reddy (13). Andre Russell dismissed Aiden Markram in his first over as SRH slipped to 62/5 in the 11th over.

SRH could not recover from there.

**BRIEF SCORES:** Sunrisers Hyderabad: 113 all out in 18.3 overs (Pat Cummins 24; Mitchell Starc 2/14, Andre Russell 3/19, Harshit Rana 2/24).

Kolkata Knight Riders: 114 for 2 in 10.3 overs (Venkatesh Iyer 52 not out)

# Political storm over landgrab charges against CS' family

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



The recent accusations made by Jana Sena Party (JSP) leader Peethala Murthy Yadav against Chief Secretary Jawahar Reddy and his family have sparked a fierce political storm in Andhra Pradesh. Yadav's claims, alleging the involvement of Chief Secretary Reddy and his family in acquiring assigned lands in Visakhapatnam and surrounding areas, have sent shockwaves across the state.

In a press conference held on Sunday, Murthy Yadav doubled down on his accusations against Chief Secretary Reddy, claiming that Reddy has been exploiting lands designated for

Scheduled Castes (SCs). Yadav accused Reddy of directly participating in the seizure of SC lands and implicated his son in illegal benami transactions. The gravity of Yadav's allegations, which include claims of relentless land seizures and the staggering acquisition of 800 acres through illegitimate

channels, has ignited widespread demands for accountability and justice.

In response to mounting pressure, Murthy Yadav has called for a comprehensive investigation, proposing either the intervention of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) or oversight by a sitting judge. Promising to provide supporting evidence to expose the alleged involvement of Tehsildars in the land seizures, Yadav emphasized the urgency of transparency and swift action.

These accusations not only shine a light on the entrenched issues of corruption and exploitation in Andhra

Pradesh but also highlight the challenges faced by marginalized communities. As calls for impartial investigations grow louder, the focus remains on restoring faith in the system and delivering justice to those adversely affected. Yadav's call for transparency and accountability resonates as a call for reform, indicating a collective desire for a governance system that prioritizes integrity and serves the interests of all citizens, particularly the marginalized. As this saga unfolds, the hopes for a resolution that addresses these injustices and rebuilds trust in the governance apparatus remain paramount.

# Candidates anxious as counting day nears

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

With just eight days remaining until the vote counting for the Andhra Pradesh assembly elections, political candidates are on edge, anxiously awaiting their fate. The media landscape is abuzz with speculation and analysis, as there is little other major news to cover until the results are announced. Newspapers, television channels, and digital media outlets are intensely focused on the upcoming vote count and the early trends that will emerge.

Every media outlet is presenting its projections on the potential outcome, weighing the chances between the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and the Telugu Desam Party

The TDP is hopeful about the impact of 444,000 postal votes, primarily from employees and emergency service workers. On the other hand, the YSRCP believes elderly and physically disabled voters who used the home voting option favoured their candidates.

(TDP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). One analysis based on voting percentages suggests the YSRCP holds a slight edge over the NDA.

The final polling figures reveal that 33,340,333 voters participated in the elections, with 16.4 million male voters and 16.9 million female voters.

Women voters outnumbered male voters by 500,000, a significant factor that may favour the YSRCP. "This is a plus point for the YSRCP, as the majority of women voters have supported the ruling party due to the strict implementation of welfare schemes that have benefited women financially. Not only did they vote for Jagan,

but they also influenced their husbands and other family members to vote for the YSRCP," explained one analyst.

Additionally, the rural voting percentage was 2 per cent higher than the urban voting percentage, further favouring the YSRCP. However, another media outlet argued that government employees, educated unemployed youth, middle-class and upper-middle-class voters, and urban voters largely supported the TDP and its allies.

"Even in rural areas, it's not the case that 100% of women voters and poorer sections voted exclusively for the YSRCP and rejected the TDP," the media outlet stated. They also noted that the 2% increase

in polling compared to 2019 suggests support for the TDP-Jana Sena-BJP alliance.

The TDP is hopeful about the impact of 444,000 postal votes, primarily from employees and emergency service workers. On the other hand, the YSRCP believes elderly and physically disabled voters who used the home voting option favoured their candidates.

As anticipation builds, the first round of results is expected to be announced within 15-20 minutes of the start of vote counting, with clearer trends likely to emerge by 10:30 am.

The suspense over which party will form the next government in Andhra Pradesh continues to grip the state.

## Water levels in...

Continued from Page 1

Of particular concern is the Pulichintala Project, which, at a mere 0.43 TMCs of water, languishes far below its designed capacity. Last year's storage of 34.76 TMCs serves as a stark contrast to the current predicament. With only 0.43 TMCs stored, there is no immediate prospect of downstream water release. The ramifications extend to the agricultural sector, with an estimated 13.08 acres of ayacut in the Krishna Delta impacted by delayed water releases. Officials from the Water Resources Department express hope for an early start to the Kharif season if the southwest monsoon arrives promptly.

Similarly, the Srisailem and Nagarjuna Sagar projects teeter on the brink of depletion, with both experiencing significant drops in water storage compared to previous years. The implications for irrigation and drinking water supply to millions of acres and inhabitants in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana loom large.

In addition to these key projects, reservoirs like Almati, Narayanpur, and Tunga Bhadra face similar water storage challenges. Unless early rains arrive, experts foresee substantial hurdles in initiating agricultural activities in the Krishna River catchment area. Reflecting on the broader context, KVV Prasad, general secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham, criticised past administrations for inadequate reservoir construction and water management.

# Vamsadhara Canal faces maintenance issues

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

The Vamsadhara Canal, initially hailed as a boon for farmers in Palasa and Vajrapukotturu mandals, now faces challenges due to a lack of sustained maintenance. This has caused immense concern among local farmers who rely on the canal for their livelihoods. The canal, serving approximately 9,000 acres of farmland, has seen a decline in functionality. The Gotta Barrage, the canal's water source, currently releases water only during periods of heavy flooding, leaving farmers vulnerable during drier seasons. The 18-kilometer canal itself, stretching from Tekkalipatnam village to Kiddingi, requires critical repairs to ensure a consistent water flow.

Tribal authorities have consistently proposed essential maintenance activities for the canal, including repairs to water control structures, sediment removal, and improvements to subsidiary canals. However, these proposals, submitted annually, have not been met with adequate budgetary allocations from the

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government. This has resulted in the canal's modernization remaining incomplete for the past five years. Farmers remain hopeful that the new administration will prioritize addressing these critical infrastructure needs.

The situation is further exacerbated by environmental concerns. The confluence of the Deshabatti Channel and the Vamsadhara Canal near Palasa has become a source of pollution. Wastewater discharge from the Palasa-Kasibugga municipality has contaminated the canal water and surrounding ponds. This not only hinders water flow but also poses a potential threat to the health of crops and surrounding ecosystems.

Local farmers are urging the government to take immediate action to restore the Vamsadhara Canal to its full functionality.

They emphasise the need for timely repairs, consistent maintenance efforts, and a comprehensive solution to address the pollution issue.

# Seven newborns perish...

Continued from Page 1

In a post on X, Kejriwal said the government stood with those who lost their children in the fire incident, and added the administration was ensuring proper treatment to the injured. He said the reasons behind the fire were being probed and those found negligent will not be spared. DFS chief Atul Garg said 12 newborns were rescued from the medical facility but seven of them died.

Five babies are undergoing treatment at another hospital, he said, adding some of them have received minor burn injuries. The bodies have been shifted to the GTB Hospital for postmortem, police said.

Deputy Commissioner of police (Shahdara) Surendra Choudhary said owner of the hospital Naveen Kichi has been booked under sections 336 (act endangering life of personal safety of others) and 304A (causing death by negligence) at Vivek Vihar police station. The officer said teams have been formed to nab the owner. Choudhary said they are checking the fire NOC of the hospital and if it is found with out it, IPC sections may be added.

According to eyewitnesses, locals and members of an NGO, Shaheed Seva Dal, were the first to rush to help. Some residents climbed the building from the back side and rescued some of the newborns.

## Severe cyclone...

Continued from Page 1

Amphan, which was categorised as a super cyclone, had made landfall on May 20 in 2020 over Sagar Island and caused widespread destruction in Kolkata, South and North 24 Parganas, Howrah and Nadia.

The IMD has warned of localised flooding and major damage to vulnerable structures, power and communication lines, kutcha roads, crops, and orchards in the South and North 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal.

Residents in affected areas are advised to remain indoors and avoid vulnerable structures. Fourteen teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) have been deployed across South Bengal districts, including Kolkata, North and South 24 Parganas, Purba and Paschim Medinipur,

# 13 Maoists surrender in ASR district

PNS ■ PADERU

Thirteen militia members of the banned CPI (Maoist) from the Ginnelakota pocket of Pedabayalu surrendered to the Alluri Sitaram Raju (ASR) district police on Sunday. The surrendered militants, ranging in age from 24 to 48, are all natives of Ginnelakota and Jamiguda panchayats in Pedabayalu mandal.

The individuals were identified as Killo Simhadri (24), Vanthala Nagesh (38), Pangi Pilku Naidu, Killo Chiranjeevi (30), Vanthala Rambabu (28), Vanthala Donnu Babu (25), Ganta Mohan Rao (25), G. Panthula Padal (48), Manuguri Nagaraju (38), Chikkudu Ram Murthy (27), Chikkudu Ganesh Alias Ganne Rao (25), Pangi Pulusi alias Tingu (29), and Pangi Ramdas (28).

Killo Simhadri, who had



been active since 2017 after his brother's arrest, faces 19 pending cases. Vanthala Nagesh joined the Maoist outfit in 2015 and has eight pending cases. The militia members were involved in organizing meetings, supplying food to extremists, participating in Praja (illegal kangaroo courts) courts, and engaging in arson. ASR district Superintendent of Police Tuhin Sinha addressed the media, explain-

ing that the lack of proper leadership in the Maoist ranks in Pedabayalu, following numerous arrests and surrenders, has contributed to the militants' decision to surrender. Sinha emphasized that community welfare initiatives by the district police have played a significant role in encouraging these surrenders.

The surrendered militants will receive government benefits, including land, as part of their

rehabilitation. SP Sinha urged remaining Maoists to abandon their violent ideology and integrate into mainstream society. He highlighted the recent discovery of a Maoist cache in the Sileru forest area as evidence of ongoing security efforts.

Sinha noted the high voter turnout in recent elections in previously Maoist-impacted areas like Chintapally, Pedabayalu, and GKVeedhi, indicating strong community support for democratic processes. He reassured the public about the peaceful conduct of the elections, backed by robust security measures and clear procedural communication to candidates and political parties. SP Sinha reiterated the prohibition of rallies or victory celebrations on counting day, emphasising the commitment to maintaining peace and order.

# Uncertainty over capital...

Continued from Page 1

During the months that preceded the May 13 simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly polls, Reddy had promised multiple times that he would relocate to Visakhapatnam but failed to keep his word, and according to the YSRCP, it was owing to legal tangles. Matters related to the three capital cities proposal are pending before the Supreme Court.

Amidst this scenario, IPS officer-turned-politician, V V Lakshminarayana said Andhra Pradesh should demand the Centre to continue with the ongoing arrangement of Hyderabad as joint capital till finalisation of the capital city.

Lakshminarayana, a former CBI joint director, launched a new political party, Jai Bharat National Party last year. His party fought polls and he, a retired Additional Director General of Police, contested from Visakhapatnam North Assembly constituency.

"Only the announcement was made, the foundation stone laid and some work had started on Amaravati but the full-fledged capital has not come up. But there is an opportunity, parties should be able to convince the President of India to extend Hyderabad as joint capital until a capital city comes

up," Lakshminarayana said.

When he was Chief Minister, Naidu rolled out grand plans to make Amaravati the capital of the state. However, they could not take off for several reasons. YSRCP Rajya Sabha member A Ayodhya Rami Reddy reiterated his party's stand of setting up three capitals to ensure decentralisation and good governance.

Reaffirming TDP's commitment to Amaravati, TDP general secretary Nara Lokesh said, "One state, one capital and it's Amaravati. Decentralised development. Every district must develop, and during the TDP's regime, we proved it. Kia Motors to Anantapur, electronics manufacturing at Chittoor, etc."

Lakshminarayana held the two state governments of the past 10 years, TDP and YSRCP, as well as the BJP-led Union government responsible for the absence of a capital city. The TDP both at the time of bifurcation and even now is part of the NDA, he noted.

"A lot of meetings were convened by the Union Home Ministry regarding the assurances given by the bifurcation Act but nothing concrete has happened. Now it is the responsibility of the Central government to do the needful. That is important," he said, reflecting on the related interna-

tives during the YSRCP government's five-year tenure.

The former CBI officer opined that bifurcation should not have been even taken up before the establishment of a capital city for Andhra Pradesh. Further, he underscored that the Telugu states are yet to apportion public assets worth up to Rs 1.4 lakh crore.

J Ravi Shankar, a Supreme Court lawyer who took up the legal cudgels for 'saving Amaravati' claimed that the centrally located place is the capital city of the southern state as per the Central government's map.

"Amaravati is already there. Amaravati has been notified. Even the High Court has been notified by the President of India. And the Act says the Governor's office and other offices should be located at Amaravati, capital of Andhra Pradesh," said Shankar. He claimed that the concept of three capitals 'is a non-existent theory', and noted that wherever the chief minister sits, that is the executive capital of a state. Amid conflicting ideas, assertions and legal tangles, June 4, the day of the counting of votes, is seen by many as a harbinger of hope for Andhra Pradesh as the party forming the next government is expected to clear the decks for the much-awaited capital city.

# EC, Police biased...

Continued from Page 1

The ruling YSRCP has accused the TDP of orchestrating violent attacks during and after the May 13 elections in Andhra Pradesh. Following polling day, the TDP allegedly incited chaos and unrest in Palnadu district. In Karempudi village, TDP leaders reportedly assaulted supporters of the ruling party and individuals aligned with it, resorting to the use of firearms. The police reportedly withdrew before TDP members unleashed havoc in the area.

Nani claimed that these incidents were part of a conspiracy involving the TDP and certain police officials. The ruling party has presented evidence alleging collusion between the TDP and the police, resulting in post-election violence in the Palnadu region.

Furthermore, Nani highlighted instances in Karempudi village where TDP mobs targeted the properties of YSRCP activists and businesses.

The YSRCP has also accused the TDP of plotting harm against Macherla MLA Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy while alleging that the Palnadu police are actively pursuing the MLA in connection with unspecified charges.

# Thunderstorms likely...

Continued from Page 1

Similar weather patterns are anticipated for North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and South Coastal Andhra Pradesh within the next 24 hours and on June 1.

Dry weather conditions are anticipated in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh from May 28 to 31, in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh from May 27 to 31, and in Rayalaseema on May 28 and 29. Some isolated rainfall occurred over Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema in the past 24 hours, with the highest maximum temperature of 38.6 degrees Celsius recorded at Tirupati in Rayalaseema, as per the report.

# Pinnelli brothers attacked TDP agents, alleges Varla

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP senior leader Varla Ramaiah has alleged that YSRCP MLA Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy's anarchies are coming out one after another during and after polling. He said that Pinnelli's victims are coming out one by one against the MLA. Speaking to the media at the party office on Sunday, Varla Ramaiah said that YSRCP leaders are hell-bent on attacking the Dalits.

He said that the attack on Nomula Manikya Rao in Kandlakunta, Pinnelli's village, is proof of this. When a Dalit person was a booth agent in support of TDP, he was abused with foul language and attacked with rods and sticks, and the police played a spectator role. Ramaiah said that



**He said that the attack on Nomula Manikya Rao in Kandlakunta, Pinnelli's village, is proof of this. When a Dalit person was a booth agent in support of TDP, he was abused with foul language and attacked with rods and sticks**

even after the family members of Manikya Rao fell on the feet of Pinnelli Venkatrami Reddy pleading to show mercy they were also attacked. Another TDP agent, Durgampudi Venkatreddy and his children were attacked with sticks and rods.

Victim Manikya Rao said that Pinnelli Ramakrishna

Reddy's brother Venkatrami Reddy came to polling booth number 144 of Kandlakunta village and abused me with foul language. He threatened to see my end and his followers beat me up inside the polling station. Venkatrami Reddy's followers attacked my family. Pinnelli kicked my eldest son in the stomach.

Venkatrami Reddy and his followers beat my younger son and wife with rods and sticks.

He also said that another booth agent, Durgampudi Venkatreddy, family was also attacked by Pinnelli's followers and beat his sons severely. He said they went to trainee DSP Jagdish and told him everything and begged to save my life and Venkatreddy's family. The police took me along with three other TDP agents in their vehicle to Veldurthi Police Station. The police in the station were told to provide security to us and left. The police refused to take our complaint. Later, TDP supporters came and took us to the house of Julakanti Brahma Reddy, the candidate of the alliance, he added.

# Demand for extension of Hyd as joint capital gains momentum

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As the ten years stipulated by the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act for Hyderabad to serve as the common capital for Telangana and Andhra Pradesh draws to a close, voices from Andhra Pradesh are calling for an extension. The former Joint Director of the CBI and President of Jai Bharat National Party, VV Lakshminarayana, has taken to Twitter to highlight Section-5 of the Joint Andhra Pradesh Partition Act, which mandates Hyderabad to be the joint capital for at least ten years post-bifurcation.

In his tweet, Lakshminarayana emphasised that Andhra Pradesh has yet to establish a fully functional capital and urged the President of India to issue a special ordinance extending Hyderabad's status as



**In his tweet, Lakshminarayana emphasised that Andhra Pradesh has yet to establish a fully functional capital and urged the President of India to issue a special ordinance extending Hyderabad's status as a joint capital for another decade.**

a joint capital for another decade. Following the 2014 bifurcation, Andhra Pradesh's then-government, led by the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), designated Amaravati as the new capital. Despite drafting a master plan and initiating construction, Amaravati's development has faced significant challenges. Transit buildings were constructed, and administrative functions began to shift

there, but the process remains incomplete. Amaravati continues to be listed as the capital in central government records.

The situation grew more complicated with the rise of the Yuva Jana Samika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) to power in 2019, which proposed a tri-capital plan for Andhra Pradesh. This plan, however, has

been stalled by legal issues, leaving the status of Amaravati unresolved and the state's capital situation in limbo. Amidst this uncertainty, YSRCP leaders had previously suggested extending the joint capital arrangement. This demand resurfaced briefly before the Telangana assembly elections but was not pursued further. Currently, it is mainly VV Lakshminarayana who is actively advocating for the extension.

Despite being designated a common capital, Hyderabad has seen little utilisation by the Andhra Pradesh government. The state did not leverage the privileges offered, with few buildings being used and none owned by the government. As the deadline approaches, the debate over Hyderabad's status continues, with significant implications for the future administrative setup of Andhra Pradesh.

## Legal notice to be served on Murthy Yadav

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A legal notice will be served on Jana Sena Corporator Murthy Yadav soon for 'making false and baseless allegations' against State Chief Secretary Dr KS Jawahar Reddy for the past two days.

The government issued a rejoinder through a media release in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. However, Murthy Yadav held a press conference in Visakhapatnam on Sunday and levelled the same allegations against Jawahar Reddy. Legal experts have been consulted to take action against Murthy Yadav. A legal notice will be issued to Corporator Murthy Yadav soon.

## IIM-V welcomes 2<sup>nd</sup> batch of MBA students

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Visakhapatnam inaugurated the second batch of its Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) program today at its permanent campus in Gambhiram. The program witnessed a significant increase in enrollment, with a 25% jump in batch size compared to the previous year. Professor Happy Paul, Program Chairperson, attributed this rise to the program's growing popularity among working professionals seeking to enhance their skill sets.

Professor Kaveri Krishnan, Admission Chair, unveiled the profile of the incoming EMBA Batch 2024-26. The batch comprises 180 working professionals with an average of ten years of experience, representing a broad spectrum of industries including manufactur-



ing, IT, banking, consulting, e-commerce, telecommunication, and retail. Notably, women comprised 28% of the participants.

The ceremony's chief guest, MVN Rao, Head - of Corporate Learning & Development at Larsen & Toubro Ltd., commended the participants for choosing the IIMV EMBA program. He emphasized the critical role of upskilling for working professionals in today's dynamic

business environment. Rao elaborated on the future landscape where graduates will leverage the acquired skills and outlined the essential qualities of future workforce members. He underscored the importance of stakeholder management, strategic execution, and a technologically adept yet humane approach. He urged the participants to remain focused and actively engage throughout the program to maximize their learn-

ing experience.

Welcoming the new batch, Professor M Chandrasekhar, Director of IIM Visakhapatnam, assured them of the institute's dedication to providing an exceptional learning experience. He encouraged them to strive for excellence and collaborate with peers and faculty to develop case studies reflecting contemporary management challenges.

Anish Srikrishna, CEO of TimesPro, elucidated how the two-year program will equip learners with crucial skills, foster cross-sectoral knowledge sharing through peer interaction, and cultivate leadership qualities fundamental for individual and organizational growth. The ceremony also recognized outstanding academic performance. MVN Rao presented Certificates of Merit and felicitated students on the Director's Merit List from the EMBA batch of 2023-25.

## LVPEI's 'Whitathon' raises awareness about childhood eye cancer

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The third edition of the L V Prasad Eye Institute's (LVPEI) Whitathon was successfully held in Visakhapatnam, attracting over 350 runners who participated in 3km, 5km, and 10km runs. The event was flagged off by retinoblastoma survivor Mast. Vanunu Chandrasekhar and Seera Jayaram, Arjuna Awardee and Boxing Coach, at the scenic Kali Mandir on RK Beach road. Participants included members of the general public, Vizag Runners, the Indian Medical Association, Omega Cancer Hospital, and LVPEI staff. This year's event highlighted the institute's ongoing commitment to raising awareness about retinoblastoma, a potentially life-threatening eye cancer that primarily affects young children.

Dr Virender Sachdeva, Head of the LVPEI Visakhapatnam Campus, emphasized the importance of early detection. "Parents, caregivers, and the community must be aware of the common symptoms of eye cancer in



children and seek timely medical attention," he stated. Dr. Sachdeva further explained, "White reflex is the most common symptom of retinoblastoma. White reflex is a white or yellowish-white glow that appears in the pupil of a child's eye when light is shined on it, especially in photos taken with a flash. Other symptoms include poor vision, redness of the eye, and squint."

Dr Suneetha Gavara, Eye Cancer Specialist, elaborated on the curability of retinoblastoma with early detection and treatment, which can save the child's life, eye, and vision. She expressed gratitude to all par-

ticipants, saying, "We are delighted by the turnout and are confident that the impact and awareness will continue to grow each year. I request each of you to talk about the symptoms with family and friends and spread awareness."

Retinoblastoma predominantly affects children under three years of age, with 90% of cases occurring in this age group. Tragically, 50% of affected children worldwide lose their lives due to late detection and inadequate treatment, with India accounting for 20-25% of global cases. The event underscores the vital importance of early detection.



## Four injured in gas cylinder explosion

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Four people were injured in a gas cylinder explosion at the workers' quarters of Mohan Spintex at Remalle, Bapulapadu mandal, Krishna district on Sunday. The gas cylinder exploded when the workers were cooking after their shift.

The victims were taken to the government hospital in Nuzvid for first aid. Later, they were transferred to the

Government General Hospital in Vijayawada for further treatment. Representatives of the company said that the condition of all four workers is currently stable.

The injured workers hail from Adilabad in Telangana State. The company provides accommodation for its workers. The police have registered a case regarding the cylinder explosion, and an inquiry has begun.

## Practise yoga to stay healthy: Joint Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Joint Collector Dr P Sampath Kumar has stated that practising yoga asanas will be a better treatment for all diseases, and added that everyone should spare some time for yoga. "Yoga asanas unify all forces within the human body and help to create concentration," he said.

Sampath Kumar attended the concluding ceremony of the Yoga Summer Coaching Camp organised by the Amaravati Yoga and Aerobics Association at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation Stadium in Vijayawada on Sunday. Certificates were presented to the trainees on the occasion.

Sampath Kumar said that yoga has been of great importance since the ancient times. It keeps people healthy and improves concentration. These



NTR District Joint Collector Dr Sampath Kumar presenting certificates to students who participated in the Yoga Summer Coaching Camp, at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation Stadium in Vijayawada on Sunday

days, everyone should practise yoga as it gives relief from stress.

He also requested the parents to encourage their children to practise yoga asanas right from their childhood. Conditions such as hypertension, thyroid, and diabetes can be cured through yoga, he

added. Amaravati Yoga and Aerobics Association president Chalasani Ajay Kumar, yoga coach A Satyanarayana, vice-presidents Miriyala Venkateswara Rao, Ch Arun Kumar, and MD Iqbal, treasurer Lavanya Kumar and others were present.

## Counselling held for rowdy sheeters, suspect sheeters



Vijayawada West Zone ACP Murali Krishna Reddy leading the counselling programme for rowdy sheeters and suspect sheeters at One Town Police Station in Vijayawada on Sunday

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In view of the counting of votes on June 4, NTR Police Commissionerate officials on Sunday conducted counselling for all rowdy sheeters, suspect

sheeters and those involved in many cases at various police stations. As per the directions given by Police Commissioner PHD Ramakrishna, ACPs led the counselling sessions. The police officials asked the

rowdy sheeters not to participate in rallies or processions after the counting. Also, they were asked not to be involved in any anti-social activities, and warned of stringent action.

Vijayawada West Zone ACP Murali Krishna Reddy led the counselling session at the One Town Police Station. Similar programmes were held at all police stations in North Zone, South Zone, Central Zone and other rural zones under the NTR district Police Commissionerate.

The ACPs asked the rowdy sheeters, suspect sheeters and other criminals to stay at their houses on June 4. They also told all Station House Officers (SHOs) and other officials.

# First Haj flight to leave Gannavaram airport today

THREE FLIGHTS WILL BE OPERATING FROM GANNAVARAM TO JEDDAH WITH 692 PILGRIMS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Special flights will be operated from the Gannavaram airport for three days for the Haj pilgrims from the State. The first flight is scheduled to leave Gannavaram Airport at 8.45 am on Monday. Harsha Vardhan, Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Minority Welfare Department and Chairman of Haj Operations will flag off the first flight.

The State government has announced that three flights will be operated for the 692 pilgrims from various districts in the State. A special camp has been set up at the Eidgah Jama Masjid at Gannavaram near the airport to facilitate the process.



Haj Committee members issuing identity cards to the pilgrims at the Haj camp near the Gannavaram airport on Sunday

The first flight, carrying 322 pilgrims, will depart for

Jeddah at 8.45 am. Pilgrims are advised to reach the Haj camp by 3.30 am. The second flight is scheduled to depart with 322 pilgrims at 4.55 pm on May 28, and the third and final flight will leave with 48 pilgrims at 7.10 am on May 29.

Authorities have arranged special buses to transport pilgrims from the Haj camp to the airport. Pilgrims are urged to report at the airport five hours before the scheduled departure of their respective flights. Also, the Haj Comm ittee has made all necessary arrangements such as a help desk, medical camp, police outpost, baggage counter and others at the camp.

## Aarogyasri services begin at PVR Multi Specialty Hospital

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Dr YSR Aarogyasri's services have been started at PVR Multi Specialty Hospital at Patamata, Vijayawada on Sunday. Dr CL Venkata Rao, Hospital Advisor and former member of the Medical Council of India, Retired IPS officer BV Ramana Kumar and former Principal Secretary B Udayalakshmi attended Dr YSR Aarogyasri services at PVR Multi Specialty Hospital on Sunday as chief guests.

Speaking on the occasion they said that Dr YSR Aarogyasri is a boon to the poor and needy and from today the poor people will get free super speciality services through Dr YSR Aarogyasri, and Dr PVR Choudhary Hospital itself has been providing accessible medical services to all since its inception. Hospital MD PVR Chowdhary



said that all types of multi-specialty services are available in the hospital at affordable prices and free treatment to the poor under Aarogyasri.

T Arjuna Rao, Chairman of Vijaya Institute of Medical Sciences said that he will provide any nursing care services to the hospital and congratulated Dr PVR Choudhary as a doctor with good vision. He

said that Dr Choudhary, who has provided medical services in East Godavari and West Godavari districts, started a state-of-the-art hospital in Vijayawada and said that it is commendable to provide good treatment to the poor.

Dr Puvvada Ramakrishna, CEO of the hospital and eminent neurosurgeon welcomed the guests in this programme.

## Schools in TG to reopen on June 12

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Department of Education on Saturday announced that schools in Telangana will reopen on June 12 for classes 1 to 12 for the academic year 2024-2025. The academic calendar has advanced or pre-scheduled the timings of both primary and secondary schools from 9:30 am to 9 am.

The upcoming academic year would comprise 229 working days, with the final day scheduled for April 23, 2025. The primary schools will run from 9 am to 4:15 pm while high schools will run from 9:30 am to 4:45 pm. The SSC exams are scheduled in the month of March 2025. In regards to holidays or vacations for schools, Dasara vacation is scheduled from October 2 to 14, while Christmas vacation for missionary schools is scheduled from December 23 to 27.

# Adverse weather hits aqua sector

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

The adverse weather conditions have crippled the aqua sector in the region as fishes in the ponds are getting perished due to falling oxygen and DO percentages.

A large number of fish in the aqua ponds have perished due to adverse weather and high humidity in the atmosphere and the fisher farmers are selling fish at a cheaper price of Rs 10 to Rs 20 a kg.

A fish farmer Narasimha Raju told the Pioneer that the oxygen level has come down in the waters of the fish pond due to bad weather resulting in fish starting to perish. The farmers have no options now except to sell fish as quickly as possible.

"There is an enormous change in the weather during the last three days which has become detrimental to the fish in the ponds. The farmers are unable to take steps to overcome the problem as they have to invest money further. The aqua farmers are already incurring huge losses with increased costs of feed, drugs



**A fish farmer Narasimha Raju told the Pioneer that the oxygen level has come down in the waters of the fish pond due to bad weather resulting in fish starting to perish. The farmers have no options now except to sell fish as quickly as possible.**

and power tariff charges," he lamented. As a large number of fish produce is flooding the market,

the traders are selling fish between Rs 10 and Rs 20 per KG. "The aqua farmers understood that they could no longer

protect their fish by overcoming the bad weather, and they are opting to sell at a cheaper price," an aquaculture farmer said.

The fish traders sold fish at Rs 10 and Rs 20 per KG on Sunday in Akividu at the fish harbour. This is the first time fish are sold at the lowest price. However, the consumers expressed happiness as the fish is being sold at a cheaper price in the market.

An aquaculture farmer Ratna Raju told the Pioneer that even big-size fishes are also perishing in the fish ponds because of dwindling oxygen levels in the water due to adverse weather.

He said that due to bad weather conditions, some aqua farmers are unable to save the crop due to various reasons including the spread of the virus, frequent power failures and skyrocketing prices of aqua feed and medicines. He appealed that the new government should take steps to save the aqua sector by announcing incentives and reducing the power tariff.



## 3,600 chickens perish in poultry farm fire

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

In a major fire accident on a poultry farm, over 3,600 chickens perished in Kuppam town on Sunday.

Police said that one person, Ramesh, was running a poultry farm on the outskirts of Kuppam. He brought 3,600 chickens from Chennai five days ago and released them into his poultry farm.

Flames erupted in the poultry farm and spread all over within minutes. The flames engulfed the entire poultry farm, killing over 3,600 chickens. The fire officials suspect that an electric short circuit is the reason for the fire mishap. The exact loss of property is being ascertained, fire officials said.

# 938 personnel deployed for counting of votes: DC

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh has made it clear that 938 officers and staff of various departments are being deployed for the counting of votes, to be held on June 4, and 14 top-level officials of various departments have been appointed as AROs to monitor the counting process.

The EVMs of seven Assembly constituencies and one Parliamentary constituency have been preserved on the campus of CR Reddy Engineering College and a three-tier security has been provided to the EVM strong rooms. As many as 14 tables are being arranged specially to count the postal ballot votes of the Parliamentary constituency.

The Collector said that 938 staffers from various departments are being deployed to take up the counting of votes. Among them, there are 289 counting supervisors, 340 counting assistants and 309 micro observers.

He said that over 13.70 lakh voters have exercised their



right of vote in the elections. A training camp would be organized for the counting staff to impart training on May 27, he added.

Micro Observers, Returning Officers and Assistant Returning Officers would be made aware of the counting of votes on the table, he said adding that along with them, and some other staffers will be taken and allotted according to the respective constituencies.

The first round of randomization has been completed in connection with the recruitment of staff, he asserted. Arrangements are being made

to train them phased manner from 27 th of this month. In this, high officials of the district will participate and explain the role of counting supervisors, counting assistants and micro observers and the precautions to be taken in counting.

The Collector warned of taking stringent action if anybody resorted to violent acts. Since the election code will remain enforced till June 6, no victory rallies will be allowed and the bursting of firecrackers is strictly prohibited, he said, adding that drones should be flown.

## 6 red sanders logs seized



PNS ■ TIRUPATHI

The Task Force police team seized six red sanders logs while being transported in a car at Mallamankona village in Rapur mandal.

DSP Chenchubabu told the media here on Sunday that a police team led by RSI Chenchu Babu conducted a

checking of vehicles.

The police suspiciously found a car in the forest area and they checked it.

They found six red sander logs in the car. However, after noticing the police, the red sander smugglers fled the scene. A case was registered in the Task Force police station in Tirupati.

# Some poll officials acted in a biased manner: Kakani

PNS ■ NELLORE

Minister for Agriculture Kakani Govardhan Reddy has alleged that some election officers worked in a biased manner during the elections.

Talking to the media here on Sunday, the Minister expressed anger that some election officials did not hold elections fairly and transparently. He opined that the election machinery has failed miserably in conducting elections fairly and impartially. "TDP leader and farmer minister Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy distributed money to the voters. I sent the video evidence in this regard to the election officials and made a complaint on it," he stated.



The Election Officer is in such a state that he was unable to tell how the video of MLA P Ramakrishna Reddy leaked. Moreover, some police officials stoked the violence. He also criticized the Nellore district Collector stating that he worked partially. "I have no confidence that the counting of

votes will be held transparently and properly. We appealed to the ECI to appoint an Observer to monitor the counting process," Minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy asserted.

If the election officials did not take appropriate action on the issue, he would approach the court, he made it clear. Kakani Govardhan Reddy lamented that even the drinking water facility was not provided to some polling stations in Nellore district during the polling on May 13. Some of the polling stations were devoid of police protection, he flayed, claiming that NCC cadets were deployed to some polling stations to provide security.

## 2 arrested in petrol bombs case

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

The police arrested two persons in connection with the hurling of petrol bombs at Madala village in Sattenapalli constituency.

Informing this to the media here in Sattenapalli, Circle Inspector M Rambabu said that two persons were arrested in connection with the hurling of petrol bombs at Madala village after the polling on May 14.

He said that a rowdy sheet was opened against 30 persons for being involved in



pelting stones and group clashes in Nakarikal, Rajupalem, Muppalla and Sattenapalli rural mandals.

The police bound over 50 people for involving clashes but 44 of them were again involved in clashes and Muppalla and Tahsildar issued notices to them. However, only 16 of them attended before the Tahsildar.

"The police have so far arrested 25 people in connection with the vandalizing of EVM at a polling station at Gullapalli village. Special vigil has been laid on problematic villages to avert untoward incidents during the counting day," he added.

## Karvetinagaram shrine annual fest from May 29 to June 6

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The annual Brahmotsavam of Karvetinagaram Sri Venugopalaswamy is scheduled from May 29 to June 6 with Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam on May 21 and Ankurarpanam on May 28.

The Vahana sevans in Sri Rukmini Satyabhama sameta Sri Venugopalaswamy temple in Karvetinagaram will be observed at 7.30 am to 9.30 am and again from 7 pm to 9 pm during Brahmotsavams.

Pushpa yagam will be performed on June 7 from 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm.

By paying Rs.750, Grihasthas can participate in Kalyanotsavam on June 1. On June 2 Garuda Seva will be observed in the evening while Radhotsavam on June 5.

During Brahmotsavams, devotional music, cultural programmes, bhajans and kolatams will be organised daily under the auspices of TTD Hindu Dharmaprachara Parishad and Annamacharya projects.

## 'Jagananna Vidya Kanuka' kits inspected by Principal Secy



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Praveen Prakash, Principal Secretary of schools Education, visited the factory manufacturing the Vidya Kanuka school bags in Noida on Sunday. The Principal Secretary was impressed with the quality of the bags and expressed satisfaction with the commitment by the supplier to supply the material by June 5.

The school bag is the key of all the Vidya Kanuka items, with dimensions of 45 cm in length, 33 cm in width, and 15 cm in depth. It has a volumetric capacity to hold all textbooks, notebooks, tablets, and other essentials. The material used has a thickness of 0.42 mm, sufficient to ensure a year's durability. Undoubtedly, the school bag is a boon for students, allowing them to carry all their important study materials. The bags are set to be distributed to students on June 12, the Principal Secretary said.

# Sudanese among 31 persons arrested for mobile thefts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's Task Force (South) and (South-east) zone has arrested 31 persons, including a Sudanese national, for their involvement in smart phone smuggling and mobile theft. Property worth Rs 2 crore was seized from the accused.

The accused were identified as Mohammed Amjad (35), a

decoration worker and resident of Falaknuma; Syed Ghayaz Hashmi (35), an auto driver and resident of Shaheen Nagar; Shaik Ansar (27), a welder and resident of Shaheen Nagar; Mohammed Muzaffar (35), a swimming instructor and resident of Santoshnagar; Mohammed Khaled (25), a cook and resident of Hafeez Babanagar; Mohammed Dastagir (28), an auto driver

and resident of Hafeez Babanagar. Mohamed Musa Hassan Gamaralanbia (26) received the stolen phones. He is a resident of Nanal Nagar. He is a South Sudanese national.

The gang is involved in 27 cases of phone thefts registered under various police stations, including Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Santosh Nagar, Kamatipura, Amberpet,

Saidabad, Langerhouz, Chaderghat, Gachibowli and Chandrayangutta. 15 of the accused involved in mobile theft are residents of Hyderabad. They planned to steal mobile phones from crowded places such as public meetings and wine shops. The phones were sold to receivers who had connections with technicians at Jagdeesh Market and Abids.

# 'Focus on increasing number of deliveries in PHCs'

Strict measures to prevent malaria, dengue and chikungunya cases

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Commissioner of Health & Family Welfare Dr S Venkateswar has asked the Director of Public Health and Family Welfare Dr Padmavathi to take action against those doctors of Primary Health Centres (PHC) who have not performed a single delivery in a long time. In a release, the Commissioner said that the District Medical and Health Officers (DMHO) should focus on increasing the number of deliveries in PHCs.

He said that medical officers in PHCs need to improve their performance and take action against the concerned staff in the PHCs where very few deliveries have been registered. Action will be taken against the medical officers if

there is no improvement in performance. He said that it is not possible to have zero deliveries, especially in tribal areas. He said that there is no point in neglecting the medical officers of PHCs who have not registered a single delivery in five years.

The Commissioner pointed out that in Guntur and Visakhapatnam districts that lag behind in administering six categories of TB BCG vaccination given to those above 18 years of age, the authorities should address the situation as soon as possible and create awareness among the people through publicity, posters and pamphlets. The Commissioner advised the State-level officials to organise special camps in the AP Secretariat and government offices and prepare a pro-

gramme for TB BCG vaccination and also to take necessary steps to administer the vaccine to journalists.

He instructed the DMHOs to take strict measures to prevent cases of malaria, dengue and chikungunya from spreading. He said better results can be achieved if DMHOs coordinate with municipal authorities and cautioned to be vigilant in the coming four months. Actions should be taken on a war-footing to prevent increasing dengue cases, especially in tribal areas. The Commissioner has directed DMHOs to send a comprehensive report on the fact that ineligible persons have been included in the list of beneficiaries of Prime Minister Matru Vandana Yojana in Bapatla district.

# TG attracted investments worth Rs 9,000 crore in 3 months: Min

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Industries Minister Sridhar Babu said that investments of Rs 9,000 crore have come to the state in the last three months apart from the Rs 40,000 crore promised at Davos.

"Telangana attracted investments worth Rs 9,000 crore after the Davos Summit. Industries have shown interest in investing in Telangana. Talks on MoUs are going on," he said.

Addressing a press conference here on Sunday, Sridhar Babu said that during their Davos visit they got investments worth Rs 40,000 crore while the BRS admin got only Rs 21,000 crore as investments from Davos.

He said that the government never created a negative environment in the state. On allegations of companies leav-



ing Telangana, Sridhar Babu said, "Where did the companies go?"

"The Keynes Technology MoU was signed in October 2023. Groundbreaking was over. For the semiconductor machine, they are awaiting a nod from the Centre. Phase-1 is completed. The second one is ISM semiconductor and advanced electronics. They are thinking of setting

up a plant. The opposition should stop its fake propaganda that this company is gone," he said.

"For Corning, there was no MoU or any binding agreement. But the then Minister made an announcement. So, based on that, we were holding discussions. We are taking further steps and asking them to invest. They might go to other states," the Minister said.

"If not that, we'll get a bigger one. Today we are saying if companies are going to other states based on their interest we will bring 10 more companies. We will work in that direction. We got Rs 40,000 crore, but we continued to get Rs 9,000 crore. Our work will speak for itself," Sridhar Babu said.

"They never thought of

bringing MSMEs. Incentives and subsidies were announced, but the subsidy was not given to this day. Rs 3,007 crore subsidy is pending for industries from 2016. They put the burden on us. Governance is a continuous process and we are taking everything as a challenge," he said.

"If any company goes to other states due to pressure from the PMO, with our human resources, environment and confidence we will bring other companies. We will bring investments and create employment in a big way. Even if the PMO takes away some companies we will bring others," Sridhar Babu said.

Sridhar Babu said, today I am telling we will bring 3x and 10x more investments and will talk about it after 5 years.

INDIA CORNER

### Tribal man, son shot dead by Naxalites in Jharkhand

A tribal man and his son were shot dead allegedly by Naxalites in Jharkhand's Chatra district on suspicion that they were police informers, officials said on Sunday. The incident happened at Hindia Kala village in the Kunda police station area on Saturday night, they said. The deceased, identified as Chhedhi Birhor (48) and his son Pankaj Birhor (30), belonged to a particularly vulnerable tribal group, they added. "The man and his son were allegedly killed by members of Tritiya Sammelan Prastuti Committee (TSPC)," Superintendent of Police (SP) Vikas Pandey said. Pankaj's elder brother Vidhayak Birhor told police that around 60-70 Naxalites surrounded their house and knocked on the door. "When no one opened the door, they broke into the house through the roof. At first, they thrashed them and then shot them dead," he said. Vidhayak said he was not in the house when the attack happened.



### Cops foil gang's plan to target coal bizman; 4 held

Four members, including a sharpshooter, of the Jharkhand-based Aman Sahu gang have been nabbed from Raipur and Rajasthan after a 72-hour secret operation on inputs that they are planning to kill a coal businessman, a Chhattisgarh Police officer said on Sunday. He said the plan was hatched by Mayank Singh, who operates the Aman Sahu gang from Kuala Lumpur. Shooters operating under Mayank Singh carry out attacks on the targets identified by Aman Sahu and Lawrence Bishnoi gangs, the police officer said. - "A 72-hour secret operation was conducted based on intelligence inputs that a Chhattisgarh-based coal businessman, who operates in Jharkhand, is the target of the gang," Raipur (Range) Inspector General of Police Amresh Mishra told reporters. Pappu Singh alias Papsa was nabbed from Rajasthan while Mukesh Kumar, Devendra Singh and the shooter Rohit Swarnakar were taken into custody from separate places in Raipur, he said.



### Cycle rallies in Himachal to spread awareness among voters

Ahead of the June 1 election in Himachal Pradesh, cycle rallies were organised in 10 districts of the state to motivate voters, particularly those residing in urban areas, to come out and exercise their franchise, officials said on Sunday. The cycle rallies were flagged off by all the District Electoral Officers or Deputy Commissioners in their respective districts barring Hamirpur and Kinnaur and were organised in collaboration with the Cycling Association of Himachal Pradesh, a statement said here. In Shimla, District Collector Anupam Kashyap flagged off the riders from the historic Ridge and state Chief Electoral Officer Maneesh Garg also joined them along with other officials. These rallies were being organised to spread the message among people, particularly among the first-time voters and the youths, about their duty to vote, Garg said.



## 'FIR against 6 partners of Rajkot game zone, 2 held; facility didn't have fire NOC'

PNS ■ RAJKOT

Police have registered an FIR against six partners of a game zone in Gujarat's Rajkot city on charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder and arrested two persons after a fire there killed 27 persons, officials said on Sunday.

The local police in November 2023 granted a booking license to the gaming zone, which was renewed for the period from January 1 to December 31, 2024, Rajkot Police Commissioner Raju Bhargava told reporters.

"The game zone had received permissions from the roads and buildings department. It had also submitted a proof of fire safety equipment to obtain the fire NOC which was under process and not yet completed," the official said.

The game zone had fire safety equipment but action taken to control the blaze was not sufficient, leading to the tragedy on Saturday, he said.

Twenty seven persons, including four children, were killed and three others injured in the massive fire that swept through the TRP game zone in the Nana Mava locality teaming with people who were enjoying a summer vacation outing on Saturday evening,



**"The game zone had received permissions from the roads and buildings department. It had also submitted a proof of fire safety equipment to obtain the fire NOC which was under process and not yet completed," the official said.**

officials earlier said.

As per the FIR, the accused persons erected a 50-metre wide and 60-metre long structure with the height of around two-three storey building using metal sheet fabrication to create a game zone.

They did not have a proper fire fighting equipment and had not obtained the no-objection certificate (NOC) from the local fire department, thereby endangering the lives of people despite knowing that a blaze in

such a structure could cause deaths and injuries, said the FIR.

Yuvrajsinh Solanki, a partner in the Raceway Enterprise, which operated the TRP game zone, and the entertainment facility's manager Nitin Jain have so far been arrested, Rajkot Deputy Commissioner of Police (crime) Parthrajsinh Gohil said.

The six persons against whom the case was registered by the Rajkot taluka police in

the wee hours of Sunday are Dhaval Corporation proprietor Dhaval Thakkar, Raceway Enterprise partners Ashoksinh Jadeja, Kiritsinh Jadeja, Prakashchand Hiran, Yuvrajsinh Solanki and Rahul Rathod, as per the FIR.

The case was registered against six identified persons and others whose names are revealed during the investigation, it said.

The accused have been booked under Indian Penal

### Modi announces Rs 2 lakh ex gratia to kin of deceased

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh from the PM's National Relief Fund for the next of kin of each deceased in the Rajkot game zone fire incident, his office said on Sunday.

The injured persons would be given Rs 50,000, the Prime Minister's Office said on X.

The Gujarat government has also announced an ex gratia of Rs 4 lakh to kin of each deceased and Rs 50,000 to the

injured persons.

President Droupadi Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar and PM Modi had expressed grief over the incident.

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel visited Rajkot on Sunday morning. He inspected the fire tragedy site and also met family members of the victims.

He offered condolences to the bereaved families, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said in a press statement.



### 12 devotees dead as truck overturns on their bus in UP

PNS ■ SHAHJAHANPUR (UP)

Twelve people, including six women and three children, headed to the Purnagiri temple in Uttarakhand were killed when a gravel-loaded dumper truck overturned on their bus in this district, police said Sunday.

Nine other pilgrims were seriously injured in the Saturday night incident and have been admitted to the Government Medical College here, a senior official said. Purnagiri temple in Uttarakhand's Tanakpur is about 180 kms from Shahjahanpur.

Shahjahanpur Superintendent of Police Ashok Kumar Meena told PTI that the accident took place at Hajjiyapur village under the Khutar police station

area when the privately owned bus carrying 59 passengers from Sitapur had halted at a roadside eatery on its way to the temple.

While some of the devotees had alighted for dinner, others waited inside the bus.

Suddenly, the dumper truck carrying gravel lost control, overturned and fell onto their bus, unloading the content on the waiting pilgrims, the SP said.

According to Meena, 10 passengers identified as Sudhanshu (7), Aditya (8), Ajit (15), Rohini (20), Pramod (30), Seema (30), Suman Devi (36), Ramgopal (48), Shiv Shankar (48), and Chutki (50) died on the spot, while Sonavati (45) and Bindra (50) succumbed during treatment.

### 'Will dedicate INDIA bloc's victory in LS polls to Karunanidhi'

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and ruling DMK President M K Stalin on Sunday said his party would dedicate the INDIA bloc's victory in the Lok Sabha polls to late party patriarch M Karunanidhi and celebrate his centenary at the national level.

On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Karunanidhi (1924-2018) on June 3, which also marks the culmination of year-long (2023-24) centenary celebrations of the DMK icon, Stalin heaped praise on the leader for his contributions to democracy and the nation.

Whenever democracy faced crisis situations, "leaders from North India looked up to Karunanidhi" and it was his "stellar contributions" that ensured the retrieval of democracy and brought stability to the govern-



ment, and "this cannot be disputed by anybody", Stalin said. "It was Karunanidhi who championed state autonomy at the national level, battling for federalism." He went on to say, "The Lok Sabha election results will be out on June 4. That day we shall hoist the victory flag and dedicate INDIA's (bloc) victory to Kalaingar," he said, adding that the centenary celebrations would be organised at the national level. The DMK has invited INDIA

bloc leaders for the centenary celebrations on June 3 at its Delhi party office.

The Dravidian party chief said that Karunanidhi, through his actions, has strongly reinforced DMK's commitment to the ideals of social justice, harmony, state autonomy and protecting the mother tongue.

That is why "those doing communal politics" are targeting the DMK "with malice" in poll-bound regions of the country by "spreading rumours", Stalin said. "Their voice shows they are trembling due to the fear of defeat."

Without naming the BJP, Stalin said it can be understood that such forces are lamenting as they have realised the imminent formation of a 'new India' (a new government at the Centre by the INDIA bloc) with the support of the DMK.

### Under Modi's leadership, people witnessing emergence of new India: Adityanath

PNS ■ MIRZAPUR/VARANASI

People are witnessing the emergence of a new India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and it is on the path of becoming a superpower, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Sunday.

Adityanath claimed "one might infer a pro-Pakistan stance" in the Congress and Samajwadi Party manifestoes and alleged the two constituents of the INDIA bloc were inclined towards implementing inheritance tax that he likened to Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's "Jizya tax".

The opposition "intends to seize ancestral properties through coercion and distribute them among infiltrators and Rohingya Muslims", the



Uttar Pradesh chief minister alleged.

At a poll meeting for Mirzapur Lok Sabha candidate Anupriya Patel and Robertsganj parliamentary seat nominee Rinki Kol, the BJP leader said India has secured its borders and achieved new milestones of development in the past 10 years.

### Country's freedom, Constitution, democracy in danger: Kejriwal

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Delhi Chief Minister and AAP supreme Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday attacked the BJP, saying the country's freedom, Constitution and democracy are in danger and called upon Punjab to once again be at the forefront to save the nation.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader said the people of Punjab played a big role in the country's freedom movement.

"So many sacrificed their lives for the sake of freedom. Today, our country's freedom, Constitution and democracy is in danger," Kejriwal said during a townhall programme with the traders and industrialists in Ferozepur.

Kejriwal, who is on interim bail until June 1 in the Delhi



excise policy case, sought support of the people of Punjab and said that they need to come forward and be at forefront in the fight to save the Constitution, democracy and freedom in this country.

Referring to his arrest, Kejriwal said, "On March 16, the general elections were announced and they arrested me on March 21. They arrested me, my party leaders Sanjay Singh, Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain, and then Modi

says in Delhi let's fight election."

Targeting the BJP-led Centre, the AAP leader said that several opposition leaders have been jailed and "then they say, let's fight election."

"In Maharashtra, Modi ji broke the NCP into two parts, snatched its party and its symbol, divided the Shiv Sena into two parts, snatched its symbol, arrested Hemant Soren (ex-Jharkhand chief minister) before the polls and then he says let's fight election," said Kejriwal.

"Like in Pakistan, they arrested Imran Khan, snatched his party, symbol and after what they did to his party they had held elections and won. Had Imran been out (not jailed), his party would have won, everyone knows.

### Rise in cancer incidences among younger people in India: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Twenty per cent of cancer patients who called an NGO-run helpline to seek a second opinion were below 40 years of age, indicating a rise of cancer incidences amongst younger people, data from the organisation stated.

There were 1,368 callers between March 1 and May 15, according to the Cancer Mukht Bharat Foundation, launched by a group of oncologists.

The study showed that 60 per cent of the cancer patients below the age of 40 years were men.

It also found that the most prevalent cases were head and neck cancer (26 per cent), closely followed by Gastrointestinal cancers (16 per cent), breast cancer (15 per cent) and then blood cancers (9 per cent).

The most number of calls



were from Hyderabad, followed by Meerut, Mumbai and New Delhi, a statement by the NGO said.

The helpline number (93-555-20202) was launched for the patients to seek second opinion free of cost. It is operational from 10 am to 5 pm from

Monday to Saturday. Cancer patients can call the helpline number to speak to leading oncologists directly or even do a video call to discuss their cancer treatment.

Dr Ashish Gupta, Principal Investigator and senior oncologist who is heading the Cancer

Mukht Bharat Campaign said that since the launch of the helpline number, it has proven to be a support system for cancer patients across India and almost hundreds of calls are received every day.

"This study helps us make a more targeted cancer approach towards treatment and make India 'Cancer Mukht'. We found head and neck cancer was most prevalent which is nearly entirely preventable by lifestyle modification, vaccinations and screening strategies. Breast and colon cancers have very effective screening strategies for finding cancer in the early stages. Unfortunately as is representative of the population at large in India we found nearly 2/3rds of cancers were detected late likely due to low adoption of proper screening," Dr Gupta said.

### Bansgaon neglected by 'double anyay sarkar'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi why his "double anyay sarkar" failed to provide basic infrastructure in Uttar Pradesh's Bansgaon and questioned him on Mirzapur's brass workers being left out of the BJP regime's schemes.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh posed several questions to the prime minister ahead of his rallies in Uttar Pradesh, also asking why optical cable fibre connection has not been provided to every village yet.

"Today's questions for the outgoing prime minister's Uttar Pradesh visit: Why has the BJP's double anyay sarkar failed to provide essential infrastructure in Bansgaon? Why have Mirzapur's brass workers been left out by the Modi sarkar's schemes?" Ramesh asked.

"What happened to the out-

### Mirzapur's brass workers overlooked: Congress



going prime minister's promise of optic fibre connections for every village?" he said in a post on X.

The prime minister addressed several poll rallies in Uttar Pradesh, including in Mirzapur.

Providing details, Ramesh said Bansgaon district has suffered great neglect at the hands of the BJP's "double anyay sarkar", a reference to BJP leaders' use of "double-engine" government when their party is in power both in the state and at the Centre.

The Bansgaon-Rudrapur road is still incomplete, having remained under construction for the last six to seven years, he claimed, adding that railway connectivity has also been a long-standing issue.

Although the government has sanctioned the Sahjanwan-Dohri railway line, it is now planning to shift the station away from Bansgaon, Ramesh claimed.

"Finally, although dozens of villages in Bansgaon district are affected by floods, they never receive any support from the government. Can the outgoing prime minister tell us why he has ignored the plight of Bansgaon's people?" he asked.

The Congress general secretary also claimed that Mirzapur's brass workers have been left out by the Modi government's "One District, One Product" scheme.

Although the scheme is supposed to encourage specialised indigenous products and crafts, only bigger and more established players have been able to avail of it, he alleged.

"The Modi sarkar has repeatedly shown their inability and/or unwillingness to support India's MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises). Can the outgoing prime minister tell us why he has left Mirzapur's brass workers out of his government schemes?" he asked.

The Congress leader said the prime minister "vowed" on August 15, 2020, to provide optic fibre connections to all six lakh villages in India by 2023.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman later boasted about this ambitious scheme in her Budget speech, he claimed.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## A sorry state

### Poor voter turnout in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections continued in Phase 6

It may be due to the heat, perhaps their frustration with politicians, or even a sense of resignation as voters perceive the mess political parties have made of our nation's democratic system — they simply aren't turning out. Barring a few exceptions such as West Bengal, where the voters put up a decent show, most others have stayed away from polling booths. The story in Phase 6 of voting was no different; the recent trends in voter participation across India reveal a concerning decline. This pattern, however, does not hold for all regions; Bengal and J&K stand as notable exceptions with relatively stable or even increased voter turnouts. Understanding the reasons behind this declining voter engagement is crucial to address the challenges facing India's democratic process. Several factors could be contributing to this trend: Adverse weather conditions, pre-decided loyalties or a growing sense of disillusionment with the democratic exercise itself. One of the most likely explanations for the poor turnout



is weather. Phase 6 coincides with the onset of extreme weather conditions, including an intense heatwave. It can discourage voters, particularly the elderly and those with health issues, from making the trip to polling stations. Another plausible reason is the phenomenon of voters already committed to a particular side; sensing that their candidate is losing, they abstain from voting. Indeed, supporters of candidates trailing may feel disheartened, believing their vote will not alter the outcome and thus choosing not to participate. On the other hand, the winning party's supporters could get complacent. The most troubling reason behind the low turnout, perhaps, is a growing sense of disillusionment with the democratic process itself. If one were to scan social media and heed vox populi, one would get this sense loud and clear. Most people can typically fit into two categories: Those who are committed and overzealous and the disillusioned ones who see no point in the whole exercise. They feel the Government they choose works only for itself. This no-trust vote against the democratic exercise can stem from various factors. Many voters feel that their participation does not lead to tangible changes or improvements in governance. This perception of inefficacy can dissuade individuals from voting as they see little benefit in engaging with a system they believe to be fundamentally unresponsive. Additionally, in regions with frequent elections, voters can experience electoral fatigue. The constant cycle of voting wears off the novelty and sense of civic duty. The lack of appealing candidates can also contribute to a lower turnout. When voters perceive all options as equally unqualified or corrupt, they may choose to abstain from voting altogether. In areas with political violence, safety concerns can deter voters. However, the resilient turnout in J&K suggests a complex interplay of factors, including a strong desire for political change despite the risks.

### PICTALK



A myna feeds its chicks, in Moradabad district

# India-Iran revitalise Chabahar Port

## Despite the US pressure, India and Iran sign \$370 million deal, reviving Chabahar Port's strategic importance, which would be beneficial for both countries



SANTOSH MATHEW

The Indian Ocean-facing Iranian port of Chabahar is back in the spotlight thanks to a new 10-year, \$370 million agreement between India and Iran, signed on May 13. This deal marks an important step in the long-standing partnership between the two countries, aimed at enhancing regional connectivity and economic growth. India's Chabahar Port project in Iran is more than just a commercial endeavour—it's a strategic masterstroke aimed at reshaping regional trade dynamics and strengthening geopolitical ties. Located on Iran's southeastern coast in the Sistan-Baluchestan province, Chabahar Port offers India a golden gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia, circumventing Pakistan and providing a counterbalance to China's influence in the region. Chabahar is the only Iranian port outside the Straits of Hormuz.



The Chabahar Port stands out for several reasons. Firstly, it is the only Iranian port with direct access to the Indian Ocean, providing a critical transit hub for goods travelling between India, Iran and beyond. The project includes the development of port infrastructure and the construction of a railway linking Chabahar to the Iranian city of Zahedan, close to the Afghan border, effectively creating a new trade corridor. This port is pivotal for India as it seeks to bolster its economic and strategic presence in Central Asia. Traditionally, India's trade routes to Afghanistan and Central Asia have been blocked by Pakistan, which does not allow Indian goods to pass through its territory. Chabahar provides a much-needed alternative route, facilitating access to these markets without relying on Pakistani cooperation. The idea for jointly developing Chabahar began during the 2003 State visit to India by Iranian President Muhammad Khatami. At that time, India and Iran shared strategic interests, viewing Pakistan's political interference in Afghanistan as harmful. Both supported the Northern Alliance, led by Ahmad Shah Massoud, against Pakistan-backed Pashtun groups. Developing Chabahar

on Iran's Indian Ocean coast naturally extended this Indo-Iranian partnership. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has seen substantial investments in ports and infrastructure across Asia, often referred to as the "String of Pearls." Gwadar Port in Pakistan, just 72 kilometres east of Chabahar, is a cornerstone of this strategy. By developing Chabahar, India not only counters China's influence but also positions itself as a key player in the regional logistics network. Chabahar is also vital for Afghanistan. The landlocked nation has been heavily reliant on Pakistan's Karachi Port for its imports and exports. Chabahar provides a viable alternative, potentially reducing Afghanistan's economic dependence on Pakistan. In 2016, India, Iran and Afghanistan signed a trilateral agreement to develop Chabahar, demonstrating a shared commitment to regional stability and economic cooperation. The port is expected to significantly increase trade volumes and create jobs in Afghanistan, fostering economic resilience. For India, the Chabahar Port project is a testament to its ability to manoeuvre through complex diplomatic landscapes. Iran, often isolated due to international sanctions,



CHABAHAH IS MUCH MORE THAN A PORT; IT'S A PIVOTAL PIECE IN INDIA'S GEOPOLITICAL CHESSBOARD. WHILE CHALLENGES PERSIST, THE SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT OF CHABAHAH COULD REDEFINE TRADE AND ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIPS IN THE REGION

sees India as a crucial partner in its economic development. India's investment in Chabahar signals its intent to strengthen bilateral ties with Iran, enhancing energy security by facilitating greater access to Iranian oil and gas. The port also serves as a symbol of India's growing assertiveness on the global stage. By investing in Chabahar, India underscores its readiness to take on infrastructure projects that have far-reaching geopolitical implications. This move aligns with India's broader "Act East" and "Connect Central Asia" policies, aimed at deepening trade and cultural linkages with East and Central Asian countries. Despite its potential, the Chabahar project faces significant challenges. The re-imposition of US sanctions on Iran has cast a shadow over the port's future, creating uncertainty for investors and complicating financial transactions. However, India has received some exemptions from these sanctions, allowing the project to progress, albeit cautiously. Moreover, regional instability poses risks. Iran's internal political dynamics and its relations with global powers add layers of complexity to the project's execution. Chabahar, the only Iranian port outside the Straits of Hormuz, is back in the news.

The US-envisioned India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) is now stalled due to Gaza hostilities. The Suez Canal is also risky due to the Houthi threat. Thus, an alternative route through the Caspian Sea and Russia seems likely. The Chabahar Port project is a cornerstone of India's strategy to enhance its regional influence and economic reach. By providing an alternative trade route to Afghanistan and Central Asia, countering Chinese influence and strengthening ties with Iran, Chabahar is much more than a port—it's a pivotal piece in India's geopolitical chessboard. While challenges persist, the successful development of Chabahar could redefine trade and economic partnerships in the region, heralding a new era of connectivity and cooperation. This situation presents a win-win for both India and Iran. For India, Chabahar offers a strategic alternative to bypass regional instability, ensuring uninterrupted trade routes to Europe and Central Asia. For Iran, the development of Chabahar boosts its economy and strengthens its regional influence by providing a vital link in global trade networks. (The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### RBI DIVIDEND TRANSFER

Madam — Apropos the news story "India to get rating support if it uses RBI dividend to reduce fiscal deficit: S&P analyst," published on May 24, this is my response. The windfall gain for the Government through the RBI's Rs 2.1 lakh crore unpredicted dividend is big positive news. It is a consequence of an increase in interest income from RBI's foreign assets and forex transactions. This has created a considerable fiscal space for the next Government.

Next Government can use it in two ways. First, if the Government uses this money to reduce borrowing, then it is going to positively impact our credit rating, which in turn will attract foreign investors to India. This would be a positive sign for the capital market as well. And if GoI uses this money to stimulate the economy then it will lead to a boost in consumption. So either way it is going to be a win-win situation for our country's economy. The next Government should continue what the last Government has been doing in terms of quality of spending.

Bal Govind | Noida

### SUNAK FACES THE HEAT

Madam — Apropos, "UK PM Sunak, opposition labour hit the campaign trail for July 4 polls," The Pioneer, May 24. The UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced the national polls to be held on July 4, six months ahead of the due time in January 2025. Many observers wondered: why now? More specifically, why has the PM called an election that is almost certain to lose? For months, polls have placed Sunak's Conservative Party way behind the opposition Labour Party. Sunak's decision has been driven by the possibility that it's very unlikely there will be a better time for him and his Conservative party. Almost everything Sunak tries seems to backfire and it's not implausible that his favorability with the public will get even worse before the end of the year.

### NTC brings financial inclusion



Apropos the news story "New-to-credit users drive financial inclusion," published on May 25, this is my response. New-to-credit (NTC) users have been driving significant growth in India's lending sector, contributing to financial inclusion and economic progress. With approximately 200 million active credit users and 800,000 new NTC consumers annually, the retail

credit category has expanded rapidly, fueled by easy access to credit cards and short-term personal loans. While digitisation has facilitated this growth, it has also brought challenges in assessing borrowers' repayment capacities. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has intervened to mitigate risks by tightening credit controls, making it harder for first-time users to access credit. However, specially designed credit products for NTC users help build credit histories. For these new consumers, smart debt management is crucial. Understanding credit card terms, starting with a low credit limit, timely payments and monitoring spending are key practices. Keeping credit utilisation low, avoiding cash advances and regularly checking credit reports are essential steps. Building an emergency fund adds a safety net, promoting financial stability for a healthy financial future.

Neha Gupta | Delhi

The past couple of days have been relatively good for Sunak. The economy does seem to be recovering, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) updating the UK's growth forecast and inflation finally returning to something resembling a normal level. Nothing went catastrophically wrong in the last week or so ahead of calling the election. Sunak inherited a mess, no one can deny that. It currently seems unlikely that he has cleaned up that mess enough to earn the Conservatives another term in office. But given the size of the task ahead of him, it makes sense that he seize on this rare period of good news and hope for the best.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

### PLASTIC USE MUST BE CONTROLLED

Madam — Although the central and State Governments have imposed a complete ban on polythene covers of thickness less than 125 microns in the State, it is not seen in practice. The viscosity of polythene bags is too high. 75-micron-thick bags, which were once

banned are still being used today. A large number of polythene covers are used in vegetable, tiffin, grocery, big shops and wholesale shops. As authorities have failed to ban polythene covers, they are seen everywhere on roads and canals. Cattle are falling sick by eating the wastes dumped in these covers in front of the houses and on the road. Criticisms are being heard that even though so many mishaps are happening, the concerned authorities are not paying attention. The authorities should clamp down on the sale of banned polythene bags which harm the environment and take strict action against those selling them. The authorities should make an effort to inform the people about the disadvantages caused by the use of banned polythene bags and to organise awareness programmes to encourage people to use eco-friendly clothing as an alternative.

Appanna Gonapa | Visakhapatnam

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Embracing silence in the age of social media

### As we reminisce about a time when joy was safeguarded within the confines of our homes, we ponder the evolution of modern communication



SANJAY CHANDRA

I recently came across this famous quote by Khalil Gibran, "Travel and tell no one, Live a true love story and tell no one, Live happily and tell no one, People ruin beautiful things."

In older times when we were children, we were told by our elders not to display our good fortune, lest we catch the evil eye. That meant we had to keep the happiness, the good fortune, or anything good in our life, within the four walls of our house. It was not a successful pearl passed on to us by our forefathers. There were avenues where we could still boast, like in school or during the mandatory evenings out to play with other children in the locality.

Those were different times. A visit to our grandparents' during the holidays, or the new toy that we had received from our parents for our birthday, or any other such possession, was valuable - to be cherished and talked about. Even laughter and happiness were something to value and to pass on to our near



and dear ones. Things started changing. My letter-writing stopped. Emails were the new order. However, Government departments and corporations have yet to discover the paperless office. A hard copy of the communication, with a physical signature, was still required to be sent through post for it to be accepted. People said that any document without a physical signature was not legally enforceable; however, I believed that the reason was far simpler — the postal mindset doubted the receipt of email communication by the recipient. This was not baseless — the

mail still finds ways to reach the spam box. But more likely, it had more to do with the sender's capability, or lack of it, in operating the computer. I started writing after my relative withdrawal a few years back from professional life. In the olden days, the only recourse that I had for an outreach, was to send my manuscript with a self-addressed stamped envelope to the limited number of magazines and journals available at the time — to eventually receive a rejection. But I had the satisfaction of waiting in anticipation for a few weeks if not months. Now times have changed. I

recently sent my article to the editor of a reputed daily by email and within hours I received a cryptic reply, "Regret."

There is a popular serial currently airing on the TV. Two celebrities have a conversation over coffee - with a k, with another celebrity and talk about mundane subjects. A recent episode captured the changing times perfectly. A star from the 90s was asked about the one thing that she missed not having during her heydays. Her reply was spontaneous, without missing a beat, emphatic and crisp - "Social Media." I cannot even imagine the plight of the corporates who continue to prosper because we are obsessed with social media if people start following Mr Gibran's advice! Not to talk of the withdrawal symptoms for a generation brought up posting all their happiness and even sorrow, on social media!

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



## FIRST COLUMN STRATEGIES FOR INNER PEACE AND EMPOWERMENT

We seek solace and direction, grappling with negative influences and internal strife



RAVI VALLURI

Are we running after a chimaera? Or like Rama and Lakshman are we running after a non-existent golden deer? Or like the Pandavas, (barring the righteous Yudhisthira) do we partake in water from a poisonous lake? In all such situations, our mind is fully aware that what we are attempting is incorrect and inchoate, yet we undertake that activity like a Kamikaze pilot. There are a couple of reasons for this hara-kiri or running after the hubris.

A) We are not wakeful (not sleepy in a literal sense) as we are not focused or centred. We cannot differentiate and distinguish between choices. B) Our mind and thoughts (a human mind on average receives 70k thoughts a day) cannonade us endlessly. Now the company we keep and the food we partake in has a significant impact on the human mind and body.

Negative company drains a person and toxic food and drink enervates and debilitates our system. I was a victim of alcoholism and realised the suffering one goes through. By adopting the techniques of Sudarshan Kriya and Pranayama, overcame the disease. It was a weak mind which fell prey to Bacchus.

C) Tools for Effective Time Management- Try the POSEC METHOD - That is to prioritise by organising, streamlining and economising time to be effective.

"Undertake a SWOT analysis to emerge triumphant.

"We should learn to work in teams and practice the art of delegation.

"As a routine, attempt all arduous tasks first.

"Build flexibility in one's schedule or else one would suffer from psychosomatic disorders.



"Develop hobbies and read inspirational and self-help books. "Every morning and night while being grateful make an inventory of dos and don'ts and must-do lists. Let us learn to say 'NO' and to utter 'YES' when an oxymoron kind of situation arises. A 'Yes mind' makes an individual take up responsibility. And taking up responsibility can only empower a person.

Live life king-size and learn to celebrate. We can celebrate only if we can quieten our minds. These are some ways to quieten our mind and develop a relaxation room or space in our mind. For that we can do the following:

Go for long walks, talk out our problems, hug a person (perhaps someone whom we do not like), write down all our botherations, be in sync with our breath and movement, pursue a passion, be a daredevil, get out of our comfort zone, exercise vigorously (positive endorphins get released which have a soothing effect on the mind and body), have cold water baths to conquer passion and carnal instincts.

Despite practising all techniques, we may not be able to find our place in the Sun.

So, what does one do?

Just surrender to the immense power within ourselves and learn to accept. Realise that "ham Brahmasmi" - "I am the infinite reality", as written in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Our mind has that immense power. It needs to be harnessed and realised. We just need to declutter our minds.

There are several ways to channel this energy. There may be some who may practice meditation, breathing techniques and observing silence to quieten and silence the mind. There may be others who remain focused by playing a game of tennis and sweating it out.

We should feel blessed and feel abundance. Let your mind not be judgemental and complain and cling to negativities. Willy-nilly we provide the hook to hang the coat of negativity.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

# Punjab voters' dilemma: Choosing the lesser evil



SUKHDEV SINGH

As Punjab gears up to vote in the last phase of the Lok Sabha elections, the State's electorate faces a plethora of options but finds few truly meritorious candidates



In the Lok Sabha election 2024, over twenty million voters in the State of Punjab have plenty more options than ever before for choosing their representatives from among Indian National Congress (INC), Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Communist Party of India- Communist Party of India, Marxist (CPI-CPIIM) and others, yet they are faced with a lack of enthusiasm and disinterest more than ever before in 'who to vote and who not to vote'. On the other hand, every political party is grandstanding to be the best candidate for the voters' choice, yet very unsure, fearful and worried about the voters' response.

Among the voters, there is a 'stony silence' while the candidates and political parties are clamouring for their candidature and claim on all the thirteen Lok Sabha constituencies.

During the last couple of months, the leaders and the parties have been trying their fresh 'makeover' by switching positions: the individuals by hopping parties as the perceptibly stronger boats for them to sail through the election and the political parties by adopting the leaders of their opponents as perceptibly stronger 'horses' to pull their horse carts. The situation is caused by the politicians' 'faulty' understanding of democracy as a game of 'taking turns' to enjoy as 'rulers' and render the 'citizens' as 'subjects' while following the policies 'not so pro-people' that redefine democracy as



NO POLITICAL PARTY HAS INCLUDED CONVENTIONAL ISSUES LIKE THE TRANSFER OF CHANDIGARH AND PUNJABI-SPEAKING AREAS, WATER DISTRIBUTION AND MORE RIGHTS TO THE STATES ETC IN THEIR MANIFESTOS, SPEECHES AND SLOGANS

a Government of the people, by the people but not 'for the people'.

The political parties have been promising at the time of elections but not performing to fulfil the promises after their victory. After the elections, pursuing policies that help the political class, corporations and their associates, the political parties and individuals in power have been dodging the real issues by projecting the emotive but peripheral issues, leaving the people begin with nothing in essence and end with nothing in essence; the politics of 'nothingness' has been going on leading the voters to the current situation of 'the agony of choice' caught in an existential crisis of deciding 'to vote or not to vote' / 'who to vote or who not to vote'.

The available choices of candidates and political parties in 'matter' are plenty but all alike in 'essence': distinguishable in appearance but indistinguishable in actions, leaving the voters confused but 'condemned to choose'.

Significantly, no political party has included conventional issues like the transfer of Chandigarh and Punjabi-speaking areas, water distribution and more rights to the States etc. in their manifestos, speeches and slogans. Furthermore, no major

political party is firmly raising issues that glare in the face of the people as well as the State: unemployment, poor education, health and civic amenities, migration abroad, drugs, mining, corruption, law & order and urban development.

Instead, the game of party switch or candidate hunting, as a 'war' before the election 'war' has been in practice as a principle rather than an exception in this election in Punjab.

Facing the 'trust-deficit' of the people and 'self-confidence-deficit', the political class has remained engaged in a dance of party-switch and candidate-hunting.

Analysing their profiles can help to see the political parties' faces more clearly. For example, the BJP may be credited with governance and a brisk economy, but it is discredited for pro-rich and anti-small businesses, farmers, shopkeepers, urban and rural poor and religious polarisation. It is a 'crisis of plenty' where the economy of the country is being touted as the 'fifth largest in the world' yet its people have become poorer and the unemployment and prices are on the rise.

The Congress may be credited for the all-inclusive politics and the pro-farmer promise of MSP but discredited for a divided house

and ambiguous performance in the past. The AAP is credited for some concessions like free power and free bus travel for women in the State but discredited for non-performance, inexperience and overdependence on Delhi.

The SAD is credited for its historical pro-State positions and fights but discredited for family control of the party and a pro-corporate tilt in its position.

The communists are credited for honesty, commitment, secularism and pro-poor ideology but discredited for resource crunch to contest elections, inability to win and have much role in the Government.

The voters are confused because they are not sure whether their vote shall be for Congress, BJP, SAD or AAP after the candidate wins; they are not sure if the candidate they vote for will remain in the same party or switch to the party more beneficial to him; they are confused because they are not sure if the parties and leaders will do what are saying.

Yet they will have to choose someone. But that will happen on the day of voting. The situation is as hazy and ambiguous as the manifestos of the political parties.

(The writer is a retired professor from Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar; views are personal)

# Key takeaways from ICMR's new dietary guidelines

It emphasises prioritising whole grains, adequate protein intake, limited fat consumption and daily physical activity

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) jointly released a New Dietary Guideline for Indians on 7 May 2024. The comprehensive set of 17 dietary guidelines is aimed at reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as obesity, diabetes, stroke and coronary heart disease (CHD) in the Indian population. According to NIN, under the apex health research body, about 56.4% of the total diseases in India are due to unhealthy dietary habits. They also stated that having a healthy diet and physical activity can lower the risk of CHD, hypertension (high blood pressure) and type 2 diabetes mellitus



WAJIHHA MEHTAB

by up to 80%. The burden of NCDs and resultant mortality is expected to increase unless massive efforts are made to prevent and control NCDs and their risk factors. The dietary guidelines for Indians (DGLIs), developed by a team led by the director of NIN, Dr. Hemlata R, are evidence-based food and lifestyle-related recommendations. They are logical, sustainable, easy to follow by

Indians and provide long-term solutions for fighting against malnutrition and having a healthy life. These guidelines are practical approaches for ensuring diet diversity to meet the requirements of essential nutrients among people of all age groups across the country. Following are some of the important and key takeaways from the DGLIs: General lifestyle To ensure a balanced diet, it is crucial to include foods from all food groups, selecting a variety that is appropriate for age, gender, physiological status and physical activity level. At least 50% of cereals consumed should be whole grains and millets, which are minimally polished to provide adequate

nutrients. However, cereals should account for no more than 45% of the total caloric intake. Pulses, eggs and meat should contribute 14-15% of the calories, supplying good quality proteins and essential amino acids through natural food combinations. Avoid protein supplements for muscle mass building, as they are unnecessary if a balanced diet is maintained. Fat intake should be limited to 30% of total calories, with essential fatty acids obtained from nuts, oilseeds, milk products and seafood, which should collectively provide 10% of daily caloric intake. Include non-starchy fresh vegetables, green leafy vegetables and at least 30 grams of fruits in every meal. Vegetarians should consume

n-3 PUFA-rich foods like flax and chia seeds to meet their B12 and n-3 PUFA needs. High-fat, high-sugar and high-salt (HFSS) foods should be avoided. Adults should engage in a minimum of 30-45 minutes of physical activity daily, while children should aim for 60 minutes. During pregnancy and lactation, maintaining healthy dietary habits and an active lifestyle is essential. Infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months, with no additional feeds, not even water. Lactating mothers should continue breastfeeding even if they have any disease unless advised otherwise by a medical professional. For cooking and food storage, air-fryers and granite-

coated utensils (without Teflon) are preferable. Earthen pots are the safest cookware as they are eco-friendly, require less oil and preserve nutrition. Avoid using non-stick pans at temperatures above 170 degrees and discard any damaged or broken non-stick cookware. Acidic foods should not be stored in aluminium, iron, or unlined brass/copper containers to avoid chemical reactions that could contaminate the food. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) unveiled new dietary guidelines on May 7, 2024, to combat the rising tide of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in India. These guidelines aim

to address the unhealthy dietary habits contributing to 56.4% of the country's disease burden. Evidence suggests that a healthy diet and regular physical activity can significantly reduce the risk of conditions like coronary heart disease, hypertension and type 2 diabetes by up to 80%. The guidelines, crafted under the leadership of Dr Hemlata R, provide practical, sustainable and culturally appropriate recommendations to ensure a diverse diet that meets the nutritional needs of Indians of all ages. Key recommendations include balancing food groups, prioritising whole grains and millets, ensuring adequate protein intake through natural foods, limiting fats to 30% of daily

calories and including a variety of vegetables and fruits in each meal. The guidelines also emphasise avoiding high-fat, high-sugar and high-salt foods and promoting daily physical activity-30-45 minutes for adults and 60 minutes for children. Special considerations are given to pregnant and lactating women, advocating for exclusive breastfeeding for infants during the first six months. Additionally, safe cooking and food storage practices are recommended, such as using air-fryers, granite-coated utensils and earthen pots to preserve nutrition and avoid chemical contamination. (The writer is a Consultant Celiac Dietician at AIIMS Delhi; views are personal)

**MONEY MATTERS**

### CCI extends bidding deadline for AI to June 28

Air trade regulator CCI has issued clarifications on the bidding for conducting the study on artificial intelligence and its impact on competition, and has extended the deadline for submission of bids till June 18. Earlier, the deadline for the bids was June 3. In a set of clarifications, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) said bids cannot be submitted through a consortium or a joint venture. Among other eligibility requirements, the minimum annual turnover of Rs 50 crore has been retained for the bidders. "The Request For Proposal (RFP) does not provide for submission of bids through a consortium or joint venture. Turnover of the group companies may, however, be included only to meet the eligibility criterion of Rs 50 crore," the regulator said in a communication dated May 24. The last date for submission of bids is June 18 and the financial bids will be opened on July 11.



### Leh-bound SpiceJet plane suffers bird hit; returns to Delhi

A Leh-bound SpiceJet aircraft suffered a bird hit on Sunday morning and returned to the national capital, according to the airline. The plane landed back safely and the passengers were deplaned normally. A source said the Boeing 737 plane had around 135 people onboard. In a statement, SpiceJet said the aircraft operating SG 123 from Delhi to Leh returned back to the national capital after suffering a bird hit on engine 2. "The aircraft landed back safely in Delhi and passengers were deplaned normally," it said. The airline also said the aircraft made a normal landing and not an emergency landing. Earlier, the source said that a full emergency was declared at the airport and the aircraft, which took off at around 1030 hours, landed safely at about 11 am. The plane returned due to engine vibrations, the source added.



### GAIL's 10 MW green hydrogen plant in Madhya Pradesh inaugurated

State-owned GAIL (India) Ltd's maiden green hydrogen plant at Vijapur in Madhya Pradesh has been commissioned, making a major step for the nation's largest natural gas transmission and distribution firm's foray into new and alternate energy, the company said. The 10-megawatt proton exchange membrane electrolyser for the green-hydrogen producing unit at the Vijapur complex has been imported from Canada. The plant will produce about 4.3 tonnes of green hydrogen per day, with a purity of about 99.999 per cent by volume. It uses electricity produced from renewable sources such as the sun's solar energy, to split water to produce green hydrogen. In a statement, GAIL said the plant was in line with the National Green Hydrogen mission that has set out a goal of 5 million tons of annual green hydrogen production capacity for the country by 2030.



## India in trade deficit with nine of top 10 trading partners

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has recorded a trade deficit, the difference between imports and exports, with nine of its top 10 trading partners, including China, Russia, Singapore, and Korea, in 2023-24, according to official data. The data also showed that the deficit with China, Russia, Korea, and Hong Kong increased in the last fiscal compared to 2022-23, while the trade gap with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Indonesia, and Iraq narrowed. The trade deficit with China rose to US\$ 85 billion, Russia to US\$ 57.2 billion, Korea to US\$ 14.71 billion and Hong Kong to US\$ 12.2 billion in



2023-24 against US\$ 83.2 billion, US\$ 43 billion, US\$ 14.57 billion and US\$ 8.38 billion, respectively, in 2022-23. China has emerged as India's largest trading partner with US\$ 118.4 billion of two-way commerce in 2023-24, edging past the US.

The bilateral trade between India and the US stood at US\$ 118.28 billion in 2023-24. Washington was the top trading partner of New Delhi during 2021-22 and 2022-23. India has a free trade agreement with four of its top trading partners - Singapore, the

UAE, Korea and Indonesia (as part of the Asian bloc). India has a trade surplus of US\$ 36.74 billion with the US in 2023-24. America is one of the few countries with which India has a trade surplus. The surplus is also there with the UK, Belgium, Italy, France and Bangladesh. India's total trade deficit in the last fiscal narrowed to US\$ 238.3 billion as against US\$ 264.9 billion in the previous fiscal. According to trade experts, a deficit is not always bad, if a country is importing raw materials or intermediary products to boost manufacturing and exports. However, it puts pressure on the domestic currency.

## Domestic airfares on northward trajectory: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic airfares are sailing northwards, surging up to 40 per cent in key routes on higher traffic and capacity constraints in the last six quarters. Still, ticket prices are among the lowest in the world, according to experts. India is one of the world's fastest growing civil aviation markets and on average, 4.5 lakh passengers travel on domestic flights daily. While only a small percentage of the country's population travels by air, capacity constraints are a key challenge as many aircraft are grounded mainly due to supply chain issues. Aviation consultancy firm CAPA India said that average



fares on the top 20 domestic routes had not moved significantly in nominal terms for the last two decades, until the last six quarters during which they have been up by close to 40 per cent. The routes include Mumbai-Delhi, Bengaluru-Delhi, Bengaluru-Mumbai and Delhi-Hyderabad. The trend has been driven by serious capacity shortages with an average of 150 aircraft on the ground due to supply chain and other issues, CAPA India said during a webinar this week and added that structurally, high pricing should continue into FY2026. "In the last three years, especially after the coronavirus pandemic, fares have gone up. Still, the average fares are among the lowest in the world. For instance, the average

fare for a flight between Delhi and Mumbai will be around Rs 5,000 to 6,000. It might seem like a big rise in terms of percentage but the quantum of rise is not significant when the overall inflationary pressure is taken into account," Sanjay Kumar, President & CEO of InterGlobe Technology Quotient Ltd, said.

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## Mcap of nine of top-10 most valued firms jump Rs 1.85 L cr

### Reliance, HDFC Bank sparkle

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nine of the top-10 most-valued firms together added Rs 1,85,320.49 crore in market valuation last week, with Reliance Industries Ltd and HDFC Bank stealing the show with maximum gains, in line with rally in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark zoomed 1,404.45 points, or 1.89 per cent. The 30-share BSE Sensex hit its all-time intra-day high of 75,636.50 on Friday. From the top-10 most-valued firms pack, only ITC emerged as the laggard. The market valuation of

Reliance Industries jumped Rs 61,398.65 crore to reach Rs 20,02,509.35 crore. HDFC Bank added Rs 38,966.07 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 11,53,129.36 crore.



The market valuation of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) rallied Rs 35,135.36 crore to Rs

6,51,348.26 crore. Bharti Airtel's market capitalisation (mcap) zoomed Rs 22,921.42 crore to Rs 7,87,838.71 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever climbed Rs 9,985.76 crore to Rs 5,56,829.63 crore. The mcap of Infosys went up Rs 8,821.99 crore to Rs 6,08,198.38 crore and that of State Bank of India (SBI) soared Rs 6,916.57 crore to Rs 7,39,493.34 crore. ICICI Bank added Rs 903.31 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 7,95,307.82 crore and the mcap of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) climbed Rs 271.36 crore to Rs 13,93,235.05 crore.

## Govt directs telcos to block incoming intl spoofed calls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has directed telecom operators to block all incoming international spoofed calls that display Indian mobile numbers, an official statement said on Sunday. The Department of Telecom (DoT) said that it has been reported that fraudsters are making international spoofed calls displaying Indian mobile numbers to Indian citizens and committing cyber-crime and financial frauds. Such calls appear to be originating within India but are being made by cyber-criminals from abroad by manipulating the calling line

identity (CLI) and have been misused in recent cases of fake digital arrests, FedEx scams, drugs or narcotics in courier, impersonation as government and police officials, disconnections of mobile numbers by DoT or TRAI officials, etc. "DoT and Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) have devised a system to identify and block such international spoofed calls from reaching any Indian telecom subscriber. Now directions have been issued to the TSPs for blocking such incoming international spoofed calls," the statement said.



## Summer travel up 40%; hospitality, travel services see buoyant demand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As Indian travellers pack their bags to escape the scorching heat, there has been a 40 per cent on-year increase in summer travel this year, with hospitality and travel services providers noticing buoyant demand. Although the ongoing general elections have had a minor impact on corporate and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) business, hotels are finding increased retail business with beach destinations still fighting it out with hill stations for the favoured holiday site. "Those in the Northern part of the country head to the hills to escape the heat. There is also movement from the cities to



nearby tourist or leisure destinations. Industry sources estimate a 30 to 40 per cent increase in the summer travel this year as compared to last year," Hotel Association of India, President and Radisson Hotel Group Chairman-South Asia, KB Kachru told PTI. MakeMyTrip Co-Founder & Group CEO Rajesh Magow said, "Summer is always one of the biggest quarters of the

year in terms of travel intent, and this year too, the buoyancy in the sector continues. We are observing a healthy growth in searches over those recorded last year at this time." According to MakeMyTrip's summer travel trends, the family travel segment has grown by 20 per cent this year, as compared to the summer of 2023, while solo travel grew by 10 per cent over last year's numbers.

## FPIs take out Rs 22,000 crore from equities amid poll jitters

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors have pulled out a massive Rs 22,000 crore from Indian equities so far this month, due to uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the Lok Sabha elections and outperformance of Chinese markets. This came following a net outflow of over Rs 8,700 crore in the entire April on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields. Before that, FPIs made a net investment of Rs 35,098 crore in March and Rs 1,539 crore in February.



to miss the post-election rally. Actually, the rally may begin even before the election results, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said.

According to data with depositors, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) witnessed a net outflow of Rs 22,047 crore from equities this month (till May 24). "This heavy selling was triggered by the massive out-performance of Chinese stocks. The Hang Seng index, dominated by Chinese stocks (FPIs invest through the Hong Kong market since there are restrictions on investing through the Shanghai market) surged 7.66 per cent during the last month," Vijayakumar, said. The election-related jitters, too, might have influenced FPI selling.

## BharatPe, PhonePe amicably settle all long-standing trademark disputes on 'Pe' suffix

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fintech unicorns BharatPe Group and PhonePe Group have amicably settled all long-standing legal disputes pertaining to the use of the trademark with the suffix 'Pe', both companies said in a joint statement. BharatPe and PhonePe had been involved in long-drawn legal disputes across multiple courts, over the course of the last five years. The settlement will put an end to all open judicial proceedings, the statement said. "BharatPe and PhonePe amicably settled all long-standing trademark disputes," the statement said. As a next step, parties have already taken steps to withdraw all opposition against each other in

the trademark registry, which will help them to proceed with the registration of their respective trademarks, the statement said. "This is a positive development for the industry. I appreciate the maturity and professionalism shown by the Management of both sides, working closely to resolve all



## Markets to track global cues; may witness gradual up-move

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Equity markets may witness a gradual up-move this week with some volatility as both election and earnings season are nearing their end, analysts said, adding that global trends and trading activity of foreign investors would hold significance in dictating investors' sentiment. Benchmark indices, which had a record-breaking rally last week, would also track global oil benchmark Brent crude and the rupee-dollar trend. The monthly derivatives expiry on Thursday may also fuel volatility in markets. "We have reached the final curtain for the Q4 earnings season. Many companies, including names like Tata Steel, will release their financial results this week. Positive

earnings from the final quarter could provide strength to the market to continue its bullish momentum. "We are very close to the Lok Sabha election results, and the election verdict will give a boost to FII flows," said Pravesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika Investmart Ltd. The results of the ongoing general elections will be declared on June 4. On the global front, the upcoming economic data from Japan and the US, along with movement in the global currency market, will also be important factors to consider, he added. This week, attention will remain on elections, global cues, and the final phase of the earnings season. Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

## Assam small tea growers facing uncertainty

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Small tea growers in Assam, who account for nearly half of the tea grown in this North Eastern state, are staring at uncertainty with the bought leaf tea factories (BLFs) to stop procuring their green leaves from next month over quality compliance regulations. The Assam Bought Leaf Tea Manufacturers Association (ABLTMA) had announced shutting down its factories from June one as it is not possible to produce FSSAI-compliant teas from untested green leaves provided by small growers.

A Team Board India notification earlier this year made it mandatory for manufacture of only compliant tea by the BLFs. With no testing done of the green leaves, if the made tea is found non-compliant when sent for mandatory public auction, the failed teas will be destroyed with penal action against the BLFs, as per the notification. The small-scale planters, on their part, maintained that they are working on all per cent compliance by all their members, while urging for more time to ensure it and



seeking government intervention in the matter. "We have written to the state government and Tea Board to

intervene. But we have not received any response yet," working president of All Assam Small Tea Growers' Association

(AASTGA) Karuna Mahanta told PTI. Referring to the notification which also made routing of 100 per cent dust teas through public auctions mandatory, he said it was decided last month to maintain status quo till elections are over. "The BLFs were to continue procuring green leaves as earlier. But this sudden decision by the factories has taken us aback," Mahanta said. The AASTGA has dashed off separate letters to the state government and Tea Board, seeking their intervention while also expressing concern

that this unilateral decision of the ABLTMA was a ploy to lead to drop in prices of green leaves. Expressing similar concern, Jatin Chandra Bora, advisor of Lakhimpur district committee of AASTGA, said, "This is a strategy to bring down the prices of the green leaves as such a decision creates pressure on the grower to sell off at whatever price is given." He maintained that the small growers are now aware of harmful effects of pesticides and are ensuring on producing safety standards-compliant leaves.



# Anasuya Sengupta dedicates her win at Cannes to gay community

Anasuya Sengupta is on cloud nine, and she has every right to be. The actress made history as the first Indian to win Best Actress at the Cannes Film Festival. Anasuya won the Un Certain Regard award for her depiction of Renuka in the film *The Shameless*. The film was written and directed by Bulgarian filmmaker Constantin Bojanov.

Anasuya said that when she won, she couldn't believe what was happening. "But as I stepped shakily to the platform and stood among artists I respected, my heroes, it felt strangely normal to be greeted with such genuineness and affection by them. I am extremely grateful to the jury for recognising my hard work." Following her victory, Anasuya Sengupta received congratulations from numerous industry colleagues, including Alia Bhatt, Ranveer Singh, and Arjun Kapoor. The actress commented on this, saying, "I am amazed at the love pouring in from so many back home; it makes me proud to make every-one my proud. I am literally taxing in the plane now on my way home to my family; I can't wait to see them."

During the same conversation, Anasuya Sengupta discussed how hard she worked on *The Shameless*. She added, "I auditioned for it, and my director Constantin reached out. This was a leading role. I've worked extremely hard for a long time, and I intend to continue doing so. When I look back, it all feels worthwhile, and everything is finally falling into place for me." Anasuya

Sengupta dedicated her honour to the gay community. In her acceptance speech, the singer added, "I dedicate this and so much more to the queer community, as well as other marginalised communities throughout the world, for fighting a struggle that they should not have had to fight. You don't have to be gay to fight for equality, and you don't have to be colonised to understand how sad colonisation is—we simply need to be very, very decent human beings."

*The Shameless* premiered at the 77th Cannes Film Festival on May 17. The plot revolves around Renuka (Anasuya Sengupta), who escapes from a Delhi brothel after killing a police officer. In addition to Anasuya, the film stars Omara, Auroshikha Dey, and Rohit Kokate in key parts.



# Nicki Minaj speaks out after her arrest

Nicki Minaj was reportedly arrested by police at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport on May 25th. According to reports, a Dutch National Police source stated that the 41-year-old rapper was arrested for attempting to leave the country while in "possession of soft drugs, which is prohibited."

Nicki Minaj was upset at being arrested by Dutch police, and she expressed her concerns in a series of social media posts, declaring her innocence.

Nicki Minaj took to X to inform her followers of the arrest, revealing that investigators discovered marijuana in one of the suitcases supposedly belonging to her security.

She stated, "Now they say they found weed and that another group of people needs to come here to weigh the pre-rolls. Keep in mind that they stole my stuff without permission. My security has already informed them that the pre-rolls belonged to

him. Oh, and the pilot wants me to take my large post down."

In another post, the 12-time Grammy winner claimed that Dutch officials planted the cannabis in her backpack to "sabotage" her Manchester concert.

She wrote, "They're being paid a lot of money to attempt and sabotage my tour because so many people are upset that it's so popular and they can't eat off of it. They were discovered skimming money from my travels and jets. Got fired. I got angry. Etc."

Nicki Minaj said, "This is Amsterdam, btw, where weed is legal. It should be mentioned that possession of soft drugs at an airport in the Netherlands is banned."

While Minaj's followers, known as the "Barbs," defended the musician, many chastised her for refusing to accept responsibility for her conduct. Meanwhile, Dutch police announced on X that Nicki Minaj had been punished and later released.



# Bipasha Basu to pen book on life journey

Actor Bipasha Basu will soon become an author as she pens a personal account of episodes that have shaped her life and also explores themes of self-discovery, resilience, and the pursuit of inner peace.

The part memoir and part self-help book by the now-wellness advocate and entrepreneur will have anecdotes, reflections, and illustrations as she elaborates on why she chose happiness as a life pursuit.

Basu said her life has been challenging and blessed in equal measure, and she is looking forward to "this new chapter in my life."

"But what has got me through this far is a conscious decision to focus on the bright side of life and to choose sunshine—every day! I felt it was time to share my learnings with my fans and readers. I am delighted I have found an enterprising team in The Sunflower Seeds and L Ventures who will be working closely with me on making this dream come true," she said. The book is scheduled for release next year.

# Was the 2025 Mrs. Doubtfire remake real or fake?

The rumours about a prospective *Mrs. Doubtfire* remake in 2025, with Will Smith in the main role, are growing louder by the day.

According to one viral ad that has been circulating on Facebook, the film is

expected to be released in March 2025. Smith is shown in the photo wearing a wig, floral attire, and round spectacles in an attempt to emulate Robin Williams' appearance in the original film.

A full-scale musical adaptation of *Mrs. Doubtfire* is currently touring America as part of a theatre performance and will be played on Broadway until the end of November.



During a 2006 BBC Radio 1 interview with Edith Bowman, Williams stated unequivocally that there would be no *Mrs. Doubtfire* sequel if he was involved. According to sources, he also suggested Alan Carr: Chatty Man, claiming that script problems had halted preparations for another installment.

*Mrs. Doubtfire* follows an unsuccessful voiceover actor who disguises himself as a nanny when his wife files for divorce in order to maintain contact with his children. It is available for streaming on Disney+.

## FUN

### ARCHIE

### CALVIN AND HOBBS

### GARFIELD

### REALITY CHECK

### SPEED BUMP

### CROSSWORD

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### NANCY

### SUDOKU

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YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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RULES

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

### GINGER MEGGS

# Vijayawada

the pioneer

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Monday  
May 27, 2024

SHIKHA DUGGAL

**An irreverent, unapologetic, unedited, and occasionally politically incorrect cuisine show—*The Big Forkers*—where the hosts assess, update, and occasionally reject their perceptions of what constitutes delicious food.**

**It is launching a new season, and here are the exclusive excerpts from the interview with *The Pioneer*.**

**Could you share some of your most memorable food experiences from throughout the world?**

**Sid Mewara:** For the past 15 years, I've travelled more than 300 days per year. As the son of a mariner, I have spent 46 years on the road and at sea. My culinary journey has taken me and my family to the gourmet temples of San Sebastian, Basque Country, Spain, where dining at renowned places such as El Bulli, Mugaritz, and Arzak was a revelation about the potential for food as art. The ideal Hainan Chicken Rice at a Singapore hawkker center, as well as the unforgettable experience of sharing a flaming bowl of Thai-style Khao Soi with my girls at 7 a.m. in Chiang Rai. Last winter, I drove 2000 kilometers across five southern states, photographing every great meal along the way, owing to the community fostered by the *Forkers* dining club.

**Shashank Jayakumar:** Of all the nations I've visited, stayed in, or studied in, one of the most memorable gastronomic adventures was the Anthony Bourdain food trail I took from Barcelona to Granada in Spain. In my opinion, one of the best tapas bars on earth is "Quimet & Quimet" in Barcelona. The eatery's "stage" set consists of two performers (chefs) standing on an elevated platform with approximately 3000 ingredients in the background from which they select. If there was a best technique of marketing, it would be the small plates that come out the counter, which are passed on by customers to those who have ordered them seated all over this tiny 100-year-old room. Everyone sees and smells what the other person has ordered; therefore, the majority of the menu items are reordered. Aside from this one recollection that comes to mind, there are the small hand cart eateries in the by alleys of Yulin in China, the Anatalyan feast at Ozark in Istanbul, and the best meal I've had in the last few years at Marguerite in Singapore, where Chef Michael took us on an unforgettable journey.

**Could you share a noteworthy learning experience you've had with world-renowned chefs?**

**Sid Mewara:** All of our interactions with chefs have seemed like after-work hangouts. Chefs are a hard-working group who also know how to have fun, so we try not to take ourselves—or them—too seriously. It's amazing how enthusiastic they are about discussing cuisine, even after a long day in the kitchen. Juan Mari Arzak was hilarious; I spent a fantastic evening trying to comprehend his chuckles into the early hours, despite my terrible Spanish. Isaac Toups of New Orleans was extremely passionate about the



## MEET THE **forkers!**

nose-to-tail movement, having spent the entire afternoon chopping down meat and teaching how to use the offcuts. Chef Michael Wilson at Marguerite in Singapore added fun and flair to both his menu and his interactions with clients.

**Shashank Jayakumar:** One thing I have always admired about chefs is their dedication to their "art," and that is precisely what it is. I also believe it is one of the most interesting types of art, as it appeals to four of the audience's five senses. How sensitive they are to each of those senses while conceptualising a meal is something I have grown to appreciate enormously over the past few years of performing the show. Many other chefs have one thing in common. A little conversation with some of these people before or after the meal elevates the supper from a meal into an event!

**India's culinary scene is continuously changing. What trends do you see forming?**

**Sid Mewara:** Sushi and ramen are becoming increasingly popular in high-end dining, with some of the most renowned restaurants on top lists serving Japanese cuisine. Similarly, pan-Asian recipes with a significant Indian influence are emerging across the country. People look to our show for unbiased comments and insights, and we hope to help our audience make informed decisions about ordering and selecting restaurants through our shows and social media channels.

**Shashank Jayakumar:** The new India is a well-travelled one. This generation, which includes post-boomers, millennials, and Gen Z, has a global view-

point and is open to learning from whatever they see. East or West, we appear to be bringing everything and gradually making it our own. To my amazement, I've noticed a smooth integration that a lot of these chefs are managing to do. Not all, but many of them. I admire how the chefs bring playfulness to the table, drawing inspiration from their personal journeys. I believe we are well represented to an audience at both stages of this change: one that is learning about the nuances of cooking and everything that goes into it (me), and the other (Sid), who is well-versed in what's going on globally and is curious to see how India will adopt it.

**What are some of the most important qualities of a pioneering chef in India today?**

**Sid Mewara:** Aside from the conventional prerequisites for technical abilities and innovation, I believe chefs should delve deeper into their own history and culture. India, to me, is multiple Indias; we are not a homogeneous group, and we should celebrate our heritage in that context. Varun Totlani, for example, can draw more on his Sindhi ancestry, as Gresham Fernandes does at Bandra Born with his local roots. Additionally, pioneering cooks in India could use a minimalist 'less is more' approach. We don't all need to overload the cuisine with 20 different ingredients. Instead, an emphasis on simplicity can result in truly extraordinary food.

**Shashank Jayakumar:** The bravery to experiment and the confidence to succeed. This is something that I believe several of the best chefs today have in common. Some chefs are returning to their youth to draw inspiration from the foods they ate as children. With their expertise, they are making this dish more acces-

sible and pleasant to a wider audience. Then there are chefs who, although not doing exactly this, understand how to sell themselves, their cuisine, and any inspiration they may have. So a pioneering chef is someone who has bravery, talent, and can think beyond the box, and it certainly helps to have a strong marketing team behind them.

**Can you describe a memorable cultural experience that inspired your approach to cooking?**

**Sid Mewara:** My family and I are the products of a cultural kaleidoscope. My children are a combination of Kashmiri, Rajasthani, Marwari, Polish, Georgian, and German ancestry, born and raised in China and now residing in India with a strong American identity. Our home is a lively mix of these cultures. Home-cooked traditional Chinese food is a favourite, but it is now integrated into our lives in Goa. Our children's school lunch resembles a Davos meeting.

**Shashank Jayakumar:** Of all the places I've been around the world, Phaltan has had the most impact on my cuisine. *Farm to Fork* is a well-known idea, yet I witnessed it being executed quietly as a way of life. The experience of selecting the goat for the mutton rassa curry and the spices for the masala made me conscious of each element that goes into my cooking, and it taught me to cherish every aspect of the cuisine I prepare. It also taught me how something as simple as the amount of water used or when salt is added to the food can affect the overall taste of the dish.

**How do you strike a balance between classic recipes and integrating unique touches into your cooking?**

This topic frequently provokes controversy in our *Forkers Dining Club*. In fact, we developed a pilot show titled *Whose Dish Is It Anyway?* The crux of the argument is that names have meaning, and authenticity is important. We must respect a dish's origins while also realising that what is now considered traditional was once innovative. However, it is also vital to understand that many culinary traditions originated as innovations and evolved throughout time via trial and adaptation.

**How do you handle the difficulty of bringing lesser-known regional foods to the forefront?**

**Sid Mewara:** It has long been our goal to introduce lesser-known cuisines to a larger audience. From a Naga pop-up at The Leela in Bangalore to a Mizo cooking episode during our Bangalore season, we've emphasised distinct regional delicacies. During our Goa season, we featured Kunbi tribal and Gaud Saraswat Brahmin cuisine. Our Delhi season included traditional Delhi foods and Afghan cuisine. Through these initiatives, we hope to highlight the diverse tapestry of lesser-known cuisines, sharing their tales and flavours with a larger audience.

**What can *The Big Forkers* viewers expect from the next season, according to the hosts?**

**Sid Mewara:** This season marks our first venture into the north after six successful seasons. My childhood home invokes nostalgia, familiarity, and a sense of family. However, this journey introduced me to portions of the city I was previously unfamiliar with. We visited a North East Indian diaspora enclave, sampled migrant Muslim cuisine from Aligarh and Bihar, and even dined on Cameroonian delicacies in a nurse's home. A home-cooked lunch with Nizamuddin's *Qawwals* was the highlight. We also had the pleasure of hanging out with Vir Sanghvi in Bukhara and received crucial assistance from H.H. Priya Raje Scindia, who helped our Delhi production in every way.

**In the age of social media, how vital do you believe it is for chefs to connect with their audience outside of the kitchen?**

**Shashank Jayakumar:** Chefs being very active on social media could be a double-edged sword. They are not always the most pleasant people, nor are they the most quirky artists. That's why many of them rely on influencers and agencies. Having said that, with an increasingly knowledgeable audience, it is critical that the chefs relate their story of how the meal came to be. Eating out is no longer simply about the food; it has become an experience. Mothers used to say *yeh toh main ghar pe bhi bana sakti hoon* (I can make this at home too) in restaurants, but this is no longer the case. And the chefs make this evident by visiting each table and explaining the inspiration, ingredients, and technique behind their creations. I feel like I have a layman's understanding of food and am learning on the job. This is relatable to those who, like myself, are learning more about food.

## 'For me, humour is all about clean stand-up comedy'

TEJAL SINHA

**A** multifaceted star who has not just confined his prowess to acting but has also been much appreciated for being a motivational speaker, food and travel blogger, and now also a stand-up comedian.

Well, today we bring to you our candid chat with the industry's popular villain, Ashish Vidyarthi, who no doubt has detached himself from the label. Having grown up around a period and a place around the appreciation of arts and many conversations around people performing arts, he certainly found acting as a form of expression, and acting was something he was always inclined towards.

The national-award-winning star has currently been seen and heard all over social media with his posts and content. Well, we are not talking about his Instagram posts, but the content on his YouTube channel, *Ashish Vidyarthi Actor Vlogs*, and also his standup comedy, for that matter.

"I appreciate food," begins the *Drohkaal* actor on a brighter note during this candid call. "I meet people, interact with them, and let people know places that they can try for a wonderful sip of Chai or a gastronomic experience for Chole Bhatore. And, through these videos, I get to come across these small businesses who are doing great work and let people know about it."

Popularly known for his portrayal of villainous characters, the *1942: A Love Story* actor knew that he wanted to explore something more. Basically, he feels, "Even my directors, producers, and writers, and even the audience, know that there is something more to this guy. That's when I was thinking about it, and coincidentally, Sunflower happened. I realised Why don't I do something on the standup stage? That's how *Sitdown Ashish* happened, and it's been so great. It feels great that the audience is also enthralled by what they saw. What is very unique, and I want to underline it, is that this humour is clean standup comedy and does not have abuses. It's not looking down on someone and cracking jokes about them. It is all about me laughing at myself. The response has been so amazing when both young and old people come together and watch the show."

You are never too old to try out new things, and the *Bichoo* actor couldn't agree more as he shared, "I feel that people need to have respect for the age that they have rather than be embarrassed about it. Therefore, my wife Rupali and I started a channel called *Fifty Plus Zindagi* because, through social media, we wanted to communicate with people and have respect for their own age. When you respect your age, then you live your life fully. Why do you think I'm still working as a motivational speaker? To let people know that they can be true to themselves. I believe that people need to have hope in themselves. When you have hope in yourself, you don't have time to think of other things. I just let people know that they can do something amazing with their lives and not sit and discuss them. It needs to be about what's next. What next excites you, and what gives you a reason to live, is the joy of giving a life to me."

Reinventing himself as an actor; especially when people only saw him as a villain, now he is doing a whole lot of roles and letting people know I can! "I am 58 and my wife is 50; even as we join in this journey, we look forward to creating new futures. I am excited about it not being resigned. There have been mishaps in life, but not to be beaten by mishaps relating to anything as happenings rather than condemning yourself. What I share with people through my writings and motivational talks is that it is possible to do anything that you wish for yourself if you have hope," signs off, as he adds how he's enjoying standup comedy.



Actor-motivational speaker and now standup comedian, Ashish Vidyarthi doesn't sulk at aging but rather finds himself exploring more, opens up with *The Pioneer* over an exclusive chitter-chatter about keeping himself engaged with things he enjoys and his new love for stand-up comedy.



## Reclaim your Zzz's with ways to enhance your sleep routine

**R**ecently, a lot of people have emphasised the importance of sleep, stating, "To maintain a balanced lifestyle, excess of everything should be avoided. A healthy body is crucial for a healthy mind, and it requires routines, spending time in sunlight, and getting regular and complete sleep. Habits like screen time are eating into the required sleep time, which is considered very important by modern health science."

**Here, let's take a look at 5 ways you can enhance your beauty sleep:**

**1. Less screen time:** Limiting exposure to screens before bedtime can improve sleep quality. The blue light emitted by electronic devices like smartphones, tablets, and computers can disrupt the body's natural sleep-wake cycle. Try to avoid screens at least an hour before bed to allow your mind to unwind and prepare for sleep.

**2. Quality mattress:** Investing in a quality mattress is essential for achieving sound sleep and maintaining good back health. If your mattress fails to provide adequate support and interrupts your sleep, it may not be the right fit for you. For example, India's sleep specialist Century mattresses. Tailored for various body types, these mattresses include spring, foam, coir, and memory foam options. With soft covers and innovative features like copper crystal memory foam and ergo-soft transition foam, they offer comfort and effective heat management for an undisturbed

night's sleep. Choose a mattress that combines elegance, comfort, for optimal support and blissful sleep.

**3. Calming music:** Listening to soothing and calming music before bedtime can significantly contribute to a peaceful sleep. Music has the power to relax the mind and reduce stress, creating an ideal environment for rest. Choose gentle melodies or nature sounds that promote a tranquil atmosphere, helping you unwind and prepare for a restful night. Consider creating a bedtime playlist with your favorite calming tunes to make it a consistent part of your nightly routine. Incorporating calming music into your pre-sleep ritual can enhance the overall quality of your sleep and contribute to a more rejuvenating experience.

**4. Essential oils:** An essential oil can help you more easily transition to a relaxed and meditative state and calm your mind. There are numerous essential oils available in the market, like lavender oil, sandalwood oil, frankincense oil, cypress oil, etc., which are some examples of essential oils that can prove beneficial to calm the mind.

**5. Herbal tea:** Unlike caffeinated beverages, herbal tea contains only herbs that soothe the mind and promote restful sleep. Chamomile, valerian root, lemongrass, and peppermint are among the herbal teas known for their effectiveness in alleviating insomnia.



# ENGLAND HAVE MISSED TRICK BY CALLING BACK PLAYERS FROM IPL AHEAD OF T20 WC: VAUGHAN



PTI ■ CHENNAI

Former skipper Michael Vaughan feels England "missed the trick" by recalling its cricketers from the IPL to play a T20 series against Pakistan, saying it had denied them experiencing pressure-cooker situations of the playoffs, which could have helped them prepare better for the upcoming T20 World Cup in the Americas. Top England players, including skipper Jos Buttler (Rajasthan Royals), Phil Salt (Kolkata Knight Riders) and Will Jacks (Royal Challengers Bengaluru) were among the players called back home by the England and Wales Cricket Board for a four-match T20I series against Pakistan, leading to severe

criticism from several former Indian cricketers including the legendary Sunil Gavaskar. In fact, it was skipper Buttler who had pushed for players to get back in the English camp from the IPL to prepare for the T20 World Cup with the series against Pakistan, director of cricket Rob Key had earlier revealed. "I'm all for international cricket, but now and again this tournament (IPL) in particular is so exposed to pressure, and these players under a huge amount of pressure from fans, owners (and) social media, it's massive," said Vaughan on a Club Prairie Fire podcast. "They (ECB) have missed the trick by sending all their players home. Will Jacks, Phil Salt, (and) Jos Buttler in

particular, playing in the IPL in the Eliminations pressure, crowd expectation, I would argue that playing here (IPL) is better preparation than playing a T20 game against Pakistan," Vaughan opined. The first match of the bilateral white-ball series in Headingley was washed out on May 22, while England won the second match against Babar Azam's side by 23 runs on Saturday. Vaughan felt that Salt and Jack, in particular, could have got valuable lessons in handling pressure, which would have served them better in the T20 World Cup beginning on June 2 in the West Indies and USA. "I just felt particularly those two (Salt and Jacks) and Buttler probably not as much, but I still think he

could have stayed here. But Will Jacks and Phil Salt, they would have been better prepared (for T20 WC) staying here playing in the IPL than going back to Headingley to play a game. Vaughan said he was not "disrespecting" either Pakistan or England with his views but just stating that the standard of IPL is probably "better". "This tournament (IPL) is so pressurised and the skill levels are so high, you could argue and I'm not disrespecting Pakistan or the England side... They haven't been playing lot of T20 together. But I would say the standard here (IPL) would possibly be better than the game that we're gonna at Headingley (May 22). Australian great Adam

Gilchrist too felt England players had missed a big opportunity to play in the business end of the IPL. "I'm sure there's a number of players that could have fulfilled those obligations in the international setup (vs Pakistan) there, but the guys that were actively involved in the IPL in the finals period (Buttler, Salt and Jacks), yeah, I think that's a missed opportunity, too. Spot on (Vaughan)," said Gilchrist. "What you're walking out into, what you're learning from, all the various aspects that the glare and the focus and the microscope on you because that's going to prepare you for what they would hope (in T20 World Cup). Every nation hopes to be playing in a World Cup final eventually," he added.

# T20 World Cup in US going to be landmark event: Pradhan

Huge excitement among diaspora, says India's US envoy

PTI ■ NEW YORK

The T20 World Cup in the US is a "landmark event" and there is huge excitement among the diaspora as well as across America, India's envoy here said emphasising that the tournament is playing a "very significant role" in bringing cricket to the country's mainstream and will further contribute towards the bilateral people-to-people relationship. "This is the first time we are having a (cricket) World Cup being played on US soil. There is huge excitement, not only among the Indian diaspora members but even in the United States," Consul General of India in New York Binaya Srikanta Pradhan told PTI here in an exclusive conversation ahead of the much-anticipated tournament. He said American congressmen, senators, elected representatives are talking about the T20 Cricket World Cup being held in the US. The T20 World Cup is being jointly hosted by the USA and the West Indies from June 2 to June 29. The Indian cricket team, which has departed India for New York, will begin its campaign against Ireland on June 5 at the newly-constructed Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York. India will face arch-rivals Pakistan on June 9, followed by matches against co-hosts USA (June 12) and Canada (June 15) in their Group A matches. India had won the inaugural edition way back in 2007 in South Africa. "I am sure this is going to be a landmark event," Pradhan said. "Team India represents India in more than one way. There is huge excitement, not only in the community, but even in the Indian Consulate," Pradhan said, adding that "we are looking forward to welcome them and will be there to cheer



for them, and they will have fun here." India will play three matches in New York -- versus Ireland, Pakistan and the United States. "This is the first time India will be playing with the American team. So it's a truly momentous occasion," he said. On the fever-pitch anticipation for the match between India and Pakistan, Pradhan said tickets for the game were sold out months before the tournament, with a lot of visitors from India expected to travel to New York especially for the match. "There is huge excitement," he said, adding that several very distinguished people from the Indian diaspora, American public would be watching this match. "So we're also looking forward to that," he said. Cricket is not a mainstream sport in the US, which has traditionally been a baseball, American football, basketball, ice hockey, and soccer-playing nation. Members of the diaspora from the Indian sub-continent as well as those belonging to other cricket-playing nations such as the West Indies and Australia play the sport in the US but usually on temporary, make-do pitches on baseball fields, in parks and on school sports fields during the summer months.

Pradhan said that the T20 World Cup is playing a "very significant role" in promoting cricket in mainstream United States. In the run-up to the World Cup, the Consulate General of India in New York released a special video highlighting the comparison and similarities between cricket and baseball to "inform the American audience that they should look forward to this game and this sport is very much similar in some ways to baseball." Pradhan said the response the Consulate has received has been tremendous. Noting that cricket at the moment is very popular among the Indian diaspora, Pradhan referred to the professional Twenty20 cricket league in the United States Major Premier League and the Minor Premier League. "It's already catching up in the diaspora. But I'll not be surprised if in a few years' time, you will find the American -- not the Indian-origin Americans, but the Americans will be playing cricket as a mainstream game," he said. Pradhan noted that cricket infrastructure, including proper stadiums are now coming up in the US, as he cited the Nassau County stadium where India will play three matches.

## OTHER SPORTS

### NEERAJ CHOPRA CLARIFIES

# Not injured, withdrawal from Golden Spike precautionary move

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra on Sunday clarified that he is not injured but has pulled out of the Ostrava Golden Spike meet in Czech Republic on May 28 as a precautionary measure after he felt "something" on his adductor muscles during a recent training session. Chopra said he would not want to risk injury in an Olympic year and hence decided to skip the prestigious meet. "Following a recent throwing session, I decided not to compete in Ostrava as I felt something in my adductor. I have had problems with it in the past and pushing it at this stage can lead to injury," Chopra wrote on his Instagram. "Just to clarify, I am not injured but I don't want to take any risk during the Olympic year so had to take this

decision. Once I feel it's fully recovered, I will get back to competitions," he added. Chopra's clarification came just hours after the organisers of the prestigious meet said he has decided to skip the event due to an injury he sustained while training two weeks ago. "Due to an injury that he sustained in training two weeks ago (adductor muscle) he will not be able to throw in Ostrava, but he will arrive at the event as a guest," the organisers of Golden Spike said earlier in the day. The 26-year-old world champion will, however, attend the meet as a guest, according to the organisers. This was to be Chopra's first foray in Golden Spike meet, a World Athletics Continental Tour Gold level event, which is a going to see a star-studded field, with Tokyo Olympics silver medallist and 2023 world championships bronze winner Jakub Vadlejch of Czech Republic



and former world champion Anderson Peters of Grenada set to be in action. Chopra has competed in two competitions this season -- the Doha Diamond League and the Federation Cup.

He commenced his 2024 season on a strong note, clinching silver with an impressive throw of 88.36 metres at the Doha Diamond League on May 10. He then made a return to domestic competition after almost three years,

winning gold in the Federation Cup on May 15 with a throw of 82.27m, pushing DP Manu to second spot in Bhubaneswar. The Golden Spike was not initially announced to be Chopra's third competition of the season. But during Doha Diamond League on May 10, he said he would be competing in the Golden Spike. Before that, Chopra had announced that he would be taking part in the Paavo Nurmi Games in Turku, Finland on June 18. Chopra is one of India's best medal hopes in the Paris Olympic Games where he would be keen to retain the gold medal he won at the Tokyo Olympics. The Golden Spike organisers said they had received a note from Chopra informing them about his pull out from the competition. "The organisers did note a message from the Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra."



# Sindhu signs off with runner up finish at Malaysia Masters

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Star Indian shuttler PV Sindhu's wait for a much-needed title extended further as she faltered in the finishing line, going down in three games to world No. 7 Wang Zhi Yi of China in the summit clash here on Sunday. Fifth seed Sindhu, a double Olympic medallist, last won the Singapore Open and Commonwealth Games in 2022 and finished runner-up at the Madrid Spain Masters in 2023. The title here looked within her reach when world No. 15 Sindhu held a massive 11-3 lead in the decider after winning the opening game but the former world champion imploded after the final change of sides to go down 21-16 5-21 16-21 in a 79-minute women's singles final. The title would have been an icing on the cake but her impressive run to the final will still give her a lot of confidence as Sindhu looks to put the finishing touches ahead of the Paris Olympics. It was her first final on BWF world tour after more than a year. Sindhu, a double Olympic medallist, used a combination of poise and power to

dominate the proceedings against the reigning Asian champion Wang for most part of the match but everything fell apart after the break in the decider as the USD 420,000 crown slipped out of her hands. A silver and bronze medallist in the last two editions of the Olympics, Sindhu had lost to Wang at the Arctic Open last year but has defeated the Chinese twice in three meetings. Interestingly, it was Wang against whom Sindhu had won the finals during her last BWF title at the Singapore Open. On Sunday, Sindhu was leading 11-3 at the interval in the third game but she fell into a pool of errors after the change of sides as Wang won 18 of the next 23 points to seal the trophy in her name. World No. 15 Sindhu, who will be eyeing her third Olympic medal at the Paris Games, has looked subdued since making a comeback from a knee injury early this season. It has been a while since Sindhu has defeated big guns such as Carolina Marin, Tai Tzu Ying, Chen Yu Fei and Akane Yamaguchi -- whom she is expected to come across at the Paris Olympics.

AP ■ BILBAO (SPAIN)

It was a night of celebration for Barcelona after another Women's Champions League title, and for the women's game in general after another season with significant growth in the sport. Barcelona defeated Lyon 2-0 to win its third European trophy and to add to its recent dominance in the sport on Saturday, capping a year that saw increased attendance, additional revenue and more participation by women across all levels of the sport. A record crowd of 50,827 for a final was on hand to see Barcelona lift the trophy after beating record eight-time champion Lyon with goals by stalwart players Aitana Bonmati and Alexia Putellas at the packed San Mames Stadium in Bilbao. The Barcelona victory came as soccer officials celebrated the success of a five-year plan to boost the women's game, a plan that was renewed ahead of the final to keep the sport growing. The "Time for Action" project was put in place by UEFA in

# UEFA celebrates growth of women's soccer as Barcelona lifts another Women's Champions League trophy



2019 to try to improve women's soccer. The European soccer body aimed to double the number of women and girls playing the game, and said it more than

doubled that target with nearly three million women and girls currently playing soccer thanks to "investment in key initiatives" such as "UEFA Football in Schools."

UEFA said there are now 47 associations with a strategy in place for women's soccer, and noted that almost 20% of its committee members are now female. Centralised media

and commercial rights helped increase the competition's value more than four-fold, UEFA said, "funding a financial distribution model which extends the benefits across the entire women's club landscape." "The investments and changes to the UEFA Women's Champions League and UEFA Women's EURO, plus a highly successful commercial programme, have meant that we have exceeded our expectations in terms of doubling the reach and value of these flagship competitions," said Anne Rei, chair of UEFA's Women's Football Committee. "This has also gone a long way to changing perceptions." What also helped revitalize the Women's Champions League was the introduction of a new group stage ahead of

the 2021-22 season, with four groups of four teams playing each other home and away to add "strength in depth." And beginning in 2025-26, UEFA will introduce a single-league stage featuring 18 teams, and a second club competition in women's soccer. UEFA said "both steps will give the chance to more clubs within the football pyramid to compete at the highest level, promoting domestic growth and competitive balance." UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin said ahead of the final in Bilbao that the European soccer governing body "prioritized the growth of women's football" and achieved "significant progress through a focused strategy, substantial investment, and a commitment to making the sport accessible to all." "The UEFA Women's Champions League played pivotal in this process, highlighting the skills of top players, breaking remarkable attendance records, and inspiring generations of girls to engage with our beloved sport," he said.

# 'In Gangs of Godavari, Vishwak is loud, but my character is louder'

Actress Anjali, who has been receiving tremendous appreciation for her character in *Gangs of Godavari*, going by the trailer, speaks to the media sharing more insights and the complexity of her character.

PNS| HYDERABAD

The versatile Telugu actress Anjali, who is currently dominating the screens for *Gangs of Godavari*, which is scheduled for a spectacular cinematic release on May 31, 2024, has already captivated audiences with its intriguing trailer. Since the trailer release, the actress has been receiving tremendous appreciation, stirring excitement among viewers, particularly the Telugu people. *Katradhu Thamizh* fame shares interesting insights into her experiences and the complexity of her character interpretations!

It appears that we will see her in a bold new avatar, possibly even spouting some foul words. Doh! When Chaitanya, the filmmaker, initially told her the narrative, she stated, "My initial question concerned the usage of profane language. I expected they would be refurbished, but it appears everyone is debating it." Further discussing her character sketch, she tells the Hyderabad media, especially asking Chaitanya why he thought to narrate this story to her! Because, many people know her as the girl next door, a quiet and nice person, however, she admits, "My role in *Gangs of Godavari* is completely different from what I have done previously. Our director was seeking a performance-oriented actor, and he was very confident in me. I am pleased that it has had a positive reception thus far."

Actually, she was always eager to take on tough assignments. Even as an actress, she gets weary of playing the same role over and over, since she explains, "I was looking for something different, so I took this on. My character in this film stands out on its own. She speaks, looks, and behaves differently than I have done in the past. I didn't wear makeup for this film. Because it is set in the 1980s, we experimented a lot."

Not only that, but she took the time to step into Rathnamala's shoes and worked extremely hard for the job, stating, "Rathnamala is a complex role model who reacts to every-

thing. I took this character home numerous times. It was quite difficult to play the role. This is the popular version of Sita from *Sithamma Vaakitlo Sirimalle Chettu*. Rathnamala has a pure heart, loves and cares deeply. She was born with a Godavari accent, although the *Gangs of Godavari* do not speak in the same way. On the Lankan side, their language is different and something they do not use on a daily basis. It was difficult even during dubbing."

Hyderabad readers will be pleased to learn that Vishwak and Anjali have a particular connection in the film; even their names, Rathnamala and Rathnakar, are interlinked, as she says, "You will know once you see it in theaters. In this film, Vishwak is loud, but my character is louder. We were friends before we started working on this film, but knowing each other made working together more comfortable for him. We were as boisterous as our characters, even on set." She enjoyed talking to other actors, and the environment was pleasant, so she had a great time working on this movie.

Then, according to the actress, during the media encounter in the city, Chaitanya delivered precisely what he said, which is an excellent talent for bringing the movie to life from the screenplay. Some filmmakers write one thing and present something else on screen, but Chaitanya keeps his word. This film will provide a significant break for Krishna Chaitanya. *Gangs of Godavari* is a mainstream entertainment film that audiences will love in theatres.

As an accomplished actor, she believes Sithara Entertainments will pay extra attention to the films they make. They pay close attention to their films, guaranteeing that they are of high quality. The fact that *Gangs of Godavari* is produced by Sithara Entertainment is a significant plus.

*Gangs of Godavari*, a violent gangster drama starring Vishwak Sen, Anjali, and Neha Shetty, will be released on May 31. It is produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya under Sithara Entertainments and Fortune Four Cinemas, respectively.

On the work front, she has three other projects in Tamil and Telugu, and she is signing another project after *Game Changer*, which has something lined up in Malayalam.



## GOG TRAILER BRINGS INTENSE INSIGHT INTO VISHWAK'S CHARACTER

Following his success in *Gaami*, actor Vishwak Sen will return with *Gangs of Godavari*, helmed by Krishna Chaitanya and featuring Neha Shetty as the female lead. The film, set for a huge cinematic premiere on May 31, 2024, has already grabbed spectators with its intriguing teaser, which was unveiled not long ago.

The trailer has received significant praise, eliciting excitement among viewers. As fans eagerly await the film's release, the approaching promotions will help determine the film's fate at the box office.

*Gangs of Godavari*, a joint production of Sithara Entertainments and Fortune Four Cinema, stars Anjali, Rao Ramesh, Sai Kumar, Goparaju Ramana, and Ayesha Khan. Yuvan Shankar Raja created the music.

## Salaar 2 is on cards; makers refute rumours

*Salaar: Part 1 - Ceasefire*, the first collaboration between Prabhas and filmmaker Prashant Neel, released in theaters last December and thrilled viewers, particularly Prabhas fans. The makers recently revealed that production on *Salaar: Part 2 - Shouryaanga Parvam* will commence at the end of this month. However, various reports have circulated online in recent days, claiming that creative differences between Prabhas and Neel caused the film to be shelved, prompting many people to believe these bogus accusations. Contrary to the rumours, the producers shared a photo of Neel and Prabhas smiling with the remark, "They can't stop laughing." This indirect statement from the team reassured viewers that the film is still on schedule, thus quelling rumours and winning over Prabhas' admirers.

*Salaar 2* will feature the return of the main cast from the first installment, as well as a few new characters. Hombale Films will develop this sequel on a large scale with meticulous care. Ravi Basrur will create the music.



## Vishnu Manchu warns media not to speculate about rave party raid

Hema was recently seen at a Bengaluru rave party. Tests were performed, and blood samples revealed that she used narcotics. Manchu Vishnu, the President of MAA, appears to have been pressured by YouTubers to move against Hema. The *Kannappa* actor has stated that he will wait for concerned authorities to establish Hema's alleged culpability. "I advise everyone to avoid leaping to conclusions and disseminating unconfirmed information. Hema should be presumed innocent until proven guilty. She is also a mother and a wife, and slandering her reputation based on rumours is unfair. The Movie Artists Association (MAA) condemns all illegal actions. If the police offer concrete proof accusing Hema, the MAA will respond appropriately. Until then, please refrain from sensationalising unfounded reports," Vishnu stated in his message.

Vishnu is currently working on *Kannappa*, a pan-Indian project with international distribution. The teaser was recently screened at the Cannes Film Festival.



## Manamey's second single hits the right chord

Sharwanand and Krithi Shetty are the lead pair in director Sriram Aditya's upcoming film *Manamey*, where Vikram Aditya will be seen in a pivotal role. The movie is indeed a delightful journey for the trio. The makers, as part of the musical journey, released the second single, *Manamey*. Hesham Abdul Wahab lived up to expectations with this track again. The tune flows smoothly, and the romantic feel is unmissable. Karthik and Geetha Madhuri's voices

capture the feeling of lovebirds who start afresh after all the misunderstandings in the beginning. Sharwanand and Krithi Shetty's *jodi* looked lovely on screen. The song is colourful with some beautiful visuals. The grandness is perceived all through. The mop step by Sharwanand was eye candy! It's a Ramsey Studios LTD production that is presented by TG Vishwa Prasad of People Media Factory. This high-budget entertainer is up for release on June 7th.

## AAJ'S MASS CELEBRATORY ANTHEM RANGANAYAKI OUT NOW

G A 2 Pictures next *AAJ* stars young and energetic hero Narne Nithiin and gorgeous Nayan Sarika in lead roles. The film is directed by debutant filmmaker Anji K Maniuthra. Talented producers Bunny Vas and Vidya Koppineedi are bankrolling this fun entertainer. The film is hiking prospects with its intriguing promotional content and hilarious concept videos. After the catchy melody *Sufiyana*, on Sunday the makers dropped a banger mass song titled *Ranganayaki*. The

promo of the song set high expectations and the lyrical video which is out now lives up to it. This is out and out rural mass number that will make listeners tap their foot and dance their hearts out. Masses will celebrate this song in cinemas for its thumping sound.

Most happening singer Anurag Kulkarni sang this energetic song and Suresh Baniseti wrote the lyrics that have pure rural essence. Ram



Miriyala, known for his magical compositions gave a massy tune. Complimenting every lyric and beat choreographer Bhanu master composed superb steps. The set looks colorful, and so are the costumes. Narne Nithiin simple steps, Nayan Sarika looks and *AAJ* gang's crazy moments are the highlights. Makers have begun the musical promotions with instantly addictive mass beats which will be trending in reels and social media in no time.

## Tamil actor Karthi's birthday updates...

It was previously stated that Karthi had collaborated with director Nalan Kumarasamy for his 26th film. The film has now been titled *Vaa Vaathiyaar*, and the directors have published a first-look poster to coincide with his birthday. Previously known as *Karthi 26*, the film stars Krithi Shetty as the female lead and has Sathyaraj and Rajkiran in key roles. In the first-look poster, Karthi plays a cop. In the background, we can see several people dressed in the outfit of former actor-politician MG Ramachandran. Karthi had previously played cops in the films *Siruthai*, *Theeran Adhigaaram Ondru*, and *Sardar*. Santhosh Narayanan composed the soundtrack for

*Vaa Vaathiyaar*, his third collaboration with Kumarasamy after *Soodhu Kavvum* and his third with Karthi following *Madras* and *Kaashmora*. The film is produced by KE Gnanavel Raja under his Studio Green banner. Details about the film's narrative and release date have yet to be disclosed. Karthi last appeared in Raju Murugan's *Japan*. Suriya and Jyotika's 2D Productions announced lately that the actor's 27th film will be titled *Meiyazhagan*. Sri Divya acts as the female lead in the film, which is directed by C Prem Kumar of 96 fame. Saran Shakthi and Rajkiran also play major roles!

