



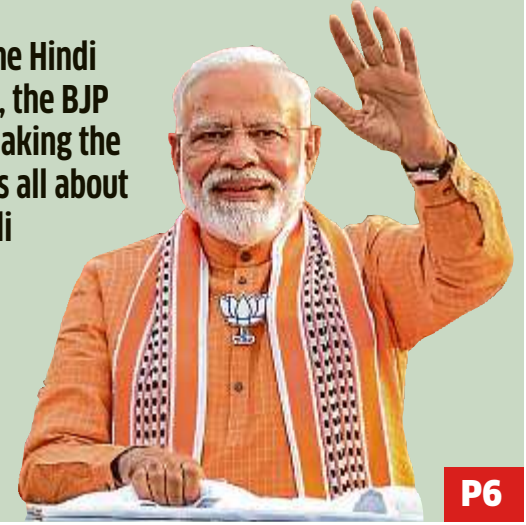
The big count

Where does India stand today in its attempt to save its tigers?



Battle for the heartland

In the Hindi belt, the BJP is making the polls all about Modi



Water in Lakshmisagar Lake at Narasapura in Kolar taluk has already turned green. An excavator removes hyacinth from the water on Friday. DH PHOTO/CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI

KC Valley project: A costly experiment on people

Lack of a policy framework behind the project raises questions about the long-term impacts of treated sewage supplied to Kolar and Chikkaballapur districts

Chiranjeevi Kulkarni

Dasappa, the 72-year-old waterman at Rajakallahalli in Kolar taluk, said he can't wait for the treated waste water from Bengaluru to reach the village tank. "No matter how smelly it is, we want it. It becomes pure when it goes into the ground," he said.

The waterman is responsible for supplying water to about 800 houses. The village has a lone reverse osmosis plant which gets water from the borewell in Doodaagrahara, 1.5 km away. "Only 20-30 people get water. Others go to neighbouring villages and some wait for the borewell to pump again after a gap of several hours. When water doesn't come, they get disappointed or angry. I'm tired of seeing all this and hope that our tank will be filled soon," he said.

At the other end of the spectrum, the Supreme Court lifting the stay on the release of secondary treated sewage water to Koramangala and Chhalghatta Valley (KC Valley) has brought a sense of victory to officials in Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) and Minor Irrigation

Department. They have also got a letter of appreciation from Speaker of the Legislative Assembly K R Ramesh Kumar, for their efforts.

In between, those who expressed doubts about the quality of water were silenced. Indian Institute of Science (IISc) professor T V Ramachandra faced the risk of personal attack for his report which exposed that the water released from the sewage treatment plant is contaminated with heavy metals and chemicals. In Kolar, protests were held and an effigy of Anjaneya Reddy of Shashwatha Neeravari Horata Samithi was burnt for questioning the government's claim that the water is fit for groundwater recharging.

The move to recharge groundwater by filling tanks of two districts, Kolar and Chikkaballapur, rendered dry by a truant monsoon has been welcomed by all. However, the lack of a policy framework behind the design and implementation

of the project has been a major concern among activists like Reddy.

Violation of norms

"The only guideline that is closely related to the project is in the Union government's Manual on Sewerage and Sewage treatment, which has been violated by the project. Groundwater is the only source of water for the two districts. If heavy metals and chemicals contaminate it, where should we go? We want KC Valley water, but it should be treated correctly," he said.

The guideline stipulates denitrification and tertiary treatment to remove inorganic compounds. It proposes running of the treated water "over 20 km and a 65-metre fall in a river course". Thereafter, it will be put through dual media and activated carbon filtration followed by ultrafiltration and reverse osmosis membranes.

Over the last five months, the officials had come under pressure when the Kar-

nataka High Court and the Supreme Court stayed the release of treated water. In March, a report from two IISc scientists, led by Prof H N Chanakya, played a major role in lifting the stay.

The two scientists based their opinion on the reports of tests on "single grab sample" of the water given by the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board. They ruled out pollution from heavy metals, which were at "permissible levels".

However, they noted: "In India, there are no water quality standards for indirect recharge (of groundwater) from secondary treated water." Prof Chanakya also recommended that "periodic monitoring, lab testing, documentation and reporting mechanism needs to be implemented through credible third-party observers."

People who were caught between doubt and desperation have finally embraced the latter, which is reflected in the fact that villagers of Mallasandra in Kolar taluk refused to vote on April 18 unless the government promised to fill their tank with treated sewage (see Page 4). Dasappa is a mild example of people who are ready to take 'any kind of water'.

> **KC Valley, Page 4**



Insight

'Malnutrition in state worse than Sub-Saharan Africa'

Akhil Kadidal

BENGALURU: Malnourishment in parts of the state is worse than that of Sub-Saharan Africa, an official said on Saturday. L K Atheeq, Principal Secretary of the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, who tweeted state malnutrition figures released by the Department of Women and Children early on Saturday morning, said that there is an overall malnutrition rate of up to 41.2% in rural India and 31% in urban areas.

Figures for the state, which include statistics from 15 districts, show varying levels of malnutrition among children within the age group of 0-6 years, demographically belonging to economically weaker sections of society. Koppal district tops the list with a malnutrition rate of 29.98% in January 2019. Bidar, Raichur and Gadag come next with 27.81%, 27.09% and 25.65%, respectively.

Atheeq described malnutrition as a social problem. "Malnutrition begins at home," he said, explaining that if a pregnant woman is anaemic, the baby is also born anaemic.

Nearly 70% of women in India are anaemic, Atheeq added. "The first thousand days of a baby's development — which translates to three years, including nine months of pregnancy — are crucial to a child's development and if there is malnutrition at this early stage, it is irreversible in later years," he said.

This developmental hindrance, according to Uma Mahadevan, until recently secretary of the Women and Child Development Department and current secretary of the Panchayat Raj, affects

MALNUTRITION IS BASED ON TWO FACTORS

1 Stunting, which means low height for age

2 Wasting which translates to low weight for height.

According to the National Family Health Survey-4 (2015-16), 36.2% of children in Karnataka are stunted and 26.1% are wasted



not only physical development but also cognitive ability and chances of employment in adult years.

Uma said that cultural norms are at the heart of malnutrition, including sanitary practices of families. Atheeq said that despite the government having constructed 75 lakh toilets in the state as part of the Swachh Bharat Scheme, nearly 20% are not being used.

"Open-air defecation leaches fecal matter into the soil, and if babies happen to crawl around near drains, the resulting germs and infection by worms interferes with their ability to absorb vital nutrients," he said.

DH News Service

Five, including 4 siblings, drown in Siddara Betta pond

BENGALURU, DHNS: Five people, including four siblings, drowned in a pond in Siddara Betta near Dobbset on Saturday afternoon, as a weekend getaway to a local dargah (shrine) turned tragic.

The deceased have been identified as Usman Khan (14), Yaarab Khan (21), Reshma (22), Mubeen Taj (21), all four siblings, and their neighbour Muneer Khan (49). Usman accidentally fell into the pond, following which the others jumped into the water one by one to rescue him. Police rushed to the spot following a call from the mother of the four, but it was too late. > **Drowning, Page 3**

'Exclude consensual sex after 16 from POCSO'

CHENNAI: Observing that the relationship between a girl under 18 years of age and a teenage boy or one little over the teenage years cannot be construed as "alien" or "unnatural", the Madras High Court suggested the exclusion of consensual sex after 16 years of age from the purview of POCSO Act.

Justice V Pathiban gave the suggestion on Friday during the hearing of a plea by a petitioner who challenged his conviction and 10-year sentence by a Mahila court in Namakkal under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The petitioner, Sabari, was accused of abducting and sexually assaulting a 17-year-old girl.

Suggesting amendments to the Act, the judge said, "Any consensual sex after the age of 16 or bodily contact or allied acts can

EC orders FIR against Gambhir

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The election pitch seems to have turned a bit bouncy for cricketer-turned-politician Gautam Gambhir.

The BJP candidate is facing one trouble after another, with the latest being the Election Commission asking police to file an FIR against him for holding an election rally without permission.

The Delhi Police has initiated the process by lodging a complaint (kalandra) under relevant sections against Gambhir, BJP's East Delhi candidate, on the direction of the Election Commission for "holding a rally in East Delhi without permission".

East Delhi Electoral Officer K Mahesh had instructed the police to file the case for organising a campaign rally in Jungpura on April 25.



Gautam Gambhir

Gambhir's rival candidate from AAP, Atishi, tweeted, "First, discrepancies in nomination papers. Then, criminal offence of having two voter IDs. Now, FIR for illegal rally. My question to Gautam Gambhir: When you

don't know the rules, why play the game?" The latest development comes a day after Atishi approached the court against the cricketer, accusing him of holding two voter IDs, a criminal offence. Earlier, she had filed objections to accepting his nomination citing discrepancies in his affidavit, which was overruled.

Justice Pathiban also directed the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs), Commissioner of Social Defence, Department of Social Welfare and Noon Meal Programme to place the matter before a competent authority.

Justice Pathiban said though under Section 2(d) of the Act, a 'child' is defined as a person below 18 years of age and in case of any love affair between a girl and a boy, where the girl happens to be 16 or 17 years old, the relationship invariably assumes penal character by subjecting the boy to the rigours of the law.

PTI

BATTLING TERROR

Militants at raided house suspected to be members of NTJ.

Bomb-making materials, dozens of gelignite sticks and thousands of metal balls were found during searches.

Police have detained at least 76 people, including foreigners from Syria and Egypt, in their investigations so far.

Nearly 10,000 soldiers deployed to carry out searches and provide security.

Bengaluru on high alert; hoax caller arrested

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka has put Bengaluru and other cities on high alert following the recent terror attack in Sri Lanka. Home Minister M B Patil said on Saturday. Patil, in a tweet, said he had instructed the state police to deploy additional forces in sensitive areas. "I urge citizens not to pay heed to fake news and inform police if you find any suspicious things/persons," Patil said.

Meanwhile, Central Crime Branch sleuths on Saturday arrested an ex-serviceman-turned-lorry driver for making a hoax call about possible terror attacks to the Bengaluru city police control room on Friday. The man had said that major cities in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Puducherry, Goa

and Maharashtra would be targeted. The call had sent police in four states into a tizzy. Taking the threat perception seriously, Karnataka police chief Neelmani N Raju had sent out fax messages to her counterparts in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Puducherry, Goa and Maharashtra.

Fax message leak

Headquarters of the state police, DG-IGP's office, on Nrupathunga road was abuzz on Saturday morning after Neelmani's fax message was leaked and went viral on social media. Sources said the chief minister was unhappy with Neelmani over the leak of message. An inquiry is on. **Security up at city churches, Page 3**

Campaigning for fourth phase ends

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Campaigning for the fourth phase of polling in 72 Lok Sabha constituencies came to an end on Saturday evening.

Over 12.79 crore people in nine states are expected to cast votes on Monday to decide the fate of 961 candidates.

The fourth phase will witness some interesting contests — CPI's rising star Kanhaiya Kumar is taking on Union Minister Giriraj Singh in Bihar's Begusarai, while Chhindwara in Madhya Pradesh is expecting a 'son rise' as Chief Minister Kamal Nath's son Nakul is in the fray.

Actor-turned-politician Urmila Matondkar is testing electoral waters in Mumbai North against sitting BJP MP Gopal Shetty. Jodhpur in Rajasthan is witnessing a keen contest as Vaibhav Gehlot, the son of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, takes on Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.

In Kannauj, former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav's wife Dimple is seeking re-election, while in West Bengal's Asansol, yesteryear actor Moon Moon Sen is locking horns with singer-turned-Union Minister Babul Supriyo.

The first, second and third phases of the seven-phase polling took place on April 11, April 18 and April 23 respectively. The last phase is scheduled to take place on May 19 and the votes will be counted on May 23.

Gadkari faints on stage again, Page 9

IPL 2019 SRH 160/8 (20) lost to RR 161/3 (19.1)
Match result

MATCHES TODAY
DC vs RCB Delhi 4 pm KKR vs MI Mumbai 8 pm
LIVE on STAR Network

