



sunday pioneer

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Gaming industry doesn't
REQUIRE
regulation, says PM'



In her father's footsteps to
KEEP A
great tradition alive

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**


The BRS needs to win all the LS seats. The people can shock the government and ensure that their job gets done only if there is a strong Opposition. If not, the Congress won't give you what was promised. You can either be in the pocket of Modi or face the ED

- KCR, former Chief Minister

P2

DON'T MISS...**170 more water tankers to be...**

Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) will procure 170 more water tankers to meet the demand in the city. Principal Secretary for Municipal Administration and Urban Development Dana Kishore said that 5,000-litre capacity tankers will be on the roads soon. Also has suggested to the board to make plans to procure 70 mini tankers with a capacity of 2,500 litre tankers to supply water to colonies, slums and areas where complaints of polluted...

-PAGE: 3**40 years of flying in ruthless...**

The IAF on Saturday recalled its contribution in 'Operation Meghdoot' 40 years ago when its tactical and strategic airlifters and key helicopters had ferried men and material to 'dizzying heights' in Siachen, the world's highest battlefield. The Indian Army marked four decades of its presence on the strategically-significant Siachen glacier. Operation Meghdoot was launched on April 13, 1984, when the Indian Army and Indian Air Force had advanced to the Siachen glacier to secure the heights dominating the northern Ladakh...

-PAGE: 5**Payment mechanism for...**

The government on Saturday said the payment mechanism for traders importing pulses from Myanmar has been eased and simplified. The importers have been asked to utilize Rupee/ Kyat direct payment system using Special Rupee Vostro Account (SRVA) through Punjab National Bank, the consumer affairs ministry said in a statement. India depends on imports of pulses to meet the domestic shortage. The country imports tur and urad dals from Myanmar. Consumer Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare discussed with Indian...

-PAGE: 6**Scientists can't agree on when...**

Flowers may look delicate – but flowering plants, what scientists call angiosperms, are one of the most successful evolutionary organisms on the planet. Including more than 350,000 known species, they dominate the ecological system, have food webs and play a vital role in oxygen production. Plus, many of them are valuable commercial crops – think of roses, grains and tomatoes. Have you ever wondered when flowers first evolved, and what has been unfolding over millions of years of evolution to cultivate these beautiful species? Recent research is bringing new insights to this longstanding debate among scientists. When you think of fossils, you probably think of dinosaurs and...

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Cong to finalise last 3 LS candidates today

● Venugopal to conduct crucial meeting**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal is coming to Hyderabad on Sunday to finalise the remaining three LS candidates of the Congress. As per the directions of the high command, arrangements are being made to conduct the meeting to finalise candidates in Hyderabad itself instead of in New Delhi.

Along with KC Venugopal, AICC General Secretary in-charge Deepa Das Munshi, in-charge Secretary Rohit Choudhary, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Ministers and poll strategist Sunil Kanugolu will attend the meeting.

These leaders would finalise the Congress candidates for Karimnagar, Khammam and Hyderabad and also meet the candidates selected for the 14 Lok Sabha constituencies. They will discuss the strategies to be adopted, and the election campaign and finalise things.

The Congress high command is sending its representative to Hyderabad instead of summoning Telangana leaders to Hyderabad to finalise candidates.

KC Venugopal will come to



These leaders would finalise the Congress candidates for Karimnagar, Khammam and Hyderabad and also meet the candidates selected for the 14 Lok Sabha constituencies. They will discuss the strategies to be adopted, and the election campaign and finalise things.

Hyderabad at 12 noon on Sunday and will directly go to the Novotel Hotel where the meeting is being held. He will have a one-to-one meeting with the leaders, will finalise the names and the AICC will announce them later.

Modi can win 214 to 240 seats at the most: Revanth

● BRS has taken *supari* to make the BJP win 5 seats: CM**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy predicted that in the Lok Sabha elections, the BJP will be getting 214 to 240 seats.

Speaking to India TV, Revanth said, "Mark my words. Modi can win a maximum of 214 to 240 seats this time. To say '400 paar' may be good from a perception point of view. Even KCR claimed he would win 100 Assembly seats, but won only 39 in last year's polls. In politics and in WhatsApp University, you can



claim to win more than 400, but look at the ground reality. The CSDS survey says that 62 per cent of youths are unhappy because of unemployment."

On whether the Congress is going to project somebody from the South as Prime Minister Revanth replied, "Mallikarjun Kharge from Karnataka is the Congress President, KC Venugopal from Kerala is the General Secretary, Rahul Gandhi represents the South. In coming days, somebody from the South may become the Prime Minister." "Telangana and AP have 42 MPs. We have got only one Cabinet minister Kishan Reddy.

2

Malkajgiri will decide Eatala's role in TG BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Malkajgiri is going to decide Eatala Rajender's fate not only in the Lok Sabha but also his position in the BJP's Telangana unit. Eatala is very keen on bagging the BJP state president post.

Party sources said that he is making moves in that direction and that if he wins Malkajgiri the state president's post is going to be a cake-walk for him.

Revanth Reddy lost in Kodangal in the 2018 elections and in the 2019 LS elections, he won and became an MP from Malkajgiri. He then went on to become the TPCC President and eventually led the party to victory in Telangana and became the



Chief Minister.

Multiple sources in the BJP have confirmed that Eatala is in the race for the state president's post which will be decided after the Lok Sabha elections.

2

AMID TENSIONS WITH ISRAEL

Iran's forces seize cargo ship with 17 Indian sailors near Strait of Hormuz

PNS ■ DUBAI

Commandos from Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard rappelled down from a helicopter onto an Israeli-affiliated container ship mostly manned by Indians near the Strait of Hormuz and seized the vessel on Saturday, the latest in a series of attacks between the two countries.

Seventeen Indian sailors are on board the ship which had a crew of 25.



The Middle East had braced for potential Iranian retaliation over a suspected Israeli strike earlier this month on an Iranian consular building in Syria that killed 12 people, including a senior Guard general who once commanded its expeditionary Quds Force there.

Continued on Page 2

India in touch with Iran

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is in touch with Iran to secure the release of 17 Indians on board an Israeli-linked cargo ship that was seized by the Iranian military near the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday amid increasing fears of an Iranian attack on Israel. Official sources said India has taken up the matter with Iranian authorities through diplomatic channels, both in

Tehran and in Delhi, to ensure the welfare and early release of the Indian crew of the cargo ship 'MSC Aries'.

The Iranian action came amid heightened fears that Tehran may launch an attack on Israel in retaliation to a strike on the Iranian consulate in Syria 12 days ago. Iran blamed Israel for the strike.

2

KCR: BJP triggering 'religious madness'

BRS chief slams it for misusing agencies like ED

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Launching a sharp attack against the BJP, BRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao on Saturday accused the saffron party of triggering a "religious madness" for political gains and misusing Central agencies like the ED to intimidate opposition leaders.

Rao, who addressed a BRS rally for Lok Sabha polls at Chevella near here, also hit out at the Congress government in Telangana for its alleged failure to implement its election promises and to ensure uninterrupted supply of water and electricity.

"The BJP has been in power for 10 years... Except raising emotions and triggering a religious madness, did a single good work happened during the BJP regime for any section of society or poor," Rao, also known as KCR, asked.

"What is happening in the country today? You will join our party



(BJP) or go to jail? Either Modi or ED? Is this BJP? Is this politics? Is this the way to take the country forward? Is this the way to destroy democracy everywhere? You have to think about it. We should not vote blindly," the former chief minister said.

The BJP-led government at the Centre, during the last 10 years, sanctioned 157 medical colleges in the country but did not set up even

a single medical college in Telangana though he had written "100 letters" to the Centre in this regard when he was chief minister, he claimed.

The NDA government also did not establish Navodaya schools in Telangana after the formation of new districts in the state, he said.

Attacking the government further, he claimed that a union minister had commented that Telangana people should eat broken rice when BRS leaders sought the Centre to purchase the paddy produced in the state.

"You have to decide whether we should vote for BJP that has asked us to eat broken rice," he said.

2

KK blames BRS for splitting his family

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress leader K. Keshava Rao cried showing his son Viplav Kumar's message to the media on Saturday. Keshava Rao's son Viplav Kumar had sent a message saying, "Today on this day of Ugadi, ur last child is dead."

Keshava Rao said that he did not get anything from the BRS. "However, my family split due to the BRS," he said.

He said that he was considered a senior leader in the Congress. However, he didn't get that recognition in the BRS although he was a senior in the BRS too. The BRS didn't give me a chairman post when I asked for it, Keshava Rao said. The BRS didn't give a MLC post to my son Viplav, he said.

AP CM Jagan hurt in stone attack

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy encountered a distressing incident during his 'Memantha Siddham' bus yatra at Ajit Singh Nagar in Vijayawada when unidentified assailants attacked his bus with stones from a catapult. The Chief Minister, along with YSRCP leaders, was atop the bus, responding to supporters when miscreants hurled stones towards them. One of the stones struck the Chief Minister on his fore-

head, just above his left eye, causing a minor injury. MLA Vellampalli Srinivas, who accompanied the CM, also sustained a minor injury in the incident.

Despite the unexpected attack, immediate medical aid was administered to the Chief Minister and the MLA inside the bus. Despite the injury, Jagan Mohan Reddy displayed resilience and decided to continue his bus yatra after receiving first aid.

2

Spl drive to repair hand pumps, pumpsets & pipelines

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government undertook a special drive to repair hand pumps, pump sets and pipelines.

Sandeep Kumar Sultania, the Principal Secretary of the Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Department said that steps are being taken so that there will be no problems in supplying drinking water to the public.

He said that 19,605 hand pumps, 14,708 single phase 5 HP pump sets, 605 fresh water wells and 662 km intra-pipeline repairs were undertaken under the special drive across the state with an outlay of Rs 100 crore. Rs 3.54 crore was sanctioned to

19,605 HAND PUMPS REPAIRED ACROSS STATE



FILE PHOTO

Sandeep Kumar Sultania, the Principal Secretary of the Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Department said that steps are being taken so that there will be no problems in supplying drinking water to the public.

Vikarabad district and 1,044 pump sets and 495 hand pumps were repaired. He said that Mission Bhagiratha is providing fresh water to every house-

hold through 37,002 OHSRs in 23,975 villages across the state. He said that OHSR chlorination is done once every 10 days and provides clean fresh

water to the people.

District Collector C. Narayana Reddy, Additional Collector Rahul Sharma and the Principal Secretary

inspected the pump house which provides drinking water from the Kagna River near Tandur during their Vikarabad district tour on Saturday. Later addressing a press conference, he said that drinking water supply is very important. Keeping that in mind, officials are giving high priority to supplying drinking water and are monitoring at the field level and taking all precautions to prevent drinking water shortage. He said that the authorities are working with plans to take alternative measures on a war footing immediately if there is a water crisis anywhere so that people do not face problems.

2**OBTUSE ANGLE**



Balmoor Venkat getting too big for his boots?

The upper house, at least in good old days, symbolised grey eminence. Over the years, the decline in standards of public discourse among netas has started reflecting there too. The latest stormy petrel to rile others is National Students of India (NSUI) state unit president Balmoor Venkat who, as MLC, has been getting too big for his boots. Power seems to have gone to his head upon becoming MLC. Going by his arrogant behavior while touring the state in his capacity as NSUI chief; people say he thinks he is deputising for Revanth Reddy. Not just in terms of accessibility but also his words do not befit his stature. During a meeting in Nizamabad, Venkat went all-out to slam Dharmapuri Arvind, calling him 'bald and a mad dog'. Politics apart, Arvind is a Member of Parliament from Nizamabad, who had won against former CM K Chandrasekhar Rao's daughter K Kavitha. Venkat went on to say: "We are enough to answer him". In fact, even a person within the Congress said: "It is difficult to get hold of him". At one point, Revanth Reddy had said the Legislative Council "looks like an Irani cafe" and that it needs some intellectuals. Alas! It looks like Venkat is out to make an Irani cafe look far better!

Revanth doesn't want to be labelled Babu's disciple

It appears that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy no longer wants to be labelled as a 'disciple' of former CM and TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu. Although he has become the Chief Minister in his own right; much to his chagrin, his detractors keep pointing to

without fail. As Shobhaa De describes in her novel Sethji, "Indian politicians are smart, canny and wily. They dress to woo voters. White works. White is the ultimate sartorial statement". The problem arises when brats and henchmen of the netas, dutifully dressed in white, accompany their leaders, but are not really welcome at these functions. The host will have a tough time drawing the line among the white-clad gentry. By default, the white-clad guests will override bandhuvulu and family friends when it comes to paying special attention. Few hosts manage to screen the

REPORTERS' DIARY

his TDP roots. The other day, he took serious note of media reports that suggested he met Chandrababu at the airport, and sent legal notices to the media outlets concerned. Revanth has been thinking along the lines of AP Chief Minister Jaganmohan Reddy when it comes to administration, be it reviewing Power Purchase Agreements, reorganisation of districts, replicating AP volunteer system as Indiramma committees, or clearing pending bills to media houses. It is a different matter that, should the TDP-JSP-BJP alliance win in Andhra Pradesh, he will have a lot more to brace up for.

Will Raghu say 'Ram Ram' to politics?

Realpolitik seems to be in full play in the politics of Andhra Pradesh. Member of Parliament Raghuram Krishnam Raju, who switched to Telugu Desam Party after winning the 2019 LS polls on YSRCP ticket and later became a bitter critic of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, is in a predicament now. He seems to have become dispensable for TDP supremo and former CM N Chandrababu Naidu. For, there is talk that Raghuram could be given the ticket for the Undi Assembly seat. This has incensed sitting MLA Ramaraju, who has indicated that he would quit the party if he is disturbed from his seat. But insiders know that all this is part of CBN's drama to convince Raghuram that he had tried to spare Undi ticket but could not convince Ramaraju to give up his seat. So, people say, Raghuram has only one option: say 'Ram Ram' to politics.

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

Not everything that's white is milk

Politicians of all hues prefer to wear white traditional garments, suggesting austerity and purity. Of late, scribes with political ambitions have also adopted this sartorial style statement to achieve their aims and some have succeeded. Now, ahead of the elections it has become a fashion for common people to invite netas to all kinds of functions - marriage, switch from half-saree to saree, thread ceremony or whatever-so that they can bask in the reflected glory. It is simply because the bigger the neta, the more the glare of the media on the function. Given their hunger for votes, invited politicians make it point to attend these functions

Crediting Sunil Kanugolu is hurting brainy Cong leaders

Right or wrong, political strategist Sunil Kanugolu has been bagging credits, reportedly even for things done by Congress leaders. So, there is heartburn among brainy Congress leaders when the opposition credits Sunil for proven strategies to which they had contributed. A party leader said: "It is like people are assuming we have stopped using our brains. But they take care of 'Aappanna Hastham'. Even for our everyday efforts, he gets the credit," lamented a Congress leader. "There is more to Congress than Kanugolu. It is an Opposition tactic to demoralise us," said another leader.

BJP to release poll manifesto today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP will release its manifesto - Sankalp Patra - for the Lok Sabha polls on Sunday, with its planks of welfare and development besides a roadmap for 'viksit Bharat' expected to figure prominently in its election agenda. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other senior leaders of the party are expected to attend the unveiling of the manifesto at the party headquarters that coincides with the birth anniversary of B R Ambedkar, a towering leader from the Dalit community and an architect of the Indian Constitution.

Where is film actress Vijayashanthi nowadays?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Criticising the BJP harshly, film actress Vijayashanthi joined the Congress before the Assembly elections. However, Vijayashanthi is not active in the Congress although she was active in the BJP. Vijayashanthi was not given any post after she joined the Congress. The party did not even use her services during the 2023 Assembly elections. But Vijayashanthi criticised the BRS arty severely during the Assembly elections. In fact, Vijayashanthi expressed happi-

ness at the Congress defeating the BRS.

Vijayashanthi is not active even on social media these days. Before the Assembly elections she had expressed her willingness to contest to the LS from Medak from where she was elected as an MP earlier. But the party gave the Medak ticket to Neelam Madhu. Interestingly, Vijayashanthi did not apply for the ticket and the reasons for that are not known. Vijayashanthi is not coming to the Gandhi Bhavan as she is not a member of any TPC committee.

2BHK SCHEME

People stage protest at BRS candidate's house

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A group of applicants of the double-bedroom housing scheme staged a protest on Saturday at the residence of BRS candidate Nivedita who is contesting in the Secunderabad Cantonment Assembly by-election. Around 30 people reached her home and said that her family had cheated them after collecting money to provide houses at Marredpally.

Spl drive to...

Continued from page 1

He said that repairs of hand pumps, bore motors and pipelines will be taken up to restore water supply. He said that all available resources are being fully utilized and water is being supplied through tankers wherever required.

He said that orders have been given to officers of the Animal Husbandry Department to arrange water troughs for cattle in villages.

He said that steps would be taken to increase the capacity of 2.5 MLD of good water from the Kagna Nadi intake well to the villages of Kodangal and Yalala mandals.

KCR: BJP triggering...

Continued from page 1

The NDA government (in 2014) handed over seven mandals of Telangana and also the Sileru power project to Andhra Pradesh (at the time of bifurcation of undivided AP), he said.

It also did not implement the assurances made to Telangana in the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act like establishment of a steel plant and railway coach factory, he added.

Hitting out at the ruling Congress government in the state, Rao said during his previous tenure, he had implemented 'Dalit Bandhu' scheme (grant of Rs 10 lakh per family) and the Congress had promised Rs 12 lakh per family ahead of the assembly elections last year.

Alleging that the state gov-

ernment is not implementing the scheme now, he threatened to undertake a protest at the Ambedkar statue near state Secretariat with the 1.30 lakh beneficiaries who have been sanctioned the Dalit Bandhu benefit during the BRS regime to ensure that they receive the fund. Charging that power and water shortage are the order of the day due to the inefficiency of the Congress government, Rao said a strong opposition is essential to make the government implement its promises.

"Only if you whip a hunter, all your works will be done. Otherwise, they (ruling Congress) will say that people have made them victorious though they did not do anything for people... That's why BRS should win. It (BRS) should act like an elephant goad," he said.

BRS chief KCR warns of protest for Dalit Bandhu

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS supremo KCR said that he would stage a protest at the Ambedkar Statue if Dalit Bandhu funds are not released to beneficiaries.

"The Congress said it will give Rs 12 lakhs to Dalits. Now it is not giving even Rs 10 lakhs. We sanctioned Dalit Bandhu funds to 1.30 lakh Dalits. But the Congress is not giving it, froze accounts, stopped proceedings and took back the money. I am warning the government that I will take up a Deeksha with 1.30 lakh Dalits at the 125 feet Ambedkar Statue," he said.

KCR said that the BRS needs to win all seats. "It is simple logic. When there is a strong opposition and if you give a shock to the government your work will get done. If not they won't give you what was promised. If you make them win, they will say despite not implementing promises we won and so we won't do it," he said.

KCR said that the BRS will



always be there for Telangana and its people.

Speaking about the BJP he said, "The BJP is in power in this country for 10 years. Apart from flaring up emotions and raising religious frenzy what good has it done? What is the price of petrol? What is the price of diesel? Will you join our party or go to jail? It is either the ED or Modi. That is the BJP's politics. Is this the way to take the country forward? Is this the way to run a democracy?"

"If you vote for the BJP meters will be installed on agriculture pumps. He threatened me to install meters, but I didn't," he said.

He said, "I warn the state government to buy every grain. We will not let you go."

He said that there are only looties and no scooties for girls. "Why has real estate crashed? Who are the brokers and jokers behind this?" he said.

Speaking at the Chevella meeting, KCR said, "Is Ranjith Reddy a sunflower to turn to wherever there is power? We have given him opportunities but still he left the party. Give a strong answer to people who change parties."

KCR said that in the last four months, it has become clear that the Congress government has no clear policy on anything. "They don't have the expertise to use our resources," he said.

"They said they will give one tula gold as part of Kalyana Lakshmi, but can't this government find gold," he said.

He said that people needed a hunter to question the Congress and called upon people to vote for Kasani Gnaneshwa.

BRS Venkatrami dismisses phone-tapping charges

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS's LS candidate, P Venkatrami Reddy, said that the BJP and the Congress were giving leaks to the media and circulating fake news against him.

He said they are engaged in shameful acts as they do not have the strength to fight him in the upcoming LS elections. "These parties are spreading the story that money was transferred to me. At that time I was an MLC and I did not contest anywhere," he said.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Government Whip Adi Srinivas asked BRS Working President

KT Rama Rao to decide the place and time for his lie detector test as they are ready to make arrangements for that.

Srinivas said that KTR must attend the tests and should not back out after arrangements are made.

Speaking to the media at the Gandhi Bhavan along with Sircilla Congress in-charge

KK Mahender Reddy on Saturday, he said that KTR had set up a war room in Sircilla for phone tapping.

Srinivas said that KTR defeated Congress candidate KK Mahender Reddy in the Assembly elections using info gained from phone tapping.

He said that BRS leaders had tapped the phones of many people for their political needs and had also threatened opponents using phone-tapping info.

Modi can win 214 to...

Continued from page 1

Gujarat has 26 MPs and they have seven Cabinet ministers. In UP, they have 62 MPs and 12 are Cabinet ministers. From the Prime Minister to portfolios like Defence and Home, everything has been taken over by people from the North. The PM, the Vice-President, the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha

Deputy Chairperson are all from the North. Are we in the South not part of this nation?" he said.

"There are 129 Lok Sabha seats in the South. In Karnataka, they can win at the most 10 to 12 seats and in Telangana they can win only two seats this time compared to four in 2019. Last time, the BJP won 303 seats by scoring sweeping wins in

Will make TG role model in improving Dalits' lives: CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy paid tributes to the 'Father of Indian Constitution' Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar on his 133rd birth anniversary which falls on Sunday (April 14).

The Chief Minister said the government is striving to make Telangana a role model for the country in improving the condition of Dalits.

The government will also implement a special plan for the comprehensive development of SCs and STs and to improve their living standards.

The Chief Minister hailed Ambedkar as a great man who tried to empower the weaker sections and women. The CM said that Ambedkar envisioned the future of the country, framed the Constitution and became an inspiration for future generations. The CM remembered the services rendered by Ambedkar for laying a strong foundation for the development of the country.

BJP will win Indian Political League with 400 seats: Sanjay

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP will win the ongoing Indian Political League (IPL) with 400 seats, BJP General Secretary Bandi Sanjay Kumar said.

He said that the Telangana Political League (TPL) started in Telangana and the BJP team is rushing forward under the leadership of G. Kishan Reddy.

Addressing Booth Sankalp Abhiyan on Saturday, Sanjay said the Congress is not in a position to find members for its team yet.

CBI FIR against...

Continued from page 1

Megha Engineering had emerged as the second-biggest buyer of electoral bonds and donated the highest amount of about Rs 586 crore to the BJP, according to the data released by the Election Commission on March 21. The company also donated Rs 195 crore to BRS, Rs 85 crore to DMK, and Rs 37 crore to YSRCP. The TDP got about Rs 25 crore from the company, while the Congress

got Rs 17 crore. The JD-S, Jana Sena Party and the JD-U got smaller sums ranging from Rs 5 crore to Rs 10 crore. According to the FIR made public on Saturday, the CBI had registered a preliminary enquiry on August 10, 2023 about the alleged bribery in Rs 315 crore project related to works of intake well and pump house and cross-country pipeline at the integrated steel plant Jagdalpur which was awarded to the company.

Malkajgiri will decide ...

Continued from page 1

A BJP source said, "If he can win the Malkajgiri seat, setting aside seasoned politicians like Muralidhar Rao, despite defeat in two places, he might also become the BJP state president."

It is reliably learnt that

AP CM Jagan...

Continued from page 1

This incident, occurring amid his Memantha Siddham roadshow, understandably caused concern and commotion within YSRCP circles. Local YSRCP leaders in Vijayawada have raised suspicions regarding the involvement of opposition factions, particularly the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), in the attack. However, no concrete evidence has been presented to confirm these allegations, and the attackers' identities remain unknown. The incident has prompted broader discussions about public figures' safety and the region's escalating political rivalries. Law enforcement authorities are actively investigating the matter to identify the culprits and prevent similar occurrences. The attack on CM Jagan has elicited widespread condemnation, with calls for maintaining peaceful conduct in politics and upholding the principles of the democratic process.

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170 more water tankers to be deployed to deliver water in city

Principal Secretary for Municipal Administration Dana Kishore held a review with officials at HMWSSB on Saturday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) will procure 170 more water tankers to meet the demand in the city.

Principal Secretary for Municipal Administration and Urban Development Dana Kishore said that 5,000-litre capacity tankers will be on the roads soon. Also has suggested to the board to make plans to procure 70 mini tankers with a capacity of 2,500 litre tankers to supply water to colonies, slums and areas where complaints of polluted water emanated.

A review was conducted at the HMWSSB head office on drinking water and tanker supply with the board officials on Saturday. Dana Kishore said that arrangements are being made to use an additional 20 million liters per day



Principal Secretary for Municipal Administration and Urban Development Dana Kishore speaking at a review meeting at Water Board office on Saturday

(MLD) of water from the twin reservoirs for the drinking water needs of the city.

He inquired about section-wise water supply, tanker bookings, delivery, performance of line men. "Line men will be dismissed from their duties if they deliberately obstruct the supply of water to the people. Water supplying and quality

details should be uploaded in the water board application," Dana Kishore mentioned.

Dana Kishore directed the officials to repair the filter beds at Mir Alam and Asif Nagar to purify the water for future needs and search for better places for constructing other water purifying centers. The government directed

the officials to ensure that the tankers deliver water within 12 hours after booking. To reduce the timings the board should install more filling stations, stalls and other plans.

He directed the officials to provide a permanent solution to their problems of Bastis that are getting tankers at the free of cost. It has been revealed that there are more than 13 lakh users in the HMWSSB but out of which only 31,000 people are booking tankers.

101 water kiosks have been installed in the city and those are getting good response from the people. So if it is needed some more will be installed in Hyderabad.

Revenue Director VL. Praveen Kumar, Technical Director Ravi Kumar, Operations Director-2 Swamy, CGMs, GMs, Managers and other officials participated in the meeting.



Cyberabad police raids OYO lodge, arrests 4 gamblers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Special Operation Team (SOT) Madhapur and Gachibowli police jointly raided the Silver Key OYO Lodge in Gachibowli and caught four people playing the card game. The police seized Rs 1,52,000 and seven sets of playing cards from them. Police arrested M Baswaraj, M Srikanth, N Kiran, N Prashanth Reddy. Gachibowli police have been investigating this case.

In another incident, SOT Madhapur Team and Gachibowli Police nabbed a youth at APHB Colony in Gachibowli and seized 250 grams of ganja. In the questioning the accused has confessed that he was selling ganja to daily labourers.

PHONE TAPPING SCAM BRS LS candidate Venkatrami rebuts allegations against him

The BRS leader said that the Congress and BJP came together to spread canards against him because they cannot fight him in election

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharatha Rashtira Samithi (BRS) MP candidate P Venkatrami Reddy said that the BJP and Congress were leaking the probe details of phone tapping case to the media and spreading fake news against him. As they lacked strength to fight in the elections, the Congress and BJP leaders resorted to canards against him.

"Those parties are spreading a story that money was transferred to me. At that time I was an MLC and also I did not even contest in any segment," he said.

"Realising that defeat is inevitable in the elections, both the BJP and Congress parties have joined hands and are making evil plans to defeat me. They have degraded to the level of misleading people and ideologies and values have been left in the air"

"As a government employee and Collector, I have served the people honestly. I entered direct



politics to provide more services as a public servant".

"I neither lie for votes nor do dirty politics. This matter is known to the people of the erst-while Medak district. The BJP and Congress are conspiring together as there is no opportunity to criticise me as I am popular with the people. People are on my side no matter how many tricks and gimmicks they do. People know my goodness. Even now, I am appealing to the Congress BJP candidates of Medak Parliamentary Constituency to stop spreading false news rumors about me", he mentioned. Meanwhile, in the remand report which has been submitted to the Nampally

court on March 29, mentioned that Radha Kishan disputed his Task Force Team during the assembly elections to avoid the seizures by the police, Flying Squad Teams (FST) and Static Surveillance Teams (SST) in the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).

In the confession statement of Radha Kishan Rao in the remand case diary, it has been mentioned that Radha Kishan instructed Task Force SI Sai Kiran to escort Rs 1 crore transaction to Vankat Rami Reddy's close associate Shiva Charan Reddy during assembly elections 2023. Two days later, Sai Kiran gave another Rs 1 crore to the Shiva again in 2023, October last week.

Totally Shiva Charan Reddy received Rs 2 crore at the behest of Venkatrami Reddy. Later the SI refused to do the work as he had become suspicious of this act after Radha Kishan Rao was removed by the Election commission of India (ECI) from the post of Task Force OSD.

468 water coolers installed across 170 stations, says SCR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In order to provide potable drinking water for passengers during summer , the South Central Railway (SCR) has installed 468 water coolers across 170 stations under its network.

"Teams of Officers and staff are monitoring the situation at both Zonal and Divisional levels to ensure provision of clean drinking water to passengers in accordance with established norms. A series of steps are being taken by the railway to ensure this. Joint meetings are being conducted with supervisors of Engineering and Electrical departments to review the demand and supply capacities of watering at all the stations, for ensuring adequate supply," said a press release from the SCR.

The authority has also set up a round the clock monitoring system through the Divisional



water kiosk

Central Control office. Respective supervisors are being contacted immediately by Central control in case of any issue. To ensure quality supply of water, Periodical water quality tests are being conducted at regular intervals. Automatic water supply systems (CAMTECH) have been pro-

vided at Major stations (wherever coach watering to be done) to ensure supply of water within the least possible time. Teams are being continually deployed with respective supervisors to rectify the working of water taps in stations. The group water pedestal on Platforms (located near General coaches) have been given special attention.

At stations where the canal water is the main source of supply, Storage tanks have been augmented to cope up with the demand. At other locations, all the storage tanks (both HL & GLRs) are being continually monitored to ensure adequate availability of water.

Supplementation of water supply from Local municipalities is also planned in the station wherever required. Rain water pits developed at several stations across the Zone for enhancing ground water potential are also being continuously monitored.

Cyber police arrest caterer for extortion

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cybercrime unit of the Hyderabad police on April 12 arrested a man allegedly involved in stalking and extortion on the pretext of catering. The accused was identified as M Vunnuru Swamy (34), a resident of Yousufguda. He originally hailed from Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh.

On April 6, the complainant approached the Cybercrime unit stating that he had contacted Swamy through just dial in order to make catering arrangements for his reception at a function hall at Bowenpally.

A person identified as Venkat agreed to arrange food for 13 persons at Rs 550 per head. The total cost was Rs 7,150. The complainant shared his contact details along with that of a friend with the caterer in case of an emergency.

At the end of the reception, Swamy demanded Rs 15,000 to

which the groom did not agree. The accused made phone calls to the groom's family and abused them, he also created a fake Facebook profile of the complainant's wife, the complainant's wife. Swamy leaked contact details of the family on Facebook and spread fake news that they operated a brothel.

The complainant and his family began receiving calls and were harassed. Swamy used three mobile numbers in order to abuse the complainant and his wife; Swamy also wrote contact details of the victim and his wife in public toilets at Madhuranagar and Ameerpet. The complainant's wife was referred to as a call girl. The issue escalated as the victim and his wife began receiving calls from unknown numbers and were subjected to abuse and harassment. Following the complaint, the cybercrime unit launched an investigation and nabbed the accused.

Two held for cyber fraud worth Rs 9.44 lakh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cybercrime unit of the Hyderabad police on April 11 arrested two persons involved in an investment fraud worth Rs 9,44, 492.

The accused were identified as Noushad Ch and Ahammed Kabeer Ch, both natives of Kerala.

They cheated the gullible people by promising high returns on investments. In January this year, a complaint from Hyderabad approached the Cybercrime unit stating that the accused contacted him through telegram, offering a part time job. The accused sent a link to the victim, upon opening it, he was given a few tasks such as 5 star ratings for international companies. Initially, the money was credited to the victim's bank account. The complainant lost the amount



as the accused did not pay anything, a case was registered against the accused.

In 2021, Naushad and Ahmed met Isac and Taher Ali to seek help regarding such offences. Then they created accounts using a fake KYC. They transferred the money from the victims and later withdrew the same. Naushad transferred the money into his associates

account and fled to Dubai. After that they converted the INR to USD by crypto exchange platforms. Accused persons supplied 18 accounts and nearly 26 crores fraud transactions occurred in these accounts.

The police seized 15 cheque books , eight debit cards, five mobile phones and two fake rubber stamps from the accused.

52 firearms surrendered in a day: DEO Ronald Rose

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Following the implementation of Election code issued by the Election Commission of India, 52 licensed Firearms were surrendered in a single day in the district. A significant cash of Rs.12,17,000 were seized during a 24-hour period inspection from Friday 6 am to Saturday 6 am. Other items valued at Rs.63,307 and 86.07 liters of liquor are also seized, reported, District Election Officer Ronald Rose. He said, 14 complaints related to cash and other items were resolved, with nine FIRs registered.

Overall, the district has witnessed a huge number of seizures, totaling Rs.13,45,36,960 in cash and Rs.1,88,61,346 worth of other goods. In the same way, 160 cases were registered, resulting in the arrest of 155 individuals. Additionally, 19,988.77 liters of liquor were seized, and 326 complaints were addressed. 214 FIRs were registered along with seizure of 2,593 licensed firearms.

The efforts of the Flying squad teams led to the seizure of Rs 2,92,76,740 in cash, Rs. 10,36,80,530 by the Police and IT, and Rs.15,79,690 by Special Surveillance Teams (SST) respectively.

Osteotomy most effective knee surgery, say experts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Orthopaedic doctors from Hyderabad and around the world suggest that Osteotomy is most effective knee surgery.

"Osteotomy is related to the preservation of the knee joint rather than replacing it especially for younger and active patients. The High Tibial Osteotomy aims to prolong the life of partially damaged knees and potentially avoid the need for knee replacement," said Dr K Raghuvver Reddy, Organising Secretary of the Sai Institute of Sports injury and Arthroscopy.

Speaking on the sidelines of the two-day Knee joint Preservation Live Surgery workshop, he further said, "Joints are affected due to mild injuries, patients experience swelling for one or two months after which the pain



Dr K Raghuvver Reddy and Dr Adrian Wilson

reduces. However, the patient can't take up demanding tasks such as exercising.

The knee cartilage starts wearing out from the age of 30 and is worn out by 70-80 years. However in case injury, overweight, it could also be genetic wherein this people could also suffer from arthritis. In cases where patients need to be active, realignment

procedure is suggested. For general patients, the recovery period post osteotomy is 6-12 weeks while sports persons may take one year to heal."

Dr Kristian Kley from Germany said, "In several countries similar events are taking place wherein people have opted for Osteotomy. The awareness regarding the surgery has increased mani-

fold. It is an alternative to knee replacement. Datasets reveal that 1/3 of knee replacement surgeries are bound to fail within four years. Someone who is into sports and opts for knee replacement is at risk of damaging the knee in four years and it becomes a major problem since it is another replacement." He further said, "Happiness is a factor considered while studying the impact of joint replacement.

In countries, including India, US UK or any other for that matter. As many as 10 per cent of patients would be absolutely delighted , 70 % of the patients would experience some pain and say it doesn't feel completely normal but I will get the other knee operated on when it needs to be. 20 % would say it is worse since the actual issue with the knee isn't treated."

People stage protest for 2BHK houses in Sec'bad Cantonment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A group of applicants of the double bed-room housing scheme staged a protest at the residence of the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) candidate for Secunderabad Cantonment Assembly by-election Nivedita on Saturday.

Around 30 people reached her home and alleged that they were cheated by her family after collecting money to provide houses at Marredpally.

They claimed that they gave Rs1.40 crore to G Sayanna in the presence of his

daughters. Now they demanded that the MLA candidate return their money.

BRS MLA G Sayanna passed away on February 19 last year due to illness. His daughter Nanditha won in Assembly elections, which were held in November 2023. After a few months of the elections, Nanditha died in a car accident on February 23.

After her death the ECI gave notification for the Secunderabad Cantonment Assembly constituency and the BRS announced the candidature of Nanditha's sister Niveditha for the by-election from that segment.

BRS' prospects in LS poll are not bright: People's Pulse

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

People's Pulse director Dileep Reddy said that when compared with the November 2023 situation, BRS prospects are not bright.

"The party may get two or three seats in the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. The psychologists suggested that ideological politics have gone into the backseat and opportunistic politics came", he pointed.

On Saturday People's Pulse director Dileep Reddy, Osmania University former Journalism department Head of the Department Padmaja Shaw, Siasat

consulting editor Mir Ayoob Ali Khan participated in a discussion on what factors will determine how Telangana votes in 2024. Dileep Reddy said that



Dileep Reddy

a universal 'battleground' scenario, where direct cash transfers to accounts have had unintended economic consequences. However, there's a growing trend of voters dissociating financial incentives from their electoral decisions, a positive shift. The Munugodu by-election, one of the costliest globally, saw each political party spending around Rs 700 crores.

Padmaja Shaw said that The political landscape is abuzz with the aftermath of a regional party's loss, raising questions

about the future of BRS and the influence of big money in elections. "While voters accepting gifts from all parties, ultimately rely on the secret ballot to vote according to their conscience, indicating a keen awareness of ground realities", she added.

She said that the elections saw a surge in liquor distribution, particularly among the youth, causing distress among mothers. The Dalit community expressed cynicism, prioritising employment over the Ayodhya issue, despite attempts by local BJP cadres to sway them with organized trips. Mir Ayoob Ali Khan said that the Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM) faces limitations in expanding beyond seven seats, with Amjadullah Khan emerging as a significant competitor in Yakutpura.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based laptops to make work from home easy, featuring with automatic zooming and cropping, maintaining eye contact during video calls, and background blur and AI noise removal for smoother collaboration. These laptops comes with Built-in AI with Otter.ai which enhances Presence Sensing and boosts privacy features, automatically locking the screen and dimming it when someone is nearby or standing behind.

Unveiling OMEN Transcend 14 and HP Envy x360 14. Both series comes with Intel® Core™ Ultra processors, advancing the gaming and creation experiences for users. These are the first lightweight designed laptops which are sleek and stylish. OMEN Transcend 14 is HP's first AI-enhanced OMEN



Category Manager, Consumer PC, HP India, T Ganesh unveiling AI-based Laptops in Hyderabad on Saturday

Laptop, comes with enhanced gaming experience with AI. Designed for gamers engaged in both gaming and content creation, the OMEN Transcend 14 features NVIDIA® GeForce RTX™ 4060 graphics, powering AI features for accelerated gameplay and enhanced graphics. Equipped with Intel Core Ultra processors, it effortlessly

handles the latest games and compute-intensive tasks. Additionally, it offers both local AI capabilities via Intel® and NVIDIA® processors, as well as built-in AI with Otter.ai for features like live transcripts and real-time captions, auto-frame and eye contact during meetings and classes.

It is a 14-inch gaming laptop

which maintains peak performance, the OMEN Transcend 14 comprises a new cooling system co-engineered with Intel. Utilizing a vapor chamber, the chassis creates a pressurized zone to push out heat through the rear vents, making it the coolest 14-inch gaming laptop globally.

World's First Gaming Laptop with Audio tuned by HyperX, Featuring HP's lattice-less keyboard design, inspired by HyperX's pudding caps, providing a bright glowing border to each key.

HP Envy x360 14, which is a seamless creation with AI. The Envy 14 laptops feature Intel® Core™ Ultra processors, facilitating a high-end creation experience with apps like Adobe Photoshop. With a Neural Processing Unit (NPU), they achieve 65% battery optimization for non-stop creativity and productivity. The Envy

x360 14 is the first laptop with a Microsoft CoPilot button for generative AI features. With a touch of a button, features like search, content generation and more features will be at your hand. HP Envy x360 14, also comes with a magnetic tilt pen for content creation and notes.

On launching Hewlett-Packard (HP) lineup of AI-enhanced laptops in Hyderabad, Category Manager, Consumer PC, HP India, T.Ganesh emphasized, "Our commitment at HP is to deliver the best experience to our customers. Our new lineup, including the OMEN Transcend 14 and HP Envy x360 14, is equipped with AI-enhancements designed to improve productivity. The OMEN Transcend 14 offers high-end gaming experiences with top-notch graphics and personalized gameplay through its AI-enhanced features."



PART-I

Would Ambedkar have agreed with CAA?

The father of the Constitution Dr. BR Ambedkar would not have agreed with the *Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA)*. For, it goes against the spirit of *The Citizenship Act of 1955*, which, *inter alia*, explains how someone can become a citizen and how citizenship can be taken away, ensuring that the process is fair and not based on religion. While certain previous laws and the Constitution studiously kept citizenship separate from religion, the CAA goes against this by bringing religious discrimination into the process of acquiring citizenship.

There are seven important Articles which deal with the 'institution of citizenship'. Ambedkar totally supported this constitutional foundation of Indian citizenship, as outlined in Articles 5 to 11 of the Constitution of India, providing various paths for individuals to acquire citizenship, such as by birth, descent, naturalization, registration, or territorial incorporation. Noticeably, religion is not a cri-

terion in any of these methods. *The Citizenship Act of 1955* further elaborates on the acquisition and termination of citizenship, ensuring that the process remains secular and non-discriminatory.

Migration from Pakistan was the basic issue of citizenship with India and other neighbors. Article 6 gave rights of citizenship to persons who had migrated to India from Pakistan at the commencement of the Constitution if he or either of his parents or any of his grand-parents was born in India as defined in the *Government of India Act, 1935* and in case where such person had so migrated before 19th July 1948 and had since been ordinarily resident in India, or where he had migrated after that date, and was granted citizenship on his application before the commencement of the Constitution. Such a person should have been a resident of India for at least six months immediately preceding the date of application.

Why has there been a debate

There are seven important Articles which deal with the 'institution of citizenship'. Ambedkar totally supported this constitutional foundation of Indian citizenship, as outlined in Articles 5 to 11 of the Constitution of India, providing various paths for individuals to acquire citizenship, such as by birth, descent, naturalization, registration, or territorial incorporation. Noticeably, religion is not a criterion in any of these methods.

on CAA for the last four years, and heartburn over the problematic Rules for CAA in 2024, though the law was changed in 2019? There are several doubts and myths underpinning these. There have been many 'clarifications' from bureaucrats and official spokespersons, apart from the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister. Still,

doubts are persisting. We need to clear the mist. To begin with, let us deal with three great claims out of the many.

There are at least 10 distinct claims that can easily be proved baseless. However, by the time the reader verifies the claim, the untruth would travel long and IT or social media managers, print and electronic media



PROF MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR ACHARYULU
Dean, Mahindra University, Hyderabad

ly separate and it is false to link the two'- PM and others.

The truth: They are closely connected. In April 2019, Home Minister, Amit Shah said: "*First the CAB will come. All refugees will get citizenship. Then NRC will come. This is why refugees should not worry, but infiltrators should. Understand the chronology — CAB will come and then NRC. NRC is not just for Bengal, it's for the entire country.*"

In December 9, 2019, Amit Shah said in Parliament that a nationwide NRC would follow the passing of the CAA. During the debate on CAA in Lok Sabha, he said, "We will bring the NRC across the country. Not a single infiltrator will be spared." On December 19, 2019, JP Nadda, BJP national president, stated that the CAA would be implemented and, "going forward, NRC also will be brought in".

He continued, "India is marching ahead under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and will continue to do so. *The*

Citizenship (Amendment) Act will be implemented; so will the NRC in future."

The second claim: "I want to let the 130 crore citizens of India know that since my government has come to power, since 2014 there has been no discussion on NRC anywhere" – PM said on December 22.

The truth: On June 20, 2019, the President, while addressing joint session of Parliament said: "*Illegal infiltrators pose a major threat to our internal security. This is leading to social imbalance and putting a huge pressure on limited livelihood opportunities. My government has decided to implement the process of the National Register of Citizens on a priority basis in areas affected by infiltrators... While on the one hand the government is working to identify the infiltrators, on the other, it is also fully committed to protecting the victims of persecution due to their faith.*"

On November 21, 2019

Home Minister, Amit Shah said the same thing in the Rajya Sabha.

The third claim: In December 2019, the Minister of State for Home Affairs said: "A countrywide NRC had not been notified so far and no one should fear."

The truth: The NRC was made part of law in 2003 by amendment to Citizenship Act. It added *Clause 14 a (2), saying: 'The Central government may maintain a National Register of Indian Citizens and for that purpose establish a National Registration Authority. (3) ... The Registrar General of India shall act as the National Registration Authority and he shall function as the Registrar General of Citizen Registration.'* The process to establish NRC was mentioned in the Rules which were adopted in 2003.

Let us deal with some more myths and truths in the next part of the article.

(to be continued)

'BRS, BJP must be punished for deceiving Telangana'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Irrigation Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy said that by winning 14 to 15 seats in the Lok Sabha elections, the Congress would play a significant role in the formation of the next Central Government. Participating in the election campaign of Congress candidate K. Raghuvver Reddy in the Nalgonda Lok Sabha constituency in Devarkonda on Saturday,

Uttam said that the party would win 14 to 15 LS seats.

He claimed that the Congress would retain the Nalgonda seat with the highest majority in the country. Uttam emphasised that the BRS and the BJP have no right to seek votes in the Lok Sabha elections.

"During their 10-year rule, the BRS and the BJP neglected Telangana. Not a single promise made in the Andhra Pradesh



Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy participating in election meeting at Devarkonda under Nalgonda Lok Sabha constituency on Saturday

Reorganisation Act was fulfilled by the Modi Government, while the BRS remained a mute spectator. Similarly, the BRS wasted thousands of crores and pushed Telangana into a debt trap," he said. He said that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi unveiled the party's national manifesto 'Nyay Patra' at a public meeting in Tukuguda on April 6. The Congress emphasises 'Paanch Nyay' or 'five pillars of justice', including

'Yuva Nyay', 'Naari Nyay', 'Kisan Nyay', 'Shramik Nyay', and 'Hissedari Nyay', comprising 25 guarantees.

He announced that the next Congress-led Government at the Centre would fill the nearly 30 lakh vacancies in sanctioned posts at various levels in the Central government. Pointing out that the Congress Government in Telangana has filled almost 30,000 vacancies within 100 days of coming to

power, he assured that the Congress would fill the 30 lakh vacancies. Uttam said that the Congress Government in Telangana has increased the cover under the Aarogyasri Scheme from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh. The Congress Government would provide cashless insurance of up to Rs 25 lakh for universal healthcare.

He said that the national minimum wage would be increased to Rs 400 per day.

MRPS threatens to launch "Go back Congress" stir

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti (MRPS) president Manda Krishna Madiga on Saturday breathed fire on Station Ghanpur MLA Kadiam Srihari who time again harped on values in politics.

He dared Kadiam Srihari to speak about values in politics only after resigning from his Assembly membership as he was elected to the House on BRS ticket and later crossed over to the Congress.

It may be recalled that Krishna Madiga issued a call to the Madigas not to vote for Congress in the forthcoming LS elections. He accused the Congress charging it with duping the Madigas not give at least one Lok Sabha seat to the Madigas, whose population in the state is put at 70 lakh.

The MRPS would wait till April 16 for the Congress to allot one LS seat for Madigas and threatened to launch "Go back Congress" protest across the state.

Harish urges people to teach bitter lesson to Cong, BJP

PNS ■ DAULTABAD

Former minister T Harish Rao has appealed to the voters to teach a befitting lesson to the Congress and BJP which failed miserably to come to the rescue of the people.

He was addressing the BRS youth at the Daultabad constituency level meeting held here on Saturday, along with MLA Kotha Prabhakar Reddy and Medak BRS Lok Sabha candidate P Venkatrama Reddy.

The BJP had done nothing to the people in spite of remaining in power at the Centre for 10 years and what happened to its promise of creation of 2 crore jobs annually, he questioned.

The BJP duped the people by promising to bring the black money from foreign banks and credit it into the accounts of people. It did nothing to improve the lot of the poor, but increased the



prices of LPG, petrol and diesel, he said.

The Dabbaka people know about the glib-tongued Raghunandan Rao, BJP candidate, he said.

The Congress came to power promising to implement six guarantees. What happened to the implementation of the promise of Rs 2 lakh loan waiver for the farmers and what about the payment of Rs 500 per quintal as bonus for all crops.

En route to Daultabad, he said, he spoke to woman farmers at Mirdoddi and learnt from them that no

procurement of paddy has begun, he said dubbing payment of Rs 2500 per month to women under Maha Lakshmi scheme and payment of unemployment allowance to the jobless youth as bogus.

Introducing the LS candidate P Venkatram Reddy to the voters, Harish Rao said that he was well known in the constituency as he had worked as joint collector and collector and played a crucial role in development of the region.

He lauded him as a great person who came to the rescue of the orphaned girls Radha and Radhika and helped them receive good education and got them married. Therefore, he sought voter support to Venkatram Reddy.

MLA Kotha Prabhakar Reddy appealed to the party rank and file to work for the grand victory of the Medak MP candidate.

Mandal birth anniversary celebration

PNS ■ NALGONDA

BC Welfare Association Youth on Saturday celebrated birth anniversary of BP Mandal here. Mandl headed the second Backward Classes Commission set up during Jatana government in 1978.

Backward Classes Welfare Association president Manasa Prasannna, while speaking on the occasion, said that Mandal had helped the Backward Classes secure reservations. The Commission headed by Mandal said that Backward Classes accounted for 52 per cent of the population.

It submitted a 40-point report to the government on Dec 31, 1980, suggesting 27 per cent reservation for them



BC Welfare Association president Mandal Prasannna, along with Association members, paying tributes at BJP Mandal statue in Nalgonda on Saturday

in education and jobs. One of them, this 27% OBC reservation was also implemented by the VP Singh government.

MEA misleading people on China, says Asaduddin

All India Majlis-e- Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) President and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi on Saturday said that the External Affairs Minister is misleading people about the Chinese military's presence in India.

Owaisi's response came following Subhramanyam Jaishankar's statement in which he said, "China has not occupied any of India's land, but said that the situation along the Line of Actual Control remains competitive, sensitive and challenging."

The Hyderabad MP took to X and said, "The Minister is playing with words to mislead the people. The Leh SP report

clearly said that our soldiers are unable to go to 26 of the 65 patrolling points in Ladakh. Is that not denial of Indian control of territory by the Chinese?"

Owaisi further asked, "Are the Chinese not blocking Indian soldiers at Depsang so that we are unable to patrol the areas that were being patrolled till 2020? Is that not loss of territory? Why else are we talking to the Chinese militarily and diplomatically? This government has been hiding the truth. It refused to answer my questions in the parliament and did not have any debate in the issue.

If there is nothing to hide, why are journalists not taken

to the frontline in eastern Ladakh as they were in Kargil? The fact of the matter is that since 2020, India has lost control of territory in eastern Ladakh to the Chinese. Our soldiers are unable to patrol many areas and neither Jaishankar nor his boss are asking the Chinese for a return to the status quo ante.

As with Modi's "na koi ghusa hai" statement, China will now use Dr.S.Jaishankar claim to assert that there is no issue in Depsang, Demchok and elsewhere. India will then permanently lose control of territory in Ladakh. That is the cost of misleading statements by the minister."

BRS cadre in utter disarray in Warangal district

PNS ■ HANAMKONDA

The BRS activists in the district are in a state of confusion to whom to support as Congress nominee from Warangal Lok Sabha seat Kadiam Kavya and BJP nominee Aroori Ramesh were in the BRS in the past.

The cadre seem to have been divided in their opinion. Some of the activists seem to be supporting Station Ghanpur MLA Kadiam Sri Hari whose daughter is contesting from Warangal Lok Sabha constituency. It has led to weakening of the party.

By now, several important leaders have deserted the BRS to join either the Congress or the BJP. Other leaders and BRS activists have been quitting the BRS, posing problems to the BRS in the elections.

Former MLA from Wardhannapeta Aroori Ramesh is now BJP candidate from Warangal. During his

stint as MLA in the past 10 years, he developed his own cadres. Upon his defeat in last Assembly elections, he sought Warangal LS ticket from the BRS. However, he received severe opposition from the field level.

He changed his mind and quit the BRS and joined the BJP to try his luck.

As there was a change of guards in Telangana, some of the BRS rank and file joined the Congress. However, Aroori took steps to protect the rest of the cadres and joined the BJP along with them.

Station Ghanpur MLA Kadiam Srihari, who till the other day was with the BRS, joined Congress to get Congress ticket for his daughter Dr Kavya from Warangal seat. Dr Kavya got the Congress ticket. Kadiam Srihari ensured that his followers in the BRS joined the Congress.

LS elections crucial for Cong, BRS & BJP in Telangana

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

The Lok Sabha elections have become crucial for the Congress, the BRS and the BJP in Telangana. It is also personally important to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy wants to strengthen his leadership by winning a majority of the seats in the Lok Sabha elections. BRS supremo KCR wants to revive the old glory of his party by winning a majority of the LS seats. The BJP wants to occupy the second slot in Telangana politics by winning a good number of LS seats.

After the victory in the

Assembly elections, the Congress high command gave a place in its good books to Revanth Reddy and made him the Chief Minister.

Now Revanth Reddy has to show his leadership and continue to keep his name in the good books of the Congress high command.

For this, the Congress has to win a majority of the LS seats. Otherwise, the opposition will say that the people have turned against the Congress in just 100 days after it came to power.

At the same time, dissonance may also start in the Congress against Revanth. So winning a majority of the LS seats has become important to the CM.

After losing power in the Assembly elections many top

leaders are leaving the BRS and the BRS is losing its glamour and party cadres are losing their confidence in KCR. In these circumstances, KCR has to win a majority of LS seats to revive the glory of the BRS and to give confidence to party cadres. If this happens the defections of BRS leaders may also stop.

The BJP leadership wants to use the present situation of the BRS to grab the second slot in Telangana politics. For this, winning a good number of LS seats has become important to the BJP.

Compared to the Congress and the BRS, the BJP has nothing to lose in Telangana if it fails in the Lok Sabha elections except that it would not be able to occupy the second slot.

NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

'YSRCP allotted 50% seats to marginalised sections'

PNS ■ MANGALAGIRI

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has said that 50% of the seats, totalling 200 (175 Assembly and 25 Lok Sabha seats), have been allocated to SC/ST/BC and minority communities by the YSRCP government, marking a historic first in Andhra Pradesh.

During an interaction with members of the handloom weavers' community, CM Jagan emphasised the government's collaboration with international e-commerce platforms to market handloom products. He also underscored the distribution of three sets of uniforms to 44 lakh government school students, with a priority given to handloom weavers.

Expressing gratitude for the support of the handloom weavers, CM Jagan announced initiatives to clear debts amounting to Rs 120 crore in APCO (Andhra Pradesh State Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society) and allocate Rs 460 crore for the development of handloom weavers.

Addressing concerns regarding political representation, CM Jagan criticised Chandrababu Naidu and his son Lokesh for denying tickets to BC community members, despite their significant population. He cited instances

where seats were allocated unfairly, stressing the importance of BC representation in both Mangalagiri and Kuppam.

Highlighting the government's commitment to social welfare, CM Jagan disclosed that 50% of seats in the State are now allocated to marginalised communities.

He also provided statistics showcasing the extensive reach of welfare schemes in Mangalagiri, including benefits received by a vast majority of households and substantial financial allocations for development.

CM Jagan compared the government's performance with the unfulfilled promises of the previous administration, particularly in supporting handloom weavers. He emphasised transparent spending of over Rs 3,706 crore for handloom weavers in the last 58 months and the significant increase in pension distribution. Drawing a contrast with the previous regime's pension distribution, CM Jagan highlighted the government's efforts to provide Rs 3,000 as a pension and ensure doorstep delivery through dedicated volunteers. He reiterated his commitment to following in the footsteps of his father, Y S Rajasekhara Reddy, in prioritizing social welfare initiatives.

CM's aunt raps Sharmila, supports Avinash Reddy

PNS ■ KADAPA

YS Vimala Reddy, Sister of the late YS Rajasekhara Reddy, has voiced her disapproval of her nieces, Sharmila and Sunita, daughters of the YS family, for their continuous accusations against Avinash Reddy in the Vivekananda Reddy murder case, lacking substantial evidence.

Expressing her dismay at the behaviour of the two sisters during a media interaction on Saturday, Vimala emphasized her opposition to the actions of Sharmila and Sunita, stating, "It is distress-



ing to witness members of our own family tarnishing the reputation of the YS family in this manner." Vimala questioned the sisters' intentions, asking, "Do these two sisters have any firsthand knowledge of Avinash's alleged

involvement in Viveka's murder?" She argued against blindly trusting the accusations made against Avinash, highlighting his esteemed position as a leader in Kadapa and his contributions to the region's development.

"Avinash is deeply connected to the people of Kadapa. He tirelessly works for the betterment of the region. Vivekananda Reddy himself supported Avinash's endeavours until his final moments," she remarked, underscoring Avinash's dedication despite facing unjust scrutiny.

Gaming industry doesn't require regulation, says PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The gaming industry does not require any regulation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday while asserting that it must remain free and only then it will boom.

In a free-wheeling interaction with top Indian online gamers on a host of issues about the future as well as the challenges before the e-gaming industry, the prime minister posed questions to the gamers while trying his hands at some of the games.

When a gamer Naman Mathur asked Modi if there was any need for regulations for the gaming sector, he said regulate wouldn't be the right word because it is the government's nature to intervene.

"There are two things -- either you try to impose restrictions under a law or try to understand and mould it based on our country's needs and bring it under an organised and legal structure and uplift



"There are two things -- either you try to impose restrictions under a law or try to understand and mould it based on our country's needs and bring it under an organised and legal structure and uplift its reputation," the prime minister said.

its reputation," the prime minister said.

"My attempt is to uplift the nation to a level that by 2047 the government is out of the lives of

middle-class families in particular. Our life is stuck in paperwork. It is the poor who need the government, the government should be there with them

in difficult times," he added.

Another gamer Animesh Agarwal said the government should recognise esports and gaming as a mainstream sport.

"It is a skill-based gaming and does not involve gambling. Once it is established and understood by all government bodies, including those involved in financial transactions, it will be really beneficial. As you said, the industry does not need a regulation. We should let it grow freely. With a little push, the industry will be ready," he told the prime minister.

To this, Modi replied, "It (esports and gaming) does not require any regulation. It must remain free, only then it will boom."

The prime minister sought to know from the gamers about how they deal with the conflict between gaming and gambling. The gamers also discussed with the prime minister certain terminologies used in the industry such as 'noob' and 'grind'.

Remove drinks, beverages from 'health drinks' category

Govt directs e-commerce firms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has asked all the e-commerce companies to remove drinks and beverages, including Bournvita, from the category of health drinks from their portals.

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), a statutory body constituted under section (3) of the Commission of Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act 2005 after its inquiry under Section 14 of CRPC Act 2005 concluded that there is no 'health drink' defined under FSS Act 2006, rules and regulations submitted by FSSAI and Mondelez India Food Pvt Ltd, the Commerce and Industry Ministry said in an advisory to all e-commerce companies. The order is dated April 10, 2024.

It said that all e-commerce

companies/portals are advised to remove drinks and beverages, including Bournvita, from the category of health drinks from their platforms/sites.

On April 2, food safety standards regulator FSSAI directed all e-commerce food business operators (FBOs) to ensure appropriate categorisation of food products being sold on their websites.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has noted that instances of food products licensed under 'Proprietary Food' with the nearest category Dairy-Based Beverage Mix or Cereal-Based Beverage Mix or Malt-Based Beverage being sold on e-commerce websites under the category Health Drink, Energy Drink, etc, it added.



'India-Mauritius tax pact yet to be ratified, notified'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Income Tax Department on Friday said the amended India-Mauritius protocol on double taxation avoidance agreement is yet to be ratified and notified by the department.

India and Mauritius on March 7, 2024, signed an amendment to the DTAA and included a principal purpose test (PPT) in the pact which aims to curtail tax avoidance by ensuring that treaty benefits are only granted for transactions with a bona fide purpose.

There were concerns that foreign portfolio investments coming via Mauritius would face increased scrutiny by tax authorities. Also, there were apprehensions that past investments could be covered by the amended protocol.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), the I-T department said some concerns have been

raised on the India Mauritius DTAA amended recently.

"In this context, it is clarified that the concerns/queries are premature at the moment since the Protocol is yet to be ratified and notified u/s 90 of the Income-tax Act, 1961.



"As and when the Protocol comes into force, queries, if any, will be addressed, wherever necessary," the I-T department said.

Historically, Mauritius has been a preferred jurisdiction for engaging in investments in India due to the non-taxability of capital gains from the sale

of shares in Indian companies until 2016.

In 2016, India and Mauritius signed a revised tax agreement, which gave India the right to tax capital gains in India on transactions in shares routed through the island nation beginning April 1, 2017. However, investments made before April 2017 were grandfathered.

IndusLaw Partner Lokesh Shah said with PPT test now introduced in the India-Mauritius tax treaty, tax authorities in India are likely to look beyond TRC (tax residency certificate by Mauritius tax authorities) and will have the ability to deny the benefit of India-Mauritius tax treaty if it is reasonable to conclude, having regard to all relevant facts and circumstances, that obtaining the treaty benefits was one of the principal purposes of any arrangement or transaction that resulted directly or indirectly such tax benefit.

Govt asks all gas-based plants to be operational from May 1

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has directed all gas-based power generating stations to operationalise their plants from May 1 to June 30 in view of rise in electricity demand due to a likely prolonged heat wave this summer.

A significant portion of Gas-Based Generating Stations (GBSs) is currently unutilized, primarily due to commercial considerations.

The ministry has projected 260 GW peak power demand this summer (April to June 2024). Peak power demand had touched an all-time high of 243 GW in September last year.

The decision to operationalise GBSs is part of a series of measures taken by the Centre to ensure that electricity demand in the summer is met.

According to a power ministry statement, the order shall



remain valid for generation and supply of electricity from May 1, 2024 to June 30, 2024.

To ensure maximum power generation from Gas-Based Generating Stations, the government has issued directions to all Gas-Based Generating Stations under Section 11 of the Electricity Act, 2003, under which the appropriate government may specify that a generating company shall, in extraordinary circumstances operate and maintain any generating station in accordance with the directions of that govern-

ment," the statement said.

The order under Section 11, which is on similar lines as done for imported coal-based power plants, aims to optimise the availability of power from GBSs during the ensuing high demand period.

As per the arrangement, GRID-INDIA will inform GBSs in advance, of the number of days for which gas-based power is required.

GBSs holding Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) with distribution licensees shall first offer their power to PPA holders. If the power offered is not utilised by any PPA holder, then it shall be offered in the power market.

GBSs not tied to PPAs must offer their generation in the power market. A high-level committee headed by Chairperson, Central Electricity Authority has been constituted to facilitate the implementation of this direction.

Foreign funds shy away from real estate

Invest only US\$ 11 mn in Jan-Mar: Vestian

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Institutional investments in real estate declined 55 per cent annually in January-March this year to US\$ 552 million as cautious foreign investors stayed away, pumping in only US\$ 11 mn, according to Vestian.

The real estate sector had attracted US\$ 1,238.3 million (US\$ 1.23 billion) in the January-March period of 2023 calendar year, as per the report, which was released on Saturday.

The latest data by global property consultant Vestian showed that the institutional inflow from foreign funds in the country's real estate plunged 99 per cent to just US\$ 11 million in the first quarter of 2024 from US\$ 791.4 million in the year-ago period.

Domestic investors pumped in US\$ 541.1 million in the Indian real estate in January-



The latest data by global property consultant Vestian showed that the institutional inflow from foreign funds in the country's real estate plunged 99 per cent to just US\$ 11 million in the first quarter of 2024 from US\$ 791.4 million in the year-ago period.

March 2025, up 21 per cent from 446.9 million in the year-ago period.

Vestian CEO Shrinivas Rao, said, "Domestic investors are bullish about India's growth story, and continue to pour in investments in the real estate sector. On the other hand, for-

foreign investors are cautious due to global macroeconomic uncertainty and geopolitical tensions."

Commercial assets (office, retail, co-working, and hospitality projects) garnered the highest investments of US\$ 231.6 million in the March

quarter, as against US\$ 484.8 million in the year-ago period.

Institutional investments in residential assets fell 33 per cent to US\$ 225 million from US\$ 337.7 million.

Investments significantly decreased 73 per cent in the industrial and warehousing sector to US\$ 58.9 million in the January-March period from US\$ 215.8 million a year ago.

Bengaluru dominated the institutional investments during the quarter with US\$ 299 million, followed by Delhi-NCR at US\$ 110 million.

Both cities together accounted for around 74 per cent of the total investments received in the current quarter.

Edelweiss Capital turned out to be the most active investor during the quarter with over US\$ 300 million worth of investments across the asset classes and geographies, Vestian said.

'Create new breed of financial planning professionals'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country needs a "new breed of financial planning professionals" who can act as consultants for customers, Financial Planning Standards Board (FPSB) CEO Krishan Mishra said.

India currently has 2,731 certified financial planners (CFPs) who are currently working in the industry as well as practising individually, FPSB said in a statement.

"Most people who are in the industry might be navigating their organisations very well but when it comes to their personal finances they also struggle, be it CEOs, CFOs, CHROs."

"This is why we need to create a new breed of financial planning professionals who can be consultants for

customers," Mishra said.

Mishra was speaking to PTI on the sidelines of the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), Delhi on Friday to launch the Executive and Regular PG programs, integrated with Certified Financial Planner (CFP) certification.



IMPORTING PULSES FROM MYANMAR

Payment mechanism for traders simplified: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Saturday said the payment mechanism for traders importing pulses from Myanmar has been eased and simplified.

The importers have been asked to utilize Rupee/ Kyat direct payment system using Special Rupee Vostro Account (SRVA) through Punjab National Bank, the consumer affairs ministry said in a statement.

India depends on imports of pulses to meet the domestic shortage. The country imports tur and urad dals from Myanmar.

Consumer Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare discussed with Indian Mission in Yangon issues relating to pulses imports from Myanmar such as import prices in the wake of revised exchange rates and stocks held by importers in Myanmar, it said.

MONEY MATTERS

Data recovered, restored shortly after it was deleted : Welspun



Textile firm Welspun Living on Saturday clarified that it has recovered and restored all the data shortly after it was deleted by some miscreants in January this year. In the clarification issued a day after the filing of the first information report with the city police, the company said the dashboard data residing on the Power BI

platform was deleted, but within a short time, it was recovered and restored by the company via backups. "...all underlying company data and reports are safe and secure. There is no loss of any data," a statement said. A case was registered against unidentified persons at NM Joshi Marg Police after data of the company was allegedly deleted, with unauthorised entry to the systems in January this year. The incident, in which confidential data, daily operation reports and the firm's dashboard, residing in the Power BI platform, were wiped out, is alleged to have happened between 8 pm and 8:50 pm on January 17 this year, the police had said.

'All 224 flats in Gurugram project sold in 15 minutes'



Realty firm Ashiana Housing on Saturday said it sold 224 luxury flats in Gurugram for Rs 440 crore within 15 minutes of its launch. The project is located at Sector 93 in Gurugram, Haryana. In a statement, the company said it has "sold out the entire phase 3 of its prestigious project, Ashiana Amarah within 15 minutes of launch".

"We are very happy with the incredible response to Ashiana Amarah phase 3 launch. We started registration at 11 am and we had received 800 cheques for 224 units by 11.15. In 15 minutes it was oversubscribed four times," Ashiana Housing Joint Managing Director Ankur Gupta said. He attributed the oversubscription to the company's brand value and execution track record. "Our novel kid-centric concept is also working. People want their children to be brought up in better places, with better amenities and quality of life and that is what Amarah is promising. "So there is a lot of excitement in the market. Ashiana is also planning to launch phase 4 in the coming quarter," Gupta said. Ashiana Housing is one of India's leading real estate firms, listed on the stock exchanges. Present in nine cities in India, Ashiana Housing has constructed and delivered over 23 million (230 lakh) sq ft to over 17,000 buyers. According to PropTiger, sales of residential properties in Delhi-NCR jumped more than three times during the January-March period to Rs 12,120 crore from Rs 3,476 crore in the year-ago period.

Petregaz India commissions its LPG import and storage terminal



Petregaz India, a subsidiary of Petredec Group has commissioned its new state-of-the-art LPG Import and Storage Terminal that has been set up at an outlay of Rs 600 crore, the company said on Saturday. The new facility located within the Adani

Krishnapatnam Private Port at Krishnapatnam in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh would benefit private marketers as well as residential, commercial, industrial, and automotive consumers. The newly commissioned facility, with an investment of Rs 600 crore, enables Petregaz to deliver cost-effective, and dependable solutions to LPG marketers, the company said in a statement. With an annual capacity of over 1.5 million metric tonnes, the facility has excellent road connectivity to the hinterland of Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. The terminal also has two refrigerated storage tanks, a modern jetty with no congestion and capable of berthing all types of LPG vessels, 16 truck loading bays among others. "Government-run oil companies can utilise our terminal's capacity to improve LPG supplies in the hinterland, optimising logistics and strengthening India's LPG landscape," said Petregaz India CEO Susheel Raina. This new facility would benefit private marketers and bottlers by improving access to LPG infrastructure, Raina said.

'Pak has highest living cost with a 25% inflation rate'

PNS ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has the highest living cost in all of Asia with a 25 per cent inflation rate and its economy may grow at the fourth lowest pace of 1.9 per cent in the region, according to a new Asian Development Bank (ADB) report.

The report was released on Thursday in Manila.

The Express Tribune reported that the Asian Development Outlook also painted a gloomy picture for the next fiscal year as well, projecting a 1.5 per cent inflation rate for the next fiscal year -- again the highest among 46



countries and a 2.8 per cent growth rate -- the fifth lowest for FY 2024-25.

The Manila-based lending

agency stated that the inflation rate in Pakistan is expected to be 25 per cent in the current fiscal year -- the highest in all

of Asia. This makes Pakistan the most expensive nation in Asia. Earlier, the cost of living in Pakistan used to be the highest in South Asia.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and federal government had set the inflation target at 21 per cent for this fiscal year but they are going to miss it despite inflicting huge losses in the shape of a 22 per cent interest rate.

The ADB said during the current fiscal year, the country's economic growth rate might remain at 1.9 per cent -- the fourth lowest after Myanmar, Azerbaijan and Nauru.

Pakistan is in a stagnation

phase for a prolonged period and the World Bank too said last week that another 10 million more people might fall into the poverty trap because of any adverse shocks. About 98 million people are already living a poor life in Pakistan.

In the past, the ADB gave a rather optimistic economic scenario close to Pakistan's official forecasts.

However, the latest ADB report stated that Pakistan would continue to face challenges from substantial new external financing requirements and the rollover of old debt, exacerbated by tight global monetary conditions.

"So long as you have food
in your mouth, you have
solved all questions for the
time being"
— Franz Kafka



For the residents of Ayodhya, as much as for Hindus across the globe, Ram Navami symbolises the fulfillment of a long-cherished dream and the reaffirmation of their unwavering faith in Lord Ram, says **BISWAJEET BANERJEE**



A DAY AWAITED FOR FIVE CENTURIES

AYODHYA,

the ancient city steeped in the rich tapestry of Hindu mythology and history, is poised to witness an unparalleled spectacle as it gears up to celebrate its first Ram Navami following the consecration of the majestic Ram Mandir. The air is filled with anticipation and reverence as devotees from all corners of India flock to this sacred land to partake in the festivities honoring Lord Ram, the epitome of righteousness and virtue.

Months of meticulous planning and fervent preparations have culminated in the grandeur that envelops Ayodhya today. The city, adorned with vibrant colors and resounding chants of "Jai Shri Ram," exudes an aura of spirituality and devotion that is palpable in every nook and cranny.

The consecration of the Ram Mandir, a momentous event that resonated deeply with millions of devotees across the globe, has added an extra layer of significance to this year's Ram Navami celebrations. For the residents of Ayodhya, it symbolizes the fulfillment of a long-cherished dream and the reaffirmation of their unwavering faith in Lord Ram.

Radha Sharma, a local resident, encapsulated the sentiments of many when she said, "This Ram Navami holds a special place in our hearts. It's not just about celebrating the birth of Lord Ram; it's about witnessing the fruition of our faith and devotion."

As the countdown to Ram Navami begins, devotees throng the Ram Mandir, eager to offer their prayers and seek the blessings of the divine. The atmosphere is electric with fervent devotion as chants of "Jai Shri Ram" reverberate through the streets, transcending linguistic and cultural barriers.

Ramesh Singh, a pilgrim from Bihar, echoed the sentiments of countless others as he remarked, "Ram Navami is not just a festival; it's a spiritual journey. Being here in Ayodhya, amidst the sacred surroundings, fills my heart with joy and peace."

At the heart of the celebrations lies the Ram Mandir, believed to be situated at the very spot where Lord Rama, the seventh avatar of Lord Vishnu, was born. For devotees, it is not merely a structure but a sacred sanctum that serves as a beacon of hope and divine connection.

ADMINISTRATION STRATEGY

As Ayodhya braces itself for the influx of around 50 lakh devotees in all nine days of Ram Navami, the administration has meticulously crafted a comprehensive crowd management strategy to ensure the safety and convenience of all participants. The maximum rush of 25 lakh-30 lakh devotees is expected on the Ram Navami day of April 17 – when people take a dip at river Sarayu.



Ram Navam A Celebration of Faith and Virtue

Ram Navami transcends the realms of mere festivity; it embodies a profound

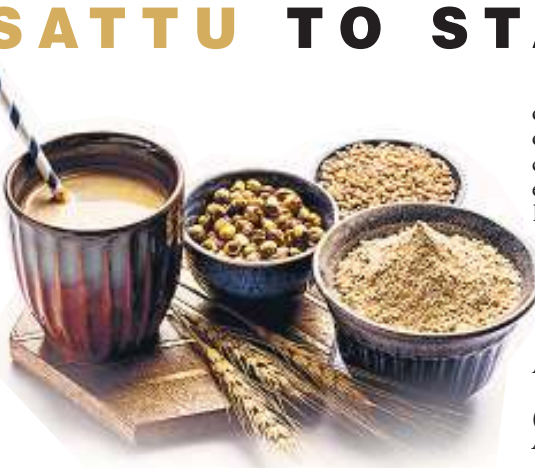
reaffirmation of faith and the timeless virtues exemplified by Lord Rama. Though revered as a deity, Lord Rama epitomizes the human manifestation of a divine force, embodying qualities of righteousness and compassion that resonate with every individual. The celebration of Ram Navami serves as a spiritual compass, guiding devotees towards a path of benevolence and virtuosity, fostering personal growth and evolution.

As the culmination of the nine-day Chaitra Navratri celebrations, Ram Navami holds a special significance, particularly in Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Rama. The Hindu month of Chaitra, heralding the transition from spring to summer, sets the stage for this auspicious occasion, elevating its sanctity and joy.

The celebration unfolds with a prayer to the sun at the break of dawn, symbolizing the dawn of enlightenment and spiritual awakening. At midday, a special prayer commemorates the divine birth of Lord Ram, invoking blessings and divine grace upon all. The spirit of celebration extends beyond the temples, as Rath yatras or chariot processions of Lord Ram, accompanied by his consort Sita, brother Lakshman, and devoted Hanuman, traverse the streets, spreading joy and spiritual fervor. The devotees converge on the banks of the sacred Sarayu River, immersing themselves in its purifying waters, seeking spiritual rejuvenation and divine blessings.

BRING SATTU TO STAY COOL

As temperatures soar in anticipation of Ram Navami, the Ram Mandir Trust has issued a special plea to devotees: bring along Sattu. Recognized for its cooling properties, Sattu, a traditional flour, promises respite from the scorching heat, ensuring the well-being and comfort of pilgrims during their visit to Ayodhya. Champat Rai, the Convener of the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, underscored the significance of hydration and maintaining a cool



demeanor amidst the festivities. He urged devotees to embrace Sattu as a means to combat the sweltering temperatures, emphasizing its effectiveness in beating the heat.

With the welfare of devotees at the forefront, the Trust's initiative aims to ensure a pleasant and comfortable experience for all pilgrims as they partake in the sacred celebrations of Ram Navami in Ayodhya.

(Additional reporting done by BP Singh from Ayodhya).

In anticipation of the monumental crowds expected to throng the city, a strategic deployment of magistrates and police personnel has been planned. Heightened security measures will be implemented at sensitive areas and major temples, including the Ram Janmabhoomi temple, to prevent any untoward incidents. Efforts are underway to facilitate smooth entry and exit at the Ram Janmabhoomi temple, with the Trust exploring multiple entries and exits to avoid potential stampede-like situations. Additionally, arrangements have been made to provide water and mats on open floors, considering the approaching hot weather conditions, ensuring the comfort of devotees. To address any medical emergencies, round-the-clock medical facilities with extra beds will be available in both government health institutions and private hospitals. Traffic management will be streamlined, and vigilant monitoring will be conducted to identify and segregate any criminal elements.

The administration is leaving no stone unturned to enhance safety and convenience for devotees taking a dip in the sacred Sarayu River during Ram Navami. Additional fiber motorboats have been deployed, and barricades will be set up in the river to regulate the flow of people, facilitating secure access for devotees. Moreover, elaborate arrangements are being made for public toilets and regular cleaning, with over 2,000 sanitation workers mobilized for this purpose. Chief Secretary Durga Shankar Mishra affirmed, "We have taken all necessary precautions to ensure the safety of pilgrims and residents alike. Our priority is to facilitate a peaceful and joyous celebration of Ram Navami."

ECONOMIC STIMULUS THROUGH FESTIVITIES

The festivities have not only kindled the flames of spirituality but have also breathed new life into Ayodhya's economy. Local businesses have witnessed a surge in sales

of religious artifacts, sweets, and traditional attire, as tourists and pilgrims alike immerse themselves in the spiritual ambiance of the city.

Ram Gupta, a local businessman, remarked, "The consecration of the Ram Mandir has brought prosperity to Ayodhya. We've seen a significant increase in sales, and tourists are eager to experience the cultural heritage of our city." Behind the scenes, skilled artisans have toiled tirelessly to craft intricate idols and decorations for the celebrations. From colorful rangolis adorning the streets to ornate idols of Lord Ram, Sita, and Lakshman, their craftsmanship adds a touch of elegance to the festivities, showcasing Ayodhya's rich cultural heritage to the world.

Ram Das, one such artisan, shared his sentiments, "For us, this Ram Navami is not just about business; it's about contributing to something larger than

ourselves. Crafting these idols is a way of expressing our devotion to Lord Ram and our love for our heritage."

Footfall in these days is tremendous bringing smiles on the faces of hoteliers. Sharad Kapoor, Director, Shaane Awadh Hotel told this reporter that not a single room is available till Ram Navami. "All the hotels, home stays and dharmshalas are booked, and the hospitality sector is doing very well since January 22," he said. Ram Navami is not merely a commemoration; it is a transformative journey, a celebration of faith, virtue, and the eternal triumph of good over evil. As the devotees unite in reverence and devotion, Ayodhya reverberates with the timeless chants of "Jai Shri Ram," echoing the enduring legacy of Lord Rama's divine grace and benevolence.



NAVRATRI

A FESTIVAL OF TRADITION, INNOVATION, AND WELLNESS

Beyond its religious significance, Navratri embraces fasting practices that promote detoxification, improved digestion, and overall wellness. **DIVYA BHATIA** explores how this nine-day celebration intertwines spiritual devotion with a mindful approach to nourishment. You can experience Navaratri at Edesia, Crowne Plaza New Delhi Okhla, in all its charm and majesty

Navratri, a nine-day festival celebrated in Northern India, holds immense significance, dedicated to Goddess Durga. Derived from Sanskrit, 'Navratri' signifies 'nine nights,' with each day devoted to one of Durga's nine forms. Falling twice a year, Navratri marks the onset of joyous festivities after the spring or during the harvest season.

Legend surrounds Navratri, with stories of Goddess Durga's triumph over evil. Whether battling Mahishasura for nine days or seeking refuge in a cave at Vaishno Devi, fasting and feasting rituals commemorate these tales. Regardless of the narrative, Navratri heralds a season of exuberance, marked by vibrant celebrations and abundant sweets.

During Navratri, adherents observe dietary restrictions, abstaining from grains and opting for satvik foods like Sabudana, kuttu, and rajgira. Fasting typically involves consuming only once or twice daily, with a focus on water, dairy, and fruits. Some prefer meals made from buckwheat or water chestnut flour, reflecting individual fasting preferences.

Health experts advocate controlled fasting, citing benefits such as reduced inflammation, improved digestion, and enhanced overall well-being. Despite myths surrounding weight gain, Navratri fasting encourages a healthier lifestyle, emphasizing fruits, salads, and detoxification practices.

In recent years, the F&B industry has recognized Navratri's potential, leading to innovations in Navratri cuisine. Evolving with changing dietary trends, Navratri food offerings now cater to health-conscious consumers, featuring lighter cooking methods and nutritious ingredients. As people prioritize health during the festival, Navratri continues to inspire culinary creativity while promoting well-being.

Adding to this spiritual significance, Chef Mani Mohan Pathak of Pilibhit House, Haridwar- IHCL SeleQtions, emphasizes the festival's evolution in the culinary world, stating, "Fasting is performed from ancient times, there are certain restrictions on fasting. Now fasting is getting fashioned, business, innovation and popular trends. Now the trend is towards healthier Navratri food options, with dietary preferences. The incorporation of superfoods like Makhana, quinoa and chia seeds, as well as creative twists on traditional recipes using ingredients such as sweet potato, sabudana, and buckwheat flour. Additionally, an emphasis on lighter cooking methods such as baking, or air frying, to reduce oil consumption. Overall, there's a growing awareness of nutrition and a desire to enjoy Navratri festivities without compromising on health goals."

Agreeing with Chef Pathak, Chef Sreenivasan Govindarajan, Director Culinary, Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport, shared, "In recent years, Navratri food trends have seen a steady focus on tradition with a subtle shift towards health consciousness and innovation. However, the fundamental choices in Navratri cuisine have remained largely unchanged. What's notable, though, is the growing emphasis on hygiene and the meticulous preparation of dishes. People today are more conscious about the cleanliness of their food, reflecting a broader trend towards prioritizing health and well-being even during cultural celebrations. This nuanced approach ensures that while the flavors remain traditional, each dish is prepared with care and attention to hygiene, meeting the evolving tastes and standards of modern times."

While Navratri presents chefs with challenges, including limited ingredients, Chef Ashutosh Bisht of Crowne Plaza New Delhi Okhla remains undeterred. He explains, "Creating a menu that is both healthy and tasty within the constraints of limited ingredients poses a significant challenge. With a restricted palette of options, the key lies in maximizing flavor and variety despite the constraints." This sentiment is echoed by Chef Sreenivasan Govindarajan, who emphasizes the importance of balancing taste and nutrition in Navratri cuisine. He said, "Balancing taste and nutrition becomes paramount, requiring careful selection and preparation of ingredients to ensure that each dish is not only fulfilling but also delicious. Overcoming this challenge demands creativity and ingenuity in the kitchen, as chefs strive to craft flavorful Navratri meals that satisfy both the palate and the nutritional



Photo: Pankaj Kumar

SPIRITUAL FOOD

CHEF ADITI DIXIT, a culinary virtuoso at CYK Hospitality, is renowned for her innovative approach to gastronomy. With a passion for crafting exquisite dishes that tantalize the taste buds, Chef Dixit elevates dining experiences to new heights. Chef Aditi Dixit talked about Navratri offerings. Excerpts



What trends have you observed in Navratri food over recent years, particularly in response to increasing health consciousness and a desire for innovative dishes?

In recent years, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, several noteworthy trends have emerged in Navratri cuisine. These trends are predominantly driven by a growing awareness of health considerations and a desire for culinary innovation. One significant trend involves the use of healthier ingredients, where there has been a notable shift away from refined flours towards alternatives such as buckwheat flour, amaranth flour, kuttu flour, and water chestnut flour. These alternatives, being gluten-free and often considered healthier options, have gained popularity among health-conscious individuals.

Moreover, there has been an increasing adoption of low-oil cooking techniques to reduce overall calorie intake and create lighter meals. Techniques such as baking, steaming, and air-frying have become preferred methods during Navratri, aligning with health-conscious dietary preferences.

What benefits does Navratri food offer, and what challenges do you face when creating a menu that is both healthy and tasty within the limitations of ingredients?

Navratri fasting offers several benefits when approached mindfully. It encourages the consumption of a diverse array of foods, including fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and dairy products, promoting the absorption of essential nutrients, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Moreover, Navratri fasting emphasizes the intake of fluids such as water, coconut water, and herbal teas, aiding in hydration and overall well-being. For many, Navratri

fasting can also support weight control by emphasizing lighter, plant-based foods and avoiding processed and high-calorie options.

However, creating a Navratri menu that is both healthy and flavorful comes with its challenges. Fasting during Navratri imposes restrictions on certain ingredients such as grains, pulses, onions, garlic, and common spices, necessitating creativity in utilizing alternative ingredients without compromising taste and nutrition. Additionally, maintaining a balanced nutritional profile, particularly in terms of protein intake, can be challenging due to limitations on traditional protein sources like lentils and beans. Hence, increasing the incorporation of dairy products, nuts, seeds, and plant proteins becomes crucial. Moreover, catering to individual allergies, intolerances, and dietary preferences adds another layer of complexity when designing a menu that caters to a diverse group of people observing Navratri fasting.

Could you share one of your most unique Navratri dishes that you've created recently, which has been particularly popular?

Certainly! We recently introduced an extensive Navratri menu featuring innovative dishes such as sweet potato & amaranth kebab, vegan millet tikki, arbi tuk chaat, hasselback aloo chaat, paan rose lassi, and kesar pista lassi. Among these offerings, the sweet potato and amaranth kebab stands out for its unique and versatile flavour profile. It has garnered significant popularity among our patrons and remains a personal favourite of mine as well.

Which ingredient do you find most versatile in Navratri cuisine?

For me personally, sabudana, also known as tapioca pearls or sago, is an incredibly versatile ingredient commonly used during Navratri fasting. Its adaptability lends itself to a myriad of beloved dishes, including sabudana khichdi, thalipeeth, kheer, vada, salad, chiwda, and papad, making it an indispensable element in Navratri cuisine.



HEALTHIER SHIFT IN NAVRATRI CUISINE

With a passion for blending traditional flavors with modern techniques, **CHEF GAURAV** has carved a niche for himself in the culinary world. His dedication to quality ingredients, attention to detail, and commitment to culinary excellence have earned him accolades from both diners and peers alike. Here he talks about Navratri food. Excerpts.

What trends have you observed in Navratri food over recent years, particularly in response to increasing health consciousness and a desire for innovative dishes?

Over recent years, we've noticed a significant shift towards healthier ingredients in Navratri cuisine. Millets like Foxtail and Rajgira are now replacing refined sabudana in dishes like khichdi, offering a more nutritious alternative. Moreover, there's been an increased emphasis on incorporating fruits and vegetables, such as Buckwheat flour rotis stuffed with veggies and salads featuring ingredients like lotus stem and water chestnuts. Additionally, alternatives to dairy like almond milk, coconut milk, and soy milk are being used in dishes like halwa, cheela, and puddings. These changes reflect a growing desire among people to celebrate Navratri while maintaining a healthy

requirements of the fasting period."

While it's often said that Navratri can ward off evil, Chef Deshraj Punia, Executive Sous Chef at Citadines Paras Square Gurugram, highlights another aspect. He emphasizes that Navratri food possesses the ability to cleanse the body of toxins and impurities. He emphasized, "I want to mention that Navratri food is healthier than what we eat every day. It's not too heavy on the stomach, so it keeps you feeling fit and energetic all day long. Surprisingly, it also helps boost the immune system and reduces the risk of cancer and heart attacks for those who fast. We don't really face any challenges because Navratri has been around for a long time, so it's part of our culture. We're used to the ingredients used in Navratri food, and since we're living in a time where health is important, it encourages us to try new and creative dishes. It's always good to explore new things instead of sticking to the same old dishes."

Despite challenges, chefs remain undeterred in their quest to create unique dishes and push culinary boundaries. For example, Kuttu Lapsi by Chef Ashutosh Bisht, Executive Sous Chef, Crowne Plaza New Delhi Okhla is an innovative dish. "We created this dish using raw kuttu in its early stage of

lifestyle.

What kind of benefits does Navratri food offer? What challenges do you face when creating a menu that is both healthy and tasty with limitations of ingredients?

Navratri food, despite its limitations in ingredients, offers a surprising range of health benefits. The focus on whole grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables provides a detoxifying effect, improves digestion, and boosts immunity. However, creating a menu that is both healthy and tasty can be challenging due to restrictions such as no onions, garlic, or certain grains. The key lies in getting creative with spices, herbs, and alternative flours to craft flavorful dishes that satisfy the palate while meeting dietary requirements.

Could you share one of your most unique Navratri dishes that you've

created recently, which has been super popular?

Certainly! One of our most beloved Navratri dishes is our Tandoori Sweet Potato Chaat. We start with tandoor-roasted sweet potatoes, which are then tossed in a vibrant medley of mint chutney (crafted without onion and garlic), sweet and tangy dates chutney, a touch of rock salt (sendha namak), crushed black pepper, a squeeze of lemon juice, and chopped green chilies. Finally, we add a delightful crunch of roasted peanuts and crispy fried potato lachas. It's a harmonious blend of textures and flavors that has quickly become a Navratri favorite among our patrons.

Which ingredient do you find most versatile in Navratri cuisine?

Chef: Black pepper.



Photo: Pankaj Kumar

ripening. This innovative twist has yielded fantastic results, offering a healthy and delicious alternative to traditional Navratri fare," he shared.

Whereas, Mr. Kamal Kanth, Executive Chef, Sambarpot, defines his 'Kashmiri dum aloo' with stuffed paneer, khoya & dry fruits as the person's favorite from Navratri thali. What surprised us were Sabudana Dumplings that are created by Chef Deshraj Punia, who shared with pride, "We give them a unique twist by

shallow frying them, which makes them look like a fusion dish. They're cooked in desi ghee, which is good for both your skin and stomach, and they taste really delicious and light."

Bringing out the best dish also depends on the ingredients used in creating the best dish. But with limitations of options, innovation is key to success. Ingredients like Potato, Sweet Potato, Buckwheat, all are there, but which ingredients are most versatile? Chef Ashutosh Bisht thinks it's curd as he rightly pointed out its benefits. It can be used to create refreshing drinks, flavorful subzi preparations, or even desserts. Additionally, it's a great source of energy that can be digested quickly, making it an ideal component for Navratri meals.

According to Chef Mani Mohan Pathak, the key ingredient is potato/ sweet potatoes and sabudana. Potato is been used plain boiled/ fried and roasted. Further, potato is used in sabudana khichdi, tikki, sabzi, and even kuttu ki puris or parathas made from potato flour.

Overall, we can say that Navratri brings with it a delightful culinary experience that caters to both tradition and taste. This vibrant festival has brought out the creative side of the F&B world and continues to inspire many without compromising on health.

SHUBHO NOBO BORSHO

Today is *Poila Boishakh*, a day when Bengalis across the globe usher in their new year. And what better way to celebrate than food. **SHOBORI GANGULI** joined the feast and festivities at Hyatt Gurugram with critically acclaimed **CHEF ANANYA BANERJEE** whose signature take on a traditional Bengali feast made it a special day indeed

The first day of the Bengali New Year is not just another date on the calendar to mark for rituals and ceremonies. It is all about cultural bonhomie, dance and music, a day to let your hair down, meet friends and family over a grand meal, a day when even the most humble of kitchens becomes the fulcrum of all celebrations, with everyone on the lookout for a feast to remember. Truth be told, nothing can vie with the spirit that enwraps all of Bengal this day. But for *probashi* (non-resident) Bengalis like me, scattered across the country, we crave to partake of a sumptuous spread, course by course, from a traditional kitchen this special day which, for many of us, dwells only in the realms of nostalgia.

In this context one draws immense consolation from the fact that roving itinerant chefs like Ananya Banerjee are rewriting centuries old traditional manuscripts, rich with secret spices and untold innovations, for a generation that is clawing back to find its roots today.

The Chef's Bengal Bhoj at Hyatt this weekend provided exactly that opportunity. For my generation, Chef Banerjee's creations are a warm and nostalgic embrace from a distant past when our tiny lives revolved around our grandmother's or mother's kitchens, a time when festivals meant food, each meal a feast. Little did we know back then that as we grew older we would simultaneously travel far away from those kitchens, from their aromas and flavours.

It is therefore heartening to know that someone like Chef Banerjee, while keeping her much wider international clientele in mind, has carved a unique niche for herself in her quest to recover the history and philosophy that informs Bengal's exquisite culinary heritage. As she puts it, that while going traditional, "I

tend to be very progressive when I curate a Chef's table."

True to her promise, the Chef laid out a lavish *Poila Boishakh* spread, from a live Bengali street food counter of *Phuchkas* and *Churmur* to appetizers like *Chicken Kobiraji*, *Mochaar Chop* and *Bhetki Paturi* or the vegetarian alternative of *Paneer Paturi*.

The main course meandered its delectable way through *Phulko Loochi*, *Chholar Daal*, *Kosha Maangsho* and *Aloo Posto*. Accompanied by steamed rice were Chef Banerjee's innovative twists to the traditional Prawn Malai Curry and *Lebu Lonka Murgi*. Bengalis are never far behind when it comes to desserts. Even after a rich and sumptuous meal, there's always space left to accommodate some *mishiti* to sign off a great feast. Chef Banerjee's Baked *Roshogulla* with *Jhola Nolen Gur* (a liquid syrup of date jaggery) delicately poured on top was really an elixir from heaven. So was the *Patishapta*, crepes with a rich filling of grated coconut and *khejurer gur* (date jaggery). The Mango Baked Yogurt too beckoned our undivided attention.

Even as technology takes over our time and lives, and reels and Instagrams provide instant and vicarious pleasure to millions of viewers, nothing in the world can ever replace the whole sensory experience of enjoying a good meal real time, even as our senses come alive to the sight, aromas, textures and sounds of a live kitchen.

The one attribute that sets Chef Banerjee apart from the rest of her tribe is the personal attention she devotes to every guest. She flits around the entire dining hall, at times personally

mixing the magical *phuchka* filling to the guests's satisfaction, or taking them on a guided tour through her handcrafted menu, her play with spices and herbs writ large on the fare she puts out. Chef Banerjee's energy and vivacity is truly infectious, her culinary creations "something to live for," as a friend at the table put it. A very Happy New Year to all of you out there!

(Please reach out for the May Edition of our magazine EXOTICA for a detailed story on the above)



CHEF ANANYA BANERJEE



EXPLORING THE WORLD OF SINGLE ORIGINS, FLAT WHITES, AND BEYOND!

Melbourne boasts an abundance of café choices that can enchant even the most dedicated caffeine enthusiasts

BY **RUPALI DEAN**

Woven deeply into Melbourne's essence, caffeine has long coursed through the veins of this vibrant Australian city. With its cobblestone alleyways and hidden gems, Melbourne boasts a staggering array of cafes that number well above a thousand. With only two days to explore this caffeinated paradise, I decide to embark on a sensory journey in pursuit of the perfect brew. Opting for a guided excursion to delve into Melbourne's coffee tapestry, I booked a walking tour led by a knowledgeable local. The tour, starting at Tulip Coffee, introduced me to Monique Bayer, the passionate founder of W a l k Melbourne.

Savouring a meticulously crafted single origin and a robust house blend espresso, Monique gently unveiled the rich history of Melbourne's coffee culture, tracing its origins back to the 1950s with the iconic Pellegrini Espresso Bar—a legacy brought forth by Italian immigrants infusing the city with their profound love for coffee. The Italians' indelible influence catalysed a coffee revolution, paving the way for a proliferation of expert roasters and skilled baristas in the early 2000s. Today, Melbourne stands as a coffee connoisseur's haven, where the alluring aroma of freshly brewed espresso dances through laneways and spills onto bustling streets. Amidst this caffeinated symphony, as I indulged in various espresso creations, my palate gravitated towards the comforting familiarity of the house blend complemented by a hint of milk, embracing the city's love affair with coffee—one fragrant sip at a time.

A PLETHORA OF PASSION

Hailing from Tasmania, the industrious Bayer curates around three tours weekly, meticulously orchestrating bespoke experiences for small groups of no more than ten individuals. The genesis of her guided tours can be traced back to a leisurely café expedition with like-minded coffee enthusiasts in September 2012, sparking the



inception of her immersive walking adventures. Immersed in the ambrosial world of coffee, I found myself savouring a potent single origin espresso, a departure from my usual cup of joe. As Monique divulged the emerging predilection for filter coffee—a gentle brewing method that

intrigued my taste buds—she promised to introduce me to this nuanced approach during our escapade. The art of coffee filtration, she explained, unfolds like a scientific exploration, offering an array of techniques to unlock diverse flavours and aromas. Monique's insatiable quest for hidden local treasures



Monique Bayer



A local coffee maker

unearthed gems like Bean by Workshop Bros, discreetly marked by a modest overhead sign, and Industry Beans, celebrated for its trendy ambiance and revered for concocting velvety Aussie Flat Whites. In her relentless pursuit of culinary marvels, she unveils these well-kept secrets, enriching our expedition with tantalizing discoveries at every turn.

COFFEE LOVE

Immersed in the vibrant tapestry of Melbourne's coffee culture, I found myself navigating a world of tantalizing options tailored even to those adhering to a paleo diet. The allure of butter coffee, touted for its purported benefits of heightened vitality and drive,

beckoned from establishments like Patch Café in Richmond and Seedling in Flinders Lane, promising a unique caffeinated experience. Enlightened by Monique's insights, I learned that a true Melbournian's relationship with coffee hinges on quality, with subpar brews failing to captivate discerning palates. Amidst the lively chatter of coffee aficionados, terms like cupping, siphon, AeroPress, and pour-over resonated across the eclectic coffee shops lining our path, each method a testament to Melbourne's fervent coffee affair.

Our sojourn led us to Maker, where I indulged in the intricate art of filter coffee, opting for the elaborate cold drip

variant—a meticulous 12 to 24-hour extraction process that accentuates the bean's essence while tempering bitterness. Here, I unearthed the enchanting novelty of frozen coffee, a departure from the conventional iced coffee of my homeland, where coffee is customized, frozen, and preserved until beckoned for consumption. In Melbourne, coffee transcends mere refreshment; it is a sacred ritual, where reverence for the brew and the bean intertwine seamlessly. As the day unfolded with myriad caffeine-infused revelations, this latest discovery stood as a crowning jewel, a testament to a city that embraces coffee with a sanctity unmatched elsewhere.

(Awarded the "Best food writer in the country" by the Indian culinary forum, WACS and the ministry of Tourism, Rupali Dean writes on food and travel.)



To understand the risks posed by AI, follow the money

Time and again, leading scientists, technologists, and philosophers have made spectacularly terrible guesses about the direction of innovation. Even Einstein was not immune, claiming, “There is not the slightest indication that nuclear energy will ever be obtainable,” just ten years before Enrico Fermi completed construction of the first fission reactor in Chicago. Shortly thereafter, the consensus switched to fears of an imminent nuclear holocaust.

Similarly, today’s experts warn that an artificial general intelligence (AGI) doomsday is imminent. Others retort that large language models (LLMs) have already reached the peak of their powers.

It’s difficult to argue with David Collingridge’s influential thesis that attempting to predict the risks posed by new technologies is a fool’s errand. Given that our leading scientists and technologists are usually so mistaken about technological evolution, what chance do our policymakers have of effectively regulating the emerging technological risks from artificial intelligence (AI)?

We ought to heed Collingridge’s warning that technology evolves in uncertain ways. However, there is one class of AI risk that is generally knowable in advance. These are risks stemming from misalignment between a company’s economic incentives to profit from its proprietary AI model in a particular way and society’s interests in how the AI model should be monetised and deployed.

The surest way to ignore such misalignment is by focusing exclusively on technical questions about AI model capabilities, divorced

from the socio-economic environment in which these models will operate and be designed for profit.

Focusing on the economic risks from AI is not simply about preventing “monopoly,” “self-preferencing,” or “Big



Open AI is already becoming a dominant player with US\$2 billion (£1.6 billion) in annual sales and millions of users. Its GPT store and developer tools need to return value to those who create it in order to ensure ecosystems of innovation remain viable and dispersed. By carefully interrogating the system of economic incentives underlying innovations and how technologies are monetised in practice, we can generate a better understanding of the risks, both economic and technological, nurtured by a market’s structure. Market structure is not simply the number of firms, but the cost structure and economic incentives in the market that follow from the institutions, adjacent government regulations, and available financing.

Tech dominance”. It’s about ensuring that the economic environment facilitating innovation is not incentivising hard-to-predict technological risks as companies “move fast and break things” in a race for profit or market dominance.

It’s also about ensuring that value from AI is widely shared, by preventing premature consolidation. We’ll see more innovation if emerging AI tools are accessible to everyone, such that a dispersed ecosystem of new firms, start-ups, and AI tools can arise.

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annual sales and millions of users. Its GPT store and developer tools need to return value to those who create it in order to ensure ecosystems of innovation remain viable and dispersed.

By carefully interrogating

nologies that underpinned the aggregator platforms of old (think Amazon, Google and Facebook among others) initially deployed to benefit users, were eventually reprogrammed to increase profits for the platform.

The problems fostered by social media, search, and recommendation algorithms was never an engineering issue, but one of financial incentives (of profit growth) not aligning with algorithms’ safe, effective, and equitable deployment. As the saying goes: history doesn’t necessarily repeat itself but it does rhyme.

To understand how platforms allocate value to themselves and what we can do about it, we investigated the role of algorithms, and the unique informational set-up of digital markets, in extracting so-called economic rents from users and producers on platforms. In economic theory, rents are “super-normal profits” (profits that are above what would be achievable in a competitive market) and reflect control over some scarce resource.

Importantly, rents are a pure return to ownership or some degree of monopoly power, rather than a return earned from producing something in a competitive market (such as many producers making and selling cars). For digital platforms, extracting digital rents usually entails degrading the quality of information shown to the user, on the basis of them “owning” access to a mass of customers. For example, Amazon’s millions of users rely on its product search algorithms to show them the best products available for sale, since they are unable to inspect each product individually.

DEGRADING QUALITY FOR HIGHER PROFIT

It is instructive to consider how the algorithmic tech-

Carbon in top soil could help in climate change mitigation: Study

A new research has estimated more than 2,300 billion tonnes of inorganic carbon in minerals in the top two metres of soil worldwide, a finding that scientists say “underscores the urgency of incorporating inorganic carbon into climate change mitigation strategies.”

Inorganic carbon is found in ores and minerals, as opposed to organic carbon, which can be found in nature through plants and animals. Researchers said that international initiatives aimed at increasing organic carbon content in soil - soil organic carbon (SOC) - should also consider the critical role of soil inorganic carbon (SIC) in achieving sustainable soil management and climate change mitigation.

Solid SIC, often calcium carbonate, tends to accumulate more in arid regions with infertile soils, which has led many to believe it is not important, they said.

However, SIC also plays a dual role in storing carbon and supporting ecosystem functions that depend on it, said the researchers, led by



While society has recognised the importance of soil to be fundamental to nature-based solutions for combating climate change, the major focus has been on the SOC. It is now clear that inorganic carbon deserves equal attention.

the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

Thus, they said, SIC can be an “additional lever” in maintaining and enhancing carbon sequestration, which refers to capturing carbon dioxide, either from the air or directly from the point of production, and storing it for long term. Carbon sequestration is considered a key method for removing carbon from the Earth’s atmosphere.

While society has recognised the importance of soil to be fundamental to nature-based solutions for combating climate change, the major

focus has been on the SOC. It is now clear that inorganic carbon deserves equal attention, the researchers said. They said their SIC estimates of more than 2,300 billion tonnes are more than five times the carbon found in all of the world’s vegetation put together, and that this could be key to understanding how carbon moves around the world.

“But here’s the thing: This huge carbon pool is vulnerable to changes in the environment, especially soil acidification. Acids dissolve calcium carbonate and remove it

either as carbon dioxide gas or directly into the water,” said Huang Yuanyuan, professor, the Institute of Geographic Sciences, CAS, and co-lead author of the study published in the journal ‘Science’.

“Many regions in countries like China and India are experiencing soil acidification due to industrial activities and intense farming. Without remedial actions and better soil practices, the world is likely to face a disturbance of SIC in the next thirty years,” she said.

JURASSIC OR CRETACEOUS?

Scientists can’t agree on when flowers evolved

Flowers may look delicate – but flowering plants, what scientists call angiosperms, are one of the most successful evolutionary organisms on the planet. Including more than 350,000 known species, they dominate the ecological system, shape food webs and play a vital role in oxygen production. Plus, many of them are valuable commercial crops – think of roses, grains and tomatoes.

Have you ever wondered when flowers first evolved, and what has been unfolding over millions of years of evolution to cultivate these beautiful species? Recent research is bringing new insights to this longstanding debate among scientists.

When you think of fossils, you probably think of dinosaurs and ammonites – creatures with bones or hard shells that stayed preserved in the rock despite huge geological

changes. But flowers with frail petals and tiny pollen can also be preserved by being sealed in amber, crystallised, or carbonised.

Generally, the most convincing fossil evidence is from the Early

Cretaceous period (about 132 million years ago). However, the earliest evidence of a flower bud has a Jurassic origin (around 164 million years ago). It is called *Florigerminis jurassica* and was found in China. But not



all scientists agree it is an angiosperm, due to the different definitions of flower organs.

Flowers can be preserved in striking detail. Dripping tree sap and resin fossilised the petals and pollen of a fossil flower in a Baltic conifer forest around 34-38 million years ago. This is the largest known amber-preserved fossil flower, measuring about 3cm across and about three times as large as most floral fossils, showing beautiful details of this ancient flower.

JURASSIC OR CRETACEOUS?

The timing of flowers’ evolution is still a matter of debate between scientists, but most scientists are in one of two camps: Jurassic or Cretaceous.

Analyses using molecular data (DNA or protein sequences) suggest flowers could be much older than the fossil record shows – a Jurassic (145 million years ago) or even Triassic

origin (201 million years ago).

Organisms from different major clades (a group of organisms descended from a common ancestor) might converge as they evolve. But scientists don’t always agree about which organisms belong in which evolutionary line. So, we need to combine all the information we have to get a more nuanced understanding of flowers’ evolution.

DECIPHERING THE PAST BY MOLECULAR DATA

Knowing when and how flowering plants first appeared and when they diverged from other plants is important to scientists. It would help us understand how angiosperms adapted to different environments, their interactions with other organisms, and their response to major geological events, such as climate change and mass extinctions.

CURTAILED CHILDHOOD FREEDOM

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE GETTING UNHAPPIER

Experts often highlight social media and harsh economic times as key reasons why young people are getting unhappier. And while those factors are important, I would like to emphasise another.

Younger generations have less freedom and independence than previous generations did. The area where children are allowed to range unsupervised outside has shrunk by 90% since the 1970s.

Parents increasingly organise entertainment – ranging from play dates and sports and music classes to family cinema trips – for their children, rather than letting them come up with it themselves. Perhaps this can help explain recent reports that many teenagers today choose to be holed up in their bedrooms.

The lack of childhood freedom isn’t just a result of parental control. Societal expectations and school policies also have huge influences.

It is important to note that constraints to freedom often stem from well-meaning intentions, such as safety concerns (location tracking, for example) or cultural norms.

Understandably, nobody wants to be the parent who lets their kid take (perceived) risks if others don’t. But there are risks to over-protecting children too. It can inadvertently hinder their psychological development.

EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL AND COGNITIVE EFFECTS

Psychologist Jean Piaget emphasised the importance of exploration and experimentation in cognitive development in the 1950s. He noted that children construct their understanding of the world through active engagement with their environment. By restricting children’s freedom to explore and take age-appropriate risks, we deprive them of opportunities for intellectual curiosity and innovation.

A lack of independence can undermine young people’s sense of agency and control over their lives. And research in psychology consistently demonstrates that when people, young or old, feel powerless and constrained

by external forces, such as parental supervision or societal expectations, it can lead to frustration, helplessness and low self-esteem.

Moreover, the absence of



Parents increasingly organise entertainment – ranging from play dates and sports and music classes to family cinema trips – for their children, rather than letting them come up with it themselves. Perhaps this can help explain recent reports that many teenagers today choose to be holed up in their bedrooms.

autonomy limits young people’s opportunities for self-discovery, creativity and personal growth. When children are constantly guided and supervised, they miss out on the invaluable experiences of problem-solving, decision-making and learning from mistakes. The decline in independence can have implications for social and emotional development. Children may get love, support and attention within the family unit. But spending too much time with parents may lead to difficulties getting on with peers, who don’t provide the same unconditional love and support.

Indeed, when children are constantly surrounded by adults and structured activities, they may struggle to develop meaningful relationships, assertiveness and resilience. Research highlights the importance of peer interactions in shaping social competence and emotional intelligence. After all, parents may not require you to empathise with them, but friends will.

By orchestrating play dates and entertainment, parents may therefore

inadvertently limit their children’s ability to navigate social dynamics. This will include learning empathy and developing interpersonal skills independently. It will also set an expectation that children will come to internalise the idea that “parents will do things so I don’t have to” – leading to further lack of accomplishment.

The lack of independence can also contribute to feelings of boredom, restlessness and disengagement. Humans need to be engaged in activities that challenge and absorb our attention, leading to feelings of fulfilment and happiness. When children are constantly entertained and supervised, they may struggle to find activities that naturally capture their interest and provide a sense of purpose and enjoyment.

This is important. In defining happiness, positive psychology emphasises both the emotional aspect, such as experiencing positive emotions, and the cognitive aspect, which involves a sense of overall satisfaction with one’s life, including meaning and purpose.

INDIAN WANTED IN KILLING WIFE

FBI offers reward of up to US\$ 250,000

The FBI is now offering a reward of up to US\$ 250,000 for information leading to the arrest of a 33-year-old “extremely dangerous” Indian national who is wanted in the US for allegedly killing his wife in 2015.

Bhadeshkumar Chetanbhai Patel, who was last known to be in the Newark area of New Jersey, is wanted for allegedly killing his wife Palak Patel by striking her multiple times with an object when they worked at a doughnut shop in Hanover, Maryland.

Patel is on the FBI’s list of ‘Ten Most Wanted Fugitives’ and the federal agency announced a reward of up to US\$ 250,000 for information leading to his arrest.

Initially, the FBI had offered a US\$ 100,000 reward for information about Patel. Patel has been charged with first-degree murder, second-degree murder, first-degree assault, second-degree assault, and dangerous weapons with intent to injure, the FBI said in a statement.

A federal arrest warrant was issued in the Maryland district court on April 20, 2015, after Patel was charged with unlawful flight to avoid prosecution. According to a 2017 FBI press



release, Patel and his wife worked the night shift at the doughnut shop of one of his relatives. Investigators believe Patel killed his wife, who was 21 at the time, in a back room of the shop just before midnight on April 12, 2015. Patel allegedly stabbed his wife multiple times and fled by a rear door. The statement warned that Patel should be considered “armed and extremely dangerous”.

According to the FBI, investigators theorise that Palak Patel wanted to return to India — their visas had expired the month before — and her husband was against the idea.

Right whale found entangled in rope off New England

A North Atlantic right whale has been spotted entangled in rope off New England, worsening an already devastating year for the vanishing animals, federal authorities said.

The right whales number less than 360 and are vulnerable to entanglement in fishing gear and collisions with ships. The entangled whale was seen on

Wednesday about 50 miles south of Rhode Island’s Block Island, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said. The whale has rope coming out of both sides of its mouth and has been far from shore, making it difficult for rescuers to help, NOAA said in a statement.

“Given the long distance from shore, experts were unable to safely travel to the last known location of the whale during daylight to attempt a rescue,” the statement said. “NOAA Fisheries and our partners will monitor this whale and attempt to respond to the entanglement, if possible, as weather and safety conditions allow.”

Several right whales have died this year off Georgia and Massachusetts, and environmental groups fear the species could be headed for extinction. The animal’s population fell about 25 per cent from 2010 to 2010.

A whale found dead off Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts, in January showed evidence of injury from entanglement in fishing gear. Environmental groups have called for stricter rules to protect the whales from entanglement in gear. However, a federal budget package passed in late 2022 included a six-year pause on new federal whale regulations.

“This is another example that entanglements are happening in US waters,” said Gib Brogan, campaign director with environmental group Oceana. “We need stronger protection from entanglements in US waters.”

The whales were once numerous off the East Coast, but they were decimated during the commercial whaling era and have been slow to recover. They have been federally protected for decades.

They migrate every year from calving grounds off Florida and Georgia to feeding grounds off New England and Canada.

The journey has become perilous in recent years because their food sources appear to be moving as waters warm. That change causes the whales to stray from protected areas of ocean and become vulnerable to entanglements and collisions, scientists have said.

“Given the long distance from shore, experts were unable to safely travel to the last known location of the whale during daylight to attempt a rescue.”