

Malli Putti Vachinava
from *Record Break*
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The new Big Bang Theory: Crafty graft with mega projects

Government contracts, land, liquor, allocation of public resources, mining and leakages in welfare constitute the primary sources of corruption money for political parties in power worldwide. The siphoning of welfare funds, illegal mining and liquor trades involve many people, thus increasing the risks of exposure and generating wide negative publicity and anti-incumbency. On the other hand, insider trading of land, allocating public resources as part of quid pro quo arrangements, and illegal grants of government contracts deliver high returns with lower risks of exposure.

Of the three sources, those at the top of the ruling hierarchy prefer the third source - humongous, centralized grants of public contracts. The preference is easy to understand as it helps those at the top to enjoy the spoils

exclusively, without sharing them with others lower in the hierarchy. It delivers dual benefits -- riches for self and family and financial muscle to sustain political supremacy.

All the parties that have ruled Telangana - independently or as part of the erstwhile united Andhra Pradesh state have mastered the art of large-scale corruption with low risks. Their modus operandi has been similar. There are three essential ingredients to their recipe. Firstly, instead of retail bribery, which is risky, focus on big-ticket items that can deliver hundreds, if not thousands, of crore in returns. Secondly, centralise the decision-making so that only a few are involved, thus reducing the risk of exposure. Thirdly and most importantly, select projects that are politically difficult to criticize - projects that those in power can market as visionary, heavily beneficial to

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the region's development and deliver on a long-standing demand of the people.

For a dry state like Telangana, water has been the greatest need. No wonder water has been the core reason for the decades-long separate Telangana agitation. Any project the rulers conceive to deliver on this need receives automatic public support, making it difficult for political opposition to criticise it on its merits. The egregiously corrupt rulers of Telangana, too, understood this very well. Instead of working to solve the

issue, they saw an opportunity to make humongous monetary gains. The presentation on Thursday by Sriram Vedire, adviser to Union Minister for Jal Shakti, exposes this truth threadbare with necessary evidence.

The Congress government that ruled the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh from 2004 to 2014 had spent almost Rs 12,000 crore (Rs 11,917 crore) to acquire land and build canals and tunnels for the Pranahita Chevella project as part of its Jalayagan mission. What is shocking is that the



KISHORE POREDDY

Congress government spent this massive amount without constructing any headworks at Tummidihatti, where the Pranahita river water needs to be stored. The Congress government was well aware that the project, as designed, would cause the submergence of 3,665 acres in Maharashtra. Yet, they went ahead with the expenditure without an agree-

ment with that state. The reason for the Congress government eagerly spending Rs 12,000 crore of public money, which is now down the drain, even before ensuring the project can become possible, is apparent.

The first government of Telangana, after the state's formation, led by Chandrasekhar Rao of Telangana Rashtra Samithi (since renamed Bharat Rashtra Samithi - BRS), outdid even the Congress government. Exploiting the faith the people of Telangana had reposed in a government headed by a Telangana bidda (son of Telangana), the TRS government committed fraud of even greater proportions on the state's unsuspecting population. Instead of negotiating a mutually beneficial agreement with Maharashtra, Chandrasekhar Rao used it as an excuse to redesign the project and escalate the cost to

Rs 1.2 lakh crore.

Vedire, in his presentation, has called out the lie the TRS government resorted to for redesigning the Pranahita-Chevella project. Firstly, he refuted the TRS lie that the Central Water Commission (CWC) estimated the water available at Tummidihatti was 67 TMC and not 165 TMC. He asserted that the CWC had always mentioned that 165 TMC of water was available at Tummidihatti.

The Chandrasekhar Rao government had used this lie to move the location of the headworks (dam/barrage) to Medigadda.

Another lie the Chandrasekhar Rao government used to justify the redesign was that the CWC had approved the redesigned project. Vedire pointed out that as per prevailing policy, if a state has a Central Design Organisation (CDO), the CDO is responsible for pro-

ject design, and the CWC will have no role.

With the sinking of the Medigadda barrage piers and the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) questioning the project's safety, the viability of the entire Kaleswaram Lift Irrigation Project is in question. The Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) report on the Kaleswaram project also pointed out the project's financial non-viability and various financial frauds committed in the project execution. The people of Telangana are once again the losers: it did not matter that one of their own from Telangana was heading the government. The Congress and the BRS are birds of the same feather when it comes to corruption and personal aggrandizement.

(The author is BJP TS spokesperson.)



India inks defence deals worth Rs 39,125 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday sealed five major defence acquisition contracts worth Rs 39,125 crore including procurement of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, radars, weapon systems and aero-engines for MiG-29 jets as part of efforts to boost the combat capabilities of the armed forces.

The mega procurement projects were firmned up amid India's lingering border row with China in eastern Ladakh, and they will be implemented under the broad framework of the government's policy to boost domestic defence manufacturing.

The contracts for the procurement of the platforms and weapons systems were signed in presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane, under whose guidance these deals fructified, an official readout said.

Govt adopts PM's Crop Insurance Scheme again

Govt to support farmers, develop agriculture: Revanth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy asserted that the government's main objective is to strengthen agriculture by supporting farmers.

The government also adopted the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) to protect farmers from the uncertainties associated with farming.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Agriculture Minister Tummalala Nageswara Rao and

PMFBY CEO Joint Secretary Ritesh Chauhan held a meeting at the Secretariat on Friday.

The CM and the Central official discussed the implementation of the farmer insurance scheme in Telangana from 2016 and 2020 and the withdrawal of the scheme from the state till now. As the state decided to rejoin the PMFBY scheme, farmers will get crop insurance from the next cropping season.

Ritesh said that farmers will benefit from the insurance



scheme and timely compensation will be provided in case of

crop loss. The Chief Minister said that his government is giving top priority to implement farmer-centric welfare policies.

The Special Chief Secretary of the Finance Department, Ramakrishna Rao, Chief Minister's Secretary Chandrasekhar Reddy, Agriculture and Cooperation Department Secretary Raghunandan Rao, Agriculture Department Director Gopi and others attended the meeting.

DELHI EXCISE 'SCAM'

Court allows Raghav Magunta to turn approver

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



A Delhi court has allowed Raghav Magunta, son of YSR Congress Party Lok Sabha

MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy, to turn approver in a corruption case linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam.

Special court judge M K Nagpal, who had in October 2023 allowed Raghav Magunta's plea to turn an approver in the related money laundering case under ED's investigation, passed the order February 29 on his application in the corruption case being probed by the CBI.

In its reply to the application, the CBI told the judge that the accused cooperated in the investigation and joined the probe as and when summoned.

Save Medigadda with temporary solution : Experts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In almost what resembled a mini-bus yatra, the Chalo Medigadda programme organised by the BRS demanded immediate repairs to the barrage.

At every village enroute BRS karyakartas welcomed the KTR and Harish Rao-led BRS leaders. At the Medigadda Barrage, the BRS leaders checked out the cracks that had developed on the piers.

Venkatesham of Engineers JAC said, "Medigadda is the heart of Telangana. Even in United Andhra Pradesh, experts have pointed out that Medigadda is the main point. Such incidents happen. This is a dam-cum-barrage as the water storage level is high. So we need to study why this incident happened. The NDSA must intervene as this is registered under dam safety and



must scrutinise it. Already four months have gone by. Temporary repairs should begin immediately while making plans for a permanent solution. Using the stop lock gate, or bund, we need to save this barrage. Instead of storing too much water, store it below MDDL, which allows the pumps to run. Then we can supply water to farmers."

KCR had stepmotherly attitude towards south Telangana: Vamsichand

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

CWC Member Ch. Vamsichand Reddy said that former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao had a stepmotherly attitude towards south Telangana. KCR remained a mute spectator when Andhra Pradesh

grabbed Telangana's share of Krishna River waters, he said.

Speaking to the media after visiting the Karvena reservoir in Bhoothpur mandal in Mahbubnagar on Friday as part of his 'Chalo Palamuru - Rangareddy Reservoirs' visit on Friday along with MLAs

Madhusudhan Reddy, Anirudh Reddy, Srihari, and Parnika Reddy, he said that KCR did severe injustice to Palamuru district which gave political alms to KCR.

Vamsichand said that KCR did not stop even though AP took Krishna Basin waters to Penna Basin.

KTR must admit BRS mistakes, apologise: Niranjana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC Senior Vice-President G. Niranjana said that BRS Working President KT Rama Rao should admit the BRS government's mistakes and apologise to the people without arguing about the Medigadda Barrage. "KTR admitted that 50 meters of the 1.6 km have been damaged and ignoring the damaged 50 meters would have affected the entire project," Niranjana said. He said that KTR, who is now asking for a committee of experts and officials, should answer why he could not do that while the BRS was in power for 47 days after the Medigadda pillars sagged on October 21 and did not take corrective measures by setting up a committee. "Do they want to carry out repairs without seeking expert opinion? Who will be responsible if there is any damage in future? People will not believe their false calculations about the water provided by the Kaleshwaram Project," he said.

Centre approves...

Continued from page 1

With permission given by the Centre, the transport network will be developed in the North Telangana districts of Nizamabad, Adilabad, Karimnagar and Ramagundam. The growing traffic problem in Secunderabad will also be solved.

The development of elevated corridors from Hyderabad to Shamirpet and Hyderabad to Kandlakoya will promote the fast development of north Hyderabad. All hurdles for the expansion of the National Highway have been removed with the sanction to use defence lands.

The arrogant attitude of the BRS government had stalled

the construction of the elevated corridors for years. The Chief Minister expressed happiness at the issue pending for the last eight years getting resolved. The CM said that the new government has succeeded in getting approvals in just 80 days and that it displayed the sincerity of the government in developing the state.

The CM recalled during his visits to New Delhi he had submitted memoranda to Union Ministers requesting them to address state issues. The CM said that he is ready to meet anyone to protect the state's interests and continue cordial relations with the Centre.

The CM made it clear that the interests of Telangana top his agenda regardless of political disputes and ideologies.

'Main fight is only with...

Continued from page 1

"The assets of Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy and mine were eroded due to politics. I will give up my assets if there are any assets registered in my name," he said.

During a chit-chat with journalists on Friday at the Secretariat along with Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy and Transport Minister Ponnampalabharathi, Venkat said that there is no BRS in the state now and that the BJP may get two or three LS seats.

The three ministers said that Arvind and Karimnagar MP Sanjay think that they are big leaders forgetting the fact that they lost in the Assembly elections. Arvind and Sanjay will go mad after the Lok Sabha elections. They are not real political leaders but won due to the flow. Both of them speak for breaking news, the Ministers said.

We forced govt...

Continued from page 1

He described Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy's statement as a victory of the BRS. Addressing the media at the Annaram Barrage after visiting Medigadda and Annaram Barrages on Friday, Harish said that the Congress government tried to throw mud at the BRS. He demanded that the Congress government should give water first to farmers and engage in politics later.

Govt exaggerating...

Continued from page 1

Earlier, before starting the Chalo Kaleshwaram Project programme, KTR spoke to the media at the Telangana Bhavan. He said that the Congress government is conspiring to see that the entire Kaleshwaram project is washed away. He said that the Congress government gave priority to politics instead of farmers. "The government has to

take action against those responsible if any mistake takes place. However, the Congress government is conspiring to see that the entire Kaleshwaram Project is washed away. The government has to carry out repair works before the monsoon session begins," he said. Former Speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy said that the Kaleshwaram Project is a prestigious one for India.

Second BRS...

Continued from page 1

After the BRS lost the assembly elections recently, a number of its leaders quit the party to join the BJP or the Congress, which is in power in the state now. Two-term MP Patil lauded the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as he joined the BJP in the presence of Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar, the party's Telangana in-charge Tarun Chugh and its OBC morcha chief K Lakshman.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Shashthi: Mar 01 06:22 AM to Mar 02 07:54 AM

Saptami: Mar 02 07:54 AM to Mar 03 08:45 AM

Nakshatram: Vishaka: Mar 01 12:48 PM to Mar 02 02:42 PM

Anuradha: Mar 02 02:42 PM to Mar 03 03:55 PM

Rahukalam: 9:32 AM to 11:00 AM

Yamagandam: 1:56 PM to 3:23 PM

Varjyam: 06:54 PM to 08:35 PM

Gulika: 6:37 AM to 8:04 AM

Amritakalam: None

Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:04 PM to 12:51 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny

Temp: 36°

Humidity: 33%

Sunrise: 6:34 AM

Sunset: 6:23 PM

Updated: March 1, 2024 5:00 PM

10 people...

Continued from page 1

The incident should not be politicised and everyone should cooperate, he said, adding strict action would be taken against those involved.

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who along with Home Minister G Parameshwara visited the blast site in the evening and also those injured at the hospital, said it was a low intensity explosion and a timer was fixed.

"The blast occurred at 1 pm. A young man of about 28-30 years came to the cafe, purchased Rava idli at the counter, placed the bag near a tree (adjacent to the cafe) and left. After one hour the blast took place," he said.

Farmers' welfare...

Continued from page 1

Hours after the formation of the new government, the Dharna Chowk was opened at Indira Park and Praja Bhavan was also opened for people to air their grievances, he said.

Since the Government is committed to fulfilling all the promises made during the elections, a huge number of applications have been received through Praja Palana. The government has also released White Papers on the state's economy, irrigation and power sectors. Four of the six guarantees have already been implemented. Some more measures will be taken to ensure the welfare of farmers and the unemployed, the CM said.

MLC Mahesh Goud, Yogendra Yadav, Professor Kodandaram, Professor

Haragopal, Professor Vishweshwar Rao, Rama Eghete, Professor Riaz, Professor Purushotam, Gade Inaiah are among those who met the CM.

The CM said that the government will call an all-party meeting to discuss the welfare of tenant farmers. The CM and public representatives shared the idea of bringing in a new law to protect tenant farmers.

The Chief Minister said that a wide-ranging discussion should be held on extending Rythu Bharosa benefits. The government's main objective is to extend the benefit to the poor and if required the real beneficiaries would be provided more assistance.

The CM announced that the crop insurance scheme will be fully implemented.

Will take criminal...

Continued from page 1

"This is not true as those reports do not exist. For example, we didn't provide the geographical profile as it didn't exist during the BRS government's tenure. There were no quality control reports until the Congress came to power. We provided information based on our actions after assuming power," he said.

Uttam said that third-party reports were not given as they did not exist, and highlighted problems in the completion reports, which led to a Vigilance inquiry.

He reminded that it was the Congress Government that had invited the NDSA team for inquiry and pledged full cooperation with the NDSA investigation.

He also criticised the BRS

government for mistakes in the design, planning and construction of the Kaleshwaram project and accused them of compromising the project for kickbacks at the expense of farmers.

He held former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao and his son KTR responsible for the damages and loans. He claimed that the BJP Government at the Centre was a partner in the actions of the BRS in Telangana.

"Loans amounting to thousands of crores were taken for the Kaleshwaram project with Central guarantee. If there was no understanding between the BRS and the BJP, how were loans of Rs 1 lakh crore loans secured?" he asked.

Speaking about the issue of handing over irrigation projects to the Krishna River

Management Board (KRMB), Uttam said that the Telangana Government would retain control of Nagarjuna Sagar and requested the withdrawal of the CRPF from the site.

Regarding the Tummadihatti Project, he emphasised that Congress's promise to build it was in its election manifesto and has no connection to the NDSA report.

Uttam accused the BRS of falsely propagating that the Central Water Commission had stated there was no water at Tummadihatti, clarifying that the CWC report indicated a 160 TMC capacity at Tummadihatti.

He revealed that the Dr BR Ambedkar Pranahita Chevella Project was launched by the YSR government and works were undertaken to create a new ayacut of 30,000 acres.

IIITH receives grant to fund Edge AI research

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

International Institute of Information Technology-Hyderabad (IIITH) announced that it has received a grant funding of US\$ 186,000 from Qualcomm Technologies Inc., to be used over the next three years towards research in the field of Edge AI and Development of AI models and establishment of an Edge AI Research lab. The Qualcomm Edge AI Research lab was inaugurated by Leendert Van Doorn, Senior Vice-President of Qualcomm, at the IIITH campus on Friday. The lab will work on developing Edge AI use cases on Qualcomm platforms, for which the firm will offer its Qualcomm Innovators Development Kit (QIDK) along with technical and knowledge support and mentorship to the research team led



by Professor Ramesh Loganathan. Leendert Van Doorn said, "Qualcomm and IIITH share the vision of a future where India is at the forefront of AI innovation, fueled by creativity, collaboration and the relentless pursuit of excellence. Today's announcement marks the beginning of a three-year journey of collaboration, research and innovation for

advancing Edge AI technologies."

Prof PJ Narayanan, Director, IIITH said, "As AI gets more pervasive, AI on the edge will be the next frontier. We are very happy that Qualcomm has set up an Edge AI lab at IIITH that will now amplify the research efforts already underway".

Some of the potential technology collaboration areas at the Edge AI lab include,

Computer vision, graphics, Edge computing, VLSI and Embedded Systems - and 5G and platform machine learning.

"IIITH has long been associated with Qualcomm on multiple areas since its inception. This lab is yet another in this series and will help take our existing strengths in the Edge AI areas to new heights", said Prof CV Jawahar, Dean R&D, IIITH.

Shashi Reddy, Vice-President of Engineering, at Qualcomm India Pvt. Ltd., said, "Our collaboration with IIITH will usher in an era where innovation flourishes. Together, we aim to unlock the vast potential of Indian R&D and cultivate a rich pool of Edge AI use cases and solutions. The synergy between Qualcomm and IIITH holds promise in empowering Indian universities and intellect in the years ahead."

CM to release book authored by former DGP tomorrow

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Anumula Revanth Reddy will release a book authored by former director general of police and former Governor of Tamil Nadu PS Rama Mohan Rao on March 3. The event will be held in the evening at Dr Marri Chenna Reddy Human Resource Development Institute.

Titled "Governorpet to Governor's House," the book is a memoir chronicling Rama Mohan Rao's remarkable journey from a young police officer to the highest ranks of the Indian Police Service and his subsequent tenure as Governor of Tamil Nadu.

The book release function will be attended by dignitaries including former union minister PV Rangayya Naidu, Chief Secretary A Santhi Kumari and Director General of Police Ravi Gupta. The book 'Governorpet to Governor's House' offers a unique perspective on the life and career of Rama Mohan Rao.

OU meet discusses Jyothi Phule's perspective - contemporary need

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A two-day national conference on "Mahatma Jyotiba Phule's perspective - contemporary need" was organised at the Jyotiba Phule Research Centre, Osmania University on Friday by OU Jyotiba Phule Research Centre, in collaboration with the BC Welfare Department of the State government and the State Council of Higher Education.

Professor SK Chahal shared in detail the philosophy of 'Satya, Dharma' practiced and propagated by the 19th century social reformer Mahatma Jyotiba Phule. Phule revealed religious perspectives and contemporary situations. Later, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar explained the influence of Phule on Mahatma Gandhi. Jyotiba Phule's philosophy of 'Satya Dharma'... his unwavering commitment to truth, justice, equality, education, social reforms... has made him a towering figure in the social and intellectual history of India.

OU Vice-Chancellor



OU VC D Ravinder Yadav garlanding the statue of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule statue

Professor D Ravinder Yadav said that the historical occasions brought about revolutionary changes in the society. It is because of great people like Jyotiba Phule, that we are enjoying freedom of speech and freedom in today's society. It has been revealed that even today, mentioning OBC as a backward class means marking them as mentally backward. He also emphasised the role of social scientists in moving society forward towards an unimaginable future is invaluable. OU Registrar, Professor P

Lakshminarayana and OSD Professor B Redya Naik were guests of honour in the programme. Dr BR Ambedkar Research and Resource Centre (BRARC), SC/ST Cell Director Prof. B Mangu, MLBCCWS & Minorities Director Dr Syeda Azim participated. Other dignitaries in the programme were Prof. Nagesh, Prof. Ramulu, Prof. CH Srinivas, Prof. Sailu, Prof. Narshimulu, Principals, Deans, Research Scholars, 78 delegates and paper presenters from various states participated.

Woman with Turner Syndrome conceives

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In an extremely rare case, a woman with Turner Syndrome gave birth to a healthy child in Hyderabad. Sheila (name changed, 30) and her husband have been married for over three years and were unable to conceive naturally or with in vitro fertilization (IVF) despite trying for over a year. This changed when the couple visited a city-based IVF hospital where she was diagnosed with Turner Syndrome.

Turner's syndrome is a rare genetic disorder characterised by absence or abnormality in one of X chromosomes in the affected female. These individuals have short stature, broad chest, webbed neck, heart defects, swollen hands and feet, inability to straighten the elbow joints, low hairline, hearing problems, and absence of menstruation.

GHMC keen to implement OTS to recover tax dues

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The GHMC officials have been targeting to earn Rs 400 crore by way of property tax through implementation of the one-time settlement scheme for the tax defaulters.

The civic body seeks to earn the quantum of funds by waiving 90% of the interest on the property tax dues.

It is pertinent to note her that the government buildings are required to pay Rs 9,803 crore by way of property tax dues to the civic body.

In all, the GHMC assesses 19,03,865 structures from the property tax perspective. The financial year 2023-24 is drawing to a close in a month. Before the closure of the fiscal year, the GHMC wants to recover Rs 2100 crore towards the property tax. In all, Rs 1350 crore was realized in Jan towards prop-

erty tax. The GHMC is yet to collect Rs 750 crore from 4.97 lakh properties, including the government assets.

GHMC commissioner Ronald Ross, in a letter dashed to the state government, observed that the property tax dues from government departments and agencies have piled up and suggested announcing a concession of 90% on the interest. Responding to the letter, the department of municipal administration gave green signal to the proposal.

The previous BRS regime implemented OTS twice. In 2020-21, 5.4 lakh property owners cleared their Rs 361.92 crore tax dues.

In 2022-23, 5.2 tax assesses paid dues of Rs 169.83 crore.

The GHMC predicts that many more have been eagerly awaiting the One-time settlement scheme.

Call to use tech advances to find solutions for major challenges

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

University of Hyderabad (UoH) has organised the sixth Foundation Day of Association for Scientific Pursuits for Innovative Research Enterprises (ASPIRE), a Section-8 company at its premises on Friday.

Prof. M Jagadeesh Kumar, Chairman, University Grants Commission (UGC) was the chief guest for the event.

The day-long programme saw insightful talks on AI, biotechnology, and also a panel discussion on securing investments for long-gestation startups. Many people associated with startups; pharma and IT firms were part of this special occasion which explored 'Strategies for sustainable growth of deep-tech startups' with long gestation periods.

Prof. M Jagadeesh Kumar said, "We are facing major challenges around the globe and



Prof. M Jagadeesh Kumar giving a speech

need to use technological advances to find solutions for them. Biodiversity is another important issue which we all must address to save the species from being harmed. Human activities are going beyond the limits which the earth systems can sustain. Hence, whenever we talk about scientific innovations it should also be seen along with societal values. There has to be a convergence of all these three aspects. Globally, prosperity has to be uniform.

All countries must prosper."

"The other challenge we face is gender fairness. We must ensure a women-led development in our country. Specially in science and technology, social sciences, administration etc, there should be more women who should be treated well and on equal terms with men at the work place," he added.

Further Prof. Kumar observed, "Materials in nature must be protected. For example, in making a chip used in mobile phones we need around 70 rare earth materials. Even one material in shortage will create problems. The amount of energy used years ago was very small compared to the present where it has multiplied thousands of times. When our lives have become too stressful, self-centred and too many challenges to face, how do we produce this energy that is required for all these needs.

10,392 petitions pending before Information panel

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The pending Right to Information (RTI) petitions in the Telangana State Information Commission (TSIC) are 10,392 from January 2022 to February 20, 2024. According to an RTI reply, in the year 2022, TSIC has not disposed of 4,818 petitions, 5,103 petitions in 2023 and 471 petitions in 50 days of 2024.

To monitor or clear all these petitions, the commissioners have not been there for the last one year. According to an RTI reply, the last Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) Buddha Murali demitted office on September 25, 2022. All other state information commissioners demitted office on February 25, 2023.

RTI activist and project manager of Youtri.in website Kareem Ansari said, "It has been more than one year since the TSIC is working without any commissioners. Yet the

government has not been showing any interest to appoint them. As a result, 10,392 Right to Information (RTI) files are pending since 2022. If it is continuous like this, the recruited commissioner will face a lot of difficulties to clear off the petitions."

"In the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) rule, they have not shown any interest to appoint them. We hope that at least the Congress government will appoint all of them before Parliament election code and clear them off," Kareem said.

According to the Right to Information (RTI) Act, officers should give information to the applicant within 30 days from the application date. But it is not happening. It is not good, if a person gets the information after six months or one year of filing a petition. Also if the files are piling up, how could they clear backlog petitions at a time," he added.

HMWSSB MD inspects tanker filling stations

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) Managing Director Sudarshan Reddy inspected the tanker filling stations in Venkatagiri, Kondapur and Madhapur under Jubilee Hills limits on Friday.

Sudarshan Reddy went to Venkatagiri filling station and enquired about the details of tanker booking and delivery timings from the officials there. He examined in and out log books related to tanker delivery.

He suggested to the officials that due to the increase in bookings, adequate staff should be provided to work in two shifts at the centres where deliveries are pending. He ordered the officials to increase the delivery timings as per the demand for water.

Revenue Director VL Praveen Kumar, Chief General Manager (CGM) Vijay Rao and other officers were there in the inspection.

SHE Teams launch free tailoring training course

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

She Teams Rachakonda, in collaboration with Rachakonda Security Council (RKSC), Rachakonda Commissionerate-Aakrti, inaugurated the third batch of free tailoring training course as part of Mahila Forum-Sheera programmes on Friday. A batch of 25 students identified by Principal D Radhika will be trained in this course.

Also, selection of sewing machines and trainers under RKSC, "She Era" Flagship Programme for Women Empowerment and Economic Self-Reliance at Ghatkesar and Workshop on Women Safety and Cybercrime Awareness programme were held at TSWR Degree College, Ibrahimpatnam.

Usha Vishwanath, DCP of Rachakonda, SHE Teams, said that the youth should be vigilant against cyber crimes and be careful with strangers on social



The third batch of free tailoring training course in progress

media. She also gave several useful tips to the youth to help them protect themselves from cyberattacks. Students were encouraged to focus on their studies and their career. She assured that the students will be given the necessary support for a better future career.

Principal Radhika appreciated the activities being done by the Rachakonda Security

Council. She expressed gratitude for providing support to the students to get self-employment opportunities.

Rachakonda Security Council Forum Coordinators Archana Manne, Nandita, RKSC Chief Coordinator Savitri, forum members Rajani, Radhika, Swarna, Nikhat, Surya and others participated in the programme.

Fraudsters involved in investment fraud nabbed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Cyber Crime Police arrested accused who were involved in investment fraud cases on February 28.

The accused are A-1 Abdullah Farook Zhunzunya, (19) and A2- Mohammed Sohyab Bablu Khan, (27).

Based on the complaint received from the victim, the accused gave him a message through whatsapp and Telegram applications and cheated him on the pretext of providing a part time job to work from home. Initially they sent Rs 500 as bonus to gain confidence and made him to invest an amount of Rs 2,38,405 and cheated him.

The accused Abdullah Farook Zhunzunya and Mohammed Shoyab Bablu Khan were arrested on February 28. For committing these cyber frauds, the accused took fake bank accounts which were provided by other accused and in turn the cyber

fraudsters cheated innocent people. Mohammed Shoyab Bablu Khan had opened a bank account of shell companies where he put himself and others as proprietors and provided the same to Abdullah Farook Zhunzunya and in turn the accused used to cheat innocent people.

In a single account, total credits were found to be Rs 4.5 crore. Similarly, the accounts were involved in 42 cases in which six cases were registered in Telangana. In Hyderabad, total money defrauded in three cases is Rs 1.2 crore, one in Rachakonda where the amount is Rs 65 lakh and in Cyberabad total two cases of defrauded amount of Rs 10 lakh.

Inspector of Police S Naresh, along with team A Shaileendra, SI, Mohammed Feroz, HC and Maheshwar Reddy, HC of PS Cyber Crime under the direct supervision of RG Siva Maruthi, ACP, Cyber Crime, Hyderabad have cracked the case.



TSSPDCL Junior Accounts Officer Sama Vijayasimha Reddy

RS 86 LAKH FINGERPRINT CLONING SCAM

Two field staffers nabbed in GHMC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two field assistants have cheated Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) of Rs 86,40,000 for the last two years by claiming the wages of absent sanitation workers. On Friday sleuths of Task Force, Central Zone team, busted the fingerprint cloning racket and apprehended two sanitation field assistants of GHMC of Amberpet division. Accused P Shivaiah Umesh and J Shivaram were claiming the salaries of absent sanitation workers by using their cloned fingerprints.



They hatched a plan to claim the wages of sanitation workers who were absent by cloning their thumb impressions. As per their plan, they prepared fake fingerprints by watching the process through YouTube. The accused persons collected 35 thumb impressions of sanitation workers out of whom 21 workers were under

Shivaiah Umesh and the remaining 14 workers under Shivaram with whom they had an understanding to share the wages.

The accused revealed that for last two years they have been daily claiming the wages of 20 sanitation workers who were absent for each shift. The loss to loss to the GHMC was approximately Rs 3,60,000 per month, Rs.43,20,000 for 12 months. Since both the respondents were doing this mischief for the last two years, it comes to Rs 86,40,000 for two years. There are about 900 sanitation field assistants in 30

GHMC circles in Hyderabad and about 24,000 sweepers and public health workers are working under the two field assistants.

In all, 35 seized synthetic fingerprints and two attendance biometric devices were handed over to Amberpet police station. The case has been filed under 467, 468, 471, 419, 420, 409 IPC.

The arrests were made under the supervision of Task Force Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) S Rashmi Perumal, by Inspector of Police B Raju Naik, SI Ch Naveen Kumar and staff of the Central Zone Task Force, Hyderabad.

COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS

Bhatti Vikramarka hints at arranging free online coaching to candidates

PNS ■ MADHIRA

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka has hinted at arranging free online coaching for students preparing for the competitive examinations free in 15 days through Ambedkar Knowledge Centre.

The free coaching would be offered to candidates in all 119 constituencies with the help of expert lecturers. For the past 10 years, the group-1 posts were not filled. As soon as the Congress came to power, it issued notification to fill 25,000 posts.

He was taking part in a series of developmental programmes in Mudigonda mandal under Madhira Assembly constituency in Khammam district on Friday. He formally commenced the Gruha Jyoti scheme by picking zero bill for the beneficiaries of the scheme.

Addressing the gathering, he said that the government would strive to ensure the



He was taking part in a series of developmental programmes in Mudigonda mandal under Madhira Assembly constituency in Khammam district on Friday

recruitment process is transparent and free from question paper leakages.

For want of job notifications, the job aspirants, who underwent coaching in Hyderabad using meagre resources their parents have, were in despair earlier. He recalled how he came across poor parents shedding tears during his People's March, complaining of question paper leakages. They questioned him when their children were going to get jobs, he said.

Such incidents that he encountered during his pada yatra crossed his mind while he was presenting the budget for the first time in the State Legislative Assembly. Ever since the Congress came to power, the government has decided to give interest-free loans to the DWCRAs groups. The government would repay the interest on loans given to self-help groups. He hinted at distributing the interest waiver cheques to the beneficiaries

addressing a mammoth public meeting shortly.

The interest-free loans would encourage women to invest in education, health, business and such other things in villages bringing a lot of money into circulation and thereby helps economy grow.

There were instances of women attaining financial prosperity and reached the level of lending money for interest in villages. Objective of the Congress government is to see women as Maha Lakshmi. Out of the six guarantees, first and foremost free travel is provided to women on RTC buses. So far, 18 crore zero tickets were issued. He said that he along with Chief Minister launched subsidized LPG cylinder scheme for the poor at State secretariat. Those who use electricity up to 200 units the interest on loans given to self-help groups. The government is paying wages every month to mid-day meals agencies.

Rahul Gandhi asked to contest LS polls from TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Indian Overseas Congress leaders asked Rahul Gandhi to contest Lok Sabha elections from Telangana and Rahul Gandhi is said to have responded positively.

Rahul Gandhi, who went to London for a two-day visit, was received by the Indian Overseas Congress leaders on Thursday. Vice-President of Telangana Wing Sudhakar Goud met Rahul Gandhi. He asked Rahul Gandhi to contest from Telangana in the upcoming Parliament elections.

He pointed out that if Rahul Gandhi contests from Telangana, the impact will be not only on Telangana but also on South India and the Congress party will win most of the seats easily.

He said that Rahul Gandhi responded positively to his appeal.

‘Elect BJP’s LS candidates for more Central funds’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

India's GDP growth rate rose to eight per cent in the last three months. This didn't happen overnight, it is entirely due to the tremendous effort of the Central Government headed by Modi, BJP leader Konda Vishweshwar Reddy said addressing the media on Friday.

“Welfare schemes should benefit the people, but freebies, sops and caste-based schemes must not be launched deceitfully. The current TS government is slightly better than the BRS government. Abuse was the order of the day in the Assembly during the BRS rule. I am happy that the recent Assembly meeting was conducted decently,” Vishweshwar said.

“The BRS left an empty bowl in the hands of the Congress government. There are no funds for Rythu Bandhu and other schemes. The Centre gave Rs nine lakh crore to



Telangana despite not being in the government. With just four MPs from Telangana if we could win such a huge Central contribution, imagine what we can manage if we have more MPs,” he said.

Modi contributed funds to Telangana keeping aside politics. KCR left behind a debt of Rs seven lakh crore for Telangana. The Centre bridged the gap by contributing funds to prevent problems for the people of Telangana, Vishweshwar said.

If social welfare schemes

are continuing in Telangana it is entirely because of Modi. If the BJP can win 14 or 15 LS seats in Telangana we can fetch even Rs 25 lakh crore for the state, the BJP leader said.

The Congress is running a misinformation campaign saying that the BRS and the BJP are one. We can also level such baseless allegations against the Congress, but we won't do that, he said.

“The Congress is ignoring the bigger fraud of Kaleshwaram and focusing on Medigadda. The Congress is using the Medigadda issue for political purposes. They are accusing the BJP of being hand in glove with the BRS for not arresting Kavitha. Although Revanth is ready to take action against the KCR family, the Congress high command is preventing it,” Vishweshwar said.

“I will win by a majority of two lakh votes in Chevella, and I will redouble my efforts to develop Chevella,” he said.

Mega DSC notification: Mood upbeat among aspirants

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Mood among the aspirants of teacher posts is upbeat with the State Government issuing a notification to fill 11,062 posts in Telangana, including 1268 in undivided Nalgonda district.

These include 298 posts of school assistants, 72 language pundits, 744 PETs and SGTs and 107 special education SGT posts.

The Mega District Selection Committee notification created a lot of interest among the aspirants. They are required to apply for the posts from March 4 onwards.

This time, the government seeks to fill the posts of 47 special educator SGTs

in government schools.

Those who have applied in response to an earlier notification issued by the BRS regime need not apply again. The new DSC notification will take their applications into consideration, according to school education commissioner.

The DSC recruitment test will be conducted in 11 towns and cities across the state online.

In the DSC notification issued on September 6 by the BRS regime, the total number of posts in Nalgonda district was 503. But, their number has increased to 1268 in the mega DSC, increasing the total number of posts by 605.

Officials’ apathy leads to drinking water sacristy in tribal areas

Congress government assurance to tribal people that ITDAs will be restored to their former glory, kindles hopes among tribals

PNS ■ ADILABAD

The administration in Utnoor Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) in the past allegedly failed to resolve the problems being faced by tribal people.

Now, the Congress government in Telangana has focused its attention on streamlining the administration in the ITDA.

Announcement of Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka that the government is committed to restoring the ITDAs to their former glory rekindled hopes of the

tribals.

The governing body meeting of the ITDA was held for the last time in 2019. Afterwards, there was no sign of holding the meeting. Therefore, funds could not be released to implement the welfare and developmental schemes for the tribals.

Frequent transfers of Project Officers have a telling effect on the developmental activities.

Regarding the observing of grievances day in the ITDA, officials have been collecting representations from tribals. But no action seemed to have been taken. In about 50 villages

under Narnoor, Indravelli, Utnoor, Sirikonda, Tiryani and a few other mandals have been facing severe drinking water scarcity during the current summer. Therefore, the tribals have been trekking long distances to fetch drinking water from streams, rivers and other water bodies.

The previous regime also failed to develop roads and bridges in agency areas restrict their mobility. Pregnant women have been facing difficulties in reaching out to the hospitals on time for want of proper road communication facilities.

‘Tainted’ BRS pretending innocence over KLIP graft

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Jana Samithi chief Prof Kodandaram on Friday described the attitude of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) is like a thief himself raising an alarm.

Kodandaram said that it was wrong on the part of BRS to certify that the Medigadda Barrage was strong though three pillars sagged.

Kodandaram said that the pillars of the Barrage sank due to poor planning, lack of quality, and maintenance and design errors. He said that the irrigation system was plunged into crisis. He said that Central Water Commission (CWC) permission was not taken for the designs that were changed.

Essence Fest at UoH

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Sarojini Naidu School of Arts, University of Hyderabad (UoH) organised Essence Fest at its premises on Friday. Prof BV Suresh of Department of Fine Arts and Dr Vinod Pavarala, Department of Communication, inaugurated the event.

Prof Suresh shared insights about the importance of films, how the stories are narrated through films and the impact on people in a large way and so on. He also expressed happiness towards the Department of Mass Communication for organising this fest.

Following the inauguration, the fest kickstarted with a film screening followed by a panel discussion, drama and other cultural performances.

Prominent actor Priyadarshi



Pullikonda, Hriday Ranjan, Geeta Golla and Gautami Challagulla who are the part of the varsity's alumni participated in the panel discussion as panelists. They have shared their insights about their journeys on how they break into the film industry, challenges they faced and so on. They also

interacted with the students, professors and film enthusiasts on various topics.

Later, the Department of Theatre Arts organised a drama based on the Letters of Virginia Wolf and Ustad Najmuddin Javed and Shams Tabrez gave a mesmerising performance with their songs.

TSBIE announces 5 min grace period

PNS ■ NALGONDA

The Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education (TSBIE) said in a statement that students who come late to the examination centre after 9 am will be given five minutes grace period.

The officials of the Board on Friday advised the respective district authorities and Central Chief Superintendents to give five minutes grace period to the students who come late to the exam centre after 9 am due to specific reasons.

3 people arrested; 1.4 kg ganja seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyberabad Police have seized 1.4 kg ganja from two different places in the city on Friday. Both raids were conducted by two different police stations in the morning.

In the first raid, the SOT Balanagar and Suraram Police seized 650 grams of ganja packets from a person named Brijesh Kumar Pandey, 26, of Kaiser Nagar, Gajularamaram. Suraram Police said that the accused is a mechanic and his family came to Hyderabad

around 25 years ago. He bought the ganja from a source to consume it. The case has been booked.

In another incident, the SOT medical team and KPHB Police arrested two people named Nandigama Sai Teja and Kothapalli Naga Srinivas for having 750 grams of ganja. KPHB inspector Ch Venkanna said that both are from Andhra Pradesh and staying in a private hostel. One of the accused Sai has previously been accused in another case. The case has been booked and the accused sent to judicial remand.

CONDUCT OF INTER EXAMS

Chief Secretary warns officials against irregularities

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Secretary Shanti Kumari has warned that strict action will be taken against those who commit irregularities in the conduct of the ongoing Intermediate examinations, no matter how large.

A video conference was held on Friday with District Collectors, Police Commissioners and SPs on the conduct of Inter and Tenth exams and the establishment of public administration service centres.

DGP Ravi Gupta, State Government Chief Secretaries Burra Venkatesham, Sam Rizvi, Nadeem Ahmed and other higher officials participated in the video conference. On this occasion, Chief Secretary Shanthi Kumari said that any kind of action that tampers with the future of lakhs of students will not be tolerated.

In Kamareddy district, several teachers and staff who tried to leak the Inter examination paper were identified and arrested and criminal cases were registered against them. She said that about 9,80,000 students are appearing in 1,521 examination centres across the State for the first and second year of Inter exams.

It has been clarified that



It has been clarified that employees, including senior officials, are prohibited from carrying cell phones into the examination centres. She said that a strong police presence should be established at every examination centre

employees, including senior officials, are prohibited from carrying cell phones into the examination centres. She said that a strong police presence should be established at every examination centre. It is the intention of the State government to conduct all types of examinations smoothly, transparently and efficiently in the State, and in this regard, the district collectors are advised to work in a planned manner.

After the completion of the exams every day, a review meeting should be held with the relevant officials in the district and immediate action should be taken against false news on social media regarding the conduct of the exams. It has been informed that the tenth class exams will start after the inter exams and similar rules and regulations should be followed for the conduct of these exams.

3 of family killed as car hits lorry

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Three members of a family were killed and another injured when their car collided with a tractor in Bontupadu village, Guntur rural mandal, along the national highway on Friday.

According to the police, the victims, including two women and a young boy, had been returning to their hometown of Mangalagiri after attending a wedding in Julakallu village. The collision occurred when their car struck the rear end of a tractor, resulting

in the fatalities of Garlapati Subbamma (45), Garlapati Pavani (18), and Garlapati Shyam Dikshat (6). G. Naglakshmi and Srikanth, the driver of the car, sustained injuries in the accident.

Emergency responders swiftly transported the injured to the Government General Hospital (GGH) in a 108 ambulance. The impact of the collision caused significant damage to the front portion of the car, necessitating efforts to extract the occupants from the vehicle.



STARTLING ACCUSATION

Jagan, Avinash behind Viveka murder: Sunitha

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a startling revelation ahead of the upcoming general elections, the unresolved case of the brutal murder of former minister YS Vivekananda Reddy at his residence in Pulivendula, Kadapa district, nearly five years ago, has resurfaced. Dr. Sunitha Narreddy, Viveka's daughter, made a sensational statement on Friday, holding her cousins and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, along with Kadapa MP YS Avinash Reddy, responsible for her father's murder.

Expressing her frustration over the sluggish pace of the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) investigation, Sunitha appealed to the public for justice, citing a lack of hope from the judicial system. She urged the



people to thwart Jagan and his party's prospects in the forthcoming elections in Andhra Pradesh, believing that justice would only be served if they were defeated. Sunitha warned that a return to power for Jagan would likely impede any progress in the case.

Sunitha expressed her gratitude towards opposition figures such as TDP President N Chandrababu Naidu, Jana Sena Party President Pawan Kalyan, former MP Kanumuru Raghuram Krishna Raju, and her cousin Y S Sharmila, who

have supported her quest for justice. This gesture was seen as an indirect appeal to the public to support the TDP-Jana Sena Party coalition in the upcoming elections.

In a poignant statement, Sunitha emphasised the presence of the real culprits within society and questioned the message sent to the public when murderers roam free. Accusing Jagan of deceit and betrayal, she called for an investigation into his alleged involvement in the case, asserting that exoneration was possible if he is innocent.

Sunitha recounted her past attempts to seek justice, including her plea to CM Jagan for a judicial inquiry into her father's murder, only to be met with resistance and political manoeuvring. She highlighted instances of harassment against her and her husband by the authorities and accused parties.

INDIA CORNER

Red Fort, Qutub Minar among top 10 most visited monuments: Eco survey

Monuments such as Red Fort, Qutub Minar, and Humayun's Tomb were among the top 10 centrally-protected monuments across the country, witnessing the highest domestic footfall till February 2023, the Delhi Economic Survey revealed on Friday. Delhi finance minister Atishi presented the Economic Survey 2023-24 in the Delhi Assembly. According to the data, Red Fort witnessed a domestic footfall of 22.01 lakh, Qutub Minar 15.24 lakh, and Humayun's Tomb 10.81 lakh in 2023. Delhi stood fourth among all states and Union Territories (UTs) with a footfall of 8.20 lakh foreign tourists in 2022, according to the data. The top eight international check posts for foreign tourist arrivals in city were Delhi airport, Mumbai airport, Haridaspur land check post, Chennai airport, Bengaluru airport, Hyderabad airport, Cochin airport, and Kolkata airport, the survey revealed. Meanwhile, the rise in the number of domestic tourists visiting the city that started in 2012 continued till 2019 and then saw a dip -- owing largely to COVID pandemic.



Bill Gates visits Statue of Unity, calls it 'incredible engineering feat'

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates on Friday visited the Statue of Unity at Ekta Nagar in Gujarat's Narmada district and termed the 182-meter tall monument dedicated to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as an "incredible engineering feat". "An incredible engineering feat! Very Beautiful! A great tribute to Sardar Patel. Thanks for your hospitality!" Gates wrote in the visitor's diary after taking a tour of the memorial, which is the largest such structure in the world. He was welcomed by Statue of Unity CEO Udit Agrawal and state protocol minister Jagdish Vishwakarma. Gates was briefed by official guides about the process of building the giant structure and materials used for its construction. Gates also visited the SoU's viewing gallery located at a height of 135 metres, a Gujarat government release said. He took a guided tour of a nearby garden and enjoyed a traditional Gujarati meal at a cafeteria run by local tribal women, it said.



Five women arrested in connection with Haldwani violence

Uttarakhand Police on Friday arrested five women in connection with the recent Haldwani violence in the town's Banbhoolpura area over the demolition of an illegal madrasa, officials said. This takes the total arrests in connection with the February 8 incidents of stone pelting, arson and firing in Banbhoolpura to 89, Nainital Senior Superintendent of Police Prahlad Narayan Meena said. The five women arrested on Friday are Shahnaz, Soni, Shamsheer, Salma and Reshma, the SSP said, adding that they all are residents of the Banbhoolpura area. Violence in Haldwani had left six persons dead and more than a 100, including police personnel and journalists, injured, the police had said earlier. The rioters had indulged in stone pelting and arson. They had set a number of vehicles and the Banbhoolpura Police Station on fire. Haldwani violence mastermind Abdul Malik was arrested on February 24 and his son Abdul Moid five days later.



PM attacks Mamata Banerjee govt over Sandeshkhali

■ Claims country seething with anger

PNS ■ ARAMBAG (WB)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday launched a scathing attack on the TMC government in West Bengal over atrocities on women in Sandeshkhali, and said the entire country is seething with anger over the issue.



Modi also slammed the opposition bloc INDIA for maintaining a stoic silence on the issue of Sandeshkhali horrors. Speaking at a public meeting at Arambag in Hooghly district, Modi virtually sounded the bugle for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls by stating that the people of Bengal would respond to the wounds they were inflicted with while casting their votes ("Chot ka jawab vote se dena hai"). "Amid achievements, the entire country is watching the

situation of Bengal today. The whole country is sad and angry after seeing what TMC, which beats the drum of Maa, Mati, and Manush, has done to the sisters of Sandeshkhali," Modi said. "Maa, Mati, and Manush" is the self-designated nomenclature of the Mamata Banerjee government since its ascent to power in 2011. "What TMC has done to the

sisters of Sandeshkhali is a matter of shame," he said at the rally. Referring to Khanakul, the birthplace of 19th century social reformer Raja Rammohan Roy which was close to the venue of the public meeting, the Prime Minister said that "the spirit of Roy, wherever it is, must be sad and weeping at the state of affairs in Bengal".

"The TMC leaders of Sandeshkhali exceeded all limits in unleashing violence on the people. The women of Sandeshkhali asked Mamata for help. And what did she do? Instead, she did everything she could to protect those leaders," Modi burst out. The Prime Minister claimed that it was on account of the BJP's sustained leadership in galvanizing protests that the state administration "was forced to finally bow down before the people of Sandeshkhali and arrest the prime accused who was absconding for nearly two months". Modi, evidently, was referring to the arrest of the now-suspended TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh who was arrested on Thursday after managing to evade police net for 55 days.

Delhi: Man hangs self over strained relations with wife

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A 28-year-old man committed suicide by hanging while he was on night duty at a sewage treatment plant in Delhi's Vasant Kunj area, police said on Friday. According to police, the reason behind Chandan Das' extreme step is suspected to be his strained relations with his wife. A PCR call was received at 2.58 am regarding the suicide of a worker at the plant in Imperial Club in Vasant Kunj North, a senior police officer said. Police said that Das used to work as an operator at the sewage plant and was on night duty. "He had a dispute with his wife and before committing suicide he made a video call to his mother. After the call, his wife and mother came to the Imperial Club and informed the guard. The crime team has inspected the spot and further investigation is underway," the officer said.

Observing that urbanisation policies have flaws, the Supreme Court has said one of the main reasons for spurt in unauthorised constructions is the government's failure to provide people with affordable houses. Acknowledging that the right to have a roof over head is a fundamental right, the top court said there is a huge gap in the policies between the requirements of the economically weaker sections and what the government was doing at the ground level. The observations by a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta came while hearing a case relating to demolition of commercial and residential units in Lucknow's Akbar Nagar where it imposed an interim stay on demolitions. "Let us be clear on housing. There's a difficulty. Our urbanisation policies have flaws. Really speaking, we have not provided for economically weaker sections. Somewhere,

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

we will have to ensure Everyone knows that migration takes place to the cities. But there is a huge gap in the policies between the requirements and what we are able to do at the ground-level. "Why are there so many unauthorised colonies in Delhi? Because DDA (Delhi Development Authority) does not even know where 60-70 per cent of the land is. All has been acquired," the bench observed. The top court was hearing a batch of petitions challenging the demolition of commercial spaces in Lucknow's Akbar Nagar after the Allahabad High



Court dismissed the pleas of the occupants on February 27. Senior advocate S Muralidhar and Shueb Alam, appearing for the petitioners, said the demolition started on February 27 after the high court order. They said residential houses were also being demolished along with commercial spaces. Additional Solicitor General K M Nataraj, representing the UP government, submitted the matter related to demolition of residential houses constructed on government land on a river front is sub-judice before the Allahabad High Court and judgment has been reserved. The ASG said the occupants put up all kinds of illegal commercial constructions on the riverbank without license or permission. After hearing the submissions, the apex court said, "Till the judgment is pronounced, the Lucknow Development Authority/State government will not carry out demolition. They will abide by the order of the High Court."

33% RS members have declared criminal cases against themselves

■ Their total assets stand at Rs 19,000 cr: ADR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Of 225 Rajya Sabha sitting members analyzed, 33 per cent have declared criminal cases against themselves while the total assets of these sitting MPs stood at Rs 19,602 crore, according to poll rights body ADR. Also, 31 of them or 14 per cent are billionaires. The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) also showed that 18 per cent of these parliamentarians have declared serious criminal cases which include instances of murder and attempted murder. In an analysis conducted by the ADR and National Election Watch (NEW), two Rajya Sabha sitting members have declared cases related to murder under IPC section 302, while four MPs have declared cases related to attempt to murder under IPC Section 307. "Out of the 225 Rajya Sabha sitting MPs analysed, 75 (33 per cent) Rajya Sabha sitting MPs

have declared criminal cases against themselves and 40 (18 per cent) Rajya Sabha sitting MPs have declared serious criminal cases," the report said. The analysis also delved into the distribution of these criminal cases across different political parties. The BJP leads with 23 per cent of its 90 Rajya Sabha members having declared criminal cases against themselves. The Congress follows closely behind with 50 per cent of its 28 MPs facing similar charges. The ADR analysis said five (38 per cent) out of 13 Rajya Sabha members from TMC, four (67 per cent out of six members from RJD, four (80 per cent) out of five MPs from CPI(M), three (30 per cent) out of 10 MPs from AAP, four (36 per cent) out of 11 Rajya Sabha members from YSRCP and two (20 per cent) out of 10 MPs from DMK have declared criminal cases against themselves in their affidavits.



Human mind an enigma, there can be myriad reasons for suicide: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The human mind is an enigma and there can be myriad reasons for a man or a woman to die by suicide, the Supreme Court has said while acquitting a man charged with abetting the suicide of his landlady 24 years ago. A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Ujjal Bhuyan said it may not always be the case that someone has to abet commission of suicide and circumstances surrounding the deceased in which he finds himself are relevant.

"Human mind is an enigma. It is well neigh impossible to unravel the mystery of the human mind. There can be myriad reasons for a man or a woman to commit or attempt to commit suicide: it may be a case of failure to achieve academic excellence, oppressive environment in college or hostel, particularly for students belonging to the marginalized sections, joblessness, financial difficulties, disappointment in love or marriage, acute or chronic ailments, depression, so on and so forth," the bench said.

In this case, the man, a former tenant, proposed to his landlady, who was returning after dropping her sister's children off at school. The man threatened her that if she did not agree to marry him, he would destroy the families of her sisters, outrage their modesty and kill them. After she reached home, the woman informed her sisters about the incident over the phone. Thereafter, she consumed poison in the house. She was rushed to hospital where she died on

July 6, 2000. The top court said there was no evidence on the basis of which it can hold the appellant guilty of abetting the suicide of the deceased. "While the death of a young woman is certainly very tragic, it cannot be said with any degree of certainty that suicide has been proved; the other essential ingredient constituting the offence under Section 306 (abetment cannot also be said to have been proved," the bench said.

Bihar govt withholds salaries of VCs for not attending meeting

PNS ■ PATNA

In an unprecedented move, the Bihar government has ordered freezing of the bank accounts of all state-run universities, barring one, and withheld salaries of their vice-chancellors for allegedly being absent at a recent review meeting convened by the education department. The department's letter, issued to all VCs barring the official of Kameshwar Singh Darbhanga Sanskrit University, has sought clarification from them as to why they did not attend the meeting to discuss the status of pending examinations and other issues.

Some Congress MLAs sold their souls, went against party ethics: Sukhu

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Some Congress MLAs sold their souls and went against the party ethics to cross-vote in the Rajya Sabha election and they will be made to pay for it by God, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said on Friday. "Those who betrayed the party and played with the sentiments of the people of the state won't be spared even by the Almighty," said Sukhu addressing a public meeting in Dharampur in the Kasauli Assembly constituency of Solan district. He said that six rebel MLAs from Congress abstained



themselves from the house during the passing of the budget and when a coup was planned to take place by the rival BJP. Sukhu accused the BJP of being ill-at-ease with his government's performance in curbing corruption and starting welfare schemes. "I am here for the people of the state, for the development of my state, I am here for you all and not afraid of the conspiracies being hatched against me," he said. "I will not allow the wealth of the state to be looted at any

cost. My people are my strength and I am bound and committed to serve them until my last breath," he added. He also accused Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur, also the former state chief minister, of being power hungry, as he reiterated his claim that his government will complete its five-year tenure come what may. Chief Parliamentary Secretary Sanjay Awasthi said an attempt was made by a few to destabilise the government with money power, which is against the ethos of democracy and Himachal Pradesh has been put to shame by those few.

Double-engine govt guarantees 'jungle raj' in UP: Rahul Gandhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The truth of the double-engine government in Uttar Pradesh is that it is a 'guarantee of jungle raj', Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Friday while announcing a statewide protest by party workers against the law and order situation. "The law and order situation in Uttar Pradesh is the biggest example of how the BJP and Modi media together are indulging in the 'business of lies'," he alleged in a post in Hindi on X. Highlighting several recent cases of crimes against women, he said the bodies of minor sisters are found hanging from trees at some places. "Somewhere the audacity of gang rape by BJP members in IIT-BHU campus, and somewhere a woman judge was forced to commit suicide for not getting justice. "This is the condition of that state whose law and order system is being praised tirelessly," Gandhi said. He also mentioned the recent murder of a Dalit student returning after taking her Class 10 exams in Rampur. "It is time to come out of the false image created by Modi media and see the truth that the double engine government is



the 'guarantee of jungle raj', the former Congress president said. "Uttar Pradesh Congress workers will raise their voice for justice by protesting in every district and every tehsil today against the BJP system and this alliance of criminals," he said. Congress general secretary in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh said, "In Modi's 'Anyay-kaal, at least three women are raped every hour. The latest tragedy struck yesterday, the 29th of February, when two girls were found hanging from a tree in Kanpur, having being driven to suicide after allegedly being raped by the contractor of the brick kiln where they worked." The inaction and unresponsiveness of the BJP's political leadership to women's safety issues only emboldens criminals further, he added in a post on X. "The nation witnessed the Yogi Government put narrow political calculations over justice for the victim when they protected and patronized their rape-accused MLA Kuldeep Sengar in Unnao until 2019. The nation saw the BJP's cynical and ruthless politicking when they forcibly cremated the body of the deceased victim in Hathras in 2021.

Manipur Assembly urges Centre to implement NRC

PNS ■ IMPHAL

The Manipur assembly on Friday passed a resolution urging the central government to implement the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state. Speaker Th Satyabrata said, "The House resolves to reaffirm its previous resolution passed on August 5, 2022, and also to urge the Government of India to implement NRC in Manipur in the interest of the state in particular and of the nation in general." In another development, Chief Minister N Biren Singh

informed the House that eight FIRs have been filed regarding the February 15 incident in Churachandpur, where a mob vandalised and partially torched the DC and SP office. Responding to a calling attention raised by Congress MLA K Meghachandra, Singh said, "Eight FIRs have been registered, of which two have been handed over to the CBI." He further mentioned that six police personnel and 43 civilians sustained injuries during the incident, and 20 people involved in the violence have been identified.

From undernutrition to obesity: Double whammy for India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is grappling with a profound nutritional shift, as highlighted by the latest Lancet study, with nutritionists attributing this "double whammy" of undernutrition and obesity to a dual challenge: inadequate consumption of quality foods and easy access to cheap, unhealthy alternatives. The Lancet study, published on Thursday, found that in India, nearly 44 million women and 26 million men were obese in 2022, respectively.

The analysis by the NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC) - a global network of scientists - and the World Health Organization (WHO) also found that about 12.5 million children aged between five and 19 were overweight in 2022. "These numbers are up from 2.4 million and 1.1 million in 1990 for women and men, respectively, while for children, the baseline number was about 0.4 million," said study co-author Guha Pradeepa, from Madras Diabetes Research Foundation (MDRF), Chennai,



told PTI. Reacting to the study findings, nutritionist Sudha Vasudevan, who was not

involved in the study, noted that while good quality foods are nutrient-dense like fruits and vegetables, unhealthy foods are usually processed, containing high-fat, sugar, salt, and refined carbohydrates. "We had not yet won the war against undernutrition-related health problems, but now we are additionally burdened by those coming from overnutrition or obesity, and resembling the developed nations in that sense," Vasudevan, Senior Scientist and Head of the Department of Foods & Nutrition Research,

MDRF, told PTI. The findings suggest trends of an "epidemiological and nutrition transition" of India, Vasudevan said. "While the developed countries might be economically equipped to deal with obesity and related healthcare burden, India is not and therefore, we are struggling," she said. The Lancet study looked at body mass index (BMI) to understand how obesity and underweight have changed worldwide from 1990 to 2022. It analysed the weights and heights of over 220 million peo-

ple aged five years or older, from across more than 190 countries. The findings also highlighted a major shift in lifestyle over the past decades, including lack of exercise and healthy food, said Pradeepa. The study found that the adult obesity rate in India increased from 1.2 per cent in 1990 to 9.8 per cent in 2022 for women, while for men, it rose from 0.5 per cent to 5.4 per cent. Pradeepa attributed the spike in obesity rate to a combination of biological and social factors.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

A spot of good news

India's leopard population surges despite facing challenges from humans and Nature

Amid rising environmental and human-animal conflict challenges, India's leopard population has recorded an increase to reach the enviable count of 13,874. This rise underscores the resilience of these magnificent creatures and the success of conservation efforts in our country. Leopards in India inhabit diverse landscapes, from dense forests to even urban areas. However, this proximity to human settlements often leads to conflict as leopards venture into villages in search of food or territory, resulting in attacks on livestock and occasionally on humans. Such encounters pose a significant threat to both leopard populations and human communities. Climate change exacerbates these challenges by altering natural habitats and prey availability. Besides, forest fragmentation, loss of biodiversity and other changes contribute to the stress on leopard populations. Besides, poaching is a lucrative business and many influential people engage in it by employing locals while themselves remaining anonymous; they must be identified and brought to book. Despite these adversities, the surge in India's leopard population can be attributed to various factors, including conservation initiatives and stricter wildlife protection laws.



The Government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been actively involved in habitat preservation, anti-poaching efforts and raising awareness among local communities about leopard conservation. Techniques such as camera trapping and satellite tracking provide valuable insights into leopard behaviour, habitat usage and population dynamics, aiding conservation strategies. Community-based conservation approaches have shown promising results. Engaging local communities in conservation efforts fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility in them. To ensure the continued growth of leopard populations, there is a need for concerted Government efforts. Though the rise in leopard population is welcome, it cannot be at the cost of human lives. Awareness campaigns must be launched in leopard-inhabited areas about their behaviour, conservation importance and conflict prevention strategies. Low-cost innovative ways can be employed so that human lives are not lost: In Sundarbans, for example, they wear masks at the back of their heads to dodge the Royal Bengal Tigers. Then there is an immediate need to strengthen habitat conservation efforts, including reforestation, establishment of wildlife corridors and curbing human encroachment into natural habitats. There is also a need to dispel the misconceptions that rural communities are hostile towards animals; they have been living with wild animals for centuries. Law enforcement agencies must rigorously enforce wildlife protection laws to combat poaching, illegal wildlife trade and habitat destruction. Collaborating with international organisations and neighbouring countries to address transboundary conservation issues will also help. We need a new wildlife policy that takes into account the prevailing conditions and balances human-animal interests.

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PICTALK



Theyyam artistes perform at Chala Kadankottu Makkam Bhagavathi temple, in Kannur

PTI

Why do Indians do better abroad than in India?

The root cause of this paradox can be attributed to the lamentable state of public education in the country

Regarding global achievements, Indians have left an indelible mark across diverse fields, from technology and entrepreneurship to academia and healthcare. Yet, an intriguing paradox persists – why do Indians often find unparalleled success on foreign lands but encounter unique challenges within their homeland? This thought-provoking question demands immediate attention and the exploration of the multifaceted challenges. Why do Indian minds shine bright internationally, but systemic deficiencies mar the domestic educational landscape? Well, there lies a critical anomaly – the failure to replicate this success on home soil is primarily due to the state of public education. The EW story “Why Indians Succeed Everywhere Except in India” adeptly dissects the paradox of Indian success on the global stage against a backdrop of domestic struggles, attributing this paradox to the unfortunate state of public education, which is accurate.

Education and Governance: Thought leaders underscore the symbiotic relationship



between the quality of education and the overarching progress of the nation. Recognizing education as a catalyst for effective governance and economic prosperity, it is crucial to position education at the forefront of national development strategies. **The Crisis in Primary and Secondary Education** One cannot help but ponder the intricacies of the connection between education and our nation's destiny. If education is the bedrock upon which a society is built, then what does the current state of our primary and secondary say about the trajectory of the world's largest democracy? The ASER surveys unveil a stark truth – a significant portion of our youth lacks even the basic skills expected at their grade level.

It's not just about rote learning or lack of infrastructure; it's a systemic failure that threatens the very foundation of our future. Yet, as we traverse the proposed solutions and underlying assumptions, a more discerning response is required to navigate the intricacies with utmost scrutiny. **Higher Education: A Crisis of Quality** You throw that graduation cap in the air, but does it open doors to a world of opportunities? India is tackling the woes of higher education – the mismatch between degrees and employability. What's the deal with most engineering, arts, science, and commerce graduates being deemed unemployable? It's time to question the very essence of what higher education institutions are delivering and whether they're preparing graduates for the dynamic job market. The portrayal of India's higher education system is a sad reflection of the systemic challenges faced by graduates and the subsequent migration of talent abroad. **The Brain Drain Dilemma:** While we proudly export our talent to foreign shores, the

numbers reveal a disconcerting truth – a drain on our intellectual capital that could have been harnessed for national growth. Is it a necessary sacrifice or a symptom of deeper issues within our educational framework? A thought-provoking analysis probes the migration patterns of Indian graduates and school leavers to foreign shores, challenging the conventional narrative of brain drain. Balancing the discourse on brain drain by acknowledging the positive impact of the diaspora would bring a more nuanced perspective to the debate. **A Vision for Change: A Unified Call to Action** The portrayal of the emigration of skilled individuals as a loss for India is correct. While the emigration of skilled individuals is sometimes portrayed as a positive development, the reality is that India loses out on valuable talent. India needs a detailed program to reverse this trend, attract exceptional scientists and researchers back home, and invest more in R&D. *(The writer is an educator; views are personal)*



RADHIKA SHRIVASTAVA

Indian diplomacy: Leveraging soft power



SANTOSH MATHEW

India is strategically positioning itself on the global stage, leveraging soft power elements to deepen diplomatic ties and foster regional stability

In today's geopolitical landscape, the traditional metrics of national power are transforming. Policymakers and diplomats are increasingly recognizing the importance of soft power elements in shaping international relations, shifting their focus from sheer military might to cultural influence and moral authority. India, in particular, has adeptly utilized its cultural assets to assert itself on the global stage. Religion plays a crucial role in shaping politics. As Niall Ferguson has said, “Faith, then, is perhaps as important a component of power as material resources... Faith cannot move mountains. But it can move people.” A recent exemplification of India's strategic cultural diplomacy was witnessed in the inauguration of the first Hindu temple in the UAE, presided over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It marked a significant milestone in bilateral relations between the two countries. With the inauguration ceremony of the Bocharanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan (BAPS) Mandir, India is set to deepen bilateral ties with the UAE while also having proactive engagement within the region. This event demonstrates a diplomatic approach that, while rooted in faith, culture, and religion, aims to foster cooperation across a spectrum of critical areas, including security, energy, maritime affairs, and infrastructure. The discussions held during the visit focused on enhancing cooperation in various fields, including trade, investment, and security. This isn't the only instance that indicates the changing diplomacy of India with the Gulf. In a triumph for India's diplomatic endeavours, Qatar released eight Indian nationals who had been detained since 2022. The release came after extensive diplomatic efforts by the Indian government, highlighting the effectiveness of India's diplomatic channels in securing the freedom of its citizens abroad. Through meticulous negotiation and strategic dialogue, our government has once again proven its dedication to protecting the interests of



every Indian, no matter where they may be in the world. India's historical and close relations with Qatar were also reiterated by Prime Minister Modi ahead of his visit to Doha. The strong bonds of diplomatic engagement have aided in fostering mutually beneficial partnerships and enhancing regional stability. These diplomacy initiatives by Narendra Modi are not only events to establish closer ties with the Gulf leaders but also strategic plans to accelerate the economic growth of India. India, with long-term economic cooperation with the Middle East, can leverage the Gulf's capital potential while aiding them with defence cooperation. India's cultural diplomacy extends beyond the realm of Hinduism, as evidenced by the Buddhist Circuit, aimed at revitalizing Buddhist heritage sites and boosting tourism in the region. This pilgrimage circuit, introduced under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, covers the four major sacred places according to Buddhist traditions, namely Bodhi Gaya, Sarnath, Kushinagar, and Lumbini. It is one of India's first transnational tourist circuits. Beginning from the place of birth of Buddha, Lumbini in Nepal, it serves as an initiative of Buddhist Diplomacy (strengthening a nation's soft

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI HAS STRATEGICALLY LEVERAGED BUDDHIST HERITAGE AS CULTURAL ASSETS TO STRENGTHEN TIES WITH ASIAN COUNTRIES

power with the exchanges of Buddhist ideas, sacred objects and trading relations). Invoking the cultural linkages with the region and the religion of Buddhism, India seeks to overcome the territorial tensions between the two nations by fostering a positive people-to-people tie across the border. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has strategically leveraged Buddhist heritage as cultural assets to strengthen ties with Asian countries. During the Global Buddhist Summit in April 2023, Modi said that the challenges faced by the modern world can be solved by employing the teachings of Buddha. Through his Act East Policy, India has upgraded its strategic relationship with the major countries in the Asia-Pacific while using Buddhism as the cultural link between India and the Southeast Asian countries. Exploring its historical ties to Buddhism, India is not only preserving its cultural legacy but also strengthening its soft power and attracting visitors from around the world. Through these initiatives, India can bolster its image as a flag-bearer of ancient civilizations and traditions. Moreover, ventures like these also contribute towards economic development through tourism. India is trying to create a greater affinity towards Asian coun-

tries while projecting itself as a model of religious tolerance, pluralism and a responsible global nation. Speaking of being a responsible global stakeholder, take for instance our commitment to humanitarian assistance. The recent incident in which the Indian Navy in swift response to the Houthi strike on the merchant ship in the Gulf of Aden, sent the missile destroyer INS Vishakhapatnam shows India's role as a responsible maritime player. Indian diplomacy extends beyond the realm of culture, encompassing strategic engagements and humanitarian efforts. By providing timely humanitarian assistance, India reaffirms its commitment to upholding peace and stability during crises in the international arena. In the realm of diplomacy, every gesture and every interaction holds the power to shape bilateral relations and forge alliances. India's assertive stance in leveraging cultural and public diplomacy reflects its growing influence and engagement on the global stage. Through proactive engagement and strategic partnerships, India continues to strengthen its position as a key player in international affairs, contributing to regional stability and global cooperation. *(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POLITICAL POACHING

Sir — The editorial, ‘Himachal crisis’ (29-2-24) carries the sentiments of everyone. Of course, this is not the first time the country has witnessed such shabby scenes of one party poaching the elected representatives and the elected representatives belying the mandate of the voters to satisfy their thirst for power and purse. These repeated happenings are nothing but a mockery of democracy. Legislative bodies being converted into a mere market to buy and sell lawmakers project a very shabby image of the democracy being practised in the country. The party engaged in poaching and those who offer themselves to be sold for power or purse also should have some respect for the mandate of the people. If this trend continues the country is likely to fall into the hands of dictators yielding to the concept of ‘Might is Right’ and the Might will be decided by Money power. It is time to bring legislation to stop elected representatives from crossing the floor just like that for some benefit or the other. If they want to shift their loyalty they should resign their post and contest again to get re-elected. Similarly, the role of money in the election process should also be curtailed to keep democracy alive. Voters should be educated to boycott both the poachers as well as the prey. Leaders speaking about the fight against corruption are being laughed at as nothing else could be more blatant corruption than poaching and yielding. India needs electoral reforms to address these basic issues.

AG Rajmohan | Anantapur

TAMIL NADU'S CONTROVERSIAL AD

Sir — It is a matter of shame and eyebrow-raising to see the Tamil Nadu Government display an advertisement for the new Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) spaceport in Kulasekarapattinam featuring a rocket with the flag of China. When the mat-

Mission Gaganyaan



PM Modi has announced the selection of four astronauts for the Gaganyaan mission, marking a historic moment as they will be the first Indians to travel to space in an indigenous space vehicle. These astronauts were chosen and selected for the mission four years ago and have undergone extensive training in Russia. Currently, the training programme is underway at the ISRO training centre in India. Before the astronauts set foot in the crew capsule, a humanoid named Vyommitra will be launched on Gaganyaan to ensure safety.

The crew members will be on a three-day mission, reaching a 400km orbit. This achievement serves as an inspiration and aspiration for all 140 crores Indians. The mission not only aims to send four astronauts into space but also to instil pride in every Indian. It represents India's capabilities in human spaceflight, technological development, and scientific advancement, and lays the groundwork for future missions. As Indians, we are expecting further scientific developments in the days to come.

Preetiyukta Mohakud | Bhubaneswar

ter turned controversial the ruling party and its bigwigs came out with excuses and explanations. Is it not the responsibility of the government and its concerned department that came out with this advertisement to scrutinise it before publishing it? The Prime Minister on a visit to this region of the state has lambasted that the ruling party has insulted Indian scientists and the space sector, giving impetus to the BJP to lampoon the state government.

M Pradyu | Kannur

THE SUCCESS OF SAGAR MANTHAN

Sir — The tactfulness of our Indian Security agencies is so impressive in terms of their activeness for their stringent actions, especially for seizing the Nacro products from the Arabian Sea. This time, it was codenamed as ‘Sagarmathan-1’. It is a point of con-

cern as well as appreciation on both nodes. Appreciation because, our Navy is actively vigilant in addressing these concerns, at the same time concerning because India is pumped with such contraband of 3,132 kg which costs around Rs. 2000 crores, as per international market valuation, which is huge and appreciable. We must cherish the alertness of the trio the Gujrat Police, NCB and the Indian Navy. But this very incident raised eyebrows that still in the eye of Narco Dealers and smugglers, the route of the Arabian Sea is fragile and easy to breach. We must not forget the incident of 26/11. Strengthening the eastern and western coast of India is the utmost responsibility of our Naval forces.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

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FIRST COLUMN

CHERISH THE INSTRUCTIONS OF GOD

The verses of the Bhagavad Gita offer profound insights into life's purpose



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Let me start with verse # 3.8 of the Bhagavad Gita, which is, "You should always do your duty. Because action is superior to inaction. Maintenance of the body will also not be possible through inaction." We all know what our duties are according to time, place and circumstances. We also know that neglecting our duties impacts our maintenance. For example, a student does not pay attention to his studies. What happens subsequently? He finds it hard to maintain himself. For whose benefit was this verse spoken? Let me take another verse, which is very famous. I am referring to verse #2.47, which goes like this, "You have a right only in action, not ever in predetermining fruits. You should not speculate about the fruit of action; your attachment to inaction also should not be there." For whose benefit was this verse spoken? Do we have any other right except to do our duties? And we must not neglect to do them. As regards the results of our actions, the right to decide them has been kept by God with Himself. The third verse chosen by me is very telling, in which Lord Krishna promises, "People who worship Me with undivided attention, meditating on Me, for these regular practitioners of yoga, I help in getting what one does not have and provide security of what one has." Verse after verse the Lord is cajoling us to do what will fulfil all our desires, which are according to dharma. God couldn't be a party to anything against dharma. Could He? The fourth verse in this connection is: "Where there is yogeshwara Shri Krishna and where there is Arjuna (meaning us), there will be opulence, victory, wealth and morality." (18.78) What are our desires generally? That we should succeed in our endeavours. We would if we were aiming for what is according to morality, i.e. dharma. The same is about



wealth. Don't we need enough resources for our maintenance? Not only wealth, there will be 'saubhagya' (good fortune). Who benefits from all these? We do; God doesn't because He is complete in all respects. (3.22) The next verse is about gaining peace and a perfect destination. Lord Krishna instructs, 'In all respects, take My shelter only. By My mercy, you will achieve supreme peace and the eternal abode.' What is it that we lack after gaining material needs, comforts, etc.? It is peace, which is what God is promising. Not only that, God is also assuring eternal abode, which is free from the defects of this material world. How nice it will be to not be subjected to repeated birth and death? God is prepared to grant this also. God is always wanting to give. He has so much to give if we become deserving. Isn't that fair? How do we become deserving? Lord Krishna describes, 'Develop My consciousness; become My devotee; make sacrifices for Me; and offer obeisance to Me.' (18.65) One may feel that all these activities relate to God. Yes, they do but do they benefit Him? No, far from it; they only purify our existence. And God had to set some conditions to qualify for His special favour. How else was He to reward anyone? Just focus on how easy they are to do. I will take up one more verse, which is, 'Having My consciousness, you will cross all impediments by My grace.' (18.58) This is quite an amazing offer from God. Aren't we all struggling with one problem or another throughout our lives? We do, but our ego comes in the way. We are not prepared to accept that somebody can be superior to us and to such an extent that we have to take His shelter and His alone. (18.66) We would rather suffer but won't do as instructed by God. Do we realise that our acts will benefit the world if we obey God's instructions? We will become better persons by following dharma – the rules for proper behaviour. We will fit in the System created by God, which is required for the creation to exist eternally. (The writer is a spiritual teacher, views are personal)

Delhi's floral splendour: A tale of tulips and traditions

The Delhi Tulip Festival stands as a testament to resilience, beauty and the enduring spirit of life's eternal dance

Nestled within the heart of New Delhi's diplomatic enclave of Chanakypuri, Shanti Path emerges as a mesmerizing canvas painted with vibrant hues, adorned by a tapestry of tulips in an array of colors - red, white, pink, yellow, and purple. The 'Delhi Tulip Festival', now in its second consecutive year, came to a close on February 21, 2024, having commenced on February 10. Visitors, drawn from distant lands, stood in awe at the spectacle of nature's grandeur, echoing the immortal verses of poets like P. B. Shelley and John Keats. As the festival unfolded, the city's roundabouts and parks, maintained by the New Delhi Municipal Council and the Delhi Development Authority,



RAJDEEP PATHAK

bloomed with the arrival of Spring, welcoming all with renewed grandeur. But what is the story behind these tulips? Originating centuries ago in the ancient lands of Persia, tulips held significance as symbols of love and prosperity. Their journey along the silk routes carried tales of exotic lands and distant horizons, captivating hearts from Istanbul to Amsterdam. It was

in the fields of the Netherlands during the Dutch Golden Age that tulips blossomed into a cultural icon. Despite uncertainty surrounding its introduction to Western Europe, the efforts of individuals like Botanist Carolus Clusius in the late 16th century popularized tulips, leading to the famous 'tulip mania' of the 17th century. By the 19th and 20th centuries, tulip cultivation flourished in the Netherlands, solidifying its position as the world's leading producer. The association between tulips and the Netherlands was further immortalized with the iconic song 'Tulips from Amsterdam' in the 1950s. Intriguingly, it was through diplomatic channels that tulips found their way into the gardens of New Delhi.



Indo-Dutch relations provided fertile ground for this botanical ambassador to take root, inspired by festivals like the 'Amsterdam Tulip Festival' and Srinagar's Tulip Garden. Imported from the Netherlands, these tulips have been lovingly nurtured by skilled gardeners trained by the NDMC's horticulture department.

As the sun casts its golden rays upon the city, tulips burst into bloom, transforming every corner into a canvas of nature's masterpiece. From the picturesque avenues of Shanti Path to the vibrant Tulip Festival Garden, each location becomes a testament to the enduring cycle of life and beauty. Engaging citizens through various competitions

and events, the festival fosters a deeper connection to nature's rhythms and the bonds of community. Sh. Amit Yadav, the NDMC Chairman, revealed that seven types of tulips were planted, with three lakh bulbs sourced from the Netherlands and an additional 40,000 bulbs donated by the Dutch Embassy. From early to late bloomers, each tulip whispers tales of resilience and renewal. This festival not only celebrates beauty but also underscores the importance of stewarding and protecting nature for future generations. The Delhi Tulip Festival epitomizes the fusion of urban elegance and ecological consciousness, enchanting visitors and serving as a beacon for sustainable tourism. Beyond

its aesthetic charm, it stands as a testament to the power of beauty and art in fostering global connections and enhancing a city's allure. As visitors from around the world gather to admire the kaleidoscopic beauty of tulips, the festival becomes a celebration of global heritage, transcending cultural barriers and fostering understanding and appreciation among people of diverse backgrounds. In more ways than one, the festival symbolises the resilience and endurance of nature, standing tall amidst the chaos of urban life. As the curtains draw to a close on the Tulip Festival, the flowers continue to adorn the cityscape with their vibrant hues. Amidst the bustling rhythm of urban life, the tulip

stands as a silent sentinel of hope, its petals a testament to the enduring spirit of life's eternal dance. Today, the tulip serves as a symbol of resilience and endurance, having traversed oceans and centuries to become a cherished emblem of beauty worldwide. While the curtains have been drawn on the Tulip Festival, the flowers continue to stand tall, adorning the cityscape with their vibrant hues. This festival is more than just a local event; it's a part of global heritage, a celebration where visitors from around the world gather to admire the kaleidoscopic beauty of colors spanning far and wide. (The writer is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Sansthan, views are personal)



MSP methodology and farmer demands



UTTAM GUPTA

Questions arise about the rationale and implications of adopting Dr Swaminathan's proposed methodology for MSP calculation



Co-terminus with the legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP) for all crops, another demand raised by the farmers relates to how the MSP is fixed. They want it to be calculated based on the recommendations of the National Commission on Farmers (NCF) under Dr MS Swaminathan (2006). All along, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) - a statutory body under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare - has been setting MSP at the level of the so-called comprehensive cost or C2 cost. C2 is arrived at by adding three components viz. A2 covers all paid-out expenses, both in cash and in kind, incurred by farmers on seeds, fertilizers, chemicals, hired labour, fuel and irrigation; FL is the imputed value of unpaid family labour; and rental value of owned land and imputed cost that would be incurred on owned fixed capital assets (OFCA), call it to return on assets or RoA. Put simply, MSP is equal to A2 + FL + RoA. It takes care of all the costs incurred by the farmer for growing the crop - both paid out and own - besides including an element of profit i.e. RoA. That is why it is banded as 'comprehensive'. The formula was used for determining MSP till FY 2017-18. The Government normally accepts recommendations made by CACP. In its fifth report submitted in October 2006, the NCF recommended that MSP should be "at least 50 per cent more than the weighted average cost of production". The recommendation did not specifically mention what 'measure of costs' would be used. However, Dr Swaminathan clarified: "When we recommended 50 per cent over costs, we meant complete costs called C2, which includes all assumed costs". Can the clarification given by him many years after the report was finalized and submitted be taken to mean that the Commission had meant it that way? A recommendation emerges from deliberations and is based on consensus among



IN ITS FIFTH REPORT SUBMITTED IN OCTOBER 2006, THE NCF RECOMMENDED THAT MSP SHOULD BE 'AT LEAST 50 PER CENT MORE THAN THE WEIGHTED AVERAGE COST OF PRODUCTION.' THE RECOMMENDATION DID NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTION WHAT 'MEASURE OF COSTS' WOULD BE USED

members. This also applies to a clarification given on an important aspect of the recommendation. That would not have been possible as you can't expect Dr Swaminathan to go back to other members and check. The big question is: Is giving the farmer at least 50 per cent more than the 'C2' costs logical? The purported rationale for giving 50 per cent extra is that she should get a handsome profit after covering all paid-out costs. Profit as it is understood in business parlance is essentially meant to give a return to the owner for her invested capital. In the case of a farmer, her investment in crop growing business is by way of 'land' and 'OFCA' besides her labour. But, remuneration/return for all these is already incorporated under C2. To give a further sweetener (read: 50 per cent profit) over and above these would be illogical. Let us understand this with the help of an example. In the case of paddy, the all-India weighted average A2 cost for the 2017-18 Kharif season, as estimated by the CACP, was Rs 840 per quintal; A2+FL cost: Rs 1,117 per quintal and C2 costs: Rs 1,484 per quintal. In the total cost of Rs 1,484 per quintal, the amount going towards the farmer's income was Rs 644 per quintal (1484-840). Of this, Rs 277 per quintal (1117-840) was for FL and Rs 367 per quintal (1484-1117) for RoA. If one were to go by NCF recommendation as clarified by Dr Swaminathan, the farmer would have to be given Rs 742 per quintal (0.5x1,484) in addition to an income of Rs 644 per quintal already built into C2 thus taking the total to Rs 1386 for each quintal of paddy. This translates to 93 percent of C2 costs. Taken as a proportion of the revised MSP of Rs 2226 per quintal, this will be 62

per cent. Where does one get such a fantastic return? This is happening because the farmer is being remunerated twice over first under C2 and then a further profit of 50 percent. Furthermore, the way profit is calculated '50 per cent of C2; you end up giving a 'return on return': RoA component under C2 being Rs 367 per quintal, she gets a fortuitous gain of Rs 183.5 (0.5x367). Unequivocally, there is a flaw in the above method. Either, the government should continue with the extant method of using C2 for fixing MSP. On the other hand, if it wants to go for 50 per cent profit, then this should be applied only to the paid-out costs namely A2. In other words, MSP should be set at A2+FL plus 50 per cent of A2. On this basis, in the above example, the MSP would be Rs 1537 per quintal (1117+0.5x840). What did the Modi - government do? In its poll manifesto for 2014, the BJP had promised to implement NCF recommendations on MSP. The announcement in this regard was made by the then Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in his Budget speech for FY 2018-19. Later, while replying to a debate in Parliament, Jaitley clarified that 'the production cost would be taken as actual paid A2 plus FL'. In other words, it decided to set MSP at A2+FL plus 50 per cent of A2+FL; it comes to Rs 1675 per quintal (1117x1.5). The formula adopted by the incumbent government also suffers from a flaw to the extent that 'it also adds return on the imputed cost of family labor' which is unjustified. Have received wage/income for the work done on the field, how can a farmer also earn a profit on it? In the above example, this fortuitous amount is Rs 138 per quintal (277x0.5).

Moreover, the very approach of the Dr Swaminathan committee of arriving at a profit by taking a percentage of the cost is susceptible to sharp increases in payments to farmers. With every rupee increase in the cost, farmers' profit will increase by 0.5 rupees. At present, most of the agricultural inputs are subsidized. On fertilizers, there is a massive subsidy (urea is sold at about 1/10th of its cost). If the subsidy is slashed leading to a steep rise in the cost of fertilizers, the formula will give an unwarranted bonanza to the farmers by a corresponding increase in profit. At a fundamental level, profit is meant to reward an entity for the capital invested in any enterprise. This is precisely what was being done before the FY 2018-19. That formula (read: C2 for fixing the MSP) ought to have been continued. The MSP setting exercise suffers from another aberration. The cost of producing a crop varies from place to place depending on the soil conditions, weather, irrigation, price of inputs and so on. However, to arrive at MSP, the CACP takes the 'weighted average' (WA) cost of production. When the price determined in this manner is given to all farmers, those producing at a higher cost stand to lose whereas others with lower cost make a fortuitous gain. Today, the government is trapped in the vicious cycle of having to procure farmers' produce at ever-increasing MSP, now under pressure to pick up 'all of it' at MSP which can denude the exchequer. This, in turn, is because it is trying to substitute the role of the market. It should disentangle from this trap and focus on agri-market reforms which alone can help farmers get a good price. (The writer is a policy analyst, views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Gold jumps Rs 350; silver rallies Rs 400

Gold prices jumped Rs 350 to Rs 63,320 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid strong trends in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal closed at Rs 62,970 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver also rallied Rs 400 to Rs 74,500 per kg, while it settled at Rs 74,100 per kg in the previous close. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 63,320 per 10 grams, up by Rs 350, taking bullish cues in the overseas market," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,045 per ounce, up by USD 11 from the previous close. Following the release of the Personal Consumption Expenditure (PCE) price index data, which indicated signs of slowing inflation in the US and raised expectations of a monetary policy rate cut by the Federal Reserve later this year, Gandhi said.



GST mop-up grows 12.5% to over Rs 1.68 lakh cr

The GST collection in February grew 12.5 per cent to over Rs 1.68 lakh crore, buoyed by domestic transactions, the finance ministry said on Friday. The total gross GST collection for the current fiscal (April 2023-February 2024) stands at Rs 18.40 lakh crore, 11.7 per cent higher than the mopup for the same period last fiscal. The average monthly gross collection for the current fiscal stood at Rs 1.67 lakh crore, exceeding Rs 1.5 lakh crore in the last fiscal. "Gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue collected for February 2024 is Rs 1,68,337 crore, marking a robust 12.5 per cent increase compared to that in the same month in 2023," the ministry said in a statement. This growth was driven by a 13.9 per cent rise in GST from domestic transactions and an 8.5 per cent increase in GST from import of goods.



Maruti's total sales rise 15% to 1,97,471 units

Maruti Suzuki India on Friday said it has reported a 15 per cent year-on-year increase in total wholesales at 1,97,471 units in February. The company had dispatched a total of 1,72,321 units in the same month last year, Maruti Suzuki India Ltd (MSIL) said in a statement. The total domestic passenger vehicle sales grew 9 per cent at 1,60,271 units as against 147,467 units in the month a year ago, it added. Sales of mini segment cars, comprising Alto and S-Presso, declined to 14,782 units as against 21,875 units in February 2023. Sales of compact cars, including Baleno, Celerio, Dzire, Ignis, Swift, Tour S, and WagonR, also declined by 10 per cent to 71,627 units as compared to 79,898 units in the year-ago month. Utility vehicles, including Brezza, Ertiga, Grand Vitara, and XL6, recorded sales of 61,234 units last month, growing 82 per cent.



GDP growth in FY24 likely to be within striking distance of 8%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The GDP growth for the current financial year could be within striking distance of 8 per cent, a study by the State Bank of India (SBI) said on Friday, a day after India posted an 8.4 per cent growth in the December quarter, and revised upwards the estimates for the preceding two quarters. "The third quarter GDP numbers jolted the psyche and cognitive framework of most in markets, while sweeping some by a pleasant surprise. Clearly, right policy prisms and perspectives can trump irrational expectations bordering fault lines," SBI said in its research report 'Ecowrap'. It noted that defying all estimates, the economy grew 8.4 per cent in the third quarter of 2023-24 after exhibiting more than 8 per cent growth in the preceding two quarters. The buoyancy in indirect tax mop-up (32 per cent year-on-year growth), gap between



"The third quarter GDP numbers jolted the psyche and cognitive framework of most in markets, while sweeping some by a pleasant surprise. Clearly, right policy prisms and perspectives can trump irrational expectations bordering fault lines," SBI said in its research report 'Ecowrap'

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross Value Added (GVA) growth widened.

"For fiscal 2023-24 GDP growth is expected to increase 7.6 per cent and GVA growth

by 6.9 per cent... we estimate fourth quarter GDP growth at 5.9 per cent, which we believe is an understatement. Thus it is most likely that FY24 GDP growth could be within striking distance of 8 per cent," the SBI study said. The National Statistical Office (NSO) has revised GDP estimates for the first and second quarters of this fiscal to 8.2 and 8.1 per cent from 7.8 per cent and 7.6 per cent, respectively. With the revisions, the GDP growth during April-December works out to be 8.2 per cent. The SBI report further said with the government's efforts to ensure quality of life for all citizens and stopping leakage of benefits through direct benefit transfer, for the first time the per capita GDP at current prices crossed Rs 2 lakh mark in 2023-24. In constant prices, too, per capita GDP has increased to Rs 1.24 lakh in the current fiscal.



LIC presents Rs 2,441 cr dividend to govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) on Friday paid a dividend of Rs 2,441 crore to the government. "Smt @nsitharaman receives a dividend cheque of Rs 2,441.44 crore from Shri Siddhartha Mohanty, Chairman - Life Insurance Corporation of India (@LICIndiaForever)," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Office said in a post on X. The dividend cheque was handed over to the finance minister in presence of Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi.

Coal-producing states earned Rs 1.52 lakh cr in last 9 yrs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Coal-producing states earned a revenue of Rs 1.52 lakh crore in the last nine years from royalty, District Mineral Foundation (DMF) and National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET). State-wise and year-wise data indicate that the coal mining sector is a very significant contributor to the revenue of states including Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh, the Coal Ministry said in a statement. "During 2014-2023, total revenue from royalty, DMF & NMET of all coal-producing states through coal mining sector is Rs 1,52,696 crore," the ministry said. The compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of the revenue from coal mining during 2014-2023 was 13.80 per cent, it said. Coal mining sector has proved to be a big booster for economic growth of the states that produce fossil fuel.



State governments are entitled to receive 14 per cent of royalty on the sale price of coal and 30 per cent of the royalty as contribution towards the proposed district mineral foundations (DMFs)-- which is meant to support project-affected people---and 2 per cent of NMET from dry-fuel produced by the coal companies and also the private sector. In case of captive, commercial mines states are also entitled to receive the revenue share offered by the auction holder in a transparent bidding process. Apart from this, state

"During 2014-2023, total revenue from royalty, DMF & NMET of all coal-producing states through coal mining sector is Rs 1,52,696 crore," the ministry said.

governments also benefit from increased employment, land compensation, increased investment in allied infrastructure like railways, road and several other economic benefits.

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING LAW FIU imposes Rs 5.49 cr fine on Paytm Payments Bank



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) has imposed a Rs 5.49 crore penalty on Paytm Payments Bank for violating anti-money laundering rules, the Finance Ministry said on Friday. FIU-IND initiated a review of Paytm Payments Bank on receipt of specific information from law enforcement agencies in respect of few entities and their network of businesses engaged in a number of illegal acts, including organising and facilitating online gambling. The money generated from these illegal operations, i.e. proceeds of crime were routed and channelled through bank accounts maintained by

these entities with the Paytm Payments Bank Ltd, the ministry said. "The Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND),... has imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 5.49 crore on Paytm Payments Bank Ltd with reference to the violations of its obligations under the PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act)," the ministry said. The FIU passed its order imposing the penalty on February 15. The FIU action follows RBI's January 31 directive barring Paytm Payments Bank from accepting fresh deposits or credits in the accounts of its customers from February 29. The date was later extended to March 15.

Indian logistics market to grow at 8.8% annually

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian freight and logistics market is estimated to grow at 8.8 per cent annually to USD 484.43 billion by 2029 from USD 317.26 billion in 2024 due to technological advancement, as per a report released at logistic fair LogiMAT India. LogiMAT India 2024, the satellite show of Europe's biggest intralogistics exhibition LogiMAT Stuttgart, is organised by Messe Stuttgart India Pvt Ltd on February 28-March 1 at India Expo Mart. According to a statement, the integration of cutting-edge technologies and advancements in intralogistics, automation, warehousing, and transportation management heralds a transformative era for the logistics sector in India. Indian freight and logistics market is poised for remarkable growth. LogiMAT India 2024 projections indicate a surge in market size to USD 317.26 billion by 2024, with a projected CAGR of 8.83 per cent, catapulting it to USD 484.43 billion by 2029. This surge not only signifies robust economic expansion but also holds the promise of sub-



LogiMAT India 2024, the satellite show of Europe's biggest intralogistics exhibition LogiMAT Stuttgart, is organised by Messe Stuttgart India Pvt Ltd on February 28-March 1 at India Expo Mart.

stantial job creation and enhanced business scalability, it stated. Together, these developments are set to redefine the logistics landscape, ushering in a new era of efficiency and innovation. Sachin Patil, MD and CEO of Messe Stuttgart said the transformative potential of new technologies and innovations show-

cased at LogiMAT India is immense. "We envision these advancements to not only attract substantial investments to India's logistics sector, but also to create a significant number of jobs, driving economic growth and prosperity," he added. Furthermore, these technologies have the potential to scale logistics businesses to unprecedented levels, enabling them to optimise operations, enhance customer service, and achieve greater profitability, the statement said. By leveraging robotics, automation, AI, and other cutting-edge solutions, logistics companies can streamline processes, reduce costs, and stay ahead of the competition.

'Lift export ban on de-oiled rice bran'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Edible oil industry body SEA on Friday demanded the government to lift the export ban on De-oiled Rice Bran (DORB), saying the curb has not brought down milk prices but only affected processors and exporters. The government imposed a ban on the export of DORB in July 2023 for four months and later extended it till March 31 this year to address inflation in milk prices. DORB, extracted from rice bran, is used in the production of animal nutrition products catering to cattle, poultry, swine and other industries. Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA), in

representation to Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries Minister Parshottam Rupala, requested the government to lift the export ban on DORB. "This export restriction on DORB was imposed since July 2023 to ease the milk prices, however, we have seen almost no reduction in milk prices across the country since this ban. This is because the cost component of DORB in milk price is very nominal," the SEA representation said. "We are still of the view that continuing this ban will not support the reduction in milk prices but will continue to negatively impact the Rice Bran processors and DORB exporters," it added.



Forex reserves jump by US\$ 2.975 bn to US\$ 619 bn

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India's forex reserves jumped by USD 2.975 billion to US\$ 619.072 billion for the week ended February 23, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had dropped by US\$ 1.132 billion to US\$ 616.097 billion. For the week ending February 23, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by US\$ 2.405 billion to US\$ 548.188 billion. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves increased by US\$ 472 million to USD 47.848 088 billion during the week, the RBI said.

Google makes efforts to weed out misinformation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of general elections, Google on Friday announced a collaboration with fact checkers in India for early detection of online misinformation, including deepfakes, and will create a common repository that news publishers can use through the electioneering. In a blog post, Google said as part of its commitment to enable the news ecosystem to combat misinformation, it will support Shakti, India Election Fact-Checking Collective, a consortium of news publishers and fact checkers in India, working together to aid the early detection of online misinformation, including deepfakes. "Starting today until the conclusion of the General Elections in India, the project will focus on connecting independent fact checkers and Indian language publishers,



giving them a collaborative platform to share fact checks, research resources and alerts on elections-related viral misinformation and deepfakes, saving crucial time," it said. Fact-checks in multiple Indian languages and formats, including videos, will be shared and amplified via partnering news publishers, ensuring they reach a wider set of language

users and diverse audiences across the country. Google working with the fact checkers will create a common repository that news publishers can use to tackle the challenges of misinformation at scale. India goes to polls in April/May to elect a new government. Shakti, a pan-India network, will be driven by DataLEADS,

in collaboration with the Misinformation Combat Alliance, The Quint, VishvasNews, Boom, Factly, and Newschecker, with support from the Google News Initiative. In addition, the project will provide news organisations and fact-checkers essential training in advanced fact-checking methodologies, deepfake detection, and the latest Google tools like the Fact Check Explorer, to streamline verification processes. Google further said that the fact-checking collective will prioritise publishers producing original news in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Bengali, and Marathi. With this launch, the Fact-Checking Collective will continue to onboard new partners and scale the effort to reach most parts of the country. As India prepares for its general elections, Google said

it recognises the essential role of news publishers, journalists, and fact-checkers in helping people access the trustworthy information they need for informed participation. "At Google, we have long supported this work by investing in features, resources and partnerships that can help people better evaluate online information. Continuing our commitment to enable the news ecosystem to combat misinformation, we are supporting Shakti, India Election Fact-Checking Collective." To strengthen fact-checking organisations worldwide, including those in India, Google and YouTube had previously launched the USD 13.2 million Global Fact Check Fund which has helped to enhance the capabilities of local and regional media organisations in producing high-quality, impactful fact-checking content.

Delhi per capita income rises by 22% to Rs 4.61 lakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's per capita income increased by 22 per cent in two years to Rs 4.61 lakh in 2023-24, Finance Minister Atishi said on Friday while projecting a 9.17 per cent economic growth for the current financial year. Tabling the Economic Survey for 2023-24 in the Assembly, the Delhi finance minister said the city's economy has grown at a record pace despite hurdles created by the Centre, LG and officers in the work of the Kejriwal government. Atishi said that the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of Delhi at current prices is likely to reach Rs 11,07,746 crore in 2023-24 with a growth of 9.17 per cent. "The GSDP of Delhi in 2022-23 was Rs 10,14,000 crore. In post-COVID times, our real GSDP grew at 8.76 per cent in 2021-22

and 7.85 per cent in 2022-23, faster than the rest of the country," she said. Delhi's contribution to the national GDP is nearly 4 per cent despite its population being just 1.5 per cent of the total population of the country,

she said. Atishi said that the Delhi government's budget for 2024-25 will be tabled in the Assembly session on March 4. The House extended the ongoing budget session, which began on February 15, till March 8.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
Parachay Raj Engineering Department Office of the Superintending Engineer, P.R. Khammam
e-Procurement Tender Notice
Online tenders are invited for the M/T No. 857/2023-24, Dt. 01-03-2024 from the eligible registered & experienced contractors for laying of Synthetic athletic track at sardar Patel stadium in Khammam of Khammam District sanctioned under DMFT Grant with an estimate cost Rs.600.00 Lakhs. Description of items: EDC, EMD, availability of tender documents, important dates, tender conditions, eligibility of tender and all other details are available from 04-03-2024 onwards on https://tender.telangana.gov.in
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, P.R. Khammam

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
IRRIGATION & CAD DEPARTMENT
IRRIGATION CIRCLE ARMOOR, NIZAMABAD DISTRICT
TENDER NOTICE Dt. 01.03.2024
No.40/2023-24
Tender for the Choutpally Hanmanth Reddy Lift Irrigation Scheme vide Tender Notice No.40/2023-24, Dt.01.03.2024, for an amount of Rs. 838.30 Lakhs. Further details can be seen @ https://tender.telangana.gov.in
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Irrigation Circle, Armoor

Hyderabad



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Saturday
March 2, 2024

'My goal is for motorsport races to arrive in Hyderabad and then spread like wildfire'

An interesting Hyderabad here for you, **The Pioneer** brings our conversation with the founder of INDE Racing and Kankanala Sports Group, Abhishek Reddy Kankanala, sharing his association and love for the city.



SHIKHA DUGGAL

Kankanala Sports Group was thrilled to announce INDE Racing as a new team for the 2024 FIM E-Explorer season, after the news that KSG and FIM E-Explorer have inked an exclusive nine-year collaboration to manage races in India. At the recent FIM e-xplorer World Cup, INDE Racing—India's first-ever FIM-licensed team, having its roots in Hyderabad somewhat—soared to unprecedented heights on the global scene. The founder of INDE Racing and Kankanala Sports Group, Abhishek Reddy Kankanala, a *pakka* Hyderabad, stated that they have always missed a competitive independent team to cheer for, despite the growing interest in motorsports! In an exclusive interview with us for the special weekly column, hoping to innovate, advance sustainability, and foster gender equality in addition to setting new standards for racing in Hyderabad and across the country, everything that the interviewee with Hyderabad roots has to say is heard.

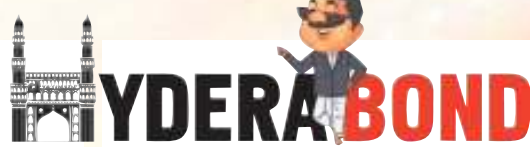
In an interview with us, the spokesperson recalled, "With badminton, volleyball, and handball, what I have been doing over the last few years is to bring some kind of attention to overall sports in Hyderabad and across." Much to your surprise, he actually lost his voice while cheering for the team and yet continues to go on, "Better images of sports viewers should be posted on social media and on television! In Hyderabad, we make sure that the volleyball court has over twenty cameras so that the sport appears seductive. I really do mean it. I am attempting to compete with how European volleyball is seen in my mind. This year, I hope our league will be the most watched worldwide. Thus, nothing

has transpired overnight; Hyderabad's handball leagues were the starting point. Despite not owning a team, I keep in close contact with every player so that I can now provide them with a global platform. This is the moment when motorsports become relevant."

"I couldn't see any motorsports team representing our country until I arrived," he said in great detail. "Although Hero and TVS are manufacturing teams, their registration is not in India. That, in a way, inspired me to think that we ought to be represented globally as well. Although I was quite active in organising small-scale events in Hyderabad, my goal was to work on a larger scale. We stand for equality as well! I even worry a lot about not being selected for a factory team, which is why INDE."

He acknowledges, "Most of my synergy, whether it's with the Black Hawks or Telugu Talons, is always in tandem in Hyderabad city. Because I am from Hyderabad, I'll use that connection to host it in my hometown one day. That is what I am anticipating from the first race that will take place shortly. My goal is for these races to arrive in Hyderabad and then spread so that the general public may learn more about them. Let's witness it live, starting with a crowd in Hyderabad. Forget about reading about it in the papers or watching it on television. Even though the state government hasn't given its approval yet, Hyderabad should be the first location to start. Everything also depends on the government's backing."

With this news, India will have its first-ever FIM-licensed squad and participate in its first-ever legally sanctioned international competition. It's so thrilling! "I own this, so we are bleeding Hyderabad," he went on (he grins). "Despite having spent nearly twenty years abroad, I still prioritize



my Hyderabad heritage. For a little while, I worked in Canada, but despite my success there, my heart was still in Hyderabad. I made the decision to return to the city with my family. I have been living in Hyderabad for almost twelve happy years. It is the best city in the world, and I say this with certainty. Mumbai and Delhi used to be fierce rivals to our city, but circumstances have changed, and Hyderabad is growing in new and interesting ways. The way things have changed has been so great that we are happy to show visitors our city."

He adds, "I always feel a connection with the Hyderabad journalists who show me so much love. I can see that the Hyderabad media takes great pride in promoting sports around the nation. It is evident in the way people write or talk about my endeavours. I am not sure how, but print media somehow inspires me. However, you also have to appreciate Hyderabad's small-town charm."

"I have travelled to nearly twelve nations in the past two months. Japan's cultural display, for instance, was breathtaking, but I can only picture myself residing in Hyderabad. I have no reservations about who I am as a Hyderabad; I totally embrace it," with a warm note, Abhishek Reddy Kankanala concluded the interview.



CREATING A MUSICAL SAGA WITH HIS EXCEPTIONAL MASHUPS

TEJAL SINHA

Mashups have undeniably been a favourite of many and a go-to music lately that just mixes up two different moods, two similar moods, or whatever. And that is where we have the talented musician and mashup artist Graverio onboard with us, sharing his inclination towards music, mashups, and a lot more. Well, there's really interesting news for all the music lovers at the end of this interview. So, keep yourself hooked on your couch and give it a read.

His inclination towards music began at a young age, inspired by a deep appreciation for its ability to create connections. Growing up, he found comfort in various genres, which ultimately led him to pursue a career in music. "I'm drawn to the unlimited creative possibilities music offers, allowing me to express myself authentically and connect with others on a deep level. Whether it's through composing, remixing, or collaborating with fellow artists, music has always been a powerful means of self-expression and communication for me," shares the talented artist. Before we go ahead, what's it with Graverio—the name we mean? So, picture this: "I started out as 'Master-B'—yes, I know, not the best choice. And it led to some awkward teasing. So, I decided it was time for a change. While brainstorming with a friend, we came up with 'Graver', but then I thought, 'Nah, that's not quite me anymore.' So, I threw in an 'O' and voila, 'Graverio' was born! It doesn't have some deep meaning behind it. I just thought it sounded cool, plus it's a bit of a nod to how my music gravitates towards different genres. I feel like sometimes you just have to go with what sounds right, even if it's a made-up word."

Interesting one, Graverio! Well, talking about his mashup, he has always focussed on storytelling. Instead of just blending two songs in the same key, he picks tracks that fit together like pieces of a puzzle. It's all about creating a musical saga where each song serves as a chapter in the story. By mixing different elements from each track, he takes his listeners on a journey that keeps them engaged and wanting more. "My process is pretty organic," says the musician. "I listen to a ton of music, like, all the time. When a track really clicks with me, it's like my brain instantly starts humming along, coming up with melodies that fit with it or are inspired by it. From there, I get into blending these melodies with the original track. If it sounds good together and captures the vibes I'm going for, I move on to the next steps, which are mixing, mastering, and maybe even creating a video to go along with it." But again, here's the thing—he's not just about the music. "Before I even start working on a mashup, I make sure to watch the movies associated with the songs."

Looking back at the turning point in his

life, it's been the mashup combination of *Let Me Down Slowly* and *Main Dhoondne Ko Zamane Mein*, and, "Let me tell you, it went absolutely viral back in 2021. I'm talking over 200 million views, which is kind of viral! It's hard to put into words just how much it changed my life. Suddenly, doors that were once closed started swinging wide open. I was getting invitations to collaborate with other artists and perform at major events. It was like, overnight, I went from being a relatively unknown musician to having a global audience. But beyond the numbers, what really struck me was the connection I was able to make with listeners through that mashup. It was like the music spoke to people in a way that I never could have imagined. And that, to me, is the true power of music—to bring people together and make them feel special."

When it comes to selecting songs for his mashups, it's all about the connection he has with his audience. "So when it comes to choosing songs, I keep all of that in mind. I know what they're feeling, what they want to hear, and even what mood I'm in myself. It's like we're all on the same page. They trust my judgment and know that whatever song I choose to mashup, it's going to resonate with them. I like to keep things unexpected yet pleasing. That's the secret sauce. So when I decided to mashup *Make You Mine* and *Apna Bana Le*, it was about capturing that unexpected twist while still delivering something that hits home for my audience. And judging

by the response, I think we nailed it."

The toughest part of making mashups, he says, is getting two different songs to fit together effortlessly. It's like trying to mix two flavours in cooking, you want them to complement each other, not clash. You have to match the keys, tempos, and rhythms just right, while still keeping the essence of each song intact. It takes a lot of patience and skill to make it work, but when it does, it's like magic!

Recently, he also released the song *Raabta*, which has received so much love. An ecstatic Graverio says, "Oh my god, thank you for asking about my original music. It means a lot to me. *Raabta* holds a special place in my heart! It's a song born from the depths of a broken heart. It resonates deeply with my own experiences. My personal life hasn't been easy. I've faced my fair share of challenges in love, feeling like an option and experiencing one-sided love, yet I was unable to let go of the love I felt. I collaborated with my friend Priyansh to create the instrumental, and together with one of my favourite artists, SickLot, we brought the lyrics to life. The lyrics hit me hard: *Tere Bina Main Hoon Kya?, Mere Bina Tu Hai Puri, Main Hi Kyun Aakhi, Adhoora Reh Gaya.*"

Arranging the vocal stems, he reveals that he found himself in tears. It was both relatable and immensely powerful. To complement the song, he created a visualiser that depicts the streets where they first met and where they said their final goodbyes. "*Raabta* is more than just a song to me. It's a piece of my soul. While it may not have received the recognition it deserves yet, I believe that one day, it will resonate with many others who have experienced similar heartache. And when that day comes, it will be a celebration of love, loss, and the power of music to heal."

And here comes an interesting revelation that we were talking about at the beginning of this interview. "I've got a version of Alan Walker's *Who I Am* coming your way, and trust me, you'll love it. We're taking a fusion of sounds from all across Pan India—sitar, sarangi, tabla, flute, you name it. I've poured over 100 hours into perfecting this remix, and let me tell you, it's been worth every second. Now, here's where it gets even better! Siddharaj Parmar's flute and Mohak Chhabaria's mix mastering have taken this remix to a whole new level of beauty. And don't even get me started on the vocals!! Peder Elias and Putri Ariani have truly outdone themselves. Their voices are like pure magic, weaving effortlessly through the intricate layers of sound."

So yes, get ready to be swept away by this remix. It's a journey through the sounds of India, with a touch of Alan Walker's signature magic thrown in. Trust me, you won't want to miss it!

Mashups have been a thing these days, and today, **The Pioneer** has the mashup star Graverio getting candid about his journey, the mashup process, his recent song *Raabta*, and more.



DIABETIC FEET: Prevention of amputation

Every year, on average, 4,000 to 5,000 people seek care for foot and ankle problems at the Podiatric Outpatient Department (OPD) at KMC Hospital, Mangalore. At the department, super-specialized doctors focus on proper wound care, and keeping feet healthy, especially for those at risk of diabetes-related issues. As a result of their utmost care and attention, very many patients recover, and only fewer than 20 individuals in a year undergo major amputations, meaning they lose their leg. It is significant to note that this accounts for less than 0.5 percent of the cases. Thus, it is gratifying and joyful to note that the limb is saved in most of the patients.

While in the majority of patients, the limb is salvaged, it is essential to understand and take precautions against the risk of diabetes-related foot problems. Experienced and specialist doctors in this specialized field of podiatry emphasize the need to 'know your risk, know your response'. Being aware of the risks associated with diabetes and receiving timely medical treatment is crucial to preventing the loss of limbs. Thus avoiding emotional and financial burdens on the families.

HERE ARE A FEW PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES TO BE TAKEN BY EVERY DIABETIC PATIENT:

Regular check-ups: Visit your healthcare provider regularly for check-ups, especially if you have diabetes. Early detection of issues can help prevent severe complications.

Manage Diabetes Effectively: Follow your doctor's advice for managing diabetes, including medications, diet, and lifestyle changes. Keeping blood sugar levels in check, significantly reduces the risk of complications.

Healthy Lifestyle: Adopt a healthy lifestyle with regular exercise and a balanced diet. Maintaining a healthy weight contributes to overall well-being, reducing the risk of complications.



DIABETIC FOOT CARE

- | Do's | Don'ts |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">Examine your feet daily and look for injuries.Keep the web space dry (area between two toes).Regularly moisturise your feet.Cut nails regularly and trim them square. Always use footwear while walking.Get regular foot check-ups from a podiatrist or foot specialist for prevention, early detection, and treatment of foot problems. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Do not walk barefoot. (both within and outside the home).Avoid submerging your feet in boiling water.Do not use hot water bags, heating pads, or apply any strong counterirritants (e.g., balms).You may burn your foot or feet without noticing.Do not wear tight-fitting elastic socks and shoes.Do not remove callus and corns at home.Do not undergo vigorous oil massages of the feet. |

In conclusion, while the numbers at our center indicate a relatively low rate of major amputations, the overall disease burden is huge, and it is essential to be proactive and educate the healthcare workers and patients about the care to be taken. Understanding the risks, regular check-ups, and adopting a healthy lifestyle are key steps in preventing the loss of limbs. As this year's World Diabetes Theme is 'Know your risk, know your response', let us all take a collective pledge to be vigilant and defeat diabetes, ultimately saving both limbs and lives.

(The author, Dr. Priyatham Kamath, is a consultant in podiatric and diabetic foot surgery at KMC Hospital.)



A19 Klub and Kitchen unveiled its doors in style with its launch at Sarath City Mall. Positioned as the city's premier nightclub destination, A19 Klub and Kitchen welcomed an array of celebrities, infusing the night with glamour and excitement. The grand launch attracted an illustrious lineup of stars, including Sunny, Raj, Anil Rathod, Sri Sathya, Inaya, Geetu Royal, Jessie, Deeksha Panth, Ruchitha Sadineni, Chandana Jayaram, and more, who came together to experience the epitome of nightlife sophistication.



ModMed announced the launch of its first Global Capability Center (GCC) in Hyderabad, India. Located in a new facility in HITEC City, the GCC reflects ModMed's commitment to fostering innovation and harnessing the abundant tech talent in Hyderabad, one of India's fastest-growing GCC hubs. The state-of-the-art facility is spread across approx. 20,000 square feet.




Drapes and Designs opened its store in Madhapur with the intention of bringing all home essentials to one place. The record breaking team of Raja Shekhar and Jaya Lakshmi opened the store together in Kaliyugam town.




Actress Daksha Nagarkar, graced the launch of the new branch of Nice Nails Baby in Hyderabad. The brand is a premier destination for luxury beauty services dedicated to enhancing your skin, nails, makeup, and hair. At Nice Nails Baby, we are passionate about empowering individuals to look and feel.


ARCHIE




CALVIN AND HOBBS




GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK




SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

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GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU

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	9		6				5	
8		7			9		6	
		3						6
				3				2
9	6			8	4			

ACROSS

1 The crime of killing someone

3 This covers your body

7 Baby goats

8 Cardboard box

10 People you like who like you

13 Envious

16 Fires a gun

17 An easy card game

18 A student's table

19 The capital of the United Kingdom

5 One hundred less ten

6 Light open shoes with straps

9 Says again

11 Overlook

12 Spoiled

14 Male children

15 Twirl around

DOWN

1 Manufacture

2 People on horses

4 Fly this on a string

Chaari 111: Fairly good comedy drama

PNS | HYDERABAD

PLOT

Chaari 111 is a story that revolves around a man named Chaari (played by Vennela Kishore). He is a spy who is assigned to deal with an important mission, which is about finding a terrorist who is responsible for a bomb blast in Hyderabad. How he solves the case and his way of spying are the remaining stories. In this, he has Samyuktha Viswanathan play the other agent along with him.

PERFORMANCES

First and foremost, the lead actor, Vennela Kishore, in the movie is not portrayed in the conventional protagonist style. He had his own way of heroism, where he made full use of his comedy prowess to lead the center stage. He got to do action and comedy, and it was fresh to watch Kishore entertain the audience throughout the film. His character has been well designed, and some of his scenes with the villain come across in the most hilarious way. On the other hand, Samyuktha Vishwanathan, as a fellow agent, was good at her part. She too had some action scenes to perform, and never for a moment did she overdramatise them. She performed all her stunts with ease. Murali Sharma, Taagubothu Ramesh, and Satya were good in their parts.

ANALYSIS

The film takes off on a good note. The first half of the movie has good comedy to make you laugh out loud. The comedy, although silly, will tickle your funny bone. While the first half is all comedy, the second half gets a bit serious, which the audience might not expect, leading to a slight disappointment. If at all the same comedy continued in the second half as well, it would've worked as a great comedy film for us. That being said, the movie, for us, makes for an entertaining watch, solely because of Vennela Kishore, who drives the whole film. Of course, logic has gone for a toss in this film, but the director handled the whole story well, and the way he narrated it was engaging, except for the second half. His

CONCLUSION

In all, the movie has a good dose of comedy in the first half and a bit of seriousness in the second half. Both put together, it might work for some and the other way around for others. Vennela Kishore is the star of the show and entertains the audience throughout. Overall, this is a good weekend watch.

Cast: Vennela Kishore, Murali Sharma, and Samyuktha Viswanathan
Director: TG Keerthi Kumar
Producer: Aditi Soni
Music: Simon K. King
Cinematography: Richard Kevin A
Editing: Kashish Grover
Rating: 2.5/5

Bhutaddham Bhaskar Narayana: A good thriller to watch

Detective thriller movies always have a good interest in the audience. Almost every movie that came out with that concept had good success. Now the movie *Bhutaddham Bhaskar Narayana* has come to the audience in the same way. The movie created good interest among the audience as it was combined with the legend of 'Dishti Bomma' in the detective story.

STORY

As far as the story of the movie is concerned, it takes place in the border areas of Telugu and Kannada states. Some psycho killers are going on a serial killing spree. He cuts off women's heads and replaces them with effigies. Detective Bhaskar Narayana (Shiva Kandukuri) steps in to solve this case. The detective who enters the case finds out the connection between the murders and the legend of the scarecrow. And who is doing those murders? Why is he cutting off the head and putting the effigy on? These things have to be seen in the theater itself.

ANALYSIS

Detective thrillers have certain expectations for the audience. There is no doubt that Bhaskar Narayana

telling his story from his childhood makes him connect with that character. But the director, who made the second half very well, seems to have lagged the first half a bit.

PERFORMANCE

Bhaskar Narayana's role is that of Siva Kandukuri Jeevaesadu. He pleases the audience as a detective with ease of acting. It looks natural to give a local touch to the area instead of black and white, as shown in all the movies. And Rashi Singh, who appeared as reporter Lakshmi, did justice to her role. The rest of the actors also did justice to their roles.

TECHNICALITIES

Needless to say, Sricharan's classical music. Sricharan's score has become an asset for many thriller films in Tollywood. Cinematography feels rich. The VFX output is okay. It must be said that the director impressed the audience with new content.

VERDICT

Audiences who like thrillers will like this *Bhutaddham Bhaskar Narayana*.

RATING: 2.5/5

MALLI PUTTI VACHINAVA FROM RECORD BREAK IS OUT NOW

Record Break is a movie that every Indian should watch, directed by Chadalavada Srinivasa Rao and produced by Chadalavada Padmavati under the banner of Sri Tirumala Tirupati Venkateswara Films. Recently, the glimpses, teaser, and trailer of this movie were released. The trailer raised expectations for the film. Now the second song from the movie has also been released. Sabu Varghese has provided the music for this song, which is the *Malli Putti Vachinava* song, and Varikuppala Yadagiri is the writer and singer of this song, which is a big asset of the movie. Chadalavada Srinivasa Rao is very ambitious and is going to bring this movie to us in eight languages as a Pan-India movie. The censorship work for this movie is going on, and it will be brought to the audience very soon. On this occasion, Chadalavada Srinivasa Rao said, "We have released the second song from our film *Record Break*, the song *Malli Putti Vachinava*. I am very happy that the teaser trailer that has been released so far has received a good response. During the filming of this movie, our artists and technicians gave a lot of support in all weather conditions. We are going to plan a grand pre-release event and announce the release date very soon."

TAMANNAAH BHATIA IN ODELA 2

Odelas Railway Station, starring Hebbah Patel, a crime thriller, scored huge success in 2022. Directed by Ashok Teja, the movie has set everyone rolling during that time. Now, it is official that the team is working on its sequel, titled *Odelas 2*. They brought on board the sensational actress Tamannaah Bhatia to play the lead role in this second part. Tamannaah gained national recognition for her recent successful over-the-top (OTT) appearances. Therefore, the film's producers intend to release it in a number of languages. Produced by D. Madhu under the names Madhu Creations and Sampath Nandi Teamworks, the film will be directed by Ashok Teja and written by Sampath Nandi. The film's opening took place in Kashi, where the regular shoot also commenced. *Odelas 2* delves far deeper and deeper into its origins. The village, its rich history, customs, and culture are the main focus of the sequel, along with how Odelas Mallanna Swamy, the village's real saviour, constantly defends it from hostile forces. The title poster, released yesterday, appears mystical. It displays Lord Shiva's Trishula, which is also revered as Mallanna Swamy. Hebah Patel and Vasishta N. Simha are the prominent cast. The VFX is said to be top-notch in the movie, while *Odelas 2* will have well-known technicians taking care of different crafts. Soundar Rajan S. cranks the camera, while Ajaneesh Loknath of Kantara fame will provide the music. Rajeev Nair is the art director.

Ravi Basrur is onboard for Marco

Music director Ravi Basrur, who is known for his music in *Ugraam*, the *KGF* franchise, and *Salaar*, to name a few, has officially gotten onboard for Unni Mukundan's *Marco*. The makers on Friday announced the latest update on their social media. *Marco* will be directed by Haneef Adeni, who also helmed *Mikhael*. The upcoming film is being produced by Shareef Muhammed Abdul Gadhaf under the banner of Cubes Entertainments. The makers have yet to reveal the details of the rest of the cast and technical crew members. Unni Mukundan, in the meantime, is working on a number of movies, including the Tamil movie *Garudan*, *Get-Set Baby*, and the April 11 release of *Jai Ganesha*.

Mohan Krishna Indraganti and Shivalenka Krishna Prasad reunite for Priyadarshi's next

Producer Sivalenka Krishna Prasad is coming up with some unique films like the Samantha Ruth Prabhu-starrer *Yashoda* and the biopic on legendary cricketer Muttiah Muralitharan *800*, among others. All his recent ventures performed well at the box office, and now the producer is collaborating with director Mohan Krishna Indraganti on a new film. The duo has previously joined hands for films like *Gentleman* and *Sammohanam*. They are now producing Priyadarshi's next film. The actor, who is riding high on the success of *Balagam*, is thrilled about this collaboration. The pre-production work for the film is underway, and the shooting of this movie will commence at the end of March.

Shruti Haasan will be the lead singer for AR Rahman's music in Kaadhalikka Neramillai

Actors Jayam Ravi and Nithya Menen are set to collaborate for the first time on screen in the next Tamil movie, *Kaadhalikka Neramillai*. Even though the news was made some time ago, the film's creators just disclosed a significant advancement in the undertaking. Kruthiga Udhayanidhi, the director of *Kaadhalikka Neramillai*, recently informed that actor-musician Shruti Haasan will be singing the song's opening verse. AR Rahman composed the film's soundtrack. Presently, Kiruthiga Udhayanidhi is directing her next film, *Kaadhalikka Neramillai*. Jayam Ravi and Nithya Menen play the main parts in the movie. Kiruthiga shared a picture from the recording studio on her old Twitter account, X, on Thursday. She said, "It was so fun and an absolute delight to record my 1st song of #KadhalikkaNeramillai with @arrahman @shrutihaasan @KavingarSnekan." Shruti Haasan will perform the lead song, while Snehan will write the lyrics. The song's composer is AR Rahman. However, the release date of the song was not announced.

KAPIL BACKS BCCI STRICTNESS ON DOMESTIC CRICKET

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A few players will suffer, but let it be,” said legendary former India captain Kapil Dev on Friday as he backed the BCCI’s decision to terminate central contracts for lack of commitment to domestic cricket, calling it a much-needed step to protect marquee first-class events like the Ranji Trophy. Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer were on Wednesday excluded from the BCCI’s central contracts after ignoring the board’s diktat to play in the Ranji Trophy. The decision evoked mixed reactions with some former players like Kirti Azad and Irfan Pathan backing the out-of-favour duo. Kapil refrained from taking names but said the BCCI’s decision to assert the importance of domestic cricket was long overdue. “Yes, few players will suffer, kuch

logon ko taqleef hogi, hone do lekin desh se badhkar koi nahi hai (some people will feel hurt but let it be because nobody is bigger than the country). Well done,” he said. “I congratulate the BCCI for taking the much needed step to protect the status of domestic cricket. I was sad to see domestic cricket being given the skip by players once they had established themselves in international cricket,” the captain of the 1983 World Cup-winning side observed in his statement. The BCCI, while announcing the central contracts, urged the players to give due importance to domestic competitions. The 25-year-old Kishan did not turn up for Jharkhand throughout the team’s campaign in Ranji Trophy despite not being on national duty after leaving the tour of South Africa in December citing personal reasons. He instead focussed on preparing for the IPL



next month for his franchise Mumbai Indians. Iyer, on the other hand, did not make himself available for Mumbai’s Ranji quarterfinal against Baroda after being excluded

from the Indian team after the second Test against England. He, however, has been picked for Mumbai’s Ranji semifinal against Tamil Nadu starting March 2. “It was high time the message was given and this strong step by the BCCI will go a long way in restoring the prestige of domestic cricket,” he added. Kapil asserted that it was the duty of established stars to play domestic cricket as they owe their success to their respective states. “I have always believed in the process of international players making themselves available to play for their respective states. It helps them extend their support to domestic players. Also it is a nice way to pay back for the services rendered by the state association in grooming a player,” he said. Kapil also expressed his gratitude to the BCCI for enhancing the pension of former cricketers, saying

it has come as a major relief to families of several yesteryear players. In 2022, the board had announced a hike in the monthly pensions of former cricketers — both men and women. Former first-class men’s cricketers, who earlier got Rs 15,000 per month are now getting Rs 30,000, while former Test players, who got Rs 37,500, are now getting Rs 60,000. Women international players, who received Rs 30,000 prior to the revision are now receiving Rs 52,500, while first-class cricketers who retired before 2003 and were getting Rs 22,500 are now getting Rs 45,000. “I am also happy that the BCCI has increased the pension amount of the players. This was a much needed boost to those whose family depends on the pension received,” added Kapil.



We are thrilled to have Shreyas in team for Ranji semifinal: Rahane

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai captain Ajinkya Rahane on Friday backed Shreyas Iyer to put the contractual turmoil behind him and deliver a punchy performance for the team in the Ranji Trophy semifinal against Tamil Nadu, beginning here on Saturday. Shreyas along with Jharkhand’s Ishan Kishan were not considered for the annual central contracts after both the players skipped the Ranji matches of their respective teams in violation of BCCI’s diktat. Shreyas sat out of Mumbai’s quarterfinal against Baroda here while complaining of back pain. “He’s an experienced player. His contribution has been amazing whenever he turned up for Mumbai. We are thrilled to have him in our team for the semifinal,” Rahane told the media here at the BKC Ground. Rahane said Shreyas would not require any extra motivation to do well for Mumbai against TN. “I don’t think he needs any encouragement or advice. He has always contributed with the bat for Mumbai, and him being around other players in the dressing room will also help the team’s cause,” said Rahane. However, Rahane himself is waging a personal battle after scoring just 115 runs from six matches at an average of 12.77 with a lone fifty.

But the 35-year-old did not read much into those anaemic numbers. “It’s just a phase and you have to respect it (not scoring runs). When you’re batting well and scoring runs, it happens consistently. There’s nothing wrong with my batting. I just have to remain positive and back my game and instinct,” he said. Rahane said he needed to bat freely to get back into his run-scoring ways. “I just have to go out there and play freely. I feel as a player you have to be confident and respect a phase, move forward and learn whatever you can. You don’t want to go too far ahead,” he added. Rahane confirmed that opener Prithvi Shaw has recovered from a finger injury which had forced him to bat in the middle-order during the quarterfinal. “His finger was hurt, that’s why he came down the order. We wanted him to go before Musheer (Khan). But obviously, because of the injection’s effect, he had to go after him,” Rahane said. Rahane hoped that Shaw, who has made 389 runs from four matches at an average of 64.83, would find his A game against Tamil Nadu. “Prithvi is really aggressive and he gets those runs very quickly. As a batsman, I don’t think he (has) changed much. He’s hungry to score runs. That’s

what we want from Prithvi. We don’t want him to change his game,” Rahane said. He said Mumbai will adopt a pressure-free approach in this game. “We are playing really well. We don’t want to think about the quarterfinal, semifinal or final. It is just another game for us. If we can do that and be in the moment as a team and individuals, it will help us,” Rahane noted. Rahane was obviously pleased with the hundreds Tanush Kotian and Tushar Deshpande, the No 10 and 11, made in the last outing and said such efforts will add a lot of meat to the whole batting unit. “Everyone is working really hard, especially the bowlers, with their batting. I think when No. 8, 9, 10, 11, contribute with the bat, it becomes really crucial for the team. Those guys have worked really hard throughout the season on their batting, you know, those extra 15-20 minutes after they bowl (at nets). It’s paying off.” Rahane said Kotian has the potential to become an all-rounder. “I’m happy for Tanush because earlier he has made those crucial 70s, 80s and 90s. But I think the hundred he got is a benchmark (for him). He has the calibre to become a good all-rounder,” Rahane signed off.

He is the new Ravi Ashwin: Vaughan on Bashir

PTI ■ LONDON

Former England captain Michael Vaughan feels England have discovered a “world-class superstar” in young off-spinner Shoaib Bashir, who has the skills to emulate the success of India’s Ravichandran Ashwin. Despite England’s five-wicket loss in Ranchi, 20-year-old Bashir, playing only his second Test, impressed as he returned with a match haul of eight wickets. His magnificent performance included a five-wicket haul in the first innings. Ashwin, on the other hand, is regarded as one of the best off-spinners in the history of Test cricket. The senior spinner recently became only the second Indian bowler to snare 500 wickets in the longest format and is set for his 100th Test in Dharamsala next week against England. “One of the great weeks, celebrating another world-class superstar that we’ve unearthed, Shoaib Bashir. That’s what we’re celebrating. Second Test match, eight wickets, he’s the new Ravi Ashwin, and we’ve unearthed him.



“So, we’re celebrating a new superstar in English cricket,” Vaughan said on Club Prairie Fire’s YouTube channel. India handed England their first series defeat under coach Brendon McCullum and skipper Ben Stokes after winning the fourth Test in Ranchi to take a 3-1 lead in

the ongoing series. Vaughan backed England to win the dead rubber in Dharamsala. “They will go with their best XI. It’s going to be cold in Dharamsala and it will suit England. I expect England to win,” Vaughan said.



BCCI to conduct women red ball tournament in Pune

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Women’s red-ball cricket will return to India’s domestic calendar after six years when the BCCI conducts a Senior Inter Zonal Multi-Day Trophy in Pune from March 28. The move comes after the Indian women’s team’s return to Test cricket. The side has played Tests against Australia and England in the recent years. Domestic red ball cricket for women was last held in 2018. “It is a welcome step taken by BCCI. The national team has started playing Test cricket again and we need the next generation of cricketers to play red ball cricket at the domestic level,” former India pacer Amita Sharma told PTI. “I would also want red ball to be played at the state level and not just zonal level. Back in the day we had both those events,” she added. The Maharashtra Cricket Association will be hosting the tournament which will feature six teams, representing East, West, North, South, Central, and North-East zones. They will be competing in a series of five matches to be played across three days each, which is a day more than the two-day games played in the 2018 season. The tournament will begin right after the ongoing Women’s Premier League, which ends on March 17. It will start with the quarterfinals between East Zone and North East Zone and West Zone and Central Zone on March 28 with the semifinals slated on April 3.

Made some mental adjustments to convert starts into big scores: Shafali

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Big-hitting batter Shafali Verma says she has made minor adjustments to her approach towards the game in the last one year, which is helping her convert good starts into big knocks in the ongoing Women’s Premier League. Verma struck a half century and stitched a second-wicket stand of 82 runs with Alice Capsey (46) as Delhi Capitals defeated Royal Challengers Bangalore by 25 runs in a WPL match here on Thursday night. RCB could only muster up 169/9 in their 20 overs, pursuing a 195-run victory target. “I’m happy for Tanush because earlier he has made those crucial 70s, 80s and 90s. But I think the hundred he got is a benchmark (for him). He has the calibre to become a good all-rounder,” Rahane signed off.



and for myself,” Verma told ‘Jio Cinema’. “The main change is a slight adjustment in my mindset and I want to take this forward,” she added. Verma’s team is currently top of the table with two wins from three matches. The 20-year-old Verma, who became the youngest to play cricket for India when she debuted as a 15-year-old, also acknowledged the positive impact of playing alongside seasoned Australian Meg Lanning in her WPL team. “When a very experienced person is standing across from you, your body language changes on its own. Playing with a player like that and building partnerships is a great privilege in my opinion. “She has changed the game with her batting,” she said. Delhi Capital will next taken on Gujarat Giants on Sunday.

Australia 13-2 as New Zealand strikes back late

AP ■ WELLINGTON

The almost comical run out of Kane Williamson for a second-ball duck was one of many setbacks suffered by New Zealand on the second day of the first test Friday as it fell 217 runs behind Australia. That was until the very end of the day when Australia battled for a second time after passing up the chance to make New Zealand follow on. Tim Southee dismissed Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne to have Australia 13-2 in its second innings after it had led by 204 on the first. At stumps Usman Khawaja was 5 not out and nightwatchman Nathan Lyon was 6 not out. Lyon was dropped at slip by Tim Southee off the last ball of the day. Smith was out for a duck to the third ball of the innings, bowled by Southee, and Labuschagne fell to Southee in the fifth over for 2. After falling for 1 in the first innings, it was Labuschagne’s lowest aggregate score in a test in his career. They were the 12th and 13th wickets to fall in the day which mostly had not gone New Zealand’s way. First, New Zealand needed more than a full session to claim one wicket and end Australia’s first innings. In that time Cameron

Green and Josh Hazlewood put on 116 runs to increase Australia’s total from 279-9 after the first day to 383. Green finished 174 not out. Then New Zealand lost three wickets at 12 and two at 29, was 29-5 before Glenn Phillips’ half century from 41 balls slowed its steady downhill slide. New Zealand eventually was all out for 179 in 43.1 overs, a deficit of 204. Phillips made 71 and Matt Henry 42. “Obviously the way Cam Green played with Hazlewood, they put on a massive partnership and that wasn’t exactly ideal for us wanting to wrap up the tail,” Phillips said. “At the end that’s what test cricket is about.” New Zealand always will be able to look back and pinpoint where this match began to get away from it. It started on the second day when Australia was 89-4 and Mitch Marsh made a fast 40 in a 67-run fifth-wicket partnership which seemed to energize Cameron Green. Green went on to reach his century in the last over of the first day and was able to form an heroic last-wicket partnership with Hazlewood which frustrated New Zealand for all of the first session and an additional 20 minutes



before Hazlewood fell for 22. This test match is the first in eight years between New Zealand and Australia in New Zealand, has been much anticipated and this match at the Basin Reserve is sold out on all five days. Watching Australia go from 267-9 on day one when the match was about even to 383 when Australia was totally in charge left fans dispirited. Tom Latham fell for 5 when New Zealand was 12, changing his decision to leave a ball from Mitchell Starc too late and directing the ball back onto his stumps. Then disaster. Williamson played a ball from Starc back past the bowler. Will Young at the non-striker’s end turned to watch the ball, then looked up to see Williamson had set off for a run. Young turned to see the ball heading straight to mid off and looked again to see Williamson bearing down on him on a collision course. As Young swerved to his left, Williamson dodged to his right and the pair collided in mid-pitch as Starc tried to take evasive action. Williamson was stranded as Marnus Labuschagne’s throw hit the stumps directly at the non-

striker’s end. Williamson walked off without looking back. New Zealand had lost two wickets in two balls and that became three in five when Rachin Ravindra drove too freely too early in his innings and sliced the ball directly to Nathan Lyon at point. Wicketkeeper Alex Carey caught Daryl Mitchell (11) off Cummins from the last ball of the 17th over and Young (9) from Mitch March off the first ball of the 18th as New Zealand slumped to 29-5. Phillips and Tom Blundell provided New Zealand’s first real period of competitiveness in all of the second day in a partnership of 84 for the sixth wicket. Both played aggressively and runs came quickly. Phillips reached his third test half century, his second against Australia and his first in New Zealand. But Blundell fell next ball, caught by Travis Head at short leg off Nathan Lyon and the innings sputtered again. Phillips was out for 71 off 70 balls and Henry took his 42 runs from 34 balls with four sixes as New Zealand briefly looked like avoiding the follow-on. But he holed to Labuschagne off Nathan Lyon with New Zealand still four runs short.