



**- KT Rama Rao,
BRS working president**

2

Monday Mirchi

NO OFFICER HAS BEEN COMING IN TIME
Regimes must and do change; but most of the staff in government offices, like the dog's curly tail, remain unchanged. In Telangana, it took a Minister's 'surprise' visit (or photo-op, says a wag) to discover the unpalatable fact that no officer has been coming in time for over nine years now. After Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy's discovery of 'time lapse' in work flow, everyone in the loop responsible for maintaining HR records was left red-faced. For, nobody had ever signed the register for recording attendance. It is understandable; for, they were bindaas en bloc because of the fact that former CM K Chandrasekhar Rao himself largely 'worked from home' and hardly visited the Secretariat. As for those who do not like to work, be it at home or in office, things have changed. 'Working' officials are divided over the sudden accent on sticking to office timings. The Congress government, having credited government employees for its victory in the Assembly elections, cannot afford to kick the ladder of its success. Surprise inspections apart, the ongoing ACB raids have also irked the employees, who, of course, cannot be expected to become nirmohi saints overnight even if they are primed ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

BABUS NOT PREPARED TO LEAVE OFFICIAL RESIDENCE
For Telangana officials who have continued in their positions long after their retirement because of what they had brought to the table under the previous dispensation, the regime change is yet to sink in. Such officials were evidently not prepared for a tumultuous change. S Narsing Rao, who used to call the shots in the Chief Minister's Office, has taken noticeably a long period for vacating his official residence. It is understood that he has just given notice and is preparing to move out of his official quarters.

TRANSFERS OR GAME OF MUSICAL CHAIRS?
Police transfers, particularly at DSP level, have been equated with the game of musical chairs across Telangana. Some officers, despite being promoted in 2018-19, are yet to get law and order posting, notwithstanding the regime change. There are others who had enjoyed sinecures and plum postings in the BRS regime but who managed to get transferred and posted within the city of their choice by cosying up with the new administration in the context of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Officers who await posting without scope for behind-the-scene action are resentful that, despite change in regime, their fortunes have not changed.

CELEBRATED AS TOPPER BUT DETESTED AS COP
Gaush Alam, celebrated as topper of 2017 batch, is today detested as an insensitive cop.

As the Superintendent of Police, he not only slapped his subordinate Ravi Kumar, ASI, for allowing his family to offer prayers at Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara but also made him kneel down and insulted him otherwise too in front his family members. The ASI, who broke down, gained support and quaffed the milk of human kindness from his peers and others. Official circles are now discussing that cops at top levels are interested more in taking care of political strategist Sunil Kanugolu, chief advisor of Karnataka's Congress unit, than in treating their fraternal colleagues fairly.

AAKU VS MULLU: THE ATTRACTION AND THE INVARIABLE LOSER
Tainted ministers and ministers need to only know how to coordinate their responses whenever scams surface. Those who fail in this dicey task, particularly officials, cannot help facing the music. When scams surface; officials are in the dock first, but ministers manage to wriggle out of the situation at least initially. Going by recent scams, regardless of the party in power, action has been initiated only against officials. No action has been initiated against the minister(s) concerned. Sleuths of the Anti Corruption Bureau in Telangana recently arrested four officials in the 'sheep distribution scam' case relating to the previous BRS government. Official circles believe that only babus have been made scapegoats in the case. This being so, the Telangana High Court recently asked the state government why no penal action had been taken against officials under the erstwhile TDP government in combined Andhra Pradesh over allotting 850 acres of prime land in Hyderabad to IMG Bharat Academies two decades ago. Some bureaucrats feel that only smart officials and wily politicians who are in power mix like water and milk to insulate themselves from scams. "Aaku yegiri mullu medha padda, mullu vachi aaku medha padda chirigedhi aaakee," goes a Telugu proverb. Babus in particular realize the truth of this quite late.

GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS AFTER HIGHER LEVEL INTERVENTION
In Andhra Pradesh, it took the hospitalization of over 100 people with diarrhea and intense pressure from Minister Vidadala Rajini, Special CS Krishna Babu and other top officials to wake up officials of the Guntur Municipal Corporation who had remained clueless for over 10 days about the cause of the outbreak. Thanks to reactive measures under watch, the civic officials found out belatedly that certain mineral water plants had supplied contaminated water in the affected areas. Six of those plants were sealed and notices issued to 25 other plants for not maintaining prescribed norms in water quality.

-- Yours truly

Poverty down to 5%: NITI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The latest consumer expenditure survey indicates that poverty has come down to five per cent in the country and people are becoming prosperous both in rural and urban areas, NITI Aayog CEO B V R Subrahmanyam said on Sunday.
The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, released data on household consumption expenditure for the year 2022-23 on Saturday which shows per capita monthly household expenditure more than doubled in 2022-23 as compared to 2011-12.
"This long-awaited consumer expenditure survey has



brought out many things. With data on household consumption, we can assess what is the status of poverty in the country and how successful the poverty alleviation measures have been," Subrahmanyam told reporters.
"The survey findings indicate that poverty in India is

below five per cent now. I am convinced with the data," he said.
He said that for the purpose of the survey, people were kept in 20 different categories and the data showed that the average per capita monthly expenditure for all categories stood at Rs 3,773 in rural areas and Rs 6,459 in urban areas. The average per capita monthly expenditure of 0-5 per cent fractile class is pegged at Rs 1,373 in rural areas and Rs 2,001 in urban areas.
"If we take the poverty line and inflate it with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to today's rate, we see that the average consumption of the lowest fractional, the 0-5 per cent, is about the same. This means poverty in the country

is there in the 0-5 per cent group only," the NITI Aayog CEO said.
"This is my assessment. But economists will analyse it and come out with absolutely correct numbers," he added.
Citing the survey data, Subrahmanyam said the increase in consumption both in rural and urban areas is about 2.5 times.
"This shows that the progress in the country is happening in both urban and rural areas," he added.
Another significant takeaway from the survey findings is that consumption in rural areas is growing faster than in urban areas, thereby narrowing the gap, Subrahmanyam said, adding, "Disparities are coming down."

5-year-old moves court seeking removal of liquor shop near school

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A five-year-old student from Kanpur has filed a Public Interest Litigation in the Allahabad High Court seeking the removal of a liquor shop from near his school.
The HC Friday asked the state government counsel to seek a response from the authorities as to why the licence of the liquor shop in Kanpur Nagar was being renewed even after the school came into existence in the vicinity. A division bench comprising Justice Manoj Kumar Gupta and Justice Kshiti Shailendra directed to list the PIL on March 13 for next hearing.

DRDO hands over 23 licensing agreements to industries

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Premier defence research organisation DRDO on Sunday handed over 23 licensing agreements to several defence producers facilitating transfer of critical technologies to manufacture a range of military equipment in the domains of armaments, naval systems and aeronautics, among others.
The agreements were handed over at the 'MSME Defence Expo' that was organised by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in Pune.
The technologies being

transferred by the DRDO to the defence producers would cover the domains of electronics, laser systems, armaments, life sciences, combat vehicles, naval systems and aeronautics, the defence ministry said.
These technologies would facilitate manufacturing of a series of military equipment including brakes for Light Combat Aircraft Tejas, 100-metre infantry foot bridge (floating), 40 mm high explosive anti-personnel (HEAP) grenade and high pressure water mist fire suppression system (HPWMFSS), officials said.

Hindi plays pivotal role in our progress

PNS ■ GURUGRAM

Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya said on Sunday here that Hindi plays a pivotal role in development since it is "our mother tongue".
"The Hindi language plays a pivotal role in our development as it is our mother tongue. Though we understand the importance of English, we shall also strive to learn Hindi as Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has made Hindi a crucial aspect of our New Education Policy (NEP)," he said. Governor Dattatreya was addressing a gathering after the inauguration ceremony of Shri Ram Global School.

PM dedicates AIIMS Mangalagiri to nation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated the AIIMS Mangalagiri to the nation along with four AIIMS hospitals in various states across the country. On the occasion, PM Modi virtually congratulated the management, faculty, and students of AIIMS Mangalagiri. He highlighted the significant milestone achieved in healthcare infrastructure, stating, "Till 50 years after independence, there was only one AIIMS in the country, at Delhi. Today, Seven new AIIMS were inaugurated and



foundation stones were laid. We are developing the country much faster than what happened in the last six decades."
Prime Minister Modi also laid the foundation for Nine Critical Care Blocks (CCBs) in Andhra Pradesh under the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman

Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission, with seven CCBs at Government Medical Colleges and two in District Hospitals. Under this programme, Seven CCBs at Government Medical Colleges of Kadapa, SPSR Nellore, Srikakulam, Tirupati, East Godavari, Kurnool, Vizianagaram and Two CCBs in District Hospitals of Guntur and Sri Satya Sai districts, will be constructed, at a total project cost of Rs.233 crores. Additionally, he inaugurated a 100-bed State-of-the-art ESI Hospital in Kakinada constructed for Rs 114 Crores.

Chinese goods...

Continued from page 1

He was addressing a gathering after his 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' arrived here from Moradabad via Sambhal. Gandhi was greeted in Aligarh by a large number of workers of the Congress and supporters of its INDIA bloc ally Samajwadi Party (SP).
With Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra accompanying him, the Uttar Pradesh Congress posted on 'X' in Hindi, "The Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is moving forward with the message of unity, brotherhood and harmony with 'Jannayak' and 'Lok Netri.'"

‘Cong would not have...

Continued from page 1

The Congress assured that it will implement the Rs 2 lakh farm loan waiver scheme for farmers, give Rs 2,500 per month to every woman and pay Rs 4,000 per month as Asara pension to old people. As per Election Commission details, there are 1.67 crore women in the state. They are waiting for the Rs 2500. There are 1.24 crore LPG connections in the state and they are waiting for the Rs 500 scheme. The Congress said that it will give 200 units of free electricity to

everyone but now the Congress is saying that the scheme is only for some," he said.
KTR said that the BRS had decided to wait for the Congress government to complete 100 days but the Congress levelled allegations as they liked in the first session of the Assembly.
He said that there is no need to think about Modi who failed to give national project status to the Palamuru-Rangareddy project.
He said that Revanth handed over irrigation pro-

jects on the Krishna River to the KRMB and the Centre. However, the CM introduced a resolution stating that there is no question of handing over irrigation projects to the KRMB in the Assembly after the BRS's Nalgonda public meeting.
He said that both the national parties, the BJP and the Congress, are 'harming' the interests of Telangana.
"We have to drive the 'car' at 100 kmph during the Lok Sabha elections. We have confidence that the BRS will win Nagarkurnool LS seat once again," KTR said.

Announce...

Continued from page 1

He appealed to the government to implement the Bill at least from March and pay the salaries of TSRTC employees from the government treasury.
Harish appealed to the government to purchase 2,000 more buses as the number of women passengers has increased.
He said that the Congress government had announced that it would repay the PRC bonds issued in 2013 and demanded that the government should make payments as promised.

INDIA ‘janbandhan’ locked...

Continued from page 1

In a post on X, Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "Massive, enthusiastic, and energised crowds gathered in Agra to welcome Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, and Akhilesh Yadav. The leaders garlanded the statue of Babasaheb Ambedkar before taking out a historic roadshow through the heart of Agra."
"The INDIA janbandhan is locked and loaded, ready to dispel the darkness of the anykaal," Ramesh said.
In another post, the Congress leader said the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra has completed its journey through Uttar Pradesh (UP), that lasted eight days.
The journey started in Chandauli and passed through the Varanasi, Bhadohi, Prayagraj, Pratapgarh, Amethi, Raebareli, Lucknow, Unnao, Kanpur,

Moradabad, Amroha, Sambhal, Bulandshahr, Aligarh, Hathras and the Agra districts, he said.
"Undoubtedly, the high point was Akhilesh Yadav's participation in Agra this afternoon," Ramesh said.
"The Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra has not only galvanised the party organisation in UP but also given new hope to all sections of UP society, especially the youth. Rahul Gandhi raised the issue of paper leaks for four consecutive days and the impact of his speeches was felt on the morning of February 24 when the Yogi (Adityanath) government announced the cancellation of the examination held earlier this month for the recruitment to the post of police constable, the paper for which had been leaked," he said.
Gandhi had made this a telling example of the injustice being inflicted on the young-

sters of Uttar Pradesh, who are already facing the highest unemployment in the last 45 years, he said.
"Rahul Gandhi's repeated emphasis on the farmers' issues also resonated loudly. He highlighted the Congress' guarantee to give legal status to MSP (Minimum Support Price) and to fix MSP based on the formula suggested by Bharat Ratna Dr MS Swaminathan.
Both these demands have been consistently ignored by the prime minister," Ramesh said. He said Gandhi also spoke forcefully on the need to carry out a socioeconomic caste census to ensure deeper and more meaningful social justice." The UP leg of the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra has given a thumbs-UP both to the Congress and to the INDIA janbandhan!" Ramesh added.

Kavitha to skip CBI summons...

Continued from page 1

Kavitha said that if required, with prior intimation she would appear through virtual mode, to answer any queries.
She pointed out that about 15 months ago, the then Investigating Officer, Deputy Superintendent of Police, CBI ACB issued her a notice under Section 160 CrPC -- which pertains to summoning a witness. In her letter to the CBI, she asked the CBI to "revoke or withdraw the subject notice" sent under Section 41A of CrPC. "In the light of my pressing onerous engagements coupled with my commitment to the people of my state and taking into consideration the necessity of my personal presence in my state while the parliamentary elections are underway, your good-self may consider keep-

ing such notice in abeyance," Kavitha said.
Further, she said she is scheduled to attend several one-to-one personal meetings in the next six weeks or so, spread over various districts in the state, thereby rendering her practically incapable of appearing before the CBI in person on February 26. Since she has absolutely no role to play in any of the accusations, the CBI does not need her assistance any longer in the matter as the case is entirely subjudice before the court of law, she claimed.
The present notice under Section 41A CrPC is in complete contrast to the earlier notice under Section 160 CrPC, which was issued to her in December 2022 and which already stands complied with, she said.
The CBI had earlier recorded her statement in December

2022 at her residence in Hyderabad in connection with the case.
The Enforcement Directorate has alleged that one of the accused in the case, Vijay Nair, received kickbacks of at least Rs 100 crore from a group called South Group (controlled by Sarath Reddy, Kavitha and Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy) on behalf of leaders of the AAP.
The CBI, which has so far filed three charge sheets against a number of accused including former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, has alleged that kickbacks of around Rs 90-100 crore were paid in advance to some politicians of the ruling AAP in Delhi and other public servants by some persons in the liquor business from south India through co-accused Nair, Abhishek Boipally and Dinesh Arora.

Divine experience

Continued from page 1

Wearing a white diving helmet and ochre robes, Modi sat cross-legged on the sea bed, folded his hands in prayers while being helped by the Navy divers and waved peacock feathers before offering them to Lord Krishna.
"More than courage, it was faith," he said after coming out of the waters.
Scuba diving is conducted off the coast of Dwarka near Beyt Dwarka island, where people can see the underwater remains of ancient Dwarka that have been excavated by archaeologists.
Sharing his experience while addressing a gathering here later in the day, Modi said when he was touching the ancient city, the picture of India's grandeur of the 21st century flashed before his

eyes, and he remained inside the waters for a long time.
"The vision of Dwarka in the sea has further strengthened my resolve of a developed India," he said.
The PM also shared his experience with some photographs on X.
"To pray in the city of Dwarka, which is immersed in the waters, was a very divine experience. I felt connected to an ancient era of spiritual grandeur and timeless devotion. May Bhagwan Shri Krishna bless us all," he said in the post on X.
Addressing the gathering here, Modi said he was overwhelmed with joy by the experience and fulfilment of his decades old dream of touching the sacred city.
"I went deep into the sea and saw the ancient Dwarkaji. Archaeologists have writ-

ten a lot about Dwarka which is immersed in the sea. A lot has been said about Dwarka in our scriptures also. It is said that Lord Vishwakarma himself had built the city of Dwarka," the PM said.
He said the ancient Dwarka city was a good example of planning and development of a great city, and when he was having its darshan in the sea, he experienced "the same ancient grandeur and divinity."
"I bowed to Lord Shri Krishna there. I also took peacock feathers with me which I offered to Lord Krishna," he said.
The prime minister said that for many years, he was very curious about going into the sea and touching whatever remains of the ancient city of Dwarka and paying his respects.

NOTICE
BHARAT PETROLEUM CORPORATION LIMITED (BPCL), a Company incorporated under the Indian Companies Act 1913 is intending to take on lease the vacant land admeasuring 1098.62 Square Metres in Survey No. 132/1/A/1/1/1/1/1/2/1, Gundlacherampally Village, Medchal Mandal, Medchal Malkajgiri District, Telangana State, bounded on the North Main Road South : Neighbour's land in Survey No. 136 East : Neighbours land in Survey No. 132 West : Owner's property in Survey No. 132 from its owner and Titleholders Mr. Gadeela Vishnu Vardhan Reddy S/o Gadeela Narayana Reddy for a period of 20 years. If any person other than Mr. Gadeela Vishnu Vardhan Reddy S/o Gadeela Narayana is having any right or claim in any manner over the said property, the same may be intimated to BPCL at the following address within 7 days from today: **Territory Manager (Retail), Hyderabad, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Hyderabad Territory Office, Post Bag No. 4, PO: HCL, Food Corporation of India Road, Cherlapally, Hyderabad-500051.** Date: 26.02.2024 Place: Hyderabad

CHAOS OVER DOWNLOAD OF ADMIT CARDS FOR EXAMS

Panic as Inter portal gets blocked

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Board for Intermediate Education has released the admit card on Saturday on its portal for students to download it for their upcoming Inter board exams which will be held from February 28. However, on Sunday, panic was triggered among students when the portal got blocked thereby not enabling them to download their admit card.

Speaking to the Pioneer, Jayaprada, Regional Joint Director of Intermediate Board said, "The Telangana government did not block the Inter portal itself but the website got stuck or blocked for a few hours



as many students were downloading the admit card at the same time. The website got jammed due to multiple clicks by a large number of students for downloading their admit card.

Moreover, it's not a serious issue as the admit card will be given to students at their respective colleges and centres. It's not true that the Telangana government has itself blocked the

Intermediate board official website."

With regards to allowing students whose hall tickets didn't have principal's signature, she said, "The government has given

orders to allow students whose hall tickets do not have principal's signature."

An Intermediate lecturer said, "It's not a big issue as majority of the students have downloaded the admit card when it got released. For those who are unable to download their admit cards, they can collect it from their respective colleges."

Pallavi, an Intermediate student said, "At first, I was bit panicky when I was unable to download the admit card from the website but later in the evening, I successfully downloaded it from the portal. It might be a server issue as students are ready to download their admit cards when it was released on portal."

IMD Hyd forecasts rainfall, issues yellow alert in TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Hyderabad has forecast rainfall in many districts in Telangana and issued a yellow alert for Monday.

According to the weather department, Kumaram Bheem, Mancherla, Peddapalle, Karimnagar, J Bhupalpally, Mulugu, B Kothagudem, Sangareddy and Vikarabad districts of Telangana are expected to receive rainfall on Monday. A yellow alert has been issued for these districts.

IMD Hyderabad also predicts rainfall on Monday in Adilabad, Kumaram Bheem, Nirmal, Jagtial, Nizamabad,



Kamareddy and Vikarabad. As per the data from the Telangana State Development Planning Society (TSDPS), rains ranging from 0.5-31.8 mm occurred in various districts of the State, with the

highest recorded at 31.8 mm in Nalgonda on Saturday.

Now, with IMD Hyderabad issuing a yellow alert for Monday, it is highly likely that rainfall will be witnessed in several districts in Telangana.

Two held for investment fraud involving Rs 49 lakh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The cyber crime unit of the Hyderabad police on February 21 arrested two persons involved in a cyber fraud worth Rs 49, 45,900.

The accused were identified as Johnny J and M Manual; they contacted the victim in October 2023 via telegram app and offered a part time job. The victim was assigned a few tasks of investing smaller amount and returns profit for their tasks.

Johnny and Manual convinced the victim to make small investments and promised large returns by year end. However, upon not

receiving any returns the victim filed a complaint with the cyber crime unit. Based on the investigation, it was learnt that Johnny and Manual contacted a person Raisul who is based in Dubai and he offered to send \$ 3000-4000 per month in their Binance wallet in return for a commission.

The two accused opened an account in the name of Cosos Technologies Private Limited and entered a business deal with Raisul on 3 % commission. Raisul created a whatsapp group including the two accused and another person identified as Abinu. Once Raisul deposited the amount in the Binance wallet, he shared

the screen shot on the group. The accused then sold to other persons in good profits; After selling those USDt then they received money in Indian rupees; After that Raisul gave his associates bank account numbers to transfer that money to those bank accounts by keeping their 3% commission.

The bank accounts were involved in 50 cases of fraud across India. The police seized five mobile phones, seven pass-books, three pen-drives, 29 cheque books and 12 debit cards from Johnny while two iphones, 13 debit cards, four cheque books and three office stamps were seized from Manual.

Yedula conferred Honorary Doctorate in Humanity

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Krishna Yedula was conferred with an Honorary Doctorate in Humanity by George Washington University of Peace, Florida, USA, at World Peace Conference held at Bengaluru on Saturday. The event was organised in joint collaboration by International Commission for Cultural and Diplomatic Relations, George Washington University of Peace and Royal Academy.

This recognition acknowledges Krishna Yedula's outstanding contribution to society, especially during Covid pandemic in Telangana as well as his unwavering commitment to fostering social service thereby bringing a positive impact in society.

His contribution in enabling business continuity for IT, pharma, manufacturing, health-

care, hospitality and realty sectors during Covid pandemic were appreciated by the Ministry of Industries, Telangana government.

Krishna Yedula expressed gratitude for the recognition, emphasising the importance of collective efforts in creating a world marked by harmony and mutual respect. He reiterated the need for continued collaboration and innovation to address the challenges for a better tomorrow to protect people and planet.

Currently, Krishna Yedula is working as a Co-Chair for CSR and Sustainability Chapter for Telangana & AP at the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM).

Captain George Washington University of Peace officials conferring Krishna Yedula with a honorary doctorate in Humanity

Call to include homeless people in caste survey



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharatiya OBC Samakhya national president K Koteswara Rao on Sunday urged the Telangana government to identify nomadic and homeless people in the caste survey.

The demand was put forward during a discussion on "There are nomadic, semi-nomadic communities, denotified tribes, castes, homeless people, people who are unable to benefit from government welfare programmes and innumerable poor people existing in the society, far from modern development.

Telangana Backward Class Commission chairperson Dr Vakulabharanam said, "The Commission is comprehensively studying procedures adopted in similar surveys that have already been conducted and are being conducted by Census Commissioner, 2011 Caste Census, Karnataka H Kantharaja BC. Commission, Havanur Commission, O Chinnapareddy Commission, Tamil Nadu's Sattanathan Commission, Ambashankar Commission, Justice Janarthanam Commission,

National Sample Survey Organisation and caste-based surveys conducted in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh states. Krishna Mohan explained that a report with constructive suggestions will be submitted to the State government soon.

Vakulabharanam further said, "The judgments given by the Supreme Court and the High Courts of various states are being examined thoroughly. The kind of procedures the State government is designing in the matter of caste survey are yet to be clarified." As a part of this, Dr Vakulabharanam informed that he is ready to work with dedication whatever responsibility the State government assigns him.

Sociologist BS Ramulu said, "People should be prepared to register themselves in the caste survey. Representatives of BC associations and caste associations should alert the general public at the time of survey. In accordance with this, it is suggested to organise village-to-village awareness meetings to explain the benefits and uses of the survey to the people of all walks of life."

Man held for cyber fraud worth Rs 2.38 lakh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The cyber crime unit of the Hyderabad police arrested a man involved in a job fraud worth Rs 2,38,405. Cash worth Rs 5 lakh was seized from the accused.

The accused was identified as Mohammed Shoyab Bablu Khan, a native of Mumbai. A city-based victim filed a complaint stating that he received a message from the fraudsters on Telegram; wherein he was offered a part time job to work from home; initially they sent a bonus of Rs 500 and asked him to invest the aforementioned amount.

Khan colluded with Cyber fraudsters and cheated people on the pretext of offering part time jobs. The accused provided bank accounts to the cyber fraudsters to cheat the victims.

Khan opened bank accounts in his name and also provided accounts to fraudsters in the name of fake companies. These accounts were used to deposit the fraudulent money and Khan received a commission of Rs 1 lakh each for providing the accounts to the fraudsters.

The fake bank accounts were utilised in 42 cases of fraud across India out of which six were reported from Telangana. The accused was booked and arrested under Sections 66(C),(D) of the IT Act and Sections 419 and 420 of the Indian Penal Code.

Apart from the cash, the police also seized 37 cheque books, 38 debit cards, 11 pass-books, 15 rubber stamps of fake companies, 12 SIM cards, three mobile phones and one laptop from Khan.

7,900 from TS to perform Haj this year

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As many as 11,000 people will travel from Hyderabad to Saudi Arabia for Haj this year; out of them, 7,900 have been selected from Telangana.

The first batch of pilgrims from Telangana is expected to travel to Medina on May 9. The Telangana Haj Committee on Sunday conducted the first training session for the pilgrims. Advisor to Telangana government on SC, ST and Minority affairs, Mohammed Ali Shabbir urged the pilgrims to make full use of the opportunity and to cooperate with the authorities in order to have a hassle-free pilgrimage.

"This year, approximately 11,000 pilgrims will travel from Hyderabad to Medina in Saudi Arabia. While 7,900 pilgrims are from Telangana and Hyderabad, the rest are from Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The



Telangana government has been managing logistics for pilgrims from the neighbouring states. Previously Telangana government allocated Rs 2 crore for Haj which has now been increased to Rs 3 crore. Those responsible for logistics have been asked to ensure quality. I urge you to be prepared for the challenges that will come up during Haj. Please remain calm while dealing with your companions. This is a test of patience, the Ehram (attire worn while performing Haj) will pose certain challenges. However, you must be prepared to perform the pilgrimage despite the inconvenience."

"It is all about determination; once you are determined to perform Haj, no amount of issues will deter you. In India, there are over 20 crore Muslims out of whom only 1,70,000 get selected for the Haj and you are among them. So please make full use of this opportunity. Perform all the rituals in a chronological order

and ensure the same for your companions," the advisor further said.

Telangana Minority secretary Syed Omer Jaleel said, "Please make sure your travel documents are updated and submitted them to the Haj Committee at the earliest. Often, Haj aspirants face problems regarding passport validity. If the validity is less than six months you won't be allowed to travel. In such cases the Haj Committee must be contacted for assistance; make sure the fee is paid in time, in case of a delay or non-payment your slot may be allotted to some other person. Make sure you are physically fit because performing Haj requires swift movement from one place to another. Even when you perform tawaf, you will have to walk for 1 kilometer. Practice walking to avoid physical issues during the pilgrimage.

Former TS govt flayed for not prohibiting sale of tobacco products

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In the light of people selling or giving ganja to schoolchildren in the form of chocolates, Hyderabad social activist Robin Zaacheus has criticised the former Telangana government for not prohibiting the tobacco products within the range of 100 yards near all educational institutions.

Robin Zaacheus said, "If the former government didn't prohibit the sale and usage of tobacco products within the

range of 100 yards near all educational institutions, how can one curb the sale of ganja to schoolchildren in the form of chocolates by unknown persons?"

As per the RTI filed by the activist, it is stated that despite sending letters to the former government several times, especially to former chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao, he failed to take any action to prohibit the products near educational institutions.

"The Centre has directed all State governments to prohibit sale and usage of tobacco products near educational institutions within a 100 yards radius. The Telangana government is not aware of the directions passed by the Centre. There are many pan shops or tobacco shops near educational institutions which can impact students to get engaged in them. Also, some unknown people consume pan or tobacco which can affect the children's health," he added.



TUWJ leaders and CPRO Boreddy Ayodhya Reddy extending greetings to Telangana Media Academy new Chairman K Srinivas Reddy

K Srinivas Reddy is Media Academy chief

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telugu daily 'Praja Paksham' Editor K Srinivas Reddy has been appointed the Chairman of the Telangana Media Academy. The State government issued an order on Sunday regarding this.

Srinivas will hold the post for two years. Earlier, Allam Narayana was the Chairman of the Media Academy.

Srinivas was the founding Chairman (with Cabinet Rank) of the Press Academy of Andhra Pradesh, an institution which

came into being due to his efforts and the efforts of the APUWJ to impart training to working journalists and to raise the standards of journalism.

During his time at the Press Council, Srinivas headed a committee on paid news syndrome and submitted a report on that.

Srinivas was also the editor of 'Visalandhra'. Later, he served 'Mana Telangana', a Telugu daily as its Editor. Currently, he is editing 'Praja Paksham', another Telugu daily based in Hyderabad.

Free sports from politicians, bureaucrats: Gopichand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Legendary shuttler Pullela Gopichand was on Sunday extremely critical of politicians and bureaucrats running sports administration in the country, saying that the government should bring a law to ensure only professionals and people who understand sports are at the helm of affairs.

Speaking during the 'News9 Global Summit' here, the former All England champion, who runs a badminton acad-

emy in Hyderabad producing top players said, "One legislation, I would really love to see is the government telling that we (sports persons) are not under bureaucrats, sports administration is not under politicians. But sports is managed by professionals and people who know stuff and who are sportspersons. "That, from a legislation point I would really want to see," said Gopichand, who is also currently the chief national badminton coach.



Metro line to Malkajigiri sought

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Activist Malka Komaraiah asked in a Tweet, "What crime has Malkajigiri constituency done that it is ignored in #Hyderabad Metro rail's new alignment? Is this the gift from CM Revanth Reddy to the people who voted for him in parliament elections 2019 after losing in Kodangal in 2018.?"

PK launches 'Health on Us' mobile app

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Actor-turned-politician Pawan Kalyan has launched Health on Us mobile app on Sunday at ITC Kohenu hotel in Hitech City.

Designed to modernise access to healthcare services, HealthOnUs' introduces a new level of convenience, making comprehensive medical care accessible with just a tap. In his address, Pawan Kalyan emphasised that this innovative app provides ample scope of employment opportunities for the youth, under-



Managing Director DJ Bharat Reddy felicitates Pawan Kalyan

lining its significance not just in healthcare transformation but also in fostering economic growth and job creation.

Under the strategic guidance of Chairman Lingamaneni Ramesh and Managing Director DJ Bharat Reddy, the organisation launched the app.

The app renders a wide range of health services, including physiotherapy, nursing and post-treatment care, directly to users' homes, setting a new benchmark in healthcare delivery.

Chairman Ramesh, the

visionary behind 'HealthOnUs', heralded the app as a culmination of diligent research and innovation, aimed at safeguarding health for everyone. With a focus on fostering a healthier society, Ramesh called for community support for this groundbreaking initiative.

Managing Director Bharat Reddy underscored the app's unique ability to offer superior healthcare services beyond traditional hospital care, directly to your doorstep, establishing 'HealthOnUs' as a pioneer in the healthcare sector.



Kishan Reddy predicts bleak future for BRS in LS polls

PNS ■ MEDAK

Union Minister and Telangana BJP State president G Kishan Reddy has predicted bleak future for the BRS in Telangana and felt that there was no loss to Telangana if the BRS fails to open its account in at least one of the 17 Lok Sabha seats. Addressing Vijay Sankalp Yatra at Toorpan on Sunday along with former MLA Raghunandan Rao, Kishan Reddy said that the LS polls are scheduled to be held in the first week of April. He accused the BRS and Congress as family

parties and also corrupt. The Congress has been spreading falsehood among the people calling the BRS and the BJP as one and the same. They have been trying to deal a crippling blow to the BJP in the elections. He exuded confidence of the BJP winning all the 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana and warned MIM MP Asaduddin Owaisi of tasting defeat at the hands of the BJP. Top leader of the AICC Rahul Gandhi would leave the shores of the country for foreign countries. The Congress



party is a party devoid any leader. A vote given to either the Congress or the BRS would go waste, he said. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy did not have the capacity to implement six guarantees promised by the Congress to the people. The State government would not be able to pay salaries to employees after two months, he said. If the Congress fails to implement the promises made to the people, the BJP would not allow the Congress leaders to roam in villages, Kishan Reddy cautions the Congress leaders.

Kamareddy MLA appeals to people to strengthen Modi's hands

PNS ■ MANUGURU RURAL

Kamareddy BJP MLA Tatipalli Venkata Ramana Reddy has appealed to the people to support the BJP to enable it to win Mahabubabad Lok Sabha seat to support the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is tipped to become the PM for the third time after the LS polls. Addressing the gathering as part of the BJP's Vijay Sankalp Yatra here on Sunday, he alleged that the Congress in the name of PrajaPalana invited applications from people but did not subject them to any scrutiny. In stead of implementing six guarantees fully, the CM has been adopting dilly-dallying tactics and undertaking tours to Kaleswaram project along with the party MLAs and Ministers. How far Revanth Reddy is justified in undertaking visits to Kaleswaram projects instead of taking action against former CM KCR, he wondered. Quoting Revanth as saying, he said that the implementation of the six guarantees is feasible only when Congress comes to power at the Centre.



He wanted the people to observe the shift in the Congress stand. The Congress came to power making the false promise of implementing six guarantees to the people soon after coming to power, he said. Earlier, he garlanded the statues of KomramBheem and Ambedkar and paid rich tributes to them before addressing the street corner meeting here. BJP district president Ranga Kiran, Kisan Morcha state unit former president Sridhar Reddy, constituency convenor of the party Bikshapati, Parliamentary constituency convenor Srinivasa Reddy, former district unit of the party president B Prabhakar Reddy and others were present.

Jaffer well in Khammam fort becomes a tourist attraction

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

The historic Jaffer steps well in the fort on the hill top in Khammam became on more tourist attraction in the district as people are flocking to the well for their pre-wedding photo shoots and other such activities. The walls of the well have been painted and lights have been provided as part of beautifying the steps well, which became one of the feathers in Khammam's cap. The fort on the hill in Khammam was built on a four square km area. When Jaffaruddaula became the Talukadar, he built a palace on the fort. The steps well was built towards the south of the fort where the rain water incident upon the fort will get collected. The well was 60 feet long, 60 feet wide and 70 feet deep. The Qutubshahis and Asaf Jahi rulers who came to power subsequently increased the height of parapet walls of the well and strengthened it further. Locally the well is known as Jaffer well. The ancient and historic well faced neglect for years altogether. The locals started depositing garbage into it. For many years, none bothered to revive it.



Realising that the historic Jaffer Well is fast losing its identity in the city, the Khammam Municipal Corporation officials decided to revive the well with the help of the archeology department officials and allocated Rs 60 lakh to it. The authorities of Rain Water Project in Hyderabad also took part in the renovation exercise. The well restoration works were commenced in April last year. The authorities operated two 7 HP motors for 23 days to pump out contaminated water from the well. The KMC

deployed 24 workers exclusively for the development of the well works. They worked hard for 90 days and removed 2.12 lakh cubic meters of garbage, baring the original condition of the steps well. Afterwards, the walls got a coat of pain and lights have been fixed to illuminate the well at night time. Collector VP Gautam, Mayor P Neeraja, municipal commissioner Adarsh Surabhi inaugurated it recently. Soon the historic well became a famous tourist attraction.

Congress is the mother of graft, says Chhattisgarh CM Sai

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Dev Sai said that he came to Telangana to seek the support of tribal brothers and sisters for the BJP. He said that the BJP is currently the world's largest political party. "Our country's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, is a charismatic leader worldwide. Due to him, India's voice is being heard globally. Our Prime Minister is dedicated to serving all the 140 crore Indians and his motto is 'Together with all, development for all'. The Congress is the mother of corruption," he said.

Vishnu Dev Sai attended the Vijay Sankalp Yatra held at Bhadrachalam on Sunday. Sai addressed the rally organized here and spoke for the BJP. He said that when the UPA government was in power under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh corruption scandals emerged daily. "scandals like the Coalgate scam, the Commonwealth scam and the Agusta Westland scam occurred during Manmohan Singh's 10-year rule, in which many prominent UPA leaders were involved. That is why the people rejected the Congress.



The Congress is a sinking ship and the mother of corruption. So we must raise the BJP flag," he said. Chief Minister Vishnu Dev Sai said that his state of Chhattisgarh was formed just before Telangana. The BJP ruled continuously for 15 years in Chhattisgarh, and the state saw rapid development. But in the last five years, the Congress government halted the state's progress, he said. In 2023, the people of Chhattisgarh defeated the Congress and again made an Adivasi the Chief Minister by electing the BJP. As soon as the BJP government took charge, we started the development of Chhattisgarh. The government has been in power for only two months and we have taken major decisions. More than 18

lakh poor families who were homeless were provided with houses. We gave a bonus of Rs 3716 crore for two years to 12 lakh farmers. We fulfilled our promise to farmers. Now we are purchasing rice from the farmers for Rs 3,100 a quintal and procuring 21 quintals of rice per acre, he said. The Chhattisgarh Chief Minister asked the people at the gathering to ensure the formation of a BJP government at the Centre after the Lok Sabha elections. "We need to develop your area extensively. We need to eradicate corruption from your state and make the state Congress-free. Only then can India become the world's guru again," he said. He said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a successful PM who wants to see India as a developed nation by 2045. From an economic perspective, our country, which was at 11th place 10 years ago has been raised to fifth place by our Prime Minister. He has determined to make India the world's third-largest economy by 2045, he said. Addressing the rally at Bhadrachalam, Chief Minister Sai appealed to the people to vote for the BJP.

Sridhar Babu hints at imposing ceiling on Rythu Bandhu aid

PNS ■ BODHAN

Minister for IT and Industries Sridhar Babu has hinted at the State government imposing ceiling on the input subsidy being given to farmers under the Rythu Bandhu scheme. The scope of extending the assistance under Rythu Bandhu is ruled out if farmers did not grow crops, he said.

He along with MLA P Sudarshan Reddy, MLC Jeevan Reddy, industries principal secretary Jayesh Ranjan, Sugar Cane director Malsur on Saturday inspected the Nizam Sugars in Shakkar Nagar on the outskirts of Bodhan. They met with farmers and elicited their views on reopening of the sugar factory. The Minister assured them to work hard to get it reopened.

Mega Job Mela today

PNS ■ NALGONDA

All arrangements have been made for the conduct of the mega job mela at Mahatma Gandhi University here on Monday under the aegis of the KomatireddyPrateek Reddy Foundation. Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkata Reddy would inaugurate the job mela being organized under the joint aegis of the TASK and Telangana Facility Management. Thousands of unemployed youth are expected to be present at the job mela.

NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

Jagan to fulfil Kuppam water promise today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is set to fulfil a significant promise on Sunday as he releases irrigation water to 6,300 acres of ayacut through 110 minor irrigation tanks in Kuppam constituency, along with providing drinking water to 4.02 lakh residents in Kuppam and Palamaneru constituencies from the Kuppam Branch Canal. The initiative, a part of the AVR HNSS Project Phase-2, constructed at a cost of Rs 560.29 crore in Rajupet, Rama Kuppam mandal, Chittoor district, underscores the government's commitment to addressing crucial water needs.

Following the ceremonial release of irrigation water, the Chief Minister will engage with the public in a meeting at Gundisetipalle, Shanthipuram mandal, Chittoor District. This endeavour marks a significant step towards fulfilling the longstanding demand for water resources in the drought-prone

THE INITIATIVE BEING TAKEN AS PART OF THE AVR HNSS PROJECT PHASE-2

Irrigation water to be provided 6,300 acres of ayacut through 110 minor irrigation tanks in the Kuppam constituency, along with providing drinking water to 4.02 lakh residents in Kuppam and Palamaneru constituencies from the Kuppam Branch Canal.

The government has initiated various developmental projects in Kuppam, including the upgrade of Kuppam Gram Panchayat to a Municipality, the establishment of the Kuppam Revenue Division, and a Police Sub-Division. substantial investments, such as Rs 66 crore for developmental works in Kuppam Municipality and Rs 100 crore for the development of four mandals in the constituency, signify the government's commitment to holistic growth



Kuppam constituency. The government's efforts are aimed at enhancing the quality of life and fostering agricultural prosperity in the region. Under the leadership of CM Jagan, the government has initiated various developmental projects in Kuppam, including the upgrade of Kuppam Gram Panchayat to

a Municipality, the establishment of the Kuppam Revenue Division, and a Police Sub-Division. substantial investments, such as Rs 66 crore for developmental works in Kuppam Municipality and Rs 100 crore for the development of four mandals in the constituency, signify the government's commitment to holistic growth.

Gear up for YSRCP challenge: Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Emphasising that the selection of candidates from both the TDP and the Jana Sena has been meticulously conducted with the welfare of the state in mind, TDP leader Nara Chandrababu Naidu stated on Sunday that the upcoming elections hold paramount importance for the people's future. "The alliance between the TDP and the Jana Sena is solely for the betterment of the five crore people of the state," remarked Chandrababu Naidu during a video conference with the selected TDP candidates. He congratulated them on their inclusion in the initial list and

provided them with strategic guidance for navigating the forthcoming elections. Highlighting the unprecedented early selection of candidates, Naidu underscored the innovative approach adopted this time. He mentioned seeking input from party leaders and grassroots workers to finalize the candidates, emphasizing the extensive effort involved. "I've consulted with 1.3 crore individuals and meticulously analyzed survey data before announcing our party's candidates. This is an unparalleled undertaking in Indian politics," Chandrababu maintained, urging the chosen candidates to strive for victory in every constituency.

Naidu cautioned candidates and party activists to ensure zero errors at every level of leadership, recognizing the critical nature of the next 40 days for the TDP. "Remain accessible to the public and inspire confidence in them regarding their future," he advised the party's candidates. "Prepare to face the challenges posed by YSRCP leaders, including Jagan, as part of their schemes. Remember, the Jana Sena is our ally, and it's imperative to treat them with respect and rally their support," Chandrababu Naidu instructed the TDP candidates contesting in the elections.

4 held, 35 quintals of PDS rice recovered

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Four persons were arrested and 35 quintals of PDS rice was seized from them while smuggling it in raids conducted by the police, SP Chandana Deepti said in a statement on Sunday. The arrested were identified as Surarapu Pichchayya, of Tatikal mandal in Nalgonda district, Mogili Upender, Mogili Nagaraju and Sai Kumar of Tatikal mandal of the district. The SP warned of initiating stern action against anyone smuggling the rice meant for distribution among the card-



holders. On a credible tip off, the Nalgonda district task force conducted raid on the house of Surarapu Lachchaiah in Tatikal mandal and seized illegally stored 10 quintals of rice from the house. In another incident, the task

force officials intercepted a Bolero vehicle illegally transporting 25 quintals of rice at Mamidala stage. The SP in a release said that the task force officials have been conducting extensive raids on gaia smuggling, gambling, betting and illegal transportation of the PDS rice. If anyone is found siphoning off the PDS rice meant for the distribution among the poor would not be tolerated at all, she said. She threatened to invoke the PD Act against the habitual offenders. She hinted at conducting special drives to check the smuggling.

Chhattisgarh cops nab 4 Maoists

PNS ■ BHADRACHALAM

The Chhattisgarh police on Sunday took into custody four Maoists in Anantaram village of Julurpadumandal of the Bhadradri-Kothagudem district. The Maoists, who got mingled with agricultural workers hired for harvesting chilli crop, were nabbed by the police. The police recovered weapons from them and shifted them to their state in their vehicle. Earlier, the police have identified the Maoists using the most modern technology. Later, the police posted plainclothesmen to keep tabs on the Maoists. Following the arrest of Maoists, the Julurpadu police conducted extensive searches in the localities of the migrant agricultural workers.

Teegala and Mothe resign from BRS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS senior leader and former MLA Teegala Krishna Reddy tendered resignation to the BRS party along with his daughter-in-law and Ranga Reddy ZP Chairperson Teegala Anitha Reddy on Sunday. Both have sent their resignation letters to BRS party president KCR. They said that they tendered resignation to the BRS party as there is no due recognition in the party. They lamented that the BRS high command never cared for them. Krishan Reddy started his political career with the TDP in 1984. He worked as the Mayor of Hyderabad and worked as HUDA Chairman. Krishna Reddy was also elected as MLA from Maheshwaram constituency in 2014 and later he joined the BRS party. On the other hand, GHMC

Deputy Mayor Mothe Srilatha and her husband BRS Trade Union State Chairman Shobhan Reddy joined the Congress on Sunday in the presence of AICC incharge general secretary of Telangana Congress Deepa Das Munshi and Transport Minister Ponnamp Prabhakar at Gandhi Bhavan. They said that they worked in the party for the last 24 years but they were neglected. The BRS party gave positions to the leaders who joined recently, neglecting the seniors severely. The BRS working president took her husband for one hour to meet him recently. Speaking on the occasion, Transport Minister Ponnamp Prabhakar said that the BRS leaders are joining the Congress as they had to bear insults in the BRS party. Ponnamp made it clear that every leader will get adequate respect in the party.

Embezzlement of bank loans by MEPMA staff alleged

PNS ■ ILLANDU


Large-scale irregularities have reportedly taken place in the office of the Mission for Elimination of Poverty in Municipal Areas (MEPMA). According to the modus operandi, the MEPMA employees availed loans from banks on behalf of the SHG members in lakhs of rupees and showed an empty hand to the banks. The MEPMA authorities in spite of knowing about it have been surprisingly maintaining silence over the issue. Loans are given to self-help groups under the aegis of the MEPMA. Bank-linkage loans and Streenidhi

loans are advanced to the members of the self-help groups. To avail any loan from banks, a resolution has to be adopted by members. CRPs meet the members applying for loans and elicit opinion of all members on securing loans. Later, the CRPs make a submission to the banks. In sanction of the loans, the RPs, CRPs of the MEPMA and bank officials play crucial role. Out of the Rs 60 lakh dues recoverable by banks from SHG members, Rs 35 lakh have been cornered by the MEPMA staff, reports said. Rs 1.32 crore have been recoverable from 2392 Stree Nidhi group members during the past three years.

INDIA CORNER

Government official booked for rape in J-K's Ramban

A government official was booked for rape following a complaint by his domestic help in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district, police on Sunday said. The accused Yawar Amin, an employee of the Public Works Department presently posted as an assistant engineer in Samagra Shiksha Ramban, is on the run and efforts are on to arrest him, they said. The 18-year-old victim, in her complaint to the Banihal Police Station, alleged that Amin raped her when she was alone at his house after his wife left for Jammu recently, a police official said. The victim alleged that the accused gave her some medicine after she fell sick in the evening and later raped her, the official said. A case under relevant sections of the law, including rape, was registered against the accused and the medical examination of the victim was conducted as part of the ongoing investigation, the official added. The victim also claimed that she was thrown out of the house after she informed Amin's wife about the incident on her return from Jammu, the official said.



Kurmi community holds rally in Ranchi for ST status

Members of the Kurmi community took out a rally here on Sunday to press for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status and inclusion of Kurmal language in the eighth schedule of the Constitution. Organised under the banner of Totemic Kurmi Vikas Morcha' (TKVM), hundreds of people from different districts of the state including Ranchi, Ramgarh, Bokaro, Dhanbad, Giridih, Hazaribagh and Jamtara participated in the march. Chief convener of the rally, Sheetal Ohdar, said Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for the community and the addition of Kurmal language in the eighth schedule are among their major demands. "Under a conspiracy, Kurmi was removed from the ST list on September 6, 1950," Ohdar claimed. She also asserted that if the demands were not met, members of the community will vote against the ruling party at the Centre in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. "We will visit villages and pass on this message," she said.



Foreign currencies Rs 1.57 cr seized at Chennai airport

Law enforcement officials at the Chennai airport have recovered Rs 1.57 crore worth of foreign currencies from a passenger bound for Mumbai. Acting on specific inputs, a Central Industrial Security Force personnel intercepted the air passenger while he was undergoing a security check at the airport on Saturday. Investigation of the baggage led to the recovery of the currencies which were concealed in 13 packets. Accordingly 1,30,000 US Dollars and 2,24,500 Saudi Rials concealed in the luggages were recovered which were totally valued at Rs 1.57 crore. "This is a very big haul of foreign currency at the Chennai Airport. CISF appreciated the diligent and alert performance of screeners and intelligence staff," an official release said on Sunday. After informing the Customs department at the airport, the passenger was later handed over to the Air Intelligence wing of Income Tax investigation department, the release added.



Entire strength of Cong used to take one family forward: PM Modi

PNS ■ DEVBHUMI DWARKA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday attacked the opposition Congress, saying its entire strength was used to ensure the progress of just one family. All kinds of scams used to take place under the Congress regime, Modi said, adding that his government stopped all those things in the last 10 years. The Congress lacked the will and intention to provide amenities to people, he said. The PM was speaking after inaugurating and laying the foundation stones for various projects in Dwarka, including India's longest cable-stayed bridge between Okha and Beyt Dwarka here in Gujarat. "Those who ruled the country for a long time did not have the will power, intention and dedication to provide amenities to the common people," Modi said. "The entire strength of the Congress has been used to take one family forward. If everything was to be done only for one family then how would one remember to build the country? Its (Congress) entire energy was focused on how to run the government for five years and how to hide scams," Modi said. The Congress could make



No 'Mann ki Baat' broadcast for 3 months in view of polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast will not be aired for the next three months in line with political ethics in view of the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. In the 110th episode of the programme, he said there is a possibility that the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) will be enforced in March as it was done during the last polls as well, a reference to the expected announcement of the election schedule some-

Resolve to give Modi govt third term with more than 400 LS seats

Shah to BJP workers

PNS ■ KHAJURAHO

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday asked BJP workers to resolve to give the Narendra Modi government a third term at the Centre with more than 400 seats, asserting that the upcoming Lok Sabha polls was about making India a superpower and the world's third largest economy. Addressing booth level workers of the party at Khajuraho, the Union minister also claimed

NGT asks 53 cities to submit complete report

Polluting sources and steps to contain pollution

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has directed 53 cities which witnessed deterioration in air quality to submit a complete report on the contribution of each polluting source and measures taken to reduce pollution. The tribunal was hearing the issue of air quality deterioration in different cities across India as reflected in the Air Quality Index (AQI) maintained by the Central Pollution Control Board. On December 5, the tribunal, after considering the reports submitted by various states, said they did not fully utilise the funds received under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) and the 15th Finance Commission. It had also asked the states concerned to submit a further action-taken report. A bench led by NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava noted that further reports were filed by the Union Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Delhi, Meghalaya, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar



In an order passed on February 19, the bench also noted that as per the reports, the major contributor to air pollution was road dust. It said efforts should be made to undertake road dust mitigating activities.

Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana. "Out of 53 cities identified in the present matter, 19 cities fall in non-attainment city and Rs 1644.4025 crore has been allocated for air quality improvement. MoEF&CC needs to ensure that assets created by expanding such amount are properly utilised," the bench, also comprising judicial member Justice Sudhir Agarwal and expert member A Senthil Vel, said.

In an order passed on February 19, the bench also noted that as per the reports, the major contributor to air pollution was road dust. It said efforts should be made to undertake road dust mitigating activities. "All the cities (53) should disclose the contribution by each polluting source in terms of identified pollutant as per source apportionment and progressive reduction on account of measures taken," the tribunal said, adding that a complete report" has to be submitted at least one week before the next date of hearing. The matter has been posted on May 3 for further proceedings.

India, Japan kick start 2-week military exercise

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Japan on Sunday kicked-off a two-week military exercise in Rajasthan's Mahajan field firing range to foster deeper cooperation in confronting common security challenges. The exercise 'Dharma Guardian' between the Indian Army and the Japan Ground Self Defence Force is being conducted under the broad framework of India-Japan strategic cooperation, officials said. It is an annual exercise and conducted alternatively in India and Japan. The contingent of both sides comprises 40 personnel each. The Japanese contingent is being represented by troops from the 34th Infantry Regiment and the Indian Army contingent is being represented by a battalion from the Rajputana Rifles, the officials said. "The aim of the exercise is to foster military cooperation and enhance combined capabilities to execute joint operations," the Indian Army said. It said the exercise would focus on "high degree of physical fitness, joint planning, joint tactical drills and basics of special arms skills". "Tactical drills to be practiced during the exercise will include establishing of temporary operating base, creating an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance grid, setting up mobile vehicle check post, executing cordon and search operations in a hostile village and airborne operations," the Army said in a statement.



ABSCONDING FOR 22 YEARS

SIMI operative arrested by Delhi Police

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A 47-year-old member of Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) who also allegedly edited a magazine of the banned organisation besides indoctrinating many gullible youths has been arrested by the Delhi Police, officials said on Sunday. According to the police, Hanif Sheikh was declared a proclaimed offender in 2002 and has been absconding for the last 22 years. He was nabbed on February 22 from Bhusawal in Jalgaon district in Maharashtra where he was a teacher in an Urdu school under a different identity, they said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Alok Kumar claimed that Hanif was the most notorious and wanted SIMI terrorist who had played pivotal roles in various activities of the proscribed organisation across the country. Police said the SIMI magazine that Hanif Sheikh edited had his name printed as Haneef Hudai. This was the only lead available with the police, making it difficult to trace him, they said. A case of sedition and under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) was



BJP to win big but there is no Modi magic: Subramanian Swamy

PNS ■ PATNA

Senior BJP leader Subramanian Swamy on Sunday claimed "a surge in Hindu pride" was likely to boost the party's prospects in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, but discounted the role of "Modi magic". The maverick leader, who was here to take part in a 'law conclave', asserted that in the BJP, and its ideological parent RSS, greater value was attached to 'sangathan' (organisation) and 'siddhant' (principles) than to individuals. "I too believe that the BJP will surpass its previous electoral performances because, for the first time, Hindus are feeling proud of their identity. They no longer feel the diffidence that was thrust upon them during Nehru's time," Swamy told reporters, responding to queries about PM Modi's claim of the party winning more than 370 seats and the NDA crossing the 400-mark. The former Union minister, however, added, "Some people may think that this change has taken place because of them. We need not attach importance to such things... I do not think there is anything like Modi magic. Individuals are not put on a pedestal in BJP-RSS. That has been Congress culture." Swamy also welcomed the return to the NDA of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and said it would be in the JD(U) president's own interests to refrain from more flip-flops.

WINNING HORSES FOR LS ELECTIONS

Karnataka: BJP, Congress grappling with challenges

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The BJP and the ruling Congress -- the key contenders in the Lok Sabha elections in Karnataka -- are grappling with the challenges of finding winning candidates in several constituencies with stakes high for the two national parties. The BJP had swept the 2019 general elections, bagging 25 of the total 28 seats in the state, while an independent backed by the party had also emerged victorious. The Congress and the JD(S) headed by former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, which were running a coalition government back then and fought the election together, had come a cropper winning just one seat each. But the political scene has changed significantly: The Congress scored a thumping victory in the Assembly elections in May last year and now appears battle-ready, determined to put up a strong show in the Lok Sabha polls. It is also a role reversal of sorts for JD(S) which joined the BJP-led NDA in September last year and wants to prove that it's still a force to reckon with, particularly in South Karnataka. The coming poll is also seen as a "litmus test" for state BJP President B Y Vijayendra, who has the onerous task of leading the party to retain its supremacy in the Lok Sabha elections. Both the BJP and the Congress have their share of challenges, with finding winning horses on top of this list. The BJP is facing resistance against fielding sitting members of Lok Sabha once again in some constituencies while also facing alliance compulsions to accommodate its new partner JD(S), according to party sources. The Congress, which won



3 Naxalites killed in encounter with security forces


PNS ■ KANKER

Three Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district on Sunday morning, a senior police official said. The face-off took place around 8 am on a hill between Bhomra-Hurtarai villages under the Koyalibeda police station area, where a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, Kanker Superintendent of Police Indira Kalyan Elesela said. The security forces had received inputs about the presence of cadres belonging to company no. 5 of Maoists in Bhomra, Hurtarai and Michchebada villages, he said. A joint squad of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and 30th battalion of the Border Security Force (BSF) was dispatched to the area on Saturday night, the official said. A gunfight broke out, and Naxalites fled the scene after a brief exchange of fire, he said. Bodies of three Naxalites were recovered from the site along with some muzzle-loading guns, he said. A few items of daily use and Maoist-related materials were also seized, the official said.

India to add 18 more N-power reactors by 2032

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will add 18 more nuclear power reactors with a cumulative capacity to generate 13,800 MWe of electricity, taking the total share of atomic power in the energy mix to 22,480 MWe by 2031-32. This was announced by the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) after Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated two home-built 700 MW nuclear power reactors at Kakrapar in Gujarat last week. Presently, the NPCIL operates 24 reactors with a total capacity of 8,180 MWe. The prime minister dedicated units 3 & 4 of Kakrapar Atomic Power Station (KAPS 3 & 4) to the nation on February 22. KAPS-4 was connected to the western power grid on February 20, two days ahead of PM Modi's visit to Kakrapar. KAPS 3 & 4 (2 X 700 MW) are the largest indigenous Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWR) with advanced safety features comparable to the best in the world, designed, constructed, commissioned, and operated by NPCIL, with the supply of equipment and execution of



Shades of grey

Do political parties really mean to fulfil poll promises, or is it mere rhetoric to befool voters?

Every election season, political parties can be seen letting loose a long litany of promises — some really genuine, but mostly mere pleasing-to-the-ears rhetoric. These campaign pledges, called poll manifestos or electoral promises or even 'jumlas', are tailor-made to meet local voters' aspirations that season. However, a critical question looms: Is it really feasible for the parties to fulfil these promises? This discourse has gained fresh attention following the Chief Election Commissioner's (CEC) statement emphasising the voters' right to know if these promises can be delivered. The CEC's stance underscores the need for transparency and accountability in the electoral process, with the hope that it will prompt political actors to make promises more responsibly. At the heart of this debate lies a complex interplay of political dynamics, economic constraints, administrative capabilities and societal expectations. While political parties often design their agenda with the intention of securing electoral victory, the practicality of implementing poll promises after getting elected is subject to numerous challenges; mainly the inherent uncertainty and volatility of governance. The political discourse is ever-evolving and parties have to adjust to it, often going back on what they themselves might have vociferously advocated. Besides unforeseen events, economic fluctuations and global dynamics also make it difficult to fulfil poll promises.



What may seem feasible during an election campaign could swiftly become untenable in the face of emerging challenges. The way out? At best, the parties can just declare: "It is our intention; conditions apply." Such an honest declaration does not at least sound as if it

were a done deal. Interestingly, even voters know that certain promises are undeliverable but then they do not have much choice, especially since the rival party is also tomming schemes that cannot be fulfilled. Of course there are unforeseen, serious challenges to genuinely-made pledges but the problem arises when misleading or false promises are deliberately made to capture votes. Worse, the parties know they can get away with it as there are no punitive damages yet for this practice. It is imperative for political parties to adopt a more responsible approach. Instead of succumbing to populist rhetoric, they should prioritise honesty, realism and evidence-based policymaking. Transparency also plays a crucial role in fostering accountability. Voters have the right to be informed not only about the promises made but also about the rationale behind them and the strategy for implementation. Also, robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation should be established to track progress and hold Governments accountable for their party's commitments. Then there is a need for greater public awareness to ensure that electoral promises are scrutinised rigorously. Citizens must actively participate in the democratic process, holding elected representatives accountable for their actions. Those deliberately making false promises must be punished through the ballot box.

PICTALK



Women devotees offer prayers during the Attukal Pongala festival, in Thiruvananthapuram

PTI

Revamping India's intelligence network

There is a pressing need for reforms within India's intelligence framework, addressing coordination deficits and accountability lapses

The imperative for a comprehensive overhaul of India's intelligence framework becomes apparent when considering the existence of 14 intelligence agencies, each with varying and occasionally overlapping responsibilities. These agencies have come into being in response to strategic shifts and past shortcomings. In the aftermath of the 1962 conflict with China, the Directorate General of Security (DGS) was established within the Intelligence Bureau (IB). Subsequently, following the 1965 war with Pakistan, external intelligence was segregated into a distinct entity, the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), which also birthed the Special Bureau aimed at enhancing organisational effectiveness. After the 1999 Kargil conflict, the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) were instituted. However, persistent issues stem from the lack of coordination among these agencies. The absence of a Director of National Intelligence or a Coordinating Minister exacerbates this problem.



Accountability remains a concern.

The intelligence apparatus, entrenched in the colonial-era police structure, grapples with adapting to contemporary challenges. The Intelligence Bureau (IB), primarily oriented towards domestic and political affairs, encounters limitations in counterintelligence endeavours. Despite initiatives like the Multi-Agency Centre (MAC), cooperation deficiencies persist. In 2001, a Group of Ministers proposed elevating the IB to the status of the premier Counter-Terrorism agency, culminating in the establishment of MAC and Subsidiary MACs for intelligence amalgamation. Externally, the R&AW, responsible for external intelligence gathering, confronts challenges such as excessive reliance on TECHINT and insufficient development of human intelligence (HUMINT).

While the establishment of the National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) and the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) aimed to address technological aspects, issues like overlapping mandates and coordination gaps have arisen. Reform is imperative, commencing with the delineation of contemporary challenges, specialisations, and oversight mechanisms. Concerning oversight, India lacks effective mechanisms for its intelligence agencies. Suggestions include appointing individuals well-versed in operational modalities at a macro level or establishing a National Intelligence Board for monitoring. Apex-level management necessitates enhancement, possibly through the appointment of a full-time intelligence adviser or a Director of National Intelligence under the NSA or MHA. Coordination and tasking, particularly between the Centre and states, remain deficient, necessitating legislative attention. The Intelligence Cycle requires refinement, with a clear demarcation between collection and analy-

sis. Personnel issues. Human intelligence (HUMINT) and technical intelligence (TECHINT) pose distinct challenges. While big data analysis is nascent, considerations regarding privacy and legislative authorization for extensive data scrutiny are paramount. The dearth of skilled manpower for HUMINT is a significant concern, and bolstering military expertise within intelligence agencies is imperative. Although inspired by the ideology of the 5 Eyes, I4C, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, has not been effectively operationalized in the realm of digital warfare. Effectiveness in counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency remains a pressing concern. Failures to establish the National Counter-terrorism Centre (NCTC) and inter-agency conflicts underscore the need for a robust system. Ensuring successful prosecutions following counter-terrorism arrests is pivotal.

(The writer is an eminent expert-Counter Terrorism in West Asia & Middle Eastern countries, views are personal)



NISHAKANT OJHA

Pakistan has not given a fractured mandate, on paper, it may seem fractured however the call people have taken is clear. It goes without saying that if 100 independent candidates win, it's no mean achievement for a party that is backing them. The story of what happened in 1968 in Pakistan is often forgotten, in that year, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto brought down the military presidency of Gen Ayub Khan. Pakistan has seen big upheavals in the past and as things stand today another one is brewing for sure. This time against a China-Pak Army selected candidate who will be nominated at the top post, against the will of the people. Most analysts believed Nawaz Sharif was sure to become the PM however why he did not make it to the top slot has to do with how he reacted to situations post-Kargil. Sharif was thrown out in 1999 by General Musharraf, who then led Pakistan's army because he publicly ridiculed the army for apparently keeping him in the dark concerning the Kargil War. Now as they say once bitten twice shy, the Pakistani army always wanted a third person apart from Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan to be the notional head of Pakistan, and they are gunning for one. The Pakistani army used the clout of

Nawaz Sharif (whatever he had) to try and get to power someone they wanted and somehow get rid of Imran Khan. China has had a friendly relationship with the Sharif family so they are fine with someone coming up with Sharif's backing. Now the question is, will the people of Pakistan accept the humiliation of subversion of their mandate? Has the Pakistani army become so weak that it does not hold any sway over the people of Pakistan? Does the US still have control over the Pakistani Army and what they do to influence elections in Pakistan? Would a coalition Government that lacks popular support be able to sustain itself? Will there be even more civil unrest in Pakistan in the months to come? Answers to these questions hold the key to what is going to unfold in Pakistan shortly. Things in Pakistan have never been quiet from within, and this election has exposed the hollow belly of the Pakistani electoral system. In most of the constituencies, the election was rigged. Some of the election commission officers have since resigned after admitting to mass-scale rigging. It's almost incomprehensible how



THE US STILL HAS A LOT OF INTEREST IN PAKISTAN, MAYBE BECAUSE OF OLD TIES OR BECAUSE IT'S AN ISLAMIC NATION WITH A DECLARED NUCLEAR WEAPON SYSTEM. WHATEVER IT MAY BE, BUT IT DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE ANY OVERRIDING CONTROL OVER THINGS IN PAKISTAN ANYMORE

a US official spokesperson then has called the election reliable. The so-called results that have been thrown up show that PMLN has 79 seats, and PPP has 54 seats in a 264-seat parliament giving both of them combined a comfortable majority. I'll look like a coalition Government would come up in Pakistan would be devoid of a popular mandate which is likely to fuel unrest in the public even more in the days to come. The mandate of the people seems to be with PTI and with Imran Khan. In this coalition too the two parties joining hands have a little in common and would provide a weak Government ridden by internal friction and lobbying. Under these circumstances, the people of Pakistan are going to feel cheated. In a country that has not a single respected institution in place and has a supreme court that is by and large influenced by vested interests, civil unrest looks around the corner. If this kind of circumstance persists, the balkanisation of Pakistan is not far away, no matter how hard China tries to keep it together. The US still has a lot of interest in Pakistan, maybe because of old ties or because it's an Islamic nation with a

declared nuclear weapon system, whatever it may be but it does not seem to have any overriding control over things in Pakistan anymore. The US does have some control over the Pakistani Army however Pakistani Army seems to have lost all respect in the eyes of the general public in Pakistan. It looks like people are not fearful of the Pakistani Army anymore. It looks like the people of Pakistan would find it hard to digest that their mandate has been subverted. It's a writing on the wall that this new coalition that has taken a good fortnight to form may just fall under its pressure in due course of time. How this new coalition Government would tackle the rising debt crisis would also be interesting to see. In the past Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has made low-brow and irresponsible comments against India, hopefully, he will have matured now and will refrain from jingoism. Sharif brothers are mature politicians, however, they would be under tremendous pressure from China, the US, the Pakistani Army and the people of Pakistan. *(The writer is an expert on geopolitics and international Affairs. The views expressed are personal)*



UMANG KOHLI

The aftermath of a controversial election

Amid concerns over rising debt and geopolitical tensions, the resilience of Pakistan's political fabric faces its sternest test yet



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WHO REPORT ON AIR POLLUTION

Sir — The World Health Organisation's report on air pollution has been released recently. According to this year 2020, 32 lakh people will have died due to air pollution. What is even more alarming is that five lakh deaths are of children under the age of five. This news was recently read that there are many causes of pollution in the world. Many people cook on kerosene and charcoal. The number of such is about 2.3 billion. Apart from this, leaves are burnt in many fields, which also causes pollution. The huge number of vehicles and the pollution caused by it is a matter known to all. Even today, many countries in South Asia depend on wood and coal.

It is necessary to increase the use of clean fuel to reduce air pollution in the country. It is necessary to increase the use of solar, stove, biogas, LPG natural gas and alcohol fuel. Apart from this, it is necessary to reduce the use of petrol and diesel vehicles and replace them with electric vehicles. The central government is alert about electric vehicles and is thinking and taking action on how their use will increase in the country. Domestic gas is also being used on a large scale in the country, so it seems that all these measures can save you from air pollution.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

PAROLE REGULATIONS

Sir — Handing and controlling parole to convicts in Indian jails is very contentious, and often misused. Parole is a "promise" or "word of honour" given by the convicts that they will return after a specific period. In special circumstances, it can be a "corrective rehabilitation". In India, the Prison Acts of 1894 and 1900 govern parole rules though they differ slightly across states. The parole, which can be custodial lasting six hours to regular, lasting one month, is monitored by prison officers and applies after the prisoner completes at least one year in prison unless specified by the court. A CAG report had said that parole was

Karnataka temple tax move draws ire



The Karnataka Government's contentious proposal to impose taxes on Hindu temples has ignited a firestorm of debate, drawing sharp criticism from opposition parties and various religious groups. The bill stipulates that temples with annual incomes exceeding Rs 1 crore must contribute 10% to a Common Pool Fund, while those generating between Rs 10 lakh and

Rs 1 crore should chip in five per cent. Proponents argue that the fund's proceeds will be directed towards the welfare of temple priests and the development of lesser-known C-grade temples. Despite passing through the assembly, the bill faced a decisive rejection in the council, where the opposition commands a majority. Meanwhile, a recent survey sheds light on public sentiment regarding the tax measure. It reveals that 52% of Hindus in Karnataka perceive the tax as discriminatory, while 48% deem it necessary. Furthermore, a significant majority of 62% believe that small temples should be exempt from this taxation. Although the Karnataka Government has refrained from disclosing anticipated revenue figures, experts speculate that the tax could generate up to Rs 1,000 crore annually, underscoring the financial implications and societal divisions surrounding this contentious issue.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

a "convenient" route of escape for convicts. Following a Delhi High Court verdict that had severely castigated the police for its inability to regulate the whole parole process adequately, serious offenders involved in rape-cum-murder, and those posing a threat to the country's security and those who are not Indian citizens are "strictly" barred from being granted parole by the Government. But a lot more needs to be done and there is a need to impose a foolproof method to prevent prisoners from taking advantage of certain lax provisions still existing in law.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

SPORTS CONNECT PEOPLE

Sir — In this rapidly changing time, only a few things keep people close and give them a medium to be connected. One such medium is sports. Sports give the fans a feeling of attachment and affinity. It builds communities that feel the adrenaline rush every time their team moves up on the leaderboard and that shed tears when they are on the losing side. Be it the

nations, franchises, or clubs, they all have a legacy—a legacy that has triumphant victories and tragic defeats that keep the fans close and make them support the team even through the tough times. The Tifosi, for instance, have an undying love for Ferrari, given the glorious legacy the red machine has from the early days of Formula One. Even if the team is struggling on the leaderboard, the passion is still the same as it was during the era of sheer dominance when the likes of Michael Schumacher or Sebastian Vettel raced for "The Prancing Horse".

The reason behind this unwavering support and loyalty is the bond that fans develop with the sport, their heroes, and their triumphs. For those who don't watch sports, all this might just be a waste of time, but for lovers of the game, it is an escape from a tedious and mundane life. It connects people and can be a meaningful way of finding purpose in one's life.

Pratyush Tiwari | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

BALANCING WORK AND WELL-BEING

It's time to shift from the disciplinary mantra 'act your age' to 'act your wage'



SHAINY SHARMA

In today's cutthroat and challenging work landscape, finding the right balance between professional devotion and personal well-being can be challenging. The modern work culture often encourages its employees to go beyond their potential, leading to exploitation, anxiety and burnout. The internet, social media, Gen Z and millennials with time have gone crazy about the term 'quiet quitting' all over and now a new trend which is considered to be a 'loud quiet quitting' is buzzing everywhere- the notion of Acting Your Wage. It has emerged as a call from the fed-up workers and employees who believe it's a solution to establish boundaries and ensure that employees are neither overworked nor under-utilized. Since the beginning of the digital era (use of cell phones), Gen Z was expected to be available 24x7 in their workplace whereas the older generation worked according to their job timings. Millennials are tech-savvy and cannot stay away from their gadgets. Acting your wage is a philosophy that revolves around performing only those tasks and duties for which an employee is contracted and compensated and not for taking additional responsibilities without proper recognition or compensation. In layman's language, it means dedicating yourself to the responsibilities explicitly tied to your compensation while avoiding the trap of overextending beyond your job description. Today, younger workers have an egalitarian mindset- a penchant for social activism and expectations of two-way feedback. They work on a simple theory - what is a job worth? It is not about being complacent or neglecting work responsibilities instead, the generation believes in recognising the importance of self-care, setting boundaries and preserving energy for long-term productivity and well-being.




It is about recognising an individual's worth and ensuring that the time and effort they devote to their job align with the compensation they receive. Moreover, studies reveal that employees who practice this approach achieve a healthier work-life balance, preserve their energy levels, protect themselves from potential exploitation and most importantly, prevent burnout. Today many employees are taking the initiative to clarify their job roles with their seniors so that a clear understanding of what is expected is ensured and ambiguity is prevented. Also, employees are now practising the art of politely saying 'no' to additional tasks that fall outside their job description and instead actively seeking opportunities for advancement or higher roles that align with their skill set and career. Employers on the other hand, who tend to implement this notion will benefit as, it will enhance employee well-being, increase job satisfaction, improve productivity and most importantly strengthen the work culture. There will be a culture of transparency, fairness and respect within the organization. Organisations who are already provide clear and comprehensive job descriptions to employees, outline their roles and responsibilities, acknowledge and reward them for their contributions, and invest in training and development programmes that will offer them opportunities to grow and advance within the organisation are already away from this notion. There is no denying the fact that success in any field grows out of learning how to build skills, how to ask for help and how to build capacity in ways that don't even exist. The act of wage is a way to take care of yourself to be stress-free. Remember, one needs to normalise doing the bare minimum at work. An individual signs up for a job. If the employers are not paying extra to do extra tasks, strictly don't do them. It's time to throw the disciplinary line 'act your age' and turn it to 'act your wage'.

(The author is a senior educator, views are personal)

The impact of amendments to criminal codes on national policing

The implications of amendments to three criminal codes on civil liberties and the integrity of the legal process remain subject to ongoing debate and scrutiny


Parliament has passed three criminal codes, among which the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) seeks to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC). There is one provision in BNSS that seeks to increase the number of days within which police custody (PC) can be sought. When someone is in police custody, it means they are held by the police in a lock-up at the station. On the other hand, judicial custody means they are held in a central jail. The investigating agency gets 24 hours to investigate if they are not able to complete the investigation within that bracket, they must get permission from the magistrate, who can grant custody of the accused for up to 60/90 days,



PRAKHAR BAJPAI

depending on the seriousness of the crime. However, within this timeframe of 60/90 days, the magistrate is restricted to granting PC for the initial 15 days from the date of arrest, beyond which only judicial custody can be granted. This 15-day limit was extensively discussed in the Anupam Kulkarni v. CBI case, where the Supreme Court ruled that an accused

cannot be held in PC beyond 15 days from the date of arrest and PC in total can be for a maximum of 15 days, which means that PC could be granted by the magistrate in parts for the first 15 days or as a whole. **Understanding the new law** According to Section 187 of the BNSS, the PC can be granted within the first 40 days (for less serious offences) or 60 days (for more serious offences) after the accused is arrested. The change implies that the prescribed 15-day period of custody can now be split into shorter periods of custody sought over 40 days for offences punishable up to 10 years or 60 days for other offences. This represents a departure from the current practice under Section 167 of the CrPC, where PC can only be obtained within the initial 15 days. Consequently, concerns have been raised regarding the Government's rationale behind this change, particularly considering the act's aim to prioritise a people-centric criminal justice system. However, further arguments necessitate the examination of two significant cases. Judgements that led to a paradox: First, in the case of *Vikas Mishra v. CBI*, where the CBI wanted more time to question *Vikas Mishra*, who was accused of corruption and conspiracy. Despite being in custody for seven days, he was hospitalised and later released on bail. The CBI argued that they couldn't interrogate him properly during this time. However, *Vikas's* lawyers cited



the court's ruling that said PC beyond 15 days from the arrest date is not allowed. Nonetheless, the court granted custody to the police and noted that every accused person must respect the investigation and court proceedings and went on to mention that these ways of hindering the pursuit of justice would not be tolerated. Second, in the case of *Senthil Balaji v. The State*, the Supreme Court decided that the maximum 15 days PC period can be split into shorter periods over the entire investigation, which can last either 60 or 90 days as against the general rule of granting PC in first 15 days, it also questioned its judgement of *Anupam Kulkarni* and further, said that

this interpretation needs to be reviewed by a larger bench. By analysing the two judgements passed last year we can conclude that there is a growing inclination towards favouring the investigating agency. Despite the accused attempting to avoid initial PC in the first case due to medical reasons, it's essential to recognise that the accused might exploit the 15-day bar by taking the excuse of loopholes on grounds of a medical emergency. However, the second case sets a precedent keeping the investigation process at the heart of the criminal justice system which poses a potential series of inconsistencies. Therefore, Section 187 of the BNSS aims to definitively resolve the existing confusion and prevent future inconsistencies regarding the timeline within which PC can be sought and sets the limit of 40/60 days. It seeks to find a middle path where the civil liberties of the accused are not exploited as the maximum number of days for which the PC can be granted is still 15 days which now can be granted in parts in 40/60 days and also favours investigating agencies by granting a reasonable time for custodial interrogation, which is crucial for uncovering the truth as denying the investigating agency the opportunity for further interrogation gives an advantage to the accused to disrupted the legal process. *(The writer is a law student; views expressed are personal)*

Indian education system: The quest for perfection

The Indian education system stands at a crossroads, poised between recognition and realisation of its inherent potential





JS RAJPUT

Looking back from the transition point to the third millennium, it could indeed be interesting—and revealing—as to what was the most encouraging achievement in the pivotal sector of education! The most mentioned of the responses to the query from seasoned academics and scholars, as well as the policymakers who had contributed to policy formulation and implementation for three-four decades, referred to the change in social responses from various strata of society. The most serious impediment was ignorance of the value of education in the lives of the individual and the family. One wonders whether anything more could be expected from a society seriously emaciated for centuries, and subjected to live their lives in abject misery! Social structures that practised exclusion, seriously flawed assumptions on the role of women and its relationship to female literacy, and the excruciating hold of the clergy in deprecating the education of girls were indeed serious handicaps before all those who were assigned to implement the constitutional directive of providing free and compulsory education to all children till they achieve fourteen years of age! The widely prevalent practice of early marriage, child labour, compulsions to earn daily bread, and the need for extra hands in farms and fields, were also prominent factors that severely impeded the process of enrolment in schools. It may be tough for the millennials to visualise a situation that for decades together, girls' education in India suffered for want of toilets for girls in schools. This is one area that remained neglected all along. After the Prime Minister of India spoke from the ramparts of the Red Fort about sanitation practices, and the need for immediate reforms, things have

OUR EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND EFFORTS, IT MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED, DRIFTED MORE TOWARDS THE ACQUISITION OF EDUCATION FOR MATERIAL AND PHYSICAL GAINS

changed, and this deserves appreciation. However, considerable alertness and appreciation of the need are still necessary. Why do I say this? What one learns from personal interactions just cannot always be extricated from data! In 2016, one visited several institutions as a member of the TSR Subramaniam Committee on Education policy. In one of the colleges with an enrollment of around two thousand, a mention was made of the neglect of sanitation, the Director had this to say: Oh, it is too dirty and unhygienic for me to inspect! I mention this for two reasons; first, the systems of education paid little attention to such a significant impediment. Second; even after the universally acknowledged and appreciated movement for sanitation, and its great success, there is much more to be achieved on this front! We are much better off at this juncture in educational achievements, particularly in the context of girls' participation in education and subsequently in every sector of knowledge, skills, services, defence and the like. What was the most ignored aspect of Indian education during the second half of the 20th century? Some academics and scholars—adherents of negativity included—would like to criticise all that has been done and achieved during this period. Those who are, ideologically unconstrained and capable of taking an objective analytical view express concern about certain aspects that are essential ingredients total the personality development of any individual. This is usually articulated in

every policy and programme, but current education practices get ignored in schools and even certain well-reputed institutions. Moral and ethical aspects of education, education in human values, and similar expressions are regular parts of every education initiative. We also have the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, who could say "My life is my message"! How many of our present-day leaders—political leaders—could say that with inner conviction and confidence? There are still the old guards and young ones who took Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachari, Karpuri Thakur, LK Advani, Narendra Modi, and the like as their role models. A committed work culture, a sound value system, and a pursuit of higher and larger goals in life could only be inculcated in educational institutions and that remains a big challenge before the Indian education system. Our advantage is that we are familiar with how it could be achieved. Indian education has achieved sufficient recognition and success; within and outside the country. India and its ancient education systems aimed at comprehensive personality development, the comprehension of 'Ekam Sat Viprah Baudha Vadanti', 'Sarv bhut Hite Ratah', 'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhina', and much more on similar lines. We were privileged that MK Gandhi gave us a practical model of education that focused on enhancing the economic aspect but did not neglect this totality, and wanted the best to be drawn out of out of head, hand and heart. Sri Aurobindo; and the mother; dwelled in higher echelons of human advancement, apart from what is usually aimed at imparting education. Our education initiatives and efforts, it must be acknowledged; drifted more towards the acquisition of education for material and physical gains. Education, said the Mother; is not to prepare learners to succeed in life and society but 'to increase his perfectibility'! Addressing the students of the Ashram Schools she said: "Do not aim for success. Our aim is perfection. Remember you are on the hold of a new world, participating in its worth and instrumental in its creation. There is nothing more important than the transformation. There is no interest more worthwhile." The Mother goes on to delineate it further for our comprehension: "To learn for the sake of knowledge, to study to know the secrets of Nature and life, to educate oneself to grow in consciousness, to discipline oneself to become master of oneself, to overcome one's weaknesses, incapacities, and ignorance, to prepare oneself to advance in life towards a goal that is nobler and vaster, more generous and truer..." Could anything more need be said on how our schools and institutions could move ahead in pursuit of excellence once they absorb the golden words and the strength of the philosophy behind them? *(The author works in education, social cohesion and religious amity, views are personal)*

MONEY MATTERS

'India's steel exports at 18-month high'

India's monthly steel exports hit a 18-month high to 1.1 million tonne in January 2024 on increased demand from the European Union and supportive global prices, SteelMint said. Besides, competitive domestic prices of steel contributed to rise in export, the research firm said in its latest report. The outbound shipment of steel in January 2023 was 0.67 million tonne, as per SteelMint data. On reasons behind the surge in exports, SteelMint said, "good restocking demand from the European Union (EU) contributed 67 per cent of the 1.11 MT (export) in January. It was highest in last 18 months." While the price of hot rolled coil (HRC) in India's trade segment was at Rs 54,300/a tonne, the global rate was USD 710 per tonne (about Rs 58,000). This factor also contributed to the demand for Indian steel in the global markets. Overall, Indian steel exports may remain largely range-bound or fall slightly in the near term.



CEO Clubs India to host flagship summit from March 1-3

CEO Clubs India will host its annual flagship summit from March 1 to 3 with participation of chief executives of more than 150 companies. The summit 'Go Beyond Retreat 2024' to be held in the city will have Star Hospitals MD Gopichand Mannam, Nangia Andersen India Chairman Rakesh Nangia and Medplus Health Services Founder & CEO Madhukar Gangadi. The summit will discuss the ever-changing needs of today's visionary leaders and include interactive workshops and gain insights into navigating the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. CEO Clubs India National President, Kishore Kothapalli said, "We are excited to continue the tradition of bringing together bright minds from across the country to explore new ideas, forge meaningful connections and shape the future".



LIC Housing Finance hopes to earn Rs 5,000 cr profit

LIC Housing Finance, the mortgage arm of insurance behemoth LIC, is expecting a net profit of Rs 5,000 crore in the current financial year on the back of robust loan demand and expansion in non-core business. The non-core business includes Loan Against Property (LAP) and affordable housing finance, LIC Housing Finance managing director and CEO Tribhuwan Adhikari told PTI in an interaction. During 2022-23, the biggest housing finance company earned a net profit of Rs 2,891 crore. "Affordable housing segment remained strong in tier-2 and tier-3 markets. We remained focused on this segment, as it gives an opportunity to millions of aspiring Indians to own their home with a moderate budget," he said. In addition to business growth, he said, "our endeavour has been to improve service standards through ongoing digitalisation".



WTO MINISTERIAL MEETING

India seeks permanent solution to food security

Will strongly oppose a China-led proposal for an investment facilitation pact

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will strongly oppose a China-led proposal for an investment facilitation pact besides pressing for finding a permanent solution to public stock holding of grains for food security and protection of the interests of fishermen at the WTO ministerial meeting beginning Tuesday.

The Indian delegation is led by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal. The four-day 13th ministerial conference (MC13) will start on February 26 in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Trade ministers of 164 member countries of the World



Trade Organisation (WTO) are meeting against the backdrop of the uncertain global economic situation due to the Red Sea crisis, the Ukraine-Russia war and the Israel-Hamas conflict.

The key issue of India's interests at the meeting relates to finding a permanent solution for its minimum support price (MSP) issue for food security, agricultural reforms,

fisheries subsidies, e-commerce moratorium on import duties, dispute settlement, and WTO reforms.

Food security issues

The public stock-holding (PSH) programme is a policy tool under which the government procures crops like rice and wheat from farmers at MSP, and stores and distributes foodgrains to the poor.

India stresses the need for PSH for its large, vulnerable population and wants a permanent solution from the MC13. Food procurement, stockholding, and distribution are crucial to India's food security strategy.



431 infra projects hit by cost overrun of Rs 4.80 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 431 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of Rs 150 crore or above, were hit by cost overrun of more than Rs 4.80 lakh crore in January 2024, an official report stated.

According to Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), which monitors infrastructure projects worth Rs 150 crore and above, out of 1,821 projects, 431 reported cost overrun and 780 projects were delayed.

Total original cost of implementation of the 1,821 projects was Rs 26,09,679.38 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be Rs 30,90,135.99 crore.

GST Council may soon clarify tax exemption to RERA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The GST Council is likely to soon clarify that Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) will not be required to pay Goods and Services Tax (GST), an official said.

According to the official, RERA, which functions as a regulator as well as facilitator for the realty sector, is covered under Article 243G of the Constitution dealing with powers, authority and responsibilities of panchayats.

RERA was set up in different states to ensure transparency in real estate projects, protect the interest of consumers and to establish an adjudicating mechanism for speedy dispute redressal.

The official said that after discussions with RERA functionaries about the nature of their function it was decided that GST is not applicable on them.

The official further said that RERAs are funded by respec-



tive state governments and hence levying GST would mean taxing state governments.

A meeting of GST Council, chaired by Union Finance Minister and comprising state ministers, is likely to be held before the imposition of Model Code of Conduct for the general election due in April-May. The last meeting of GST Council was held on October 7, 2023.

Moore Singhi Executive Director Rajat Mohan said before July 18, 2022, certain services offered by key regulatory bodies in India, including

the Reserve Bank, Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI), Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA), Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), and the Goods and Services Tax (GST) network, were not subject to GST.

This exemption was lifted on July 18, 2022, leading to discussions about the tax implications for RERA bodies as well.

"Furthermore, in the residential real estate sector, Input Tax Credit (ITC) is not permissible, which means excluding RERA authorities from GST considerations could potentially

Billionaires, cricketers, film stars invited to Ambani scion's pre-wedding festivities



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's top billionaires, including Gautam Adani and Sunil Bharti Mittal, mega stars from film industry such as Amitabh Bachchan and Shahrukh Khan and cricketing icons from Sachin Tendulkar to M S Dhoni are among those invited for pre-wedding celebrations of Mukesh Ambani's youngest son, Anant early next month.

Ahead of the wedding ceremony in July, guests from around the world have been invited to three-day pre-wedding festivities beginning March 1, at Gujarat's Jamnagar, which houses Ambani's mega oil refineries.

Anant Ambani, the youngest of the three children Mukesh Ambani and Nita Ambani have, is set to marry Radhika Merchant - the younger daughter of

Viren Merchant, CEO of Encore Healthcare, and entrepreneur Shaila Merchant.

With Jamnagar not having five-star hotels, ultra-luxury tents housing best of facilities, including tiled bathrooms are being erected for the guests.

The guest list includes international business leaders like Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai, Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen, Walt Disney CEO Bob Iger, BlackRock CEO Larry Fink, Adnoc CEO Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, and EL Rothschild chair Lynn Forester de Rothschild, sources said.

Indian business magnates invited include Gautam Adani and family, Tata Sons chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran, Aditya Birla Group Chairperson Kumar Mangalam Birla.

MARKETS TO FOCUS ON GLOBAL TRENDS

May face volatility amid derivatives expiry: Analysts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With no major domestic market-moving event scheduled this week, stock market investors would largely focus on global trends and foreign fund movement, and may face volatility amid monthly derivatives expiry, analysts said.

"We expect volatility to remain high due to the scheduled expiry of February month derivatives contracts. Besides, participants should keep a close watch on the performance of the global indices, especially the US for cues," Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research at Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Last week, BSE Sensex rose 716.16 points or 1 per cent to



close at 73,142.8 points and inched closer to its record high level of 73,427.5.

"Markets remained volatile in the passing week but managed to end with a gain of nearly a per cent. After the initial rise, mixed global cues combined with profit taking in

select heavyweights capped the momentum.

"Consequently, the benchmark indices, Nifty and Sensex, continued to oscillate in a narrow range till the end and finally settled at 22,212.70 and 73,142.80 respectively," Mishra said.

IMPACT OF RS 2,000 NOTES WITHDRAWAL

Currency-in-circulation growth dips to 3.7%

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The growth in currency in circulation decelerated to 3.7 per cent for the week ended February 9 from 8.2 per cent a year ago, reflecting the impact of the decision of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to withdraw Rs 2,000 banknotes.

Currency-in-circulation (CiC) refers to notes and coins in circulation, while currency with the public comprises notes and coins in circulation minus cash with banks.

According to the RBI, commercial banks have reported double-digit growth in deposits in

January, which too can be attributed to withdrawal of Rs 2,000 currency notes.

The growth of Reserve Money (RM), as per the RBI data, decelerated to 5.8 per cent as on February 9, 2024 from 11.2 per cent a year ago (8.8 per cent adjusted for the first-round impact of change in Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)). Components of RM include CiC, banks' deposits in RBI and other deposits with the central bank.

The growth in CiC, the largest component of RM, decelerated to 3.7 per cent from 8.2 per cent a year ago, reflecting the withdrawal of Rs 2,000 banknotes, according to the RBI.



Number of M&A deals in India falls 10% to 793 in 2023: PwC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The number of merger and acquisition (M&A) deals during 2023 dropped by 10 per cent on an annual basis to 793, said a PwC India report on Sunday.

However, the total disclosed deal value for M&A declined much steeper at 38 per cent during the year, according to the report titled 'Deals at a glance'.

The report further observed that PE (Private Equity) investments totalled USD 36 billion, marking a substantial 36 per cent drop from 2022.

Despite this decline, the average investment size per deal increased to USD 46 million from USD 42 million in 2022, reflecting a potential shift towards larger opportunities.

While early-stage investments were 53 per cent less compared to that in 2022, the report said, these along with growth-stage investments continued to make up the major share, constituting around 73 per cent of fundings in 2023.

IOC, GAIL, ONGC fined for third quarter

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned oil and gas giants including Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), explorers Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL), gas utility GAIL, and refiners Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) a cumulative Rs 32.5 lakh, stock exchange filings showed.

In separate filings, the companies detailed the fines imposed by the BSE and NSE for either not having the requisite number of independent directors or the mandated women director in the third quarter ended December 31, 2023, but were quick to point out that appointment of directors was done by the government and they had no role in it.

The companies had faced fines for the same reason in the previous two quarters as well. The six PSUs in separate filings said they have been slapped with a fine of Rs 5,42,800 each for the third quarter. While ONGC and its subsidiaries HPCL and MRPL, GAIL and OIL faced fines for not having the required number of independent directors on their board, IOC for not having a woman independent director on its board.

Listing norms require companies to have independent directors in the same proportion as executive or functional directors. They are also required to have at least one woman director on the board.

For the second quarter, IOC, ONGC, OIL, GAIL, Bharat Petroleum Corporation.



Exports now into Africa, Central Asia & Europe

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At a time when global trade is facing geo-political uncertainties, India's exports of goods like automobiles and gold jewellery have ventured into uncharted territories of Central Asia, Africa and Latin America, according to an analysis by the commerce ministry.

The analysis has shown that India has penetrated into what are termed as "absolutely new markets" in regions such as Africa, Central Asia, Latin America and North America during April-December 2023. The "absolutely new markets" refer to areas where India did see any export during April-December 2022, but healthy growth of certain principal



commodities like motor vehicles, two- and three-wheelers, petroleum products, sugar, gold and other precious jewellery were recorded in April-December 2023.

Exports of these commodities to the absolutely new markets during April-December 2023 stood at USD 234 million as against nil shipments during

the same period of 2022.

It added that these commodities captured a greater number of markets in the Central Asia, Africa, and European regions.

"A comprehensive examination of country-wise exports underscores a notable diversification of markets for India's merchandise exports, characterised by the exploration of

new export destinations, in spite of strong global headwinds with subdued performance globally," an official said.

The official added that after evaluating the market diversification of the country's merchandise exports across major sectors at the principal commodity level, comparing the periods from April-December 2022-23 to April-December 2023-24, significant advancements in market diversification emerged in the current fiscal.

These diversified markets are termed as "absolutely new", "new", and "promising".

"Together, exports to these markets capture 5 per cent of India's total exports of 42 principal commodities to the

world. These commodities span across 16 important sectors of India's export basket," the official added.

In the new markets, where India's exports share of goods like ceramics and allied products, aluminium, products of aluminium, two- and three-wheelers, products of iron and steel, electric machinery and equipments was meagre or nil has jumped to USD 2.17 billion during April-December 2023.

These items have captured a greater number of markets in the America, Central Asian, and African regions.

The analysis showed that the export of two- and three-wheelers has been headed to 31 new markets/countries with a total exported value of USD 110 million in the April.

Monthly household consumer spending more than doubled during 2012-2023

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The per capita monthly household expenditure more than doubled in 2022-23 as compared to 2011-12, according to the latest study of National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).

NSSO, under Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, conducted Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) during August 2022 to July 2023, an official statement said on Saturday.

The survey aims at generating estimates of household Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) and its distribution



separately for the rural and urban sectors of the country, for states and Union Territories, and for different socio-economic groups.

As per the survey, the average MPCE at current prices

(without imputation) more than doubled to Rs 6,459 in urban areas in 2022-23 from Rs 2,630 in 2011-12.

Similarly in rural areas, it jumped to Rs 3,773 from Rs 1,430 at current prices.



Actor **Mukul Chadda**, who is currently enjoying the international acclaim that his upcoming film *Fairy Folk* has been receiving, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, sharing his feelings on the same, sharing the big screen space with his wife, **Rasika Dugal**, and more.

‘FAIRY FOLK’ sheds light on multiple issues, without sermonising on anything’

TEJAL SINHA

The joy of being an actor is inhabiting different characters and learning new things with each project, believes actor Mukul Chadda. There’s always something in us, that wishes to inhabit different souls in one lifetime and learn new things all the time. And so, the entire journey of being an actor, he says, has been one of self-discovery and constant learning. He is not someone who plans his life ahead; he always hopes to take it on, one exciting step at a time.

After receiving much acclaim, appreciation, and recognition on the international front at several film festivals, his upcoming film *Fairy Folk* is all set to hit theaters on March 1.

The *Ek Main Aur Ekk Tu* actor feels fortunate to travel with the crew to the Sydney Film Festival and the Chicago International Film Festival. Well, “Watching it in a darkened hall collectively with strangers from a different culture and country was wonderful. With every

laugh, every held breath, and every sigh, I was going through the emotions of the audience even before speaking to them after the screenings. And of course, the feedback after the film was over was overwhelming. The best part for me was that so many people had so many varied reactions to the film—everyone liked a different aspect of it because it spoke to so many different kinds of people. I can’t wait for audiences in India to see it.”

Fairy Folk is the story of a couple living in Mumbai. When a magical creature enters their world, it upturns their lives and relationships in different ways. This film is a juxtaposition of magical realism with a relationship drama, a film that is both funny and tragic at the same time. His character is a poker player who sees things as a puzzle to be solved and is very obsessive about everything he gets involved with. And make others also follow through on his plans in the manner he has thought out best!

And something that was more than interesting to know was that the film also stars his darling wife, Rasika Dugal, in the lead role, for the first time on the big screen. Mukul was no less than ecstatic about sharing the screen with his wife.

“She is a wonderful actor and someone whom I trust and respect a lot,” gleefully shares the star. That degree of trust and respect is very important while working with someone, and he feels lucky the couple got to do this rather difficult project together.

“I’ve learned a lot from Rasika over the years. Just watching her prepare for her projects has been a learning experience in itself. Or from the discussions we tend to have with each other about our respective projects. This project was different because, by the very nature of the improvisational shooting style, we couldn’t discuss what our characters were going through or what we were planning for the next day. Karan would often give each of us notes on how to surprise the other actor on set the next day, and obviously, we couldn’t share that with each other. So surprisingly, I had fewer discussions with her on this project that we worked on together than on projects in which we weren’t working together.”

The project highlights a major thing that has been of much concern these days—bonds and

relationships. The film beautifully shines a light on the fragility of relationships, on how a small change of events can expose cracks in a relationship and dramatically impact it. “What I love about Karan’s storytelling style is that he never makes the film about any one issue; it’s a simple, sometimes funny, sometimes dramatic story about the lives of a couple. But along the way, it sheds light on relationships, on love, on desire, on gender—on so many issues, without sermonising on anything.”

Attention, love, and kindness are things that relationships lack these days. And this, he says, has been well demonstrated in the film, as to how a little catalyst can dramatically change the way a relationship goes forward. And how fragile things can be, with just a little nudge. Likewise, those external events can also bring two people so much closer than they were earlier.

This film was shot in an improvised way; there were no written dialogues whatsoever, even though the basic structure of the storyline was known in advance. So, for example, “We knew roughly what has to happen in a scene, but not how it was going to come about. When trying to achieve this, actors mustn’t pre-plan anything and simply go with the flow. Even if another actor says or does something unexpected in a scene, your job is to accept it, and react as the character. And they, in turn, react to what you just did. In fact, some magical and beautiful moments came out of this process. Since we didn’t discuss or pre-plan things, it was not really possible in this process to have a disagreement with another actor. And like I said, if something unexpected came your way in the take, you accepted it fully and went with the flow.”

Here comes an interesting and exclusive revelation: “Most of the film is shot in an apartment. Rasika and I took a lot of things from our own house to populate that apartment to give it a lived-in feel, and also make it feel like our own home, which really helped us.”

Meanwhile, on the work front, his upcoming film, *Sunflower 2*, is releasing very soon! Then there is also an action comedy film called *Dhoom Dhoom* with Yami Gautam and Pratik Gandhi; a romantic comedy called *Ishq Jhamela* with Arjun Rampal; and an Amazon series called *Big Girls Don’t Cry* with Pooja Bhatt and Raima Sen that should all release this year. So, of course, there is an interesting year ahead for Mukul, and we too look forward to it!

“I’ve learned a lot from Rasika over the years. Just watching her prepare for her projects has been a learning experience in itself.”

Harmonious melange of Rasika Shekar’s love for folk music

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Rasika Shekar, a singer, flutist, and music composer was praised by Ustad Ghulam Ali Khan recently. She first appeared as a playback singer in movies like *Kill Dil* and *2 States*, as well as singing with Shankar Mahadevan in the Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy composition *Dekh Indian Circus*. However, her performance as a featured flutist on Ehsaan and Loy’s produced hit *Man Patang* at MTV Coke Studio season 2 marked a turning point for her. Now she has recently collaborated on a record with American jazz players who have won awards!

The folk performer elaborates in an exclusive chat with us, saying, “It’s been more than a dream. This journey has been filled with amazing encounters that have influenced both my musical style and me. As I explore and compose my own music, the varied experiences and training have cultivated a viewpoint and taste in music that are all coming together. I still enjoy practicing and listening to Carnatic music the best since it has such a strong foundation. Being a classically trained flutist and vocalist who has experimented with different genres has given me a distinct yet well-rounded perspective and exposed me to a wide variety of sounds.”

She recently appeared in the first-ever Indian folk music documentary series on JioCinema called *Equals*, which showcases episodes of a folk musician and a young, urbane producer working together. Rasika worked with the most experienced and renowned folk musician Prahlad Tipanya on the series! She was one of the series’ featured solo female music producers. She performed as a multi-instrumentalist, producer, composer, and bandleader. “I was more aware of my love for music in my final year of chemical engineering school than ever before. I so found myself debating whether to give it a go and acquire more knowledge before deciding to pursue a career in engineering. I continued to become more and more in love with the various aspects that music has to offer as I made the leap. I wanted to investigate it further since I was so engrossed. Nonetheless, I am incredibly appreciative of my engineering degree. It has equipped me with particular abilities like problem-solving, arithmetic, and analytical thinking, which are useful in the music industry in a special way,” the singer added.

Ustad Ghulam Ali has taught her a great deal about phrasing and improvisation in music. In addition to his musical expertise, she was greatly inspired by his self-control, modesty, and commitment to music! Conversely, “In cinematic projects, you’re filling in to realise someone else’s vision for that song. It is a combination of the music

director’s and director’s requirements for that specific track. I believe the strategy needs to be well thought out since you have to strike a balance between adding your own flair and what the song and concept call for. The excitement of playback singing lies in the ability to transform your voice into many personas.”

For her, each and every live performance with Shankar Mahadevan has been a blessing and an education in and of itself for Rasika. From musicality to ways of thinking, creativity to discipline, perseverance to on-stage presence, humility, and so much more, she has seen and learned so much. Being on stage alongside renowned performers offered her a glimpse into some small moments and how to respond to various situations. She has performed and made music in a variety of settings, which has given her the opportunity to try out new techniques.

She promised herself early on in her musical journey that she would experience every aspect of it and immerse herself in each new musical realm that drew her in. There’s a more focused approach now. Although the term “genre” is broad, there are a few sounds and techniques that really appeal to and delight her. Most importantly, she hangs on to the idea that if something emotionally impacts her, it doesn’t matter what genre it is. She thinks it’s critical to be aware of and sensitive to the context.

There is a shared vision when there is teamwork. When it’s music she wrote, the meaning changes! As a result, the balance can move freely. “I learned a lot from one specific performance experience that I will never forget: performing in Spain. An audience that had never heard Indian music before attended the concert. I had no idea what to anticipate. Throughout the performance, I was continually taken aback, and it taught me a lot about the nature of live performances. Each audience is unique, with a pulse and taste that originate from a deeper place that is influenced by its own social dynamics, history, and culture. One of the wonderful things about performing live is that audiences may surprise you in the most exquisite ways.” But there is one thing that she discovered that unites audiences all around the world: sincere

music and expressive lyrics have a profound effect on listeners that is difficult to put into words. Whatever the language or genre, that’s what makes music so beautiful!

“Even now, I find the instrument’s simplicity to be fascinating. It seems to be the closest to the voice. Playing it makes me feel a very rewarding kind of connection. Every flute has its own personality, which is another fascinating aspect. It’s kind of like making friends. Gaining an understanding of its subtleties and relationship takes time. It’s just myself and a particular bamboo flute when I am playing alone. I can lose myself in simply examining the hues and tones of that particular flute and using that particular character to convey my musical ideas. It’s an instrument that, on the outside, appeals to a great deal of people on a very basic level. Despite being primarily an Indian instrument, it can be used in any genre,” the composer leaves us with a thought-provoking statement.



Rasika Shekar, known for her fusion of folk music and passion, gets candid with *The Pioneer* about her journey, collaborating with renowned musicians including Prahlad Tipanya, Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy, and more.



Navigating the healing journey post-contoura surgery

Contoura vision, a revolutionary advancement in vision correction surgery, has transformed the lives of millions worldwide, offering unparalleled precision and accuracy in treating refractive errors. However, like any surgical procedure, proper recovery is crucial to achieving optimal results and ensuring long-term eye health. Here are some invaluable tips and insights to navigate the recovery process after contoura surgery.

1. Follow post-operative instructions diligently: Your doctor will provide detailed postoperative instructions tailored to your specific needs. It’s imperative to adhere to these instructions meticulously. They may include using prescribed eye drops, avoiding strenuous activities, wearing eye protection at night, and attending follow-up appointments. Compliance with these guidelines is vital for a smooth recovery and optimal visual outcomes.

2. Rest and relaxation: In the initial days following contoura surgery, prioritize rest and relaxation to facilitate healing. Avoid activities that strain the eyes, such as reading, watching screens for extended periods, or engaging in vigorous exercise. Adequate sleep is essential for the healing process, so aim for at least 7-8 hours of quality sleep each night.

3. Protect your eyes: Shield your eyes from potential irritants and contaminants, especially in the first few weeks post-surgery. Wear protective eyewear, such as sunglasses, to safeguard against bright sunlight, dust, wind, and other environmental factors. Avoid rubbing or touching your eyes, as this can increase the risk of infection and interfere with the healing process.

4. Stay hydrated and maintain a healthy diet: Proper hydration and nutrition are crucial for overall well-being and optimal healing post-surgery. Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated, as it promotes tissue regeneration and aids in flushing out toxins from the body. Additionally, consume a balanced diet rich in vitamins, minerals, and

antioxidants to support ocular health and expedite the recovery process.

5. Avoid smoking and alcohol: Smoking and excessive alcohol consumption can impair the body’s ability to heal effectively and increase the risk of complications after surgery. If you’re a smoker, consider quitting or at least abstaining from smoking during the recovery period. Similarly, limit alcohol intake to promote faster healing and minimize the risk of postoperative complications.

6. Be patient and manage expectations: While contoura surgery offers remarkable results, it’s essential to understand that the full benefits may take time to manifest. Vision improvement may vary from person to person, with some individuals experiencing immediate clarity, while others may require several weeks for optimal outcomes. Be patient, and trust the healing process, but also communicate any concerns or unusual symptoms promptly to your ophthalmologist.

7. Engage in light activities: As you progress through the recovery process, gradually reintroduce light activities into your daily routine. However, continue to avoid activities that exert excessive strain on the eyes or increase the risk of injury. Consult with your ophthalmologist before resuming activities such as driving or exercising to ensure it’s safe to do so.

8. Attend follow-up appointments: Regular follow-up appointments with your ophthalmologist are essential for monitoring your progress and addressing any concerns or complications promptly. These appointments allow your surgeon to assess your healing, adjust medications if necessary, and ensure that your vision is progressing as expected. Do not skip or delay follow-up visits, as they are crucial for the success of your surgery.

In conclusion, navigating the recovery process after surgery requires patience, diligence, and proactive care. By following these tips and insights, you can optimize your healing, minimize the risk of complications, and enjoy the life-changing benefits of improved vision. Remember, your doctor is your partner in this journey, so don’t hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or concerns along the way. With proper care and attention, you’ll soon experience the full potential of your contoura vision.

(The author, Dr. Ch Annapoorna, is a Senior Refractive Surgeon, at the Maxivision Group of Eye Hospitals.)

‘There are plans to create a sequel for Chaari 111’

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Filmmaker TG Keerthi Kumar, made his film debut with Malli Modalaindi, directed by Sumanth Yarlagadda. Currently, he is directing Vennela Kishore's *Chaari 111*, set for release on March 1st. The filmmaker got down for a quick conversation as the movie's release date drew near and shared some intriguing details about the movie with the media.

The director claimed that prior to beginning his profession, he had never had a directorial idea. "I took a course in visual communication before beginning my job as an editor, and I edited corporate films and TV ads for almost ten years. After that, I worked on *Malli Modalaindi*, my first film."

He first presented the concept for *Chaari 111* to Vennela Kishore, who played a comic in the movie. "Later, I shared the script with him," the director states. "Despite not having the script narration, he reviewed the script and gave the project his OK."

Filmmaker TG Keerthi Kumar, who is all set with the release of his upcoming film *Chaari 111*, speaks of his formative days, inspiration behind the film, and more.

He had faith in me right away," *Pink Panther* and *Johnny English's* core themes served as inspiration for this movie. I was really fond of those espionage comedies, which inspired me to write this script. Casting is crucial for a movie like *Chaari 111*, and I was fortunate to have Vennela Kishore and Murali Sharma sign on." He highlights, "This is a character-driven movie; the conflict and villain will emerge later."

It's an action comedy spy movie. "As an example, *Johnny English* is a spy comedy, whereas James Bond is an action spy. My movie fits into the second group. I had Vennela Kishore in mind when I created this script. If Kishore hadn't given the script his approval, I wouldn't have made this movie."

"In our film, Kishore's character irritates his boss to no end," the director says. "And, I chose Murali Sharma for the role because I needed an actor with a serious appearance. The antagonist in our movie dons a mask for a reason. Although there wasn't a deliberate attempt to conceal the antagonist, the plot does have an intriguing element. For commercial reasons, we therefore chose to maintain the suspense."

He hopes to collaborate with a famous hero in the future. He feels that he needs to establish himself before he can work with a famous hero on an action movie. That he made *Chaari 111* makes him pleased! "There is potential to include more heroes in the film. I have to say that there are plans to create a sequel for *Chaari 111*. This universe has a lot of possibilities for spy comedies."



‘I am shooting for some of the biggest, most intense films in my career’

Actress Rashmika Mandanna, who portrayed Geethanjali in Sandeep Reddy Vanga's *Animal*, was the target of internet trolling despite receiving appreciation for her performance in the movie. She recently discussed why, after the movie's release, she chose not to take "ownership" of her part in the film.

The actress, who is currently filming her next movie, wrote a long letter expressing her gratitude for the enormous success of the Ranbir Kapoor-starring movie.

Rashmika, who is widely referred to as the "national crush," revealed that although she was back on the set of her next movie and could not take any time off, she wanted to appreciate the extraordinary success of *Animal*.

Rashmika posted a monochromatic mirror selfie in which she posed with her face hidden behind the lens. She wrote: "Hi guys! Can't show my full face as it is a new film look, and I can't reveal it before my film team does, as always. But the shoots are going really well -- just wanted to let you all know."

The actress said she wanted to just talk about how people were talking about her not taking ownership of her success and all that.

Reflecting on the chatter, Rashmika wrote: "Ok, here's the thing. 1: I know it comes from a place of love, concern, and worry. We have delivered a massive film, and people loved it and appreciated it."

I too wanted to take some time out to enjoy it, as every one of us wants to, but I was back on set the next day of my film release (being the amazing workaholic that I am), and hence I was and am unable to do a lot of interviews or

events out there. I am having to do these overnight travels for work, and I am shooting for some of the biggest and most intense films in my career."

"And as you'll know, I can't really reveal the look before my film teams do, and hence I am unable to take photos or post some posts or go live as per your or my wishes. And I know you're missing me and so am I, but I know for sure that when the films DO release, I know you'll all be super duper happy, and it's all gonna be worth it!! (I personally can't wait for those moments)"

Rashmika continued her heartfelt post by urging her fans: "Please be patient with me because you should know that I am doing my best, and I am happy doing so for all of you, myself, and my teams."

Opening up on 'owning' the success, Rashmika expressed happiness over the love and messages of her huge fandom.

"Guys, your love, the messages to me are what make me happy and keep me going, honestly, and I saw them in abundance; and again, thank you so much for all the love... always."

She further revealed how her PR team had told her to be more active.

"But like I already said the next day of the film release, I was back on set for my next film, so couldn't find the time, but next time we will work on it... I promise; and I just believed that good work will speak for itself and it did... and I cannot be more grateful... I am yet to thank you all for the love... and I know I am late... but I only wanted to do it when I come live, and I am still going to hold on to that for that day," Rashmika said.

She concluded: "I was surrounded by the most supportive cast and crew and the best fans, so I didn't or don't have anything to worry about... I just love them... they are the best!"

Rashmika next has *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, *Rainbow*, *The Girlfriend* and *Chaava* in the pipeline.

VN Aditya receives honorary doctorate from George Washington University of Peace

Renowned filmmaker VN Aditya has made a name for himself in Tollywood with his family-friendly comedies and endearing love tales like *Nenunna* and *Manasantha Nuvve*. VN Aditya, who has worked in the film industry for almost ten years, was awarded an honorary doctorate by the George Washington University of Peace in America. He received this esteemed award during the International Peace Conference in Bangalore, where the George Washington University of Peace honoured notable figures for their accomplishments across a range of disciplines. VN Aditya received recognition in the film industry.

Notable attendees at the event were National SC & ST Commission Member Dinesh Guruji, Secretary-General Dr. Srinivas Eluri, Director of the George Washington University of Peace Neelamani, and NITI Aayog IES Advisor Shivappa. Director VN Aditya dedicated this honour to his mother, who had always hoped he would succeed in school rather than movies, as a gesture of thanking her for this opportunity. He expressed his gratitude and delight at earning a doctorate in cinema, a subject he loves dearly, adding that it was both a personal accomplishment and a realisation of his mother's dreams.

He expressed gratitude to George Washington University of Peace in the United States for awarding him an honorary doctorate. The film industry has responded with congratulatory messages for his achievement.



ALL EYES ON ANJALI'S MILESTONE FILM GEETHANJALI MALLI VACHINDI

The upcoming horror entertainer *Geethanjali Malli Vachindi*, starring Anjali in the titular role, marks the sequel to the 2014 low-budget blockbuster *Geethanjali*.

The film is being produced by Kona Venkat under the banners of Kona Film Corporation and MVV Cinemas, with Siva Turlapati directing. The film is slated for release on March 22. In anticipation, the movie's teaser was recently released, with Director Buchi Babu, Bobby, Gopichand Malineni, and hero Sree Vishnu gracing the teaser launch event as chief guests.

Hero Sree Vishnu speaking at the event said, "I have been collaborating with Kona Venkat since last year. I am very excited about our upcoming film. He places a strong emphasis on the story, without rushing. I hope this movie achieves great success. I extend my best wishes to the entire film team and hope the director earns a good reputation. I eagerly await making the audience laugh and scaring them in theaters on March 22, ensuring a successful box office run. Anjali's accomplishment of act-

ing in fifty films is no small feat. It's a matter of pride for a Telugu girl to have achieved such success. I wish her continued success, with another hundred or 150 films. I also have high hopes for Nandu and Bhanu to become top writers. With *Om Bheem Bush* also releasing on March 22, I wish all films great box office success."

For all the obvious reasons, the film has been very special for actress Anjali. *Geethanjali* was her first lead role, and *Geethanjali Malli Vachindi* marks her 50th film, a significant milestone in her career.

This sequel, she says, promises even more laughs and scares double this time, making for a delightful theater experience. "I am thrilled to reach the 50-movie milestone. I foresee a bright future for Director Siva and am grateful to everyone involved in the film, including Srinivasa Reddy, Rajesh, Ali, Shakalaka Shankar, Avinash, and Rahul. The entire team has put in tremendous effort. Sidhu's visuals are stunning, and Praveen Lakkaraju's music complements the film beautifully. Nandu and Bhanu's writing stands out.

Kona Garu played a crucial role in bringing this project to life, even a decade later. Although it took time to perfect the story, we managed to complete the shooting swiftly. I appreciate Directors Bobby and Gopichand, as well as Sree Vishnu, for their support, especially with his film also releasing. I hope both our films achieve great success." Recently, the makers had shared that the teaser would be unveiled at a graveyard, but was later changed.

Buchi Babu Sana speaking at the event said, "Kona Venkat was talking about this event and mentioned that the venue is a graveyard. I got scared. After that, he didn't pick up the phone. Then, he left a voice message saying the venue had been changed. If Kona Venkat's name is associated with a film, it elevates the project to another level. The dialogues he writes are something we take home with us. They are very logical. Ten years ago, we laughed and were frightened by *Geethanjali*. Now, they are coming back. All the best to the film team."



Chiru's Vishwambhara shooting moves to Nalgonda

Megastar Chiranjeevi's grace in his films, regardless of his age, is only going upwards, so much that even now any announcement regarding the megastar's film will create a lot of enthusiasm among movie lovers. He is now being starred in a fantasy drama, directed by *Bimbisara* director Vassishtha. Produced under the banner of UV Creations, the film, which was launched in November 2023, began its shooting in Telangana. Starring actress Trisha, latest update on the film is that the shooting of *Vishwambhara* has commenced in the picturesque locales of Haliya, nestled in the heart of Nalgonda district, Telangana. The film is said to deal with some myths and reality and it has music by MM Keeravani.

Vishwambhara also stars Vennela Kishore, Chammak Chandra, Praveen, Raja Ravindra, Harshavardhan, Roshan, Akul, and others in the important roles.

I'm likely to canvass for Janasena, says Varun Tej



Actor Varun Tej and Manushi Chhillar starrer *Operation Valentine* is all set to hit big screens on March 1. The movie is being promoted widely and this is the actor's first film in which he plays a fighter pilot.

Recently married Varun Tej, while promoting this Telugu-Hindi bilingual film, shared that he went through a simulator training to get this role correct in the project. He even has interacted with many Indian Air Force officials, who indeed helped him perfect his character in the movie.

Interestingly, he also

spoke about his 'babai' Pawan Kalyan and his party while also promoting the film. His remarks have captured the attention of internet users, particularly with the AP elections quickly approaching. "I'm likely to canvass for Janasena because I believe in his (Pawan Kalyan's) ideology and he could bring the real change in the political grammar," he said, adding, "I am not saying this because Pawan Kalyan garu is my Baabai, but because I solely like his ideology."

In addition, he gave an update on his next movie, *Matka*. He explained that the film is still going forward and that a new producer had joined the project in response to rumours that it had been shelved. He added that 35 percent of the movie had already been filmed.

Niharika Konidela debuts on Aha with CHEF MANTRA SEASON 3

The much-awaited grand launch of *Chef Mantra Season 3* is set to premiere on March 3 on aha, promising viewers a night filled with laughter, fun, and captivating conversations.

After two immensely successful seasons, Niharika Konidela takes the center stage this time, introducing a fresh new format filled with more fun, games, and engaging tasks. With Niharika at the helm, audiences can expect a whirlwind of entertainment as she brings her trademark charm and wit to the screen.

Prepare to be star-struck as *Chef Mantra season 3* features an electrifying lineup of celebrities from various spheres of the entertainment



industry. Each episode promises to be a star-studded affair, with special guests adding their own unique flair to the show, ensuring a delightful viewing experience for all.

With a total of 8 episodes lined up, fans are in for a treat as Niharika Konidela and her guests take them on a rollercoaster ride of emotions, laughter, and unforgettable moments. From heartwarming stories to hilarious anecdotes, *Chef Mantra Season 3* promises to be a journey like no other.

Chef Mantra Season 3 is sponsored by Hatsun Curd, Freedom Oil, Value Zone HyperMarket and Easy Kitchen. With their unwavering support, this season promises to reach new heights of culinary excellence and entertainment.

ASHWIN, JUREL, KULDEEP SHINE

INDIA NEED 192 RUNS TO WIN 4TH TEST AGAINST ENGLAND

PTI ■ RANCHI

Dhruv Jurel's defensive chef-doeuvre found a perfect match in the destructive symphony of spin by fifer-man Ravichandran Ashwin and Kuldeep Yadav as India seized decisive control of the fourth Test against England at the end of a dramatic third day here on Sunday.

India walked off at the stumps, having chiselled off 40 runs from the 192-run target without losing a wicket.

Rohit Sharma (24 batting) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (16 batting) would be confident of the team mustering the remaining 152 runs without much theatre.

However, it was Jurel who started India's resistive movement with a defiant 90 that came in 149 balls and 211 minutes. It carried the hosts to 307 in their first innings from the overnight 219 for seven.

In their second essay, England just did not have any answers to the questions posed by Ashwin (5/51), his 35th five-wicket haul in Tests, and Kuldeep Yadav (4/22), getting bowled out for a meagre 145.

Opener Zak Crawley (60) was the lone post of fight. It would have been worse for



England without that Crawley fifty before his innings was halted by Kuldeep.

Ravindra Jadeja bagged a solitary wicket but it was the key wicket of Jonny Bairstow.

In fact, Crawley was the only English batter to go past 30 as they lost their last seven wickets for just 35 runs with Ashwin and Jadeja weaving their magic.

Introduced late, the left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep struck in his third over when he cleaned up Crawley with a gem of a delivery that skidded through, unsettling

the middle-stump. Crawley was looking in an ominous mood and tore into the Indian attack against the run of play to stretch their overall lead past 150 as Rohit

persisted with Ashwin and Jadeja in the second session. But Kuldeep breathed fire into the attack as he got drift and was at his deceptive best. Having survived through an

umpire's call, England skipper Ben Stokes was castled by Kuldeep with the ball staying low.

Bairstow looked in firm control in his 42-ball 30 (3x4) but fell in the first ball after tea when Jadeja exploited the cracks on the pitch to turn it away and the batter drove it straight to short cover.

Kuldeep then dismissed Tom Hartley and Ollie Robinson in four balls, before Ashwin raced to his fifth wicket as stumper Dhruv Jurel took a brilliant reflex catch to oust James Anderson.

In the process, Ashwin also became the highest wicket-taker at home for India. He now has 354 wickets from 59 Tests at home, overtaking Anil Kumble's tally of 350 from 63 matches.

'Jurel' in the crown

But Jurel's innings might just have ended India's search for a wicketkeeper batter in Tests in the absence of recuperating Rishabh Pant.

The 23-year-old from Agra was not only terrific with his glovesmanship but exhibited oodles of maturity during that determined fifty as India mounted an incredible fightback, trimming England's first-innings lead to a mere 46 runs.

After reaching his maiden fifty in 96 balls, the Rajasthan

Royals' wicketkeeper-batsman shifted gears, taking on English spinners Shoaib Bashir and Tom Hartley.

Jurel hurried for a single off Hartley to bring up his fifty in an entertaining 40-run stand off just 75 balls for the ninth wicket with Akash Deep (9).

But Hartley denied him a hundred with a quicker delivery that stayed low.

Young England off-spinner Bashir completed his maiden Test five-wicket haul, trapping Akash to finish with figures of 5 for 119 in only his second Test.

Jurel and Kuldeep's 76-run partnership for the eighth wicket also rescued India from a precarious position when they were reduced to 177 for seven on the second day.

Under overcast conditions in the morning session, the overnight duo of Jurel and Kuldeep faced a 134-run deficit.

Kuldeep showcased superb application on a pitch with variable bounce, playing 131 balls with immaculate defence and effective strike rotation.

Kuldeep's determined innings ended when an Anderson delivery that stayed low took a bottom edge and disturbed the timber.



Irfan lauds Akash for a memorable debut

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan on Sunday praised Akash Deep for making an immediate impact on his Test debut, with the right-arm seamer producing a three-wicket burst on the first day morning of the ongoing fourth Test against England in Ranchi.

Pathan said that for a fast bowler to make his debut in India is very difficult, but the way Akash bowled and picked up his three wickets, he showed promise of a bright future ahead of him.

"As a batter you want your debut to happen in India but as a fast bowler you dream to have your debut in England, Australia, South Africa or New Zealand," Pathan told PTI on the sidelines of the New Delhi Marathon on Sunday.

"The way he bowled in the first session of the match and to pick up three

wickets is commendable. We can only hope to see Akash's career graph to go up from here," he added.

The former India player also praised opening batter Yashasvi Jaiswal for becoming only the fifth from the country to have scored 600 or more runs in a Test series.

"Yashasvi Jaiswal is a very special cricketer, he has very bright future and he will make it big," the former cricketer said.

Pathan, who was at the marathon as chief guest, said India had the potential of becoming a sporting nation.

"To participate in such events is really special. I have always believed that India can become a sporting nation. Twenty thousand people participated here today and everyone was smiling. The people want to be fit and want to participate in such activities, it is always good to see this," he expressed.

Australia beats New Zealand

AP ■ AUCKLAND

Australia beat New Zealand by 27 runs under the Duckworth-Lewis system in the heavily rain-affected third T20 international Sunday to complete a 3-0 sweep the series and to harden its favoritism for the World Cup later this year.

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner won the toss in his 100th T20 international and sent Australia in, mindful the rain might dictate terms later in the match. It did.

Australia's was interrupted three times by rain breaks and finally terminated after 10.4 overs when it was 118-4. New Zealand was set 126 to win in 10 overs under the Duckworth-Lewis system, which seemed a relatively charitable target.

But New Zealand botched the run chase for the second time in three days at Eden Park, unable to conquer Australia's world class attack.

Under the revised rules for the 10-over innings, Australia was allowed five bowlers who could bowl two overs each with a three-over power play.

The young left-armer Spencer Johnson took 1-10 from his two overs, showing why he made \$1.4 million in the IPL auction earlier this year.

Nathan Ellis conceded only 11 from his two overs, Mitchell Starc only 15 and Adam Zampa took 1-20.

Ellis bowled four dot balls to New Zealand's biggest hitter, Glenn Phillips, in the fifth over and at the midpoint of its innings New Zealand was 51-2, needing 75 from the last 30 balls.

Australia's bowlers continued to bowl a tight line and length to frustrate the Black Caps



batters and after Ellis bowled the ninth over for the cost of only 8 runs, New Zealand needed 43 off the last over to win.

The honor, or duty, of bowling the last over went to Matt Short who already had contributed for Australia, making 27 off 11 ball, batting at No. 3.

The first ball of the over went for six but the next three balls

were singles, the fifth ball went for two and the last ball for a boundary as New Zealand fell hopelessly short.

"I think I feel most comfortable when I'm playing shots," Short said. "It was a bit of a strange game because of the rain and being off and on.

"The aggressive way is the way we want to play our T20." Credit also goes to wicketkeeper Matthew Wade

who took over the captaincy from Mitch Marsh and led Australia with great tactical insight in tricky conditions.

"Our bowlers were unbelievable today the way they came out and executed," Wade said. "It's as clinical a bowling performance as I've seen from an Australian unit and for Matt Short to come out and bat the way he did is exciting for the future.

"We've got depth in our squad and everyone's enjoying their cricket."

Australia should have been massively disadvantaged by the fact its innings was abruptly ended after only 10 overs when it had been playing for 20. But it already was in a powerful position.

Thanks to Short and to Travis Head, who made 33 from 30 balls, and Glenn Maxwell who made 20 off 9 after being dropped first ball, Australia already was 67-2 after its six-over power play.

New Zealand couldn't match the clinical aggression of the Australian batters.

Glenn Phillips and Mark Chapman faced most of the last five overs and simply couldn't find a way to score consistent boundaries against the outstanding Australian attack.

Australia has demonstrated the ability to win in all circumstances in this series, including its thrilling final ball victory in the first match, before an emphatic 72-run win in the second game.

"They're obviously a quality side," Santner said. "Their big three quicks and obviously the power they possess, I guess they showed us (how to play) throughout the series.

"The first one was a close one and I guess we got outplayed the last two.



England spinner Leach to undergo knee surgery

PTI ■ LONDON

Left-arm spinner Jack Leach is set to undergo a knee surgery on Tuesday after being ruled out of the England's ongoing five-Test tour of India.

Leach, who came into the India series as England's most experienced spinner, took part in only the opening Test at Hyderabad which his side won by 28 runs.

The 32-year-old spinner suffered an injury on the field which caused severe swelling, forcing him to leave the tour after missing the second Test and subsequently returning home.

"I'm going to have an operation to get the rest of the swelling out because it's not budging," Leach was quoted as saying by the BBC.

The report added that the knee injury trouble is the latest for Leach who suffers

from Crohn's disease, having also missed last year's Ashes in England due to a stress fracture in his back. On the tour of New Zealand five years ago in 2019, Leach had also contracted sepsis.

"It was quite an unfortunate one. It was the second ball of the first innings in the field so that whole game I was playing with this knee problem. I obviously knocked it a few times throughout that game and it has just created a long period of recovery," he said.

"I need to get the operation done and then hopefully I can get back to playing cricket. I'd love to have a run of playing cricket and getting into a bit of a rhythm again and hopefully that can happen again once I've got this sorted."

After the conclusion of the India tour, England's next assignment will be the first home Test at Lord's from July 10.

ICC suspends Hasaranga for two matches, Gurbaz fined match fees

PTI ■ DUBAI

The ICC has suspended Sri Lanka captain Wanindu Hasaranga for two matches and docked a fine of 15 per cent on the match fee of Afghanistan wicketkeeper-batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz for breaching its Code of Conduct during the third T20I in Dambulla.

The global governing body said in a release that Hasaranga has been banned after the spin bowling all-rounder accumulated a total of five demerit points within a 24-month period, which includes his latest breach of the ICC Code of Conduct.

"Sri Lanka's T20I skipper and second-ranked T20I bowler on the ICC Men's Player Rankings, Wanindu Hasaranga, has been presented with a two-match suspension after his total demerit

points reached five within a 24-month period following his latest breach of the ICC Code of Conduct, for which he received a 50 per cent fine and three demerit points," the ICC said in a statement.

The incident involving Hasaranga took place towards the end of the third and final T20I on Wednesday when he approached the on-field umpire Lyndon Hannibal to criticise a decision regarding a full toss delivery not being adjudged a no-ball.

Hasaranga was thus found guilty of breaching the article 2.13 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel. The article relates to "personal abuse of a Player, Player Support Personnel, Umpire or Match Referee during an International Match".

With Hasaranga accumulating five demerit points, it converts to



two suspension points, the ICC said. "This means he will either get a ban for one Test match or two ODIs or T20Is, whichever comes first, for the player or player support personnel.

Consequently, Hasaranga will be suspended from participating in Sri Lanka's first two T20Is against Bangladesh next month," the ICC said.

Gurbaz penalised

Afghanistan batter Gurbaz too was penalised for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct in the same match for having violated the article 2.4 of the code, which concerns "disobeying an Umpire's instruction during an International Match".

This has resulted in one demerit point being added to Gurbaz's disciplinary record, which marks his second such offence in a 24-

month period and the player accumulating two demerit points.

"The sanction was imposed on Rahmanullah for altering the grip of his bat on the field despite repeated warnings against doing so," the ICC said.

The ICC added that both the players have admitted to the offences and have accepted the sanction proposed by Chris Broad from the elite panel of match referees.

"The charges were brought forth by on-field umpires Lyndon Hannibal and Raveendra Pimalasiri, third umpire Ruchira Palliyaguruge, and fourth umpire Ramnare Martinez," the ICC said.

Sri Lanka won the series 2-1 with Afghanistan sealing a narrow three-run win in the final T20I.

Hasaranga was named the Player of the Series for his all-round show.