

ANALYSIS 7
INDIA NOT READY FOR
CRYPTOS, FOR NOW**MONEY 8**
HP STARTS MANUFACTURING
LAPTOPS, DESKTOPS IN INDIA**SPORTS 12**
INDIA BEAT PAK 4-3
IN THRILLER TO WIN BRONZE

HYDERABAD, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

PLAN TO RELEASE
PUSHPA: THE RULE
IN DEC 2022:
SUKUMAR

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BILL GATES ON OMICRON: 'WE COULD BE ENTERING WORST PART OF PANDEMIC'

Bill Gates, in a series of tweets aimed at alerting the public to the worrisome surge in Omicron worldwide, warned on Tuesday of an abundant need for caution as we approach the peak of the festive season, sharing that he too has canceled most of his holiday plans. Noting that his close friends have increasingly been getting infected with the virus, the billionaire Microsoft co-founder urged his followers take cognizance of the fact that we "could be entering the worst part of the pandemic".

IT DEPT RAIDS ENTITIES LINKED TO CHINESE MOBILE MANUFACTURERS

The Income Tax Department on Wednesday conducted multiple searches in various states against entities engaged with Chinese mobilephone manufacturers on charges of tax evasion, official sources said. The raids are being carried out at premises located in the national capital region and some states in the south, they said. Some vendors and distribution partners of these firms are being searched and more details are awaited, the sources said.

DELHI GOVT BANS CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S GATHERINGS

As Omicron cases steadily rise in the national capital, the Delhi government today banned all gatherings to celebrate Christmas and New Year. All cultural events and other gatherings have been prohibited, according to an order by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA). All social, political, sports, entertainment, cultural, religious, festival related gatherings and congregations have been prohibited. Banquet Halls, except for meetings, conferences, marriages and exhibitions as per conditions prescribed by the authority, will also not be allowed to function.

NO SALARY WITHOUT VAX CERTIFICATE, PUNJAB TELLS GOVT EMPLOYEES

Punjab government employees won't get their salary if they don't give their vaccination certificate, the state government said in a statement today. One can be fully vaccinated or have taken a single dose, but they will have to upload the certificates on the Punjab government's job portal if they want their salary. The government order, however, does not mention what it intends to do about employees who aren't vaccinated. Punjab's rather strict policy to push people to vaccinate themselves comes at a time when there is big concerns over the Omicron strain of coronavirus, known to be highly transmissible.

KCR may go for early elections using paddy issue, claims BJP

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

Will there be early Assembly elections in Telangana again? Will Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao ring the election bell again as in 2018? Will the elections scheduled for 2023 be held in 2022?

Yes, it might be. Elections can come in Telangana anytime. Be prepared. KCR will go for early elections. Union Minister Amit Shah spoke about this to Telangana BJP leaders.

The BJP leaders from Telangana also have been stating that Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has been enacting a drama in the name of paddy to go for early elections. The BJP leaders have been saying that the Chief Minister is facing anti-incumbency and so he has taken up the paddy issue to neutralise the anti-incumbency.

They also said that he has no issues to take up for the next elec-

He said that the TRS is worried as the Dalit Bandhu didn't work in the Huzarabad by-poll and hence it is better to go for early elections with the paddy issue as it affects 70 lakh farmers.



He said that the TRS is worried as the Dalit Bandhu didn't work in the Huzarabad by-poll and hence it is better to go for early elections with the paddy issue as it affects 70 lakh farmers.

The main reason behind KCR going for early elections is that the opposition parties think that elections may be held as scheduled, and that it will be advantage TRS if it goes for early elections, an analyst said.

KCR will launch unexpected plans to shock opponents, he said. As part of it, the TRS Ministers and MPs have made it clear that they will not come back from New Delhi without a written assurance from the Centre on paddy purchase.

TPCC chief Revanth Reddy's statement that poll strategist Sunil had asked the TRS to take the paddy issue to New Delhi to destroy the Congress in Telangana is also an indication of early elections, the analyst said.

Rajender in Huzarabad. With the Huzarabad by-poll victory, the BJP has been planning many programmes to strengthen the party in all constituencies.

KCR has hatched a plan to go for early elections before the BJP becomes strong in all constituencies, a senior BJP leader said. He added that the camping of TRS Ministers and MPs in New Delhi is part of the TRS chief's plan for early elections.

tions and hence have been raising the paddy issue.

Telangana BJP leaders said that KCR may go for early elections with the paddy issue blaming the BJP-led Central government. KCR may have a chance now to face the rapidly strengthening BJP. He has been planning early elections before the BJP gets ready for them.

The BJP is now in high spirits after the victory of its candidate Eatala

Former sarpanch 'killed' by Maoists in Chhattisgarh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Maoists have killed a former sarpanch, who was kidnapped two days back. His body was found in the Kothapalli village on the Chattisgarh border on Wednesday.

2

Union Minister Danve bats for renaming Hyd as Bhagyanagar

PNS ■ NAGPUR

BJP MP and Union minister Raosaheb Danve on Wednesday suggested that there shouldn't be any objection to "renaming" Hyderabad as Bhagyanagar and also other such places whose original names had been changed by foreign invaders by hurting the sentiments of Hindus.

The MoS for Railways was speaking to reporters at a party leader's residence after visiting the RSS headquarters here in Maharashtra. He also called upon Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat.

Recently, RSS Akhil Bhartiya prachar pramukh Sunil Ambekar



had tweeted about holding a coordination meeting of chief functionaries of various organisations inspired by the Sangh's social service in "Bhagyanagar, Telangana", between January 5 to 7.

Queried whether BJP and its ideological mentor are planning to rename Hyderabad as Bhagyanagar, Danve said, "I feel foreigners who had invaded our country changed the old names (of various places) by hurting the sentiments of Hindus. In independent India, if we change their names again to respect our feelings, I feel there should be no objection in doing that".

2

SA study offers Omicron hope as nations reimpose curbs

PNS ■ JOHANNESBURG

A South African study offered Christmas glad tidings about the severity of Omicron and the trend of COVID-19 infections on Wednesday as the fast-spreading coronavirus variant forced countries across the world to impose new curbs.

The study by the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) suggested that those infected with Omicron were much less likely to end up in hospital than those with Delta.

COVID-19 cases also appear to have peaked in South Africa's Gauteng province, which is its commercial hub and the region of the country where Omicron first emerged. South Africa's NICD study, conducted with major universities, has not been peer-reviewed. It compared South African Omicron data



Security beefed up for Medaram festival

PNS ■ MULUGU

The police have beefed up security for the Medaram festival being held in February to ensure that the biggest tribal festival is celebrated peacefully, SP Dr Sangram Singh G. Patil said on Wednesday.

2

JOIN FIRST, APPEAL LATER

Govt issues guidelines for addressing appeals against allocation of new cadre

ML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

The State government has issued instructions that only after joining in the new local cadre in accordance with the new zonal system can employees exercise their option to appeal against the allocation of cadres, including spouse cases.

The General Administration Department issued a memo to this effect on Wednesday.

Employees who have any objections over their allotment to local and zonal cadre can appeal to the authorities to consider their cases. But the facility to appeal is given to employees only after they join in the postings given to them first.

The District Cadre employees will have to appeal to the District Head of the department, zonal and multi-zonal cadre employees will have to appeal to their Head of the Departments. The HoDs will have to report all the appeals to the Secretary of the department con-



cerned. The Chief Secretary has instructed the Secretaries of all the departments to resolve the appeals speedily after a full inquiry.

The government also issued guidelines for spouse cases. It will consider posting the spouses at the same place. Even in this category, employees should first report at the places allotted to them under the new zonal system and then file their appeals.

The District cadre employees

will have to appeal to the District Head of the Department and the zonal and multi-zonal employees will have to appeal to the Head of the Department concerned. The HoDs will consider all the spouse case appeals and give their recommendation to the Secretary of the department concerned.

The Government issued orders that the appeals received under the spouse cases be considered and disposed at the earliest.

2

Govt orders to speed up Kokapet Neopolis land sale

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government has given the green light to complete the process of selling Kokapet Neopolis lands.

The government has issued orders to the Hyderabad Metro Development Authority (HMDA) regarding completing the sale process of Kokapet Neopolis lands.

After the directions of the government, HMDA officials are making arrangements to complete the sale process of the lands in Neopolis, Kokapet.

The government also gave permission to the Ranga Reddy collector to complete the registration process of the Kokapet Neopolis lands purchased by bidders.

The government also made it

clear that the revenue from the sales of lands located in Survey Numbers 239 and 240 in Kokapet belongs to the government alone.

On the other hand, it also made it clear that the HMDA is only an agent of the government in the Kokapet Neopolis land sale.

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar made it clear in his orders that the transactions made by HMDA are on behalf of the government.



HC issues notices to Jubilee Hills pubs on residents' plea

G RAVI KIRAN
■ HYDERABAD

The High Court of Telangana has issued notices to 10 pubs located in the Jubilee Hills on Wednesday, following a petition by the Jubilee Hills Residents Association.

The High Court asked the pubs to file counters by 29th December, while advising the state government to correct the wrong practices of the pubs before 31st December.

The High Court took serious

notice of the complaints made by the residents. The problems created by the pubs in the residential area were highlighted by the advocate of the Jubilee Hills Residents Association. The Advocate explained that these pubs, categorized as commercial outlets, should not be located in the residential area. He sought to know how they all got permission to run the commercial outlets in a residential area.

2

'TRS, BJP enacting dramas as per poll strategist Sunil's advice'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TRS Government is facing anti-incumbency and the people are looking towards the Congress in Telangana, TPCC chief A. Revanth Reddy said here on Wednesday.

He alleged that both the TRS and the BJP have been trying to destroy the Congress politically as per the directions of electoral strategist Sunil. The two parties are enacting dramas as per the instructions of Sunil in the name of paddy, he said.

Revanth alleged that the TRS and BJP Governments were jointly conspiring to cheat farmers. He said the entire blame game over paddy procurement was well coordinated.

This is reportedly being done as per the advice of political strategist



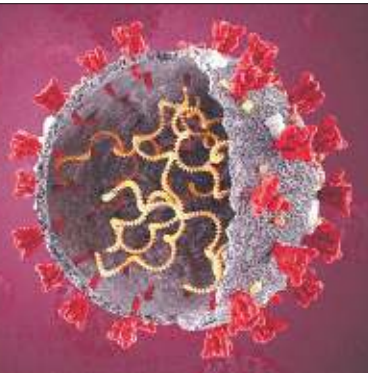
Revanth Reddy, Komatireddy and Uttam Kumar Reddy at a press conference in Delhi.

Sunil, who is closely associated with both Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

He said he would expose the nexus between the TRS and the BJP after returning to Hyderabad from New Delhi.

2

"In South Africa, this is the epidemiology: Omicron is behaving in a way that is less severe," said Professor Cheryl Cohen of the NICD, one of the authors. "Compellingly, together our data really suggest a positive story of a reduced severity of Omicron compared to other variants."



reduced severity of Omicron compared to other variants."

Still, the authors included caveats and cautioned against jumping to conclusions, saying high population immunity was a likely factor. A study by Imperial College London last week found no sign Omicron was milder. Policymakers across the world are scrambling to address the economic blow that might come from new outbreaks; Britain on Tuesday announced 1 billion pounds (\$1.3 billion) of support for businesses hit hardest.

Elsewhere, governments raced to contain the variant's rapid spread, urging citizens to vaccinate as Omicron becomes the dominant strain and upending reopening plans that many had hoped would herald the end of the pandemic, and unnerving financial markets.

2

TODAY**ALMANAC****Month & Paksham:**

Margashirsha & Shukla Paksha

Tithi : Chaturthi 18:26**Nakshatram** : Ashlesha 26:41**Rahukalam** : 1:37 pm - 2:59 pm**Yamagandam** : 6:46 am - 8:08 am**Varjyam** : 2:35 pm - 4:18 pm**Gulika** : 9:30 am - 10:53 am**Amritakalam** : 12:57 am - 2:41 am**Abhijit Muhurtham** : 11:53 am - 12:37 pm**HYDRABAD****WEATHER****Forecast:** SUNNY**Temp:** 28°C**Humidity:** 39%**Sunrise:** 6:42 AM**Sunset:** 5:48 PM

Updated DECEMBER 22, 2021 5:00 PM



BJP leaders not bothered about people’s problems, says Vinod

ML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister Piyush Goel and BJP leaders are deliberately creating confusion among farmers about paddy procurement as they have no intention of addressing the issue, State Planning Board Vice Chairman B. Vinod Kumar said here Wednesday.

Condemning the comments of Union Minister Piyush about the Telangana Ministers camping in New Delhi, Vinod said it was unfortunate that no BJP leader who met Union Ministers Piyush Goel and Amit Shah raised the problems of Telangana farmers.

Vinod was addressing a media conference at the Telangana Bhavan here.

Whether Piyush was ignorant of paddy procurement issues or was deliberately trying to divert people’s attention away from the problem he had no answer to the concerns raised by the TRS Government, Vinod said.

He added that Piyush made irrelevant comments at Tuesday’s media conference.



State Planning Board Vice Chairman B. Vinod Kumar addressing media conference at the Telangana Bhavan in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

The Union Minister falsely alleged that Chief Minister KCR was telling lies and that the Telangana Government had not supplied rice as per the agreed target, he said.

The TRS and the BJP had been discussing Rabi/Yasangi paddy procurement since months. When KCR met Piyush in September, he suggested that TS should encourage crop diversification and that paddy cultivation should be reduced during Yasangi.

He had said that only the two Telugu States, West Bengal and

Assam cultivated paddy during Yasangi as climatic conditions would not be suitable in North India and in the deep South. However, due to high temperatures from March onwards, the Telugu States have been producing parboiled rice.

Vinod said the TRS Ministers were seeking a written assurance from the Centre on paddy purchase during Rabi. There is no issue with procuring the raw rice cultivated during Kharif as there was a market for it.

BJP leaders Bandi Sanjay

and Union Minister Kishan Reddy who met Amit Shah and Piyush Goel did not even ask if the Centre would purchase Rabi paddy.

The BJP leaders who asked farmers to cultivate paddy during Rabi against the Centre’s advisory on crop diversification kept mum on the issue in front of the Union Ministers, Vinod said.

The Centre has not given a single rupee for the irrigation or power generation projects of Telangana, he said.

On Tuesday, the CWC granted national project status for the Upper Bhadra Project. Recently they gave the national tag to projects in UP and MP. But Telangana BJP MPs did not even make a request for national tag for at least one irrigation project in Telangana, Vinod said.

The TRS MPs had raised this issue several times earlier when the then Union Water Resources Minister Nitin Gadkari said there was no such scheme. Now the Centre has relaxed rules and is according national project status to projects in other States. At

least now Telangana BJP MPs should get national project tag for the Palamur-Ranga Reddy project or any other project, he said.

The Union Ministers and BJP leaders discussed only ways to unseat KCR even though elections were two years away. These people should focus on public issues, Vinod said.

He said that Tuesday’s meeting of TS BJP leaders with Union Ministers made it clear they have no concern for Telangana. In States like Tamil Nadu, all parties speak with the same voice when it comes to finding solutions to people’s problems. But here the BJP leaders failed to explain to the Centre that only parboiled rice can be produced in Rabi and that the Centre should procure it, he said.

Similarly, the Centre which agreed to give Rs 39,000 crore to a national project in UP, Rs 40,000 crore to the Polavaram project in AP, and Rs 16,000 crore for the Upper Bhadra project declined national project status to Telangana projects, Vinod pointed out.

Congress alleges Rs 18,000 cr scam in paddy procurement

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

The TPCC has alleged that a Rs 18,000 crore scam took place in paddy procurement in Telangana. The TPCC said that TRS leaders pocketed Rs 18,000 crore in the paddy procurement process.

The Congress demanded that Prime Minister Modi should order a probe into the scam. Otherwise, the public would think that the TRS and the BJP pocketed the Rs 18,000 crore.

TPCC Campaign Committee Chairman Madhu Yashki Goud alleged that farmers sold their paddy to rice millers for Rs 1,300 to Rs

1,400 per quintal due to untimely rains and as there were no adequate procurement centres.

The farmers didn’t get the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of Rs 1,940 per quintal due to the TRS Government’s policy. But the TRS Government has been saying that it purchased 53 lakh tons of paddy.

He alleged that the government purchased 53 lakh tons of paddy from rice millers and not through procurement centres. The government paid the MSP to rice millers.

Rice millers deceived farmers by purchasing paddy from farmers for Rs 300 to Rs 400 per quintal less than the MSP.

This led to the Rs 18,000 crore scam, he alleged.

TPCC Working President B. Mahesh Kumar Goud alleged that land disputes were increasing by the day in TS due to the policies of the TRS Government. He alleged that TRS leaders were grabbing government lands. But the government is harassing the poor through the Dharani Portal.

He said that AICC General Secretary Meenakshi Natarajan will launch a padayatra from January 30 from Bhoodan Pochampally to Maharashtra Sevagram to highlight land issues. Former AICC chief Rahul Gandhi will also participate in the padayatra.

We are waiting for Centre’s written assurance: Jagadishwar Reddy

Procurement of additional Kharif rice



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Ministers have stayed back in Delhi as Union Minister Piyush Goel has said that the Centre would clarify in two days as to how much additional quantity of paddy cultivated in Kharif would be procured, according to Minister Jagadishwar Reddy.

Jagadishwar Reddy, among the TS delegation staying put in Delhi, said on Wednesday that, though the Centre had stated that it would procure over and above 40 lakh tonnes of rice cultivated in Kharif, Food Corporation of India officials said that they did not get any instructions to that effect so far.

"That is why we sought a written assurance. The minute

they give the letter, we will head back," he said.

Central government officials were surprised with the significant increase in yield in Telangana as such yields were not witnessed in any other State. Telangana produced never-before yields of paddy and therefore the State had requested the Centre to procure additional quantity of rice.

"Taking on the Congress party leaders for smelling a Rs.16,000-crore 'rice scam', he sought to know why they did not raise it in Parliament. The Centre was interested only in politics and not in addressing farmers' issues. Telangana people were watching everything and they would know who is working for them and who is not, he said.

Deploing the Union Minister for raising election issue, Jagadishwar Reddy said it was being done solely to divert the attention of people from the issue on hand. BJP was known for its 'anti-farmer' policies, he said.

HC issues...

Continued from page 1

All the pubs serve liquor and drunkards frequent them. Then how come a business outlet of such nature was allowed in a residential area, he questioned. The High Court issued notices to the managements of the 10 pubs mentioned in the petition. The Court asked them to file their counters, answering all the allegations mounted by the petitioners.

The High Court asked the authorities concerned to consider it as a serious matter and correct the procedures so as to avoid causing inconvenience to the neighbors before 31st December.

Former sarpanch ‘killed’ by Maoists in Chhattisgarh

Continued from page 1

The deceased, Korsa Ramesh, was a former sarpanch of K. Kondapuram village in the Yeturunagaram Mandal of Mulugu district.

The Maoists released a letter in the name of Shanta, Secretary of Venkatapuram-Vajedu Area Committee, and placed it on the body. In the letter, they alleged that Ramesh had betrayed them and the movement.

The Maoists alleged that Ramesh had colluded with the

police and had mixed poison in the milk powder which was being used by the Maoists and that it had killed one Bikshapati.

Ramesh used to help Maoists in the past. Later, the police converted him to their side covertly.

Two days back, the Maoists came to the village and kidnapped Ramesh. The wife of Ramesh had appealed to the Maoists to free him.

A dispute arose between Telangana and Chhattisgarh police in registering the case. The Telangana police asked

the Chhattisgarh police to register the case and hand over the body to them. But the Chhattisgarh police refused to do that and asked the Telangana cops to register the case.

Ramesh and his wife both hail from Telangana. The kidnap was also carried out in Telangana. So the case has to be registered in Telangana logically.

But as the Telangana DGP is claiming that there are no Maoists in TS, registering the case would have disproved his claim.

In graft...

Continued from page 1

Corruption increased in India by 6 per cent, compared to last year. Corruption would end only if the governments used technology for processing official work, obviating the need for people to directly contact government officials. For this, governments should use technology similar to that of the Income Tax Department and adopt an online system.

Rajendra Palnati called upon people to alert toll-free number 1064 should any government official ask for bribe. People could lodge their complaints with the CBI if they want a central agency. He asked people to strive for eradication of corruption in the nation.

Union minister Danve bats for renaming Hyd...

Continued from page 1

The RSS and several BJP leaders have been demanding to rename the Telangana capital as Bhagyanagar.

Danve, who is MP from Jalna in Maharashtra, said they have been demanding renaming Aurangabad city in the Marathwada region as Sambhaji Nagar for a long time.

He also said that Railways would not be privatised.

‘TRS, BJP enacting dramas as per poll strategist Sunil’s advice’

Continued from page 1

The TPCC chief said that the meeting of TRS MPs with Union Agriculture Minister Piyush Goyal and the meeting of Telangana BJP leaders with Amit Shah on the same day (Tuesday) in New Delhi was pre-planned and the outcomes were made public in a manner that left the farmers confused.

Commenting on the meeting between Telangana BJP leaders and Amit Shah, Revanth said it was ridiculous on the part of Amit to ask his party to campaign in Telangana about the corruption of KCR and his family.

"Union Minister Kishan Reddy and Telangana BJP President Bandi Sanjay had alleged repeatedly that KCR had engaged in huge corruption and that he will land in jail. But they never lodged any written complaint with their party's government at the Centre. If Amit Shah has proof of KCR's corruption, then he can order a probe by the Enforcement Directorate, the CBI, the Income Tax Department or other Central agencies. By not taking any action against KCR,

the BJP leaders have proved that they are having a tie-up with the TRS. Who is stopping the BJP Government from taking action against KCR?" he asked.

Similarly, he said that the TRS MPs' meeting with Piyush Goyal was just eyewash with no clear agenda.

"Piyush had already made a statement in Parliament that the Centre would purchase 60 lakh tonnes of paddy from Telangana. Whatever a minister says outside cannot be treated as binding. But a statement made in the House is binding. Therefore, the procurement of paddy produced during Navakalam must be a non-issue. However, TRS MPs are trying to make it appear as a big issue although they did not extract any commitment from the Union Minister on paddy procurement during Yasangi," he said.

Revanth said that TRS MPs enacted the drama of boycotting Parliament on the pretext of visiting farmers in villages. In reality, they escaped from Parliament to avoid supporting the Opposition who were demanding the dismissal of Ajay Mishra from the Union

Cabinet.

The protest by TRS MPs was aimed at shielding the BJP Government. Later, they enacted fresh dramas to keep cheating the paddy farmers of Telangana, he said.

The TPCC chief said that the TRS-BJP combine was trying to capture media attention to give the false impression that Congress does not exist in Telangana. But that got busted as farmers have realised that only the Congress was fighting for them, he said.

Revanth said that KCR, who declared war against the BJP, has gone into hiding while his family is looting Telangana. He pointed out that the Telangana Government gave front-page advertisements in the TRS mouthpiece 'Namasthe Telangana' on Wednesday regarding the salary hikes for Home Guards and release of funds for the Dalit Bandhu scheme.

He said the advertisement money goes into the pockets of the KCR family and neither Home Guards nor Dalits would benefit. The TPCC chief said that the Congress would expose both the TRS and the BJP by

conducting a 'Rachabanda with farmers' programme from December 24 to January 3, 2022.

Speaking on the issue, Uttam Kumar Reddy said that farmers have suffered huge losses in Kharif due to the negligence of the TRS. It did not make adequate arrangements for gunny bags, transportation or IKP centres. The unseasonal rains too caused heavy damage and KCR is responsible for this, he said.

He said that paddy was cultivated during the last Rabi season on nearly 52 lakh acres. He said it was ridiculous on the part of the TRS to ask farmers to drop paddy cultivation in the next season.

He said that the entire rice produced in Telangana could be exported if the State Government gives an incentive of Rs 3,000 crore. He said that the Congress would write a detailed letter to the Chief Minister regarding this.

He said that everyone knows that the TRS is mired in corruption. But the BJP Government is not taking any action against KCR due to their secret friendship.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹180
Without Skin	₹190
Broiler at Farm	₹250

EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	468
VIJAYAWADA	495
VISAKHAPATNAM	500
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.68

Shah’s green light to make BJP-TRS fight in TS fiercer

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

With the palpable involvement of the BJP high command in Telangana politics, the ongoing fight between TRS and BJP is set to become fiercer. Already both the parties have drawn up the battle lines to corner each other on various issues.

Following Union Home Minister Amit Shah’s meeting in Delhi with the party’s Telangana brass on Tuesday, it appears that the BJP high command has zeroed in on a two-pronged strategy to take on the TRS with the singular aim of

coming to power in the next Assembly elections.

Shah asked key Telangana BJP leaders to intensify their fight with TRS politically with an assurance that, at the government level, the Centre also will take steps to 'expose' the TRS government's alleged misdeeds and corruption.

On the issue concerning paddy procurement in Telangana, already TRS and BJP are trading charges and shifting the blame for non-procurement on each other. A TRS delegation, including ministers, has stayed put in Delhi for the past two days to get 'clari-

ty' on the burning issue as well as a written assurance on procurement of additional paddy from central ministers.

The TRS ministers' strategy is to bash on, regardless of the outcome; for, if the central government accepts their demand, the TRS ministers can crow that they have succeeded in bringing pressure on the Centre to accept their demand. If the Centre does not accept their demand, even then the TRS ministers will campaign that the central government, being 'anti-farmers', stubbornly did not consider protecting the interests of farmers despite TRS' best efforts.

Noticeably, the BJP high command has directed the party's Telangana unit leaders to "expose" the TRS government's stand on the paddy issue and highlight its "corrupt practices". Thus, both TRS and BJP leaders will go to public to explain their stand and blame each other.

At the government level, the Union government will try to put the TRS government in jeopardy on paddy and financial issues.

One of BJP's top leaders and Union Home Minister Amit Shah has directed the Telangana party leaders to organise a huge

public meeting and assured them that he would attend that meeting. He also mentioned that he would visit TS as frequently as possible. This reflects how serious the BJP high command is over Telangana politics.

In the coming days, the fight between TRS and BJP at the political level is going to be no-holds-barred and at the government level, it will take a new turn.

The TRS is getting ready to rule for the third time in a row, while the BJP is trying to leave no stone unturned in its goal to attain power in Telangana in the next Assembly elections.

South African study...

Continued from page 1

Germany, Scotland, Ireland, the Netherlands and South Korea have reimposed partial or full lockdowns or other social distancing measures in recent days.

Italy is preparing new measures and might make vaccinations obligatory for more categories of workers, Prime Minister Mario Draghi said.

Austria is to order a 10 p.m. close in the hospitality sector and classified Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway as risk areas, meaning arrivals from there must go into quarantine if they have not had a

booster shot.

Belgium, the Czech Republic and Spain were also considering new curbs. The Indian capital of New Delhi banned Christmas and other celebrations.

The Chinese city of Xian told its 13 million residents to stay at home as it struggles to contain rising COVID-19 cases under Beijing's zero-tolerance policy. Xian, home to the Terracotta Warriors, has not imposed a harsh lockdown as seen in early 2020 in Wuhan, where the coronavirus was first identified, but urged residents not to leave town.

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Crime rate down in Hyderabad, CP submits report to CM

G. RAVI KIRAN
■ HYDERABAD

The Police Commissioner of Hyderabad, Anjani Kumar, presented the annual report about crimes in the city on Wednesday at a press meet. As per the report, crime rate came down in Hyderabad in 2021 while cybercrime, drug peddling and drunk driving cases have increased.

A negative fact in the report is that rape cases have increased, particularly of minor girls. Murders and kidnap cases are also high.

The positive side of the report is that the police have caught many interstate cybercriminals. The cops have increased vigilance on drug peddling and arrests have increased. On traffic violations also, the police are now more focused.

In 2021, 328 rape cases were



registered, of which 228 survivors were minors. In seven cases, unknown people committed the crime. In all other cases, the suspects were known to survivors.

SHE teams registered 1,414 cases against people who harassed women in different ways. 85 people were murdered in 2021 in the city. 192 kidnap cases were also registered. In

burglary cases, 58 per cent of the stolen property was recovered by the police.

Drug peddling cases numbered 248 this year and 2,077 kg ganja was seized by the police. Actually, most of it was seized in the last three months.

Cybercrime increased this year by 55%. The plus point is that the police nabbed 265 interstate criminals and 13 foreigners. The cracking rate of cybercrime cases has also increased. More traffic violation cases were registered. Around 58 lakh cases were registered, of which 25,453 were drunken drive cases.

The police have improved their infrastructure. They inaugurated seven new police stations. This year they added around 70,000 CCTV cameras in the city. Now the total number of CCTV cameras is 4.4 lakhs in the Hyderabad Police Commissionerate area.

SCSC & Cyberabad Police launch SHE shuttle at Genome Valley

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

SCSC & Cyberabad Police have launched their 9th SHE Shuttle at Genome valley on Wednesday. India's first and largest Life Sciences manufacturing cluster, has got its first SHE Shuttle today, for the benefit of women employees working in Genome Valley, Turkapally & its surrounding areas. With this, the working women in Genome valley will have a safe transport system for them. She Shuttle is a Free, unique initiative and one of its kind in the country. This exclusive transport system for the women professionals in the Genome Valley rolled out for the transit safety of women, especially for the last mile connectivity. The SHE Shuttle operates from Turkapally Village to Kolthur, enroute covering all the major parks like IKP, MN Park - and companies like Bharat Bio-Tech, Novartis, BE etc.

Munawar Faruqi to perform in Hyderabad in January

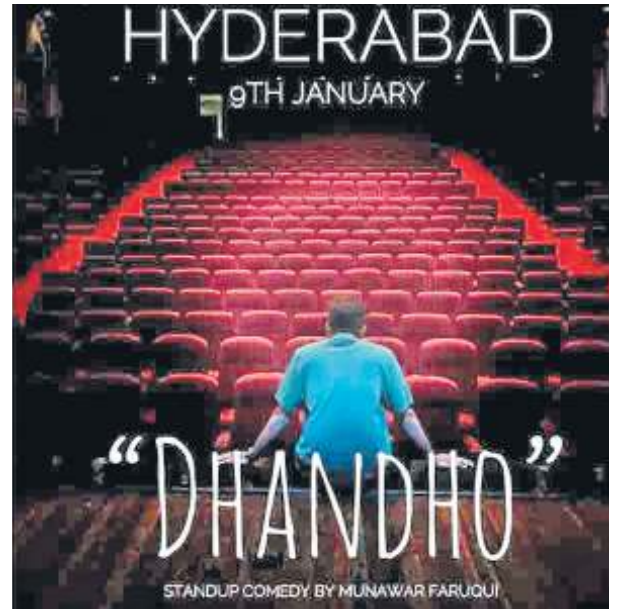
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Comedian Munawar Faruqi, who was shunned by Bengaluru Police last month, will perform in Hyderabad on January 9th. The comedian posted a picture to his Instagram account, indicating that his show 'dhandho' will come to the city next month.

Last month, Bengaluru cops stopped him from performing, citing law and order issues. Earlier this month, Telangana minister KTR offered Faruqi an open invite to perform in Hyderabad.

He said that, 'We don't cancel shows of Munawar Faruqi and Kunal Kamra just because we are not aligned with them politically.'

He also performed in Maharashtra on December 20th with the backing of Congress unit and Mahavikas aghadi government.



His shows were cancelled in Bengaluru after Hindu right wing groups protested

alleging that he hurt religious sentiments in one of his shows.

Governor calls for filling of teaching posts in varsities

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan has emphasised the need to improve the quality of teaching to bring about better standards in higher education.

She said that the vacancies of teachers must be filled on a priority basis in universities to improve standards.

Expressing concern over the declining standards of teaching, the Governor called for concerted efforts to improve teaching standards and for the promotion of research.

The Governor, as chief guest, was delivering the inaugural address at the two-day seminar on 'Synergising higher education in the context of NEP-2020: Strategies for implementation,' at the Tagore Auditorium on the Osmania University campus here on Wednesday.

'The National Education Policy-2020 has the potential to transform the education system and will pave the way for India to reclaim its position as the Viswa Guru. For this, the NEP must be implemented in letter and spirit,' she added.

The Governor appealed to



State governments to collaborate with the Centre for effective implementation of NEP-2020 to herald global standards in higher education.

Dr. Tamilisai Soundararajan said that NEP-2020 promotes critical thinking and all-around innovation and will help the country emerge as a knowledge-based economy and create an equal, equitable, accessible, and inclusive education system. 'Indian students are superior in their grasping power and we are respected all over the world for our skills. However, we need to think seriously as to

why we are failing to attract foreign students to our educational institutions, while around 10 lakh Indian students are studying abroad,' she added.

Academic leaders need to take the lead in creating an enabling eco-system for the implementation of NEP-2020 and promote multi-disciplinary education and research, she said.

AICTE Chairman Prof. Anil Saharsa Buddha, who delivered the keynote speech at the inaugural, outlined the core principles of NEP-2020 and stated that it would pave the way for

inclusive, equitable, accountable, and accessible learning. He emphasised the role of teachers and other stakeholders in the implementation of this educational policy.

Telangana State Council of Higher Education Chairman Prof. R. Limbadri, Central University of Karnataka Vice-Chancellor Prof. Bhattu Satyanarayana, ABRSM President Prof. JP Singhal, and Osmania University Vice-Chancellor Prof. D. Ravinder spoke at the inaugural session. Prof. N. Kishan was the convenor of the two-day seminar.

Telangana's Omicron tally goes up to 38

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Omicron cases are steadily increasing in Telangana. On Wednesday, 14 more Omicron cases were registered in Telangana. This brings the total number of registered Omicron cases in the state to 38. The Department of Medical Health said 14 people from at-risk countries had been diagnosed with corona. The government was alarmed as the cases escalated. It is already known that the mask wearing is must and police are imposing Heavy fines to those are roaming without a mask.

Of the 14 Omicron positive cases, 12 passengers had arrived here from non at-risk countries while the remaining two were from at-risk countries. On Wednesday, 259 international passengers have arrived here of which four tested positive for Covid-19. The blood samples of the four Covid positive patients have been sent for full genome sequencing. At present, genome sequencing results of four blood samples are awaited. Overall, since the screening and RT-PCR testing of international passengers started on December 1 at RGIA, Shamshabad, 9381 international arrivals were screened and 63 passengers tested Covid positive out of which 38 are positive for Omicron variant.

Out of the 38 Omicron positive cases so far, a total of 31 international passengers have arrived at RGIA, Shamshabad from non at-risk countries, six from at-risk countries and one person was



a contact of a positive Omicron passenger, according to the health bulletin.

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Rise in predatory loan Apps again in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Once again loan apps issue has come to the forefront. A victim who has taken 10,000 loans has faced harassment from the loan app. He filed a complaint with CCS Police on Wednesday.

The victim lives in Bangalore and took a loan from an app named Cash Free and has not managed to pay the amount in time. They levied an interest on the amount and demanded him to pay back. Since he didn't respond to their calls, they began sending threatening messages to every number in the victims contact list with abusive words and pictures. All his contacts have informed him of the same.

The victim belongs to Hyderabad and has lodged a complaint with the CCS Police on this issue. The Police have registered the case and are investigating further.



ACP, Cyber wing Mr. AVM Prasad said that In the last one week, six cases were registered on the loan apps. They are sending links in private now.

Their apps were designed to grab all the contact numbers in the mobiles of the victims. People should not download those apps and should not take any loan through the apps.'

Cold wave grips Hyderabad as temperatures dip below 10°C

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Cold wave conditions continue to grip the city as night temperatures continue to be below 10 C. In the early hours of Wednesday, the lowest temperature of 8.4 C was recorded at Rajendra Nagar, while overall minimum temperature was at 11.2C, which is 4 degrees below normal.

As per India Meteorological Department (IMD), Hyderabad, minimum

temperature is likely to hover around 11-13C for the next five days.

The city will witness foggy mornings for the next 3 days. In many places across the city, temperatures will dip by 2-3 degrees. Cold wave like conditions were seen in many districts of Telangana and IMD-H has issued a yellow alert for districts including Adilabad, Mancherial, Medak, Jagtial, Karimnagar.



Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre hosted a Christmas tree lighting ceremony to usher in the festive season. The event was attended by Manish Dayya, General Manager, NHCC Along with in-house guests, patrons, and employees who all came forward to share the spirit of Christmas and ring in the festivities.



15 cases of scrub typhus in Gandhi Hospital

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

At a time the people of twin cities are worried over increasing cases of the new variant, another disease called Scrub typhus, which mostly affects children, has surfaced.

The medical fraternity in the state is worried over at least 15 patients suffering from scrub typhus admitted to Gandhi Hospital. In December, four children suffering from symptoms of the disease joined Gandhi Hospital. Two of them recovered and two are still under treatment.

Scrub typhus disease caused by bacteria called Orientia tsutsugamushi. It's spread to people through bites of infected chiggers (larval mites). The most common symptoms of scrub typhus include fever, headache, body aches, and sometimes rash. What is alarming is such cases are on the rise in the country. In Odisha, at least 500 such cases have been reported. In UP also, the disease is increasing. According to the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, the bacterial disease spreads through the bite of larval mite.

HC imposes fine Rs.10,000 on CS Somesh Kumar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana High Court imposed a fine of Rs.10,000 to Telangana state government Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar. The Court asked CS to pay Rs.10,000 to the Prime Minister Covid Relief Fund on Wednesday. While dealing with the petitions filed in 2016 on the legality of the G.O.No.123 which is in regard to land acquisition GO for Irrigation Projects, High Court expressed unhappiness over Somesh Kumar. In fact, the High Court directed Somesh Kumar in the month of November to submit counters or attend personally before the Court. However, the Court expressed unhappiness over Somesh Kumar for not submitting counters. Moreover, The High Court also expressed dissatisfaction with the CS for not filing a petition for exemption from attendance.

‘All religions preach only peace’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Patancheru legislator Mahipal Reddy has said that all religions across the globe preach only one thing peaceful co-existence.

He was taking part as chief guest in the semi-Christmas celebrates held at GMR function hall under the aegis of the state government. Legislative Council Chairman Bhupal Reddy, Medak MP Kotha Prabhakar Reddy graced the occasion as chief guest.

The MLA highlighted how the TRS government is distributing Bathukamma Saris among women, extending Ramzan Tofa to Muslims and Christmas gifts to Christians in the new state, he said.



The government celebrates festivals of all faiths with pomp and gaiety without any bias

towards any particular faith. Bhupal Reddy noted that the people in Telangana are living

together with peace and harmony. MP of Medak Prabhakar

Reddy greeted Christians on the occasion and preachings of Jesus Christ are worth emulating by all. He highlighted the support Gudem Mahipal Reddy extends for the building of temples, mosques and

Churches in the constituency. Fathers representing various churches conducted special teachings.

Later, new clothes gifted by the state government have been distributed among Christians.

ZP Chairman Prabhakar, GHMC zonal commissioner Priyanka, MPPs, municipal chairman, MROs, MPDOs, heads of various government departments, TRS senior functionaries and others took part in the event.

Jagga to stage dharna before Intermediate Board today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC working president and Sangareddy MLA T Jagga Reddy has addressed a letter to the Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao saying that the parents of the intermediate first year students are in concern and hence the government has to pass all the failed students. He remembered that some states passed the students by giving pass marks due to prevailing corona conditions. He demanded the state government to take a decision in this regard immediately for the future of students without any delay. He said that he will stage deeksha in front of the intermediate board on Thursday



from 11AM to 2PM as the Chief Minister failed to respond to his letter before 12PM on Wednesday. He said that he will sit in dharna alone. He said that he has no inten-

tion to blame the government in this regard but the government has to take a decision immediately as it is a sensitive issue. He said that the students didn't receive comprehensive education due to online education as the covid impact fell on many sectors. Several students are committing suicides with the results of intermediate first year, he said and demanded the government to pass the students or else students further commit suicides. He asked the CM and Education Minister to take the decision immediately in favor of students. It is not proper to the government to take decisions only if the opposition parties stage dharnas.

TRS strives for harmonious living, says Srinivas Goud

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Excise Minister Dr. V Srinivas Goud on Wednesday distributed new clothes among the poor Christians at the X-Mas celebrations held on the premises of MBC Church here.

No other regime has any record of feeding the poor on festival occasions and gifting them with new clothes, he said claiming credit for the TRS.

On the occasion of Ramzan, Christmas, and Bathukamma festival, the state government arranges food and distributes clothes to the poor, he said adding that the objective behind the state government's exercise is to ensure harmonious living of people of all faiths in the state.

Earlier, the poor used to dispose of their properties to bear the cost of medical treat-



ment in case of any major illnesses, he said. In sharp contrast, the TRS government has been extending free treatment and extending financial assistance to them to undergo treatment in private hospitals, he elaborated. Chief Minister KCR is desirous to develop the state

in all sectors of activity, he said appealing to Christians to pray to Jesus Christ that there should be complete peace and harmony in the state. The state government will extend support to all sections of society, he assured.

The Minister presented Rs

50,000 cheque to Balaswamy of Christianpalli from the CM's Relief Fund. Similarly, he presented a cheque for Rs 2 lakh to Fatima Begum of the town from the CMRF. Later the minister flagged off a propaganda vehicle on energy conservation.



Governor to visit Nalgonda tomorrow

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Telangana state governor Dr. Tamil Sai Soundara Rajan will visit Nalgonda district on December 24th, in the Marriguda Mandal of Nalgonda district. The Governor will be the chief guest at the inauguration of the new Horticultural Polytechnic (Vocational) College to be set up under the auspices of Grama Bharati. Organizers said that this polytechnic college, which is being set up as an affiliate of Konda Laxman Horti Cultural University, is being set up in a completely backward Marriguda area. The inauguration of the college will be held at 9 am on Friday at the hands of the state governor Tamil Sai Soundara Rajan.

Minister Sabita inaugurates Community CCTV

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI

Telangana State Minister for Education Sabita Indra Reddy along with CP Rachakonda Mahesh Bhagwat inaugurated the total worth of 43,35,634 which is installed in Balapur PS limits at New Royal colony, Bismilla colony, Sai homes, Sadatnagar on Wednesday.

On this occasion, the Commissioner of Police Mahesh Bhagwat has explained about minimum standard specifications as envisaged in TS Public Safety law enforcement Act 2013 and asked all the vendors to strictly follow while installing CCTV's under Nenu Saitham and Community CCTV projects. Rachakonda Police is having approximately 1,43,000 cameras as of now and looking forward to installing more cameras in the days to come in.

Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy said that "One camera



equals to 100 Police and 24x7 cameras work reiterated. She has appreciated the role of the Rachakonda police in controlling law and order, services during incessant rains.

Apart from this CP Mahesh Bhagwat and DCP LB Nagar Zone, ACP Vanasthalipuram Division has Launched renovated Officers, Men and Women restrooms, Property room, dining area,

Command control room of Balapur PS, and also planted trees in the garden area. Donations were

received towards this CCTV cameras installation from GAIL, TCS, and 25 private donors. Amongst private donors Rs. 4,27,000 were donated by Amzad Khadri. CP and Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy felicitated the donors their generosity.

Siddipet to have three-star hotel

Harish to inaugurate the first ever star hotel on Friday

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

All set for the inauguration of Harita three-star hotel at Nagulabanda, built at a cost of Rs15 crore, by Finance Minister T Harish Rao here on December 24. Pending works of the hotel are being executed on a war-footing.

The first-ever star hotel in Siddipet district will have ground plus two floors. The hotel will have 14 rooms on the ground and first floors and will have a suite on the top floor. It will have an air-conditioned restaurant and a banquet hall with a capacity of 1000 people. The hotel will have a sprawling lawn for the celebration of parties.

The three-star hotel is being readied to give top class hospitality to guests as the people visiting Siddipet from various parts of the country and also



from the world has increased with the creation of the Siddipet district.

With a view to creating a brand for Siddipet artists, Harish got the works of famous painters - Kapu

Rajaiah, Batik Balaiah, and Rustum. Besides famous Cheryala Nakasi Paintings will also adorn the guest room walls. These works stand as an example of the glory of the art of Siddipet.



BJP govt anti-farmer, anti-worker: CPI

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

Former CPI MLA has accused the Centre of pursuing anti-people, anti-farmers and anti-worker policies and termed the BJP rule as inefficient. Participating as the chief guest, Kothagudem former MLA Kunamaneni Sambasiva Rao was speaking at political classes held for CPI activists for undivided Karimnagar and Adilabad districts.

He called the farmers year-long struggle to force the BJP government to withdraw agri-

cultural laws as historic and charged PM Narendra Modi with mortgaging the country to others. He criticised the rule of KCR as despotic and noted that the CM is devoid of grace and shooting his mouth as he liked. The State and central governments have been trading charges on each other on paddy procurement and playing with the lives of farmers.

He breathed fire on KCR for categorically stating that the TRS government will not procure at least one KG of paddy in Rabi season.

Labourer drowns in well outside Telangana CM's farmhouse

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 24-year-old laborer died after an accidental fall into a well outside the compound wall of Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's farmhouse in Siddipet district of Telangana on Wednesday, police said. A senior police official said the laborer, along with some others, was cleaning the well on Tuesday evening when the mishap occurred. His body was fished out this morning and sent for a post-mortem. Rao's farmhouse is located at Erravalli village in the district. The laborer's father has told the police that his son had a history of fits, the official said.

A case was registered, the official added.

Sukhendar Reddy condemns Piyush's comments

PNS ■ NALGONDA

MLC Gutta Sukhendar Reddy strongly condemned the remarks made by Union Minister Piyush Goel towards the ministers who went to Delhi to discuss the issue.

He told a media conference at his farm in Chityala outskirts of Nalgonda district on Wednesday that it was not right to speak sarcastically to those who came to speak on behalf of the farmers.

Piyush Goel, a CA. He doesn't know about farmers' problems. He said the remarks made by the Union Minister were meant to humiliate the people of Telangana.

He said that Telangana Congress MPs in Parliament never spoke on behalf of the farmers.

He said Telangana was the only state in the country that was buying every paddy.



He accused the central government intention of discrediting the KCR government. Gutta Sukhendar Reddy warned that the Center should not neglect the farmers.



All municipal activities should be done online

PNS ■ MAHABUBABAD

Mahabubabad District Collector Shashanka has directed the authorities to ensure that municipal activities are no longer conducted online.

The Collector reviewed the municipal development works with the municipal officers and staff under the chairmanship of Additional Collector of Local Bodies Abhilasha Abhinav at the Collectorate Praga Conference Hall on Wednesday.

On this occasion, the Collector said that all the activities related to the municipality should be done online. Applications should no longer be accepted online. He said that by reviewing the programs undertaken by the municipalities, plans should be

made to identify and overcome the shortcomings in achieving the set targets and make progress every month by setting targets.

He said that the greenery works to set up in the urban areas should be monitored and the plants should be grown in such a way as to create a pleasant environment for the people in a manner that would make the growing plants look beautiful. Constantly monitored and asked to take care of the plants. Municipal officials, Mahabubabad Commissioner Prasanna, Maripada Commissioner Satyanarayana Reddy, Thorroor Commissioner Gundu Babu, Dornakal Commissioner, town planning officials and others were present in the programme.

'Set up floating solar power plants'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar has urged the Centre to set up solar power plants at Lower Manair and Mid Manair projects.

Sanjay addressed a letter to the Union Minister of Power and New & Renewable Energy Raj Kumar Singh on Wednesday regarding this.

Sanjay explained in his request that there could be many benefits from floating solar power plants if they were set up on Manair River. He said that the setting up of floating power panels will reduce water vaporization and will be helpful in areas facing water scarcity.

There is no need for land for setting up floating solar power plants and they can be set up in limited areas.

He urged the Union Minister in his letter to set up floating solar power plants at the two Manair projects.



Tributes to Venkataswamy

PNS ■ GODAVARIKHANI

Several BJP leaders have paid rich tributes to former Union Minister G Venkataswamy on Wednesday on the occasion of observing his seventh death anniversary. They garlanded the G Venkataswamy statue near the SCCL Godavarikhani GM's office.

Addressing the gathering, BJP SC Morcha National Secretary S Kumar, Trade union leaders Kaushika Hari and P Mallikarjun urged party men to work hard to fulfill the ideals of the late leader.

They traced the bond G Venkataswamy had with the Ramagundam industrial area and recalled how he implemented a pension

scheme for them when he was the Union Minister. He

was also instrumental in the distribution of rice through the FP shops. Because of his efforts, RFCL has been revived, making available urea to the farmers. They demanded the Centre to honor him with Bharat Ratna award.

In connection with the death anniversary, sweets and fruits have been distributed and free food has been provided to children of Amma Parivar orphanage here.

BJP corporator Dubasi Lalita, BJYM state media cell convener K Vijay and other leaders took part in the programme. Similarly, food is provided to Ayyappa devotees at Kodandarama Temple here.



Police set up special teams to curb cockfights

PNS ■ KAKINADA

As preparations are being made to conduct cock fights across the district on the occasion of Sankranti festival the police are taking massive steps to check the infamous blood sports. The police here on Wednesday said that they set up special teams especially to prevent cockfights and other gambling events. A strict vigil is being kept on those arrested previously in organising cockfights and bind-over cases were booked against them as a preventive measure. During the intensive raids conducted by the special teams from December 9 till December 20



a total of 310 cases were booked against 1143 people involved in cock fights. As many as 1048 knives used for cock fights were seized and Rs.3.14 crore was collected towards personal surety amount from the accused

before the mandal executive magistrate, the police added, informing that the cock fights would not be allowed and that cases would be registered against those who organise cock fights under the Gaming Act.

'Correct logical, demographic mistakes in voters' list'

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

Additional Collector Srinivas Reddy has directed RDOs and Tahsildars to take steps to correct the logical mistakes in the voters' list and demographical errors.

Addressing RDOs and Tahsildars through video conference from here on Wednesday, he asked them to verify the addresses of voters under various polling booths, GIS capturing of polling booths, preparation of alternative polling booths' information.

An action plan has been implemented to enroll all those who crossed 18 years as on Jan 1, 2022, in a transparent exercise, he said. He asked them to prepare a list of new voters separately. At the same

time, he asked the officials to prepare voters' lists according to their age. By December-end, the objections from voters, if any, and their claims should be disposed of completely to publish the final voters' list on Jan 5,

2022. He asked them to give wide publicity to Garuda mobile application, devised by the Election commission to enable voters to spot their polling booths easily.

The BLOs should dispose of the representations received from the people after subjective them to scrutiny at the field level using Garuda mobile application and post the progress in the mobile application, he said. The voters' list should be ready whenever elections are held.



Ekasila School celebrates "National Mathematics Day"

PNS ■ MAHABUBABAD

Indian Mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan's birthday was celebrated on Wednesday at the local "Ekashila Holy Angels School" in Mahabubabad to mark the National Ma thematical Day. Remembering Ramanujan, the great genius in mathematics, the students made simple shapes, formulas, and models for solving problems and explained them to their fellow students.

'Ramatheerthalu' to be developed a la Bhadradri shrine

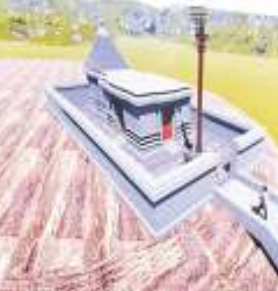
PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Minister for Endowments V. Srinivas, Deputy Chief Minister (Tribal Welfare) P. Pushpa Srivani and Minister for Municipal Administration Botsa Satyanarayana jointly laid the foundation stone for the reconstruction works of the Lord Sri Kodandarama Swamy Temple, located on the Bodikonda hillock, Rama theerthalu in Vizianagaram district on Wednesday. The State Government has sanctioned Rs.3 crore for the facilitation of the ancient temple with new infrastructure facilities. After completing the mytho-

logical rituals on the occasion, all the guests visited the Sita Devi Temple and held special rituals.

While addressing the media, the ministers said that the government would develop the temple as the second Bhadrachalam Ramayya Temple. "Besides, the Sitarama Swamy Temple at the downhill would also be developed spending an additional Rs.1 crore," the Endowment Minister said. All the works would be completed before the Sri Rama Navami festival next year, they said.

"TDP leader Ashok Gajapathi Raju is creating problems with vested interests.



He is trying to damage the peaceful atmosphere in the region. If the temple belongs to the Manas Trust, why didn't the Trust take up development works all these decades? The attitude of Ashok Gajapathi

Raju, who claims to be a gentleman in politics, was not right," Botsa Satyanarayana pointed out.

"The government invited Raju to the foundation stone-laying ceremony following all the protocols. According to the guidelines and traditions, the department engraved the names on the plaque. The main priest of the temple and the executive officer of the temple visited Ashok Gajapathi Raju and invited him to the programme. Raju, who is a senior politician and who has knowledge on the protocols, should not have termed the government a circus company.

INDIA CORNER

Uddhav recovering well, will attend Maha Assembly session: Sena MP tells Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday enquired about the well-being of Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, who is recuperating from a cervical spine surgery. Thackeray, 61, is recovering well and will attend the ongoing session of the Maharashtra assembly. Shiv Sena leader Vinayak Raut told the prime minister. Modi sought an update on Thackeray's health from Shiv Sena parliamentarians during the customary meeting of floor leaders with Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla after the conclusion of the Winter Session of Parliament. Besides the prime minister, senior ministers Rajnath Singh and Amit Shah were also present in the Speaker's chamber for the meeting. On Tuesday, Thackeray chaired a meeting of the state cabinet via video conferencing. He also participated virtually in the customary tea party for legislators on the eve of the session.



Over 3,900 teaching posts vacant in constituent colleges of Delhi University

Over 3,900 teaching posts are vacant in constituent colleges of the University of Delhi and over 3000 teachers are presently working on an ad-hoc basis against those vacant posts, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Wednesday. Union Minister of State for Education Subhas Sarkar gave the information in a written response to a question in the House. "Total number of 3,959 of teaching posts are vacant and 3,047 teachers are presently working on an ad-hoc basis against those vacant teaching posts in all the constituent colleges of the University of Delhi," Sarkar said. The maximum number of vacant teaching posts are in Gargi College (216) followed by Janki Devi Memorial College (169), Ramjas College (143), Deshbandhu College (132) and Sri Venkateswara College (131).



327 teaching, non-teaching staff members of KVs, JNVs, CBSE died due to Covid: Govt

A total of 327 teaching and non-teaching staff members of Kendriya Vidyalayas, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Central Board of Secondary Education expired due to COVID-19 but none of them died during Covid duty, Rajya Sabha was informed on Wednesday. Union Minister of State for Education Subhas Sarkar gave the information in response to a question in the Rajya Sabha. "As per available data 327 teaching/non-teaching staff of Kendriya Vidyalaya, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Central Board of Secondary Education expired due to COVID-19. None of these teachers died during Covid duty," he said. "Education is a subject in the Concurrent List of the Constitution and schools, other than those owned and funded by the Central government, are under the jurisdiction of the state governments," he added.



Din in Maha Assembly after Shiv Sena MLA 'mocks' PM Modi, apologises

PNS ■ MUMBAI

BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday accused Shiv Sena MLA Bhaskar Jadhav of mocking Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Legislative Assembly and making certain gestures, evoking sharp reactions from the opposition MLAs leading to stalling of the proceedings.

Jadhav later apologised when the House reconvened after two adjournments, saying that making hand gestures was his natural way of speaking and that he didn't use any unparliamentary word against the prime minister.

Jadhav made the remarks, as alleged by Fadnavis when a discussion on a calling attention notice on power issues was underway. Speaking in the Lower House, BJP MLA Sudhir Mungantiwar sought to know why state power minister Nitin Raut has "backtracked" on his



promise to waive electricity tariff of customers up to 100 units.

Raut recalled that he had only said that waiving of the tariff would be considered. However, as the power department provided uninterrupted supply to customers during the lockdown period, the tariff for the same has to be paid.

The power minister said even Prime Minister Narendra Modi had made certain promises to farmers but hasn't fulfilled them.

At this point, Jadhav allegedly mimicked Narendra Modi (which he later said was made by Modi as a prime ministerial candidate in 2014.

Taking strong objection,

Fadnavis said Jadhav's comments and gestures about the prime minister will not be tolerated. BJP MLAs joined Fadnavis and said Jadhav had insulted the prime minister.

BJP MLAs rose to their feet and demanded an apology from Jadhav.

Deputy Speaker Narhari Zhirwal said he would examine whether Jadhav made any unparliamentary remark and decide accordingly.

Water Resources Minister Jayant Patil (NCP) and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Anil Parab (Shiv Sena) said that leaders of all parties should be respected in the legislature.

Jadhav said he didn't make any comment against the PM.

"I spoke only about what Narendra Modi had said in 2014 when he was the prime ministerial candidate (of BJP)," the MLA said and added that he was withdrawing his comments and "gestures".

Fadnavis alleged that Jadhav was taking the issue lightly.

"How can one withdraw the objectionable gestures?" Fadnavis asked and demanded an apology from Jadhav.

As the ruckus continued, the Chair adjourned the proceedings for 20 minutes.

The House adjourned again for 15 minutes as BJP members kept shouting slogans demanding an apology from Jadhav.

When the Assembly reconvened after the second adjournment, BJP members were again on their feet demanding that Jadhav be suspended from the House.

As protests continued, Jadhav said he had not made any unparliamentary comments against the PM.

"My way of talking is such that I inadvertently make hand gestures. If my body language has hurt the members of the House I tender an apology," he said.

CIVIC POLL ROUT

Tathagata Roy says party run by "debauch, traitors"

PNS ■ KOLKATA,

A day after his party's dismal performance in the KMC polls, veteran BJP leader Tathagata Roy slammed the state leadership, saying the party is being run by a bunch of "rotten debauch-cum-traitors".

On Tuesday, West Bengal's ruling TMC gained control of the 144-member Kolkata Municipal Corporation, clinching 134 seats, in an emphatic endorsement for the party seven months after its landslide win in the state assembly polls.

The BJP, which lost much of its steam after the assembly poll defeat, managed to win just three wards, the Congress and the CPI (M)-led Left Front two, and Independents three.

"Hindu Bengal seem headed for doom and extinction. Their principal abode, the state of West Bengal, has been a Kakistocracy", ruled by a bunch of soul-destroyers for



the last 44 years. "Government by the worst persons; a form of government in which the worst persons are in power", Roy, a former governor of Tripura and Meghalaya, tweeted.

"BJP, who could have resurrected it, was left to be run by a bunch of thoroughly rotten debauch-cum-traitors. The result was the Assembly election debacle of 2021. And because there was no serious course correction thereafter, the rout in Municipal elections.

#KakistocracyWestBengal," he said in a series of tweets.

The Left Front, despite the mauling, finished second only to the TMC in terms of vote share and, in a majority of the wards, it pushed the BJP to the third position.

Continuing his tirade against the state leadership, Roy said he has pointed out the lacunae at party forums on numerous occasions, but nothing was done to rectify the mistakes.

Maha govt to roll back decision to allot small-size houses to mill workers

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government will take back the decision taken in 2016 to allot the houses measuring 160 sq ft each to be given to mill workers in Mumbai, state housing minister Jitendra Awhad told the Legislative Council on Wednesday.

The minister also said the money paid by mill workers towards the purchase of these houses will be returned with the interest. The government will give new flats to mill workers when they will become available with MHADA.

Awhad was responding to a question raised by Congress MLC Bhai Jagtap. "The 2016 decision to allot shoe-box sized houses, slated to be given (to mill workers), will be taken back. We are of the view that such small houses should not be given to mill workers. We will also return Rs 33 crore with the interest to mill workers who had paid towards (purchase of) these houses," the minister said.



PAGD's protest over delimitation panel's move 'conspiracy'

PNS ■ JAMMU

Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Ravinder Raina on Wednesday said the PAGD's proposed protest in Srinagar on January 1 against the Delimitation Commission's recommendations is a "conspiracy" against the people of the union territory.

The Delimitation Commission, set up to redraw the assembly seats of the union territory, is learnt to have proposed six additional seats for the Jammu region and one for

the Kashmir Valley in its 'Paper 1' discussed with its five associate members - three parliamentarians of the National Conference (NC) and two of the BJP from Jammu and Kashmir - in New Delhi on Monday.

The people are watching the "drama" of the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) and the Congress, and will give a befitting reply to them during the assembly polls, which will be held

after the completion of the delimitation exercise, the BJP leader said while addressing reporters here. The PAGD, an alliance formed by five

Jammu and Kashmir-based mainstream political parties, including the NC and the PDP, on Tuesday termed the panel's recommendations as "divisive and unacceptable", and announced a peaceful protest in Srinagar on January 1 against its proposal. Raina said that with honesty, the Delimitation Commission, with the support of the Election Commission, has put forth its recommendations after a lot of hardwork to provide justice to deprived communities and regions.

"But this has not gone down well with the National Conference, the PDP and the Congress, who have ruled the erstwhile state (of Jammu and Kashmir) for 70 years and



'Approaches of BJP, Cong towards women empowerment similar'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Targeting the BJP and the Congress on the issue of women empowerment, BSP president Mayawati said on Wednesday their approach on the matter has been similar and largely publicity oriented.

Mayawati's attack on the BJP and the Congress came amid concerted efforts by these two parties to woo women voters ahead of the assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh due early next year. In a series of tweets in Hindi, the BSP president said, "Almost half of the population of the country are women but they are still deprived of most of the rights. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar had made great con-



tributions in making them empowered by giving them legal rights, and now BSP is the party which is following him."

"The approach of the Congress, the BJP, etc. towards women empowerment is almost the same and mostly publicity oriented (dikhavati), whereas under the BSP government a lot of efforts were made for the social, economic and education-

al self-reliance of women, which rival parties are now trying to cash in on," she said.

She said the BJP is not serious in making women strong and self-reliant as is the Congress. "The matter of 33 per cent reservation for them in legislative assemblies and Lok Sabha pending for years is a living proof of this and this reservation must be implemented, this is the demand of the BSP," Mayawati tweeted.

At a programme on Tuesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said his government is trying to raise the marriage age of women to 21 so that they can have time to study and progress, but this has upset some.

3,117 from Pak, Afghanistan & Bangladesh granted citizenship: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A total of 8,244 non-Muslims from Pakistan and Afghanistan had applied for Indian citizenship in the last four years and of them, 3,117 were granted citizenship, Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said on Wednesday.

The minister said in Rajya Sabha that all foreign nationals are governed by the provisions contained in the Foreigners Act, 1946, the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 and the Citizenship Act, 1955.

Security situation in J-K improved since Aug 2019: Govt tells Rajya Sabha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The security situation in Jammu and Kashmir has improved significantly since August 2019 and there has been a significant decline in terrorist incidents while infiltration of terrorists from across the border has also come down, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Wednesday.

Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai also said the number of terrorist incidents in Jammu and Kashmir has come down from 417 in 2018 to 203 (up to November 30) in 2021 and estimated net infiltration has come down from 143 in 2018 to 28 (till October 31) in 2021.



"The government has instituted a robust security and intelligence grid along with proactive operations against terrorists. Therefore, the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir has improved significantly since August 2019," he said replying to a written question.

The Narendra Modi govern-

ment had abrogated Article 370 provisions which gave special powers to Jammu and Kashmir and divided the erstwhile state into two Union Territories on August 5, 2019.

Rai said there has been a significant decline in terrorist incidents and infiltration of terrorists from across the border has also come down significantly.

There were 417 terrorist incidents in Jammu and Kashmir in 2018, 255 in 2019, 244 in 2020 and 203 till November 30 in 2021, he said.

He said the estimated net infiltration to Jammu and Kashmir was 143 in 2018, 138 in 2019, 51 in 2020 and 28 till October 31 in 2021.

Truck driver held in Delhi for supplying drugs; 125 kg ganja worth Rs 25 L seized

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A 37-year-old truck driver was arrested for allegedly supplying drugs in the national capital, police said on Wednesday.

The accused has been identified as Aarif Khan, a resident of Mewat district in Haryana.

Acting on a tip-off, the police laid a trap near Tughlakabad village in Govindpur on Monday and a truck driver was intercepted, a senior police officer said.

When the truck driver tried to escape, the police overpowered him and took him in their custody. Deputy Commissioner of Police (southeast) Esha Pandey said. During interrogation, Khan disclosed that he has been working for a person in Najafgarh for more than six months. In the first week of



December, he went to Bihar with 250 cartons of illicit liquor. He delivered the cartons in Patna and then went to Odisha, the DCP said.

From Odisha, he purchased 125 kg ganja for Rs 25 lakh. It was decided that he would meet a person near Tughlakabad village where he was supposed to hand over the vehicle to him, Pandey said. The police said they seized 125 kg of ganja from his possession.

Harish Rawat alleges non-cooperation from Cong organisation, hints at quitting

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Congress campaign head for poll-bound Uttarakhand Harish Rawat on Wednesday alleged non-cooperation from his party organisation and said he feels like calling it quits.

In a tweet in Hindi, Rawat said, "Isn't it strange that the organisational structure at most places, instead of extending a helping hand, is standing with its head turned away or playing a negative role at a time when I have to swim across the ocean of elections."

India successfully tests new-generation 'Pralay' missile

PNS ■ BALASORE (ODISHA)

India Wednesday successfully conducted the maiden flight test of the indigenously-developed, surface-to-surface missile 'Pralay' off the Odisha coast, the DRDO said.

The solid-fuel, battlefield missile developed by the Defence Research Development Organisation is based on Prithvi Defence Vehicle from the Indian ballistic missile programme.

The missile, launched from the APJ Abdul Kalam Island around 10.30 AM, met all the mission objectives, the DRDO said in a statement.

"The new missile followed the desired quasi ballistic trajectory and reached the designated target with high degree



accuracy, validating the control, guidance and mission algorithms.

"All the sub-systems performed satisfactorily. All the sensors deployed near the

impact point across the eastern coast, including the down range ships, tracked the missile

trajectory and captured all the events," it said.

With a range of 150 to 500 km, 'Pralay' is powered with solid propellant rocket motor and other new technologies. The missile guidance system includes state-of-the-art navigation and integrated avionics, the statement said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated DRDO and associated teams for fast-track development and successful launch of the modern surface-to-surface missile.

"It is a significant milestone achieved today," Singh tweeted.

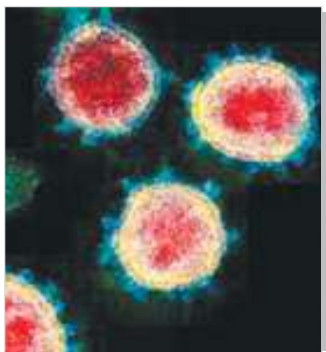
Secretary, Department of Defence-R&D and Chairman of DRDO, Dr G Satheesh Reddy, said the new-generation missile will give necessary impetus to the armed forces.



Smart move

New vaccines must help fight not only the original Coronavirus strain but also new variants

Omicron may not look life-threatening as of date, but its ability to infect both the fully vaccinated people as well as those who have antibodies owing to a prior infection is a cause for worry. For, it could be that the next Coronavirus mutation may retain the ease of transmission but, unlike Omicron, could prove deadlier than Delta plus. Then what? Secondly, what happens when supposing the Governments keep recommending booster shots to face new variants and scientific studies show that repeated boosters of the same vaccine reduce their efficiency? Even if scientists one day prove that a mix-and-match of vaccines is effective, a question arises: Which vaccine should be preferred — and why — for the third, booster shot? Even though Omicron is beginning to spread furiously across the world, and in India, we are yet to make it mandatory for the States to send all positive cases for genome sequencing, quickly decide on vaccinating children and, more importantly, inform the nation about the scientific community's progress in finding the next-generation vaccine. Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya told Parliament last week that the science laboratories have already initiated a study of the Omicron variant. That assurance apart, the Government needs to share the current status of our vaccine research with people. Across the world, the race is on to experiment with new vaccine combinations and emerging vaccine platforms to find the one vaccine that can stand up not just to Omicron but possibly future variants of Coronavirus.



A simple logic appears to drive the vaccine research globally: Nobody will escape this virus eventually and, therefore, either the world comes up with an all-purpose vaccine for the entire population or helplessly watches it get infected. The US and Spain have experimented with a vaccine combo. Research shows that vaccinating people with two vaccines, either Oxford-AstraZeneca and Pfizer-BioNTech or the Spanish CombivacS and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, has thrown up encouraging results. Many countries are testing next-gen vaccine platforms like viral vector vaccines and nucleic acid-based vaccines that can consist of the DNA or mRNA. The Americans are finding out how to create and distribute synthetic antibodies to pre-emptively prevent a spread. A most important breakthrough may shortly come from the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research that is developing a vaccine to help fight not only the original Coronavirus strain but also the new variants, including Omicron. Named the Spike Ferritin Nanoparticle COVID-19 vaccine, or SpFN, it has completed animal trials and the first phase of human trials. Apparently, the vaccine is being tested against Omicron, too. It is being described as a 'pan-Coronavirus' vaccine which takes the nanoparticle approach wherein different Coronaviruses are placed on the same vaccine so that the immune system simultaneously 'educates' itself about their presence. Given its unpredictability, the idea is to stay a step ahead of the virus; chasing variants after they emerge means staying behind.

PICTALK



INS Tarangini decked up for President RN Kovind's visit, at the Southern Naval Command in Kochi

PTI

Fair deal?

Alternative measures rather than tinkering with women's legal age for marriage is the way forward

The Government may have introduced in the Lok Sabha the Bill to increase the legal minimum marriageable age for women from 18 to 21, a move that met with no little resistance from certain political quarters, but is the Bill really the panacea for the ills plaguing Indian women at home, at work, at the roadside or in society at large? While bringing the legal age of marriage for women on a par with men may be seen as a symbolic step towards gender equality, besides an opportunity for the fair sex to have a larger say in the handling of their life and of the immediate world around them, it remains a moot point whether simply waving a statutory wand would ameliorate their societal conditions. The move emanates from suggestions sent to NITI Aayog last year by the Jaya Jaitly Committee that examined "matters pertaining to the age of motherhood, imperatives of lowering Maternal Mortality Rate, improvement of nutritional levels and related issues". It also clears the way for women to become economically independent. The task force pointed out that empowerment of women was its primary aim.



However, the devil's advocate points out that laws banning underage marriages have been around since donkey's ears without effecting any significant dent in their numbers, more so in some States than in others. Of course, the Government has a point when it says that delaying marriage will empower women: After all, today's girls may have become more knowledgeable due to easy access to the internet and media, but it holds equally true that staying indoors and being 'connected' has taken a toll on their physical health. No longer do they play in the sun and the soil, which has led to anaemia, vitamin deficiencies and a plethora of other wellness issues. In such a scenario, marrying later is bound to make them healthier and educated with more career choices but for achieving this aim, social awareness is far more important than amending existing laws. After all, the new law takes away the right of a woman to marry at 19 or 20, if she so wanted. It's better that rather than tinkering with the existing laws and allowing women to marry only after crossing the age of 21, the Government sought to change the societal mindset that cares for the views and aspirations of all women.

War on Islamophobia boasts unjust warriors

There are enough moderate, educated and reformist voices within the community that need platforming to counter Islamophobia credibly



BHOPINDER SINGH

Globally, religion has intermeshed with politics to create a polarising 'us' versus 'them' soundtrack, where more progressive outpourings like inclusivity and secularism are increasingly pooh-poohed. Political hardliners with extremist religious views are dominating the political discourse where violence, hate speeches and intolerance are flourishing. Herein, the altar of electoral success is stripping all organised religions of their spiritual, conscientious and gentler anchorage towards decidedly more militant assertions and perceptions. Even in inherently pacifistic faiths like Buddhism, the scourge of hyper-nationalism has led to calls to arms by Sri Lankan monks and ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya minority in Myanmar. The proverbial 'walls' are rising, and the name of religions is getting tarnished — none perhaps more than Islam.

For the large mass of moderate Islamic believers, this piquant and hijacked situation has given rise to the unfortunate phenomenon of Islamophobia. Like the clerical order of most organised religions, many Mullahs and Imams of prominence have done little to correct the Islamophobic perceptions — whereas the other 'voice' of the community, its political leadership, has further weakened the cause by abusing religious emotions and imperatives. Seeking political legitimacy in the name of religion has been at the heart of most global turmoil and intolerance in society. Religio-politico combine makes for potent short-term ammunition on the hustings, but it invariably leads to unforgivable and explosive consequences in the long run.

Ironically, it is the political establishments of Pakistan, Turkey and Malaysia who have sought to address the real-time issue of Islamophobia by starting a media channel, which Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said was "dedicated to confronting the challenges posed by Islamophobia and setting the record straight on our great religion". Noble as it sounds, it has reduced the deep issue to



audio-visual optics as opposed to genuine misappropriations and usurpations of religious sentiments that needs a combination of societal-administrative-legislative-political corrections. Yet again, those very forces that have diminished the purity and piety of peaceful moorings are posturing as knights in shining armour on the issue of Islamophobia, to suggest otherwise. The self-assumed ambassadorship of concerns that afflict perceptions of Islam by the trinity of political establishments could not possibly have worse emissaries than these counter-intuitive politicians.

Pakistan is caught in the vortex of religious extremism that has been assiduously cultivated; it is facing the humiliation of getting blacklisted by watchdog agencies for "financing terrorism" and its infamous dalliances with forces like the Afghan Taliban or even domestic variants like Tehreek-e-Labbaik (TLP) are on record. Pakistan under 'Taliban Khan', as the popular moniker of Imran Khan goes, has a dubious track record on issues like Ahmediyas, minority rights and blasphemy that were recently exposed by the frenzied lynching of a Sri Lankan expatriate. It can hardly posture as the credible

environment and credentials to counter Islamophobia.

Meanwhile, the erstwhile imagery of a reformist and progressive Turkey under Kemal Ataturk was one thing; the dark and irate reality of Turkey today under a religio-revisionist, Recep Erdogan, the complete opposite! 'Ottomanist' Erdogan has interfered unwarrantedly into the killing battlefields of the Middle Eastern theatre with its own religio-terror proxies, escalated international rows with threats galore, muzzled moderate voices internally and milked religion as his default go-to defence when other levers to defend his autocracy fail. To curry favour with the isolated Pakistanis, he espoused the discredited Islamabad line on Kashmir and sits cosily with other authoritarian leaders like Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin — again, a suspect model for allaying Islamophobia fears.

While the 95-year-old Mohamad Mahathir may not be in power in Malaysia anymore, he as the Prime Minister in 2019, along with Erdogan and Imran, had mooted this media platform. Today, the Mahathir-founded party that is in power — the Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) — is carrying forward that conceptual-

isation. Therefore, Mahathir's ideological heft as was borne out by shocking statements, like "Muslims have a right to be angry and kill millions of French people for the massacres of the past", makes for discomforting underpinnings. For such political thoughts to suggest that they could offer restorative impressions is either very ambitious or, more likely than not, plain political posturing.

The reality of the trinity coalescing and merging its 'voice' has more to do with internal fissures and aspirations within the Ummah (Muslim world) to dislodge the Saudi-led bloc and emerge as the alternative power centre. Interestingly, Arab Sheikdoms are making reformatory noises and thawing moves, like Israeli embassy in the UAE and societal relaxations in Saudi Arabia, whereas the more strident, inflexible and puritanical bluster is coming from Ankara and Pakistan, the 'terror nursery' of the world. With daily ratcheting of anti-West rhetoric, collapsing economies and combusting communities, there is enough and more that both Pakistan and Turkey could do to mend their ways before setting themselves the task of countering Islamophobia. Especially Pakistan and Turkey are now at the global forefront of infusing religio-politics and exporting it across the world, which is primarily responsible for creating Islamophobia. It will take more than religious drama serials, austere content and 'sanitised news' to convince the wary world of Islamophobia. There are enough moderate, educated and reformist voices within the community that need platforming to counter Islamophobia more credibly.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Pudukcherry. The views expressed are personal.)

WITH DAILY RATCHETING OF ANTI-WEST RHETORIC, COLLAPSING ECONOMIES AND COMBUSTING COMMUNITIES, THERE IS ENOUGH AND MORE THAT BOTH PAKISTAN AND TURKEY COULD DO TO MEND THEIR WAYS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN NOW

Sir — Omicron, a new variant of Coronavirus, is said to have three times more transmissibility than the previous Delta plus. The Omicron cases in India have crossed the 200 mark in no time. Some of these cases have no travel history. Therefore, the Government should be serious in implementing preventive measures among the masses. Apart from measures like containment zones, night curfews and partial lockdowns, the Government should impose fines on those who violate COVID norms like not wearing masks, unnecessary gatherings, social distancing etc.

The vaccinated people are likely to take these norms lightly due to an assurance of false security. Therefore, they should be educated that they are no less vulnerable to the threats of the new strain than others. Though the infection from Omicron is believed to be low in severity, the likely high number of cases would strain the resources more. So the Government and civil society should work hard to impress upon the people not to lower their guard. There should be no room for complacency at least for the coming couple of months. We must not get carried away in this festive season and realise that we are still in danger.

DVG Sankararao | Vizianagaram

WHAT IS INDIA WITHOUT FARMERS?

Sir — The National Farmers Day is celebrated every year on December 23, the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh. It is believed that due to the hard work of Chaudhary Charan Singh, the Zamindari Abolition Bill was passed. Agriculture plays a crucial role in our economy; it contributes about 17 per cent to the total GDP and provides employment to many.

It's not easy being a farmer. The farmers work very hard to produce the food that we serve on our plates and sometimes waste, too. Farmers have had an arduous history in India. They are hailed as 'anna data' (food provider) but barely receive the due credit and recognition they deserve. They are barely aware of most of

Why should the students suffer?



Kishore Kumar's song 'Vaada tera vaada' from the movie *Dushman* becomes relevant during elections. Whether there is a promise of employment or betrayal of promises, either of them is eventually fulfilled. Nobody knows what kind of intoxicant one consumes during elections that even the educated ones take an unprecedented turn and cast their votes on the basis of caste and religion. The veteran and experienced leaders presiding the constitutional posts proudly say in their speeches that India is a youthful nation. But, on the other hand, the youth is

left behind with unfilled promises and boastful words. The Governments try to avoid the question of rising unemployment and the youth continues to suffer amid these promising sounding speeches.

The students who were not able to appear in their last attempts of the UPSC, PCS or other Government examinations due to the horrific COVID-19 must be given one more chance on the grounds of humanity. It is worth pondering upon that elections and its results are neither leaked nor go to court and are announced right on time but competitive exams, the result of which can make or break a student's career, are delayed for years and sometimes cancelled entirely. Statistics show that Indian students die of suicide a lot. This is disturbing and disappointing. We cannot create circumstances that make the students feel that dying is easier than living. Students today will be the future tomorrow and we have to save the tomorrow, today.

Aman Jaiswal | New Delhi

the Government schemes designed to benefit them. Therefore, the Government and the society should work to spread awareness among them. The agricultural sector is one of the crucial pillars of India's economy and farmers are a pride of the nation. Therefore, any injustice upon them should be dealt with strictly.

Vishal Patidar | Ujjain

THE ODDS OF MENTAL ILLNESS DEFIED

Sir — Mental illness continues to confuse people because there is no unambiguous line between disorder and disease. A condition called "bipolar disorder" is quite common in India and elsewhere. According to a rough estimate, there are more than 10 million men and women who exhibit this disorder. Affected individuals display extreme mood swings that can last for months. The person can become a manic at one point and depressed at another. An individual who is not aware that he is in the manic phase of bipolar disorder can have strained inter-

personal relations. Can an individual with bipolar disorder don the important post of a judge?

The Supreme Court seems to have the answer; it recently dismissed a petition that challenged the appointment of a person to the Delhi judiciary as a judge under the mental illness quota. Although the candidate cleared the Delhi Judicial Services Exam in 2018, under the "person with disability" category, his candidature was rejected by the Delhi HC that felt he would not be able to perform well as a judge due to his bipolar disorder status. The court trashed the petitioner's contention saying that since the candidate was on medicines and was under "remission", he cannot be considered "disabled" anymore. Consequently, the SC order comes as a ray of hope for mentally ill individuals aiming high.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

I think the TMC doesn't have even one per cent vote share as of now. It came to Goa only three months back.

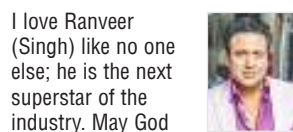


Delhi Chief Minister —Arvind Kejriwal



We can see another storm coming. Within weeks, Omicron will dominate in more countries of the region.

WHO Europe director —Hans Kluge



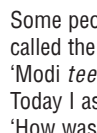
I love Ranveer (Singh) like no one else; he is the next superstar of the industry. May God bless him!

Actor —Govinda



If there is one bowler who can exploit South African conditions pretty well, it's Jasprit Bumrah.

South Africa captain —Dean Elgar



Some people called the vaccines 'Modi teeka'. Today I ask them, 'How was the Modi teeka?'

BJP national president —JP Nadda

Liquidator appointed for winding up of Adarsh Society

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Various irregularities have been reported in the functioning of Ahmedabad-based Adarsh Credit Cooperative Society and a liquidator has been appointed for winding up of the Society, Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday informed Parliament.

In his written reply to a query to the Rajya Sabha, Shah said various irregularities including embezzlement, siphoning and diversion of funds have been reported by multiple law enforcing agencies in the functioning of Adarsh Credit Cooperative Society Ltd. "Accordingly, a liquidator has been appointed for winding up of the Society," he said.

Shah further said complaints have been received for the non-repayment of funds against some of the multi-state credit cooperative societies. In the case of delinquent societies, action for winding up of 44 multi-state credit cooperative societies has been taken so far under Section 86 of the Multi State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002, he added.

HP starts manufacturing laptops, desktops in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tech giant HP on Wednesday said it has started manufacturing of multiple PC products, including laptops, in India.

Powering the 'Make in India' initiative of the Government of India, HP has started manufacturing multiple models of laptops, desktop towers and mini desktops at the Flex facility in Sriperumbudur near Chennai, Tamil Nadu, according to a statement.

Some of these products qualify under public procurement order of the government and will be available on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal to meet the demands of the government departments and other customers, it added.

"HP has partnered closely with India since it began its operations in the country. As India made significant progress and emphasis on digital transformation, we have worked with the Government of India and state governments in their mission to empower lives of millions of citizens and enhance the communities' quality of life," Ketan Patel,



managing director at HP India Market, said.

He added that the announcement marks a significant step for HP India towards local manufacturing in line with the 'Make in India' programme. "We hope to play a meaningful role in fulfilling the dream of 'Atmanirbar Bharat', by expanding the scale and reach of our manufacturing operations," he said.

This is the first time HP is manufacturing such a wide range of laptops in India with products such as HP EliteBooks, HP ProBooks and HP G8 series notebooks, the

statement said.

HP has also expanded its locally manufactured commercial desktops by adding various models of desktop mini towers (MT), mini desktops (DM), small form factor (SFF) desktops and a range of all-in-one PCs, it added.

These products have both Intel and AMD processor options. HP now also manufactures display monitors in India. HP had partnered with Flex to manufacture commercial desktops from August 2020. Since then, HP has significantly expanded its manufacturing operations to reaf-

Powering the 'Make in India' initiative of the Government of India, HP has started manufacturing multiple models of laptops, desktop towers and mini desktops at the Flex facility in Sriperumbudur near Chennai, Tamil Nadu, according to a statement.

firm its commitment to the Make in India initiative.

The proximity of the Flex facility to the Chennai port improves operational efficiency and ease of sourcing of raw materials for manufacturing laptops and other PC products, the statement said.

'Demand for spices has risen sharply with more use as health supplement'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With spices being recognised as a health supplement especially during the pandemic, their demand has increased tremendously and exports have also gone up, the government said on Wednesday.

Releasing a book "Spices Statistics at a Glance 2021" published by Directorate of Arecanut and Spices Development, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said strategies are to be planned to re-orient development programmes to give further impetus to the production and resultant export of spices.

The book highlights the growth achieved in the spices sector during the last seven years from 2014-15 to 2020-21 in the country.

Tomar hoped that this publication will be useful for such strategic planning by government policy makers and stakeholders like scientists, researchers, farmers etc in the spices sector, an official statement said.

According to the



Agriculture Ministry, "The demand of spices has tremendously increased due to the recognition of spices as a health supplement especially during the

pandemic period, which can be clearly seen from the growing export of spices like turmeric, ginger, cumin, chilli etc." The rapid stride in production has made available quality spices for export which grew from 8.94 lakh tonnes worth Rs 14,900 crore in 2014-

15 to 16 lakh tonnes valued at Rs 29,535 crore in 2020-21.

India's spices production grew from 67.64 lakh tonnes in 2014-15 to 106.79 lakh tonnes in 2020-21, following an increase in area from 32.24 lakh hectare to 45.28 lakh hectare in the said period.

The book is a compendium of all the spices statistics like, area, production, productivity, export, import, price and value of output of various spices produced in the country.

MONEY MATTERS

Hero Electric ties up with HDB Financial Services for retail finance



Hero Electric on Wednesday said it has tied up with HDB Financial Services, a non-banking financial company (NBFC), to offer easy financing options for the purchase of electric scooters. The collaboration will enable customers to avail hassle-free loans with minimum documentation on their desired electric scooter, Hero

Electric said in a statement. The financing option will be available to Hero Electric customers across its widespread network of over 700 dealerships in the country, it added. Furthermore, HDB will offer eligible customers benefits like attractive interest rates, flexible tenure options, and affordable EMIs as part of the tie-up. "Electric two-wheelers will become the vehicles for masses in the future, and easy financing is one of the essential cogs in the wheel. We at Hero have a basket of financiers, offering a wide choice of ownership options to suit one's requirements," Hero Electric CEO Sohinder Gill said in a statement. Our partnership with HDB Financial Services is a step forward to offer easy and seamless financing options beyond Tier-1 cities to promote clean and green commuting, he added. "We are confident that this collaboration will help our customers to substantially save on their commuting costs without having to spend upfront," Gill stated.

Amazon to acquire full stake in JV Prione Business Services

E-commerce major Amazon on Wednesday said it will acquire Prione Business Services - its joint venture firm with Catamaran, subject to requisite regulatory approvals. In August, Amazon and NR Narayana Murthy's Catamaran had announced that they will not continue their joint venture, Prione Business Services, beyond May 2022. Prione Business Services Pvt Ltd - the joint venture between Catamaran and Amazon - will be acquired by Amazon subject to requisite regulatory approvals. Amazon will acquire Catamaran's shareholding in Prione in compliance with applicable laws including all assets and liabilities," Amazon said in a statement on Wednesday. The businesses of the JV will continue under the leadership of the current management and on receipt of regulatory approvals, the board of Prione and Cloudtail will take steps to complete Prione Business Services was formed in 2014 and was coming up for renewal on May 19, 2022. Amazon and Catamaran had not disclosed the reason behind the decision.

Sensex jumps 612 pts; Nifty ends above 16,950

PNS ■ MUMBAI,

Equity benchmark Sensex surged 612 points on Wednesday, tracking gains in index majors Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank and L&T amid a positive trend in global markets.

The 30-share index jumped 611.55 points or 1.09 per cent to end at 56,930.56. Similarly, the NSE Nifty advanced 184.60 points or 1.10 per cent to 16,955.45.

Bajaj Finance was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising around 3 per cent, followed by Bharti Airtel, Sun Pharma, Reliance Industries and SBI.

On the other hand, Wipro, ITC and Nestle India were the laggards.

"Domestic market is gaining ground amid a positive rebound in the global market. The rebound was broad-based while mid and small caps out-



performed as the bargain opportunity led investors to accumulate the beaten-down stocks," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul ended with gains, while

Shanghai closed in the red. Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading on a positive note in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude rose 0.38 per cent to USD 74.24 per barrel.

Monthly rentals in co-living properties down 10-25 pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The average monthly rentals in co-living properties, including student housing, declined by 10-25 per cent across major after the outbreak of the COVID pandemic, according to property consultant Colliers India.

In its whitepaper 'Future of Co-living in India', Colliers India mentioned that the number of beds fell to 1.3-1.4 lakh in 2020 from 2 lakh in the previous year, while the occupancy level dropped to 40-60 per cent.

There has been a dip of 10-25 per cent in rentals post-COVID, it pointed out.

During the 2021 calendar year, the supply has again

bounced back to over 2.10 lakh beds, and the occupancy level improved to 70 per cent.

"The concept of 'shared economy' got severely tested during the peak of the pandemic. Factors such as uncertain economic conditions resulting in loss of jobs, work from home and the shift of migrant population to their respective hometowns in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak brought the evolving co-living sector to an immediate halt," the statement said.

On the outlook for the next year, Colliers said the segment would witness a recovery, driven by reopening of offices, record vaccination and reopening of colleges in a phased manner.

Hyundai joins hands with ace golfer Aditi Ashok

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hyundai Motor India on Wednesday said it has tied up with ace golfer Aditi Ashok. Under the two-year partnership, Ashok will be representing the brand in the national and international tournaments.

Through this association, the company aims to strengthen the brand's voice, spirit and innovative approach to further prioritise customer interests, and create new opportunities for the brand that resonates with today's youth, Hyundai Motor India Ltd said in a statement.

As a part of the association, Hyundai will work closely with Ashok, representing the company's young and progressive imagery, it added. "Our association with Aditi Ashok reflects the brand's vision to inspire people, especially women in sports, to be their true selves and stand by their choices. "Our commitment towards creating a gateway of opportunities for emerging talent has been a key focus this year.

L&T Construction bags significant order

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Wednesday said its construction arm has bagged a significant order for its buildings and factories business from a reputed developer.

The scope of work includes design and construction of entire civil structure, including waterproofing, masonry, plastering and electrical conduiting, L&T said in a statement.

The residential business of buildings and factories has secured this order to construct one of the largest residential townships in

Bengaluru.

"The project involves construction of 6,768 apartments spread across 39 towers... Additionally, the development entails 149 villas along with club houses, swimming pools and other amenity structures. The total built-up area will be 13.43 million sq ft," the statement said.

The project is scheduled to be completed in 42 months, it added.

Larsen & Toubro is an Indian multinational engaged in EPC projects, hi-tech manufacturing and services. It operates in over 50 countries worldwide.

Tata Medical develops fast-testing solution for COVID-19

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Medical & Diagnostics on Wednesday said it has indigenously developed a fast-testing solution for COVID-19 to significantly boost India's testing capacity amid the Omicron variant threat.

The solution, Tata MD CHECK Express RT-PCR, can be applied in multiple areas where quick, high volume, and reliable testing is required, such as airports and events, the company claimed.

With studies in India pointing to a possible surge in cases in February next year, there is expected to be a multifold increase in demand for RT-PCR COVID tests that are economical and give fast results, it added.



To meet this challenge, Tata Medical & Diagnostics (Tata MD) has indigenously developed the COVID testing solutions that will significantly boost India's COVID testing capacity, the company said.

Its solutions include 'Tata

MD CHECK RT-PCR Fast 3Gene' kit that uses a fast amplification protocol, with a processing time of 90 minutes and can process 90 samples per batch per machine. It is approved by ICMR with 100 per cent sensitivity and 100 per cent specificity, the company said.

Tata Medical & Diagnostics CEO Girish Krishnamurthy said the company was striving to indigenously develop innovative medical technologies and working on several new technologies for COVID-19 testing.

"These express testing solutions can be applied in multiple areas where quick, high volume, and reliable testing is required such as airports and events," he added.

Zydus Cadila gets USFDA nod for generic drug

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drug firm Zydus Cadila on Wednesday said it has received approval from the US health regulator to market Pimavanserin tablets, used in the treatment of certain mental disorders, in the American market.

The company has received tentative approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) to market Pimavanserin tablets in strength of 10 mg, Zydus Cadila said in a statement.

Pimavanserin is used to treat the symptoms of a certain mental/mood disorder (psychosis) that might occur with Parkinson's disease. It helps lessen symptoms such as seeing or hearing things that are not there (hallucinations) and false beliefs (delusions).

HYDERABAD METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
7th Floor, Swargajyothi Commercial Complex, Ammerpet, Hyderabad.
Public Notification U.S. 15 (3) of HMDA Act, 2008
(Government Memo. No.12699/P/11/2021 dt:15.11.2021)
In exercise of powers conferred by Sub-Section (1) of Section 15 of HMDA Act 2008 (Act No.8 of 2008), it is proposed to make the following draft variation to the land use envisaged in the notified Master Plan issued vide G.O.No.288/MA, dt:03.04.2008. The said in S.No:13,14&15 in S.No:193,199,204&205 of Kakatipally (Village & Mandal), Medchal-Malkajgiri District to an extent of 2484.13sq.mts (2971 sq.yds) which is presently earmarked as Residential use zone as per Notified Master Plan of HMDA-2021 notified by the Government vide G.O.MS.No.288/MA dt:03.04.2008 is now proposed to be designated as Commercial Use Zone. The details of the above are available in Websites <http://www.telangana.gov.in/> and <http://hmda.gov.in/>. Objections/Suggestions would be considered from any person or body to the said proposal. They can submit objections/suggestions in writing either to the M.C. HMDA or to Sp. Chief Secretary IMA & U.D Dept., Telangana Secretariat, DTCP Office, Hyderabad within Fifteen (15) days from the date of Publication of this Notice.
R.O.No.2474/PPCL-AGENCY/MDVT/1921-22 Dt:23-12-2021 for Metropolitan Commissioner, HMDA.

Office of the Director of Agricultural Marketing Government of Telangana, Hyderabad.
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
E-procurement No.58/AM/15/MDVT/1921-22, Dated: 21-12-2021
Online Tenders are invited by Superintending Engineer (AM), Hyderabad from the Registered Civil Contractors and Electrical Contractors with 'A or B' Grade License for the following works minus Market Yards in Haidarabad, Surampet, Adilabad, Manjira, Nalgonda, Medak, Jagtoli, Hanamkonda, Nirmal, Nuzvid, Srisaile and Rangareddy Districts costing of Rs.7,45,25,000/- E-procurement site opening Date on 21-12-2021 at 5:00P.M. The Non-refundable Processing fee shall be paid through online and counterforesigned by the bidders with receipt/journal number / UTR number shall be scanned and uploaded along with bid. Any other information can be had from the below tender.telangana.gov.in or office of the Superintending Engineer (AM), Hyderabad. Sp. Superintending Engineer (AM) Officiating R.O.No.2474/PPCL-AGENCY/MDVT/1921-22 Dt:23-12-2021 Q/o Director of Agri. Marketing, Govt. of T.S.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA ROADS AND BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
e-Procurement No.23/ENG/15/MDVT/1921-22, Dated: 23.12.2021 (1)
Online tenders are invited on "e" procurement platform in Siddipet, Sangareddy and Medak Districts under Non-Plan(MDR/2019-20 / FDR 2020-21 & 2021-22. (i) Egre (B) Road works under Non-Plan (MDR) for 2nd call. (ii) Egre (B) Road works under Non-Plan(MDR) for 4th call (iii) Two (2) Road works under Non-Plan(MDR) for 5th call (2) Tenders can download the tender schedules from e-portal place i.e. tender.telangana.gov.in/. The last date of receipt of tenders for road work is 06.01.2022 upto 3:30PM (2) Further details can be seen at e-procurement market place i.e. tender.telangana.gov.in/. R.O.No.814/PPCL-AGENCY/MDVT/1921-22 Dt:23-12-2021 Sp. Engineer-in-Chief(R&B) State Roads & CRN

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
Short 'e' procurement NIT No. 53/EE/Divn.15/Sec&Div Zone/GHMC/2021-22 dated: 21-12-2021
S.No.1, NIT No.: NIT No. 53/EE/Divn.15/CHWC/2021-22, Dt: 21-12-2021. Name of the Work : 10 No. Disabling Works. Estimated Amount : 154.00 Lakh. Start date/Last date & Time for Receipts of Bids : Down load Start date : 22-12-2021 at 3.00 P.M. Down load End date: 28-12-2021 at 3.00P.M. Bid Opening : 28-12-2021 at 3.15 P.M. Name & Address Office & Cell No. Executive Engineer-Divn.15, GHMC: 9704456422. Further details can be seen at e-procurement market place i.e. tender.telangana.gov.in/. D.P.R.No.19176-PPCL/Adv/1/2021-22 Sp. Executive Engineer, Division No.15, GHMC.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With an ambition to empower innovators and entrepreneurs across the country, Niti Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) has come up with a first of its kind Vernacular Innovation Program (VIP), which will enable innovators and entrepreneurs in India to have access to the innovation ecosystem in 22 scheduled languages.

According to an official statement, to build the necessary capacity for the VIP, AIM has identified and will be training a vernacular task force (VTF) in each of the 22 scheduled languages.

Each task force will comprise of vernacular language teachers, subject experts, technical writers, and the leadership of regional Atal Incubation Centers (AICs), it



added.

Launching the VIP, Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar said India derives its identity from the diverse social and cultural fabric with regional languages being one of the most prominent cultural

assets. "VIP strengthens the design and innovation capabilities of our communities, thereby assisting local entrepreneurs, artisans and innovators to seamlessly assimilate the knowledge cum technical

materials that AIM will develop. This would assist India in building a strong local network of design experts and innovation practitioners," he said.

VIP is an initiative to lower the language barrier in the field of innovation and entrepreneurship such that will systematically decouple creative expressions and languages of transaction said Dr. Chintan Vaishnav Mission Director AIM, NITI Aayog at the launch event of the program.

AIM Mission Director Chintan Vaishnav said VIP is an initiative to lower the language barrier in the field of innovation and entrepreneurship such that will systematically decouple creative expressions and languages of transaction.

Quoting the 2011 census, he said only 10.4 per cent of

Indians speak English, most as their second, third, or fourth language.

"Why shouldn't we then create equal opportunity for the vernacular innovators who represent the staggering 90 per cent of our population.

"After all, we know for sure that this excluded population, no matter which Indian language they speak, is at least as creative as the rest," he stressed.

According to the statement, India may be the first nation in the world to launch such an initiative where an innovation ecosystem catering to 22 languages plus English is being built.

By providing access to learning in one's language and culture, AIM looks forward to enriching the local, regional, national and global innovation pipelines, the statement noted.

Let's play!

The residents of SMR Vinay City have an all-new reason to go outside and stretch their legs! A sports extravaganza was organised within the society walls in Miyapur by the name of "Sports Extravaganza," and it saw a huge number of people coming together to participate in the many sports competitions organised. This event, which started last year, saw a great increase in the number of participants this year - nearly 500 people actively taking part, say the organisers, SCOWA. The organisers were pleased to see that there were a lot of women who participated in the project and fully enjoyed themselves playing cricket, throwball, carroms, tennis and other such games. Many residents felt like they could have fun like they did during their college years—many were grateful for being able to play with a community that was tough to find after getting deeply invested in the daily



muck of working and household affairs. It must have definitely been a breather! "With the pandemic, everyone was cooped up in their own home, and they were so tied up with working from home and online classes, that we felt it

would be a great idea to organise a sports festival on the weekend. There was an overwhelming response from kids and youth, and women really enjoyed

themselves as well," shares King Johnson Koyyada, the President of SMR Vinay City, Miyapur. All the women from different states and cities of the country are united. They are participating in the event as a group. "I personally felt like my childhood is back and I enjoyed all sorts of sports which I never played before," says Kavita Goyal, a resident, while expressing her gratitude for the HOA of the society for organising the activities. Another resident, D. Avani, spoke about the many sports that were organised for them. "I chose to play cricket, and while playing we really reverted back to being kids!" The cricket matches saw teams of the wives playing, while the husbands cheered them on! They cheered

with every sixer or four the women hit, and whistled when the wickets fell- truly a fun, energetic experience for everyone involved! The Initiative was very well-thought-out by the SCOWA Sports Committee. Sports Secretary Suresh, Joint Secretaries Naveen, and Deepak Khatri, and other members of the other party are conducting every game very effectively. Responsibility has been entrusted to individuals who are proficient in every game. "Playing games for fun is a completely different feeling from playing like a tournament. It's great to see everyone coming together to play and socialise," say the organisers. This is one of the main perks of living in a gated community! "This event was possible only because of it being a gated community. Many people are only now finding the right people and facilities to retake the sports they used to play. The residents practiced at night, even two months in advance of the competitions. You can tell how they're excited."



Binge-watch these web-series this holiday season!

Without a doubt, our adored OTT platforms have a vast library filled with titles from diverse genres. It is about to get even bigger with many new original shows and movies coming to the fore with the coming year. There is nothing like being glued to the screen for a couple of hours and unwinding post a tiring day, and only a good suspenseful thriller can accomplish this feat, and there is no shortage of those on our OTT platforms today. While cinema or a show, if well made, is wholly consuming, one can argue that thrillers as a genre are naturally more engaging when, say, a romantic drama or a coming-of-age movie. And at a time when we need some 'distraction' more than ever in our lives, many of us are in search of a good, suspenseful story and that is exactly where we come into the picture. From high-flying shows like *Cartel* to potential OTT Filmfare contenders, the best of OTT is yet to come. Amid many original shows, a few thrillers deserve a watch and are thoroughly listed below for your consideration.

1. Aranyak - Netflix

The star-studded recent Netflix release *Aranyak* is a show that revolves around political ploys, personal agendas, and a beastly myth where all of these surfaces as two mismatched hill station cops navigate a web of suspects after a puzzling murder. The creators of the show are Charudutt Acharya and Rohan Sippy. It stars industry bigwigs such as Raveena Tandon, Parambrata Chatterjee, and Ashutosh Rana. Have we not given you enough reasons to binge on the show already?

2. Cartel - ALTBalaji

This show has been the ultimate bigwig on ALTBalaji this year. It stars big names such as Rithvik Dhanjani, Tanuj Virwani, Divya Agarwal, Monica Dogra, Samir Soni, Supriya Pathak, and 137 other actors. The series is an action drama with its core set in a family. The show primarily revolves around The Angry family and four other crime lords

based in the different areas of the city. Khan, Anna, Gajraj, Angre, and a mysterious bookie-cum-movie producer are the low-profile mafias in the city of dreams. For years, these five powerful gangs have survived the underworld without a fuss only due to one iron lady, Rani Mai, now on her deathbed. So what happens next is a story that will keep you glued to the screen!

3. Mumbai Diaries 26/11 - Amazon Prime Video

Mumbai Diaries is another suspense thriller web series to watch out for. Directed by Kiran Rao, it's a medical thriller series that runs in a hospital's emergency room. The challenges faced by the medical staff at the hospital and other first responders across the city of Mumbai while dealing with a crisis of immense magnitude such as a terrorist attack are beautifully shown in the series. In this war, the fixing ones are the most broken to save lives and heal others. It has been the most engaging Hindi web series this year so you do not want to miss it. It stars Mohit Raina, Shreya Dhanwanthary, Tina Desai, and Natasha Bharadwaj.

4. Hostages - Disney+ Hotstar

Directed by Sudhir Mishra, *Hostages* is one of the most brilliant Hindi thrillers on Disney+ Hotstar, keeping you at the edge of your seat. Based on the Israeli show of the same name, the show 'Hostages' revolves around a surgeon who is faced with a tough predicament when her family members are held hostage and the only way to save them is by participating in the assassination of a key political figure. The Disney+ Hotstar original features Tisca Chopra, Ronit Roy, and Parvin Dabas so go indulge right away!

5. Scam 1992: The Harshad Mehta Case - Sony Liv

Scam 1992 was one of India's finest in recent years. Directed by Hansal Mehta, this Sony Liv special takes us on an epic journey of Bombay in the late 1980s and all through the nineties.

E-learning, a new phenomenon

L NIHARIKA

Learning is a phenomenal part of man's routine. Let it be education, building skills, personal development, etc. It's a never-ending journey! Pre-pandemic learning was sustained in classrooms, but post-pandemic scenarios are different now. For many, finding the right platform had become a peril on its own. The constant hunger for growth is at times petrifying! The unfolding education crisis in the country was dismissed by this blessing in disguise when Athena Company launched Tutoroot, an educational technology platform enabling training services for K-12 students! If the pandemic highlighted the inequalities faced by both students and teachers while managing online, M. Satyendra (Satish) Managing Director of Athena Global Technologies Solutions and Tutoroot, made sure to fill this gap. He spoke about the company and gave many insights to us to know how they are actually bridging the digital *takraar* in education. Beginning with the Eureka moment, he states, "As digitisation is on par and transforming various industries, one sector we wanted to work on was education. So this is the origin of our education platform, fortunately, we started the procedure in pre-Covid only. But we got more awareness post the pandemic! The issues students were facing during that period boosted us to develop this platform, according to their issues and needs." He also states how before the pandemic, people mostly didn't understand online training platforms. As a start it was just a self-learning platform, later it developed into video recording sessions, and slowly the interacting sessions came to light. If you look at classrooms today, there is no personalised

training as per the educator. The teacher interacts with a bunch of students at a time. Post pandemic, the situations were different as everything had to be digitised in a short span. Most of the platforms were like watching television, once distracted you'll lose track of the time! Furthermore, he continues, "If we see the major issues of the current situation, students aren't able to concentrate on online classes.

Teachers are also unable to engage the bunch of students all at a time, on-screen. Considering all these issues we are trying to get an adaptive engine into our platform which focuses on personal training. It is more of interactive-based learning, whatever they experience through classrooms they experience the same with our online platform.

According to it, we designed our efficient learning curve too because education is a hybrid model that can never digitise completely, as students are not only experiencing offline for academic reasons but for so many other traits. For example, there is characterization, behavioural, communication etc. Students develop such things only in school. The courses students learn in school, we boost them to learn beyond that here." Currently, they are working with an NGO, as most teachers are struggling to take online classes. They are making content to educate teachers and helping them to adapt new teaching methods and that's surely the need of the hour! In normal situations, one doesn't have access to teachers outside India, but through this platform, one can interact with International teachers also and get more exposure. Concluding the interview on a knowledgeable note, he expresses, "Education in India definitely has one of the best systems and is up to the mark. Huge companies are hiring students from our country. So it's our responsibility to enlarge it further!" The platform aims to a learner's destination, to avoid the digital divide and enhance the way one looks at education nowadays.



Mr. M. Satish (Satyendra), Managing Director, Athena Global Technologies and MedleyMed

IMPLEMENTING GENDER-NEUTRAL NORMS

Rewind
2021

We have come to the 21st century, yet many people still practise some outlandish customs which are at odds with gender equality. It's high-time that we abolish all such things which put the women of our society in such impertinent situations. Let's rewind a few stories, where many of us have raised voices for our own rights and tried to change the sphere!

Celebrating birth of daughter



In a heartwarming incident recently, a panipuri vendor in Bhopal offered thousands of free golgappas to people to welcome his baby girl. He intended to send across a message to society to celebrate the birth of a girl child and not discriminate between the genders. Shocked by the disapproving attitude of people around him, he decided to bring a change in their mindset by celebrating the occasion by distributing pani puri for free.

IAS officer rejects kanyadaan



Tapasya Parihar who recently secured 23rd rank in the UPSC examination refused to *kanyadaan* on her wedding by telling her father, "I am not a charity thing, I am your daughter." Tapasya got hitched to IFS officer

Gaurav Gangwar in Jaba village of Narsinghpur of Madhya Pradesh. She did not let the ritual of *kanyadaan* take place at her wedding. IAS officer Tapasya said in an interview that she didn't like this ideology of giving away daughters since childhood. How can someone donate her without her wish, she used to wonder!

Welcome the richest woman billionaire in 2021



Investment banker Falguni Nayar launched beauty platform Nykaa from her father's office when she was 49. Almost a decade later, after her IPO was oversubscribed nearly 82.5 times, India's richest self-made woman billionaire said she is only getting started! She is the second wealthiest woman promoter in India. At present, the promoter family holds around 53 per cent stake in the firm FSN E-Commerce Ventures, which owns Nykaa. The stake at the opening price of Rs 2,001 per share was worth over \$6.5 billion. She broke the glass-ceiling!

Ladkiyon ka zamaana hai

The National Family and Health Survey carried out by the government between 2019 and 2021 has found India now has 1,020 women for every 1,000 men. India has more women than men for the first time in its recorded history.



and is no longer experiencing a population boom! The numbers indicate that India can no longer be called a country of missing women. Back then, there were 927 women per 1,000 men in India. This is the first time, in any Census, that the sex ratio is skewed in favour of women.

Calling for applications from the transgender community

In an initiative to promote gender equality, the Karnataka police has for the first time invited applications from transgenders for the posts of 'Special Reserve Sub-Inspector'. The notification for the Karnataka state police recruitment-2021, said 'men, women and transgenders', including in service of residual and Kalyana Karnataka (Local)— 2021-22 can apply to fill 70 posts. Apart from this, three posts have been reserved for transgender candidates in the Forensic Science Laboratory for Scene of Crime Officer.

Dismissing inherent gender in uniforms

The Valayanchirangara Government Lower Primary School Ernakulam district has introduced a gender-neutral uniform for students. All students will be wearing 3/4th shorts and shirts, irrespective of gender. Meanwhile, the issue is being discussed on social media platforms. Journalist and academic Arun Kumar wrote on Facebook that gender-neutral uniforms would dismantle the consciousness that enabled men to gaze at the human body as a commodity.





Asha Kher



Anupam Kher

ACHIEVE AND EXCEL

Young Indians Hyderabad organised its Annual Day on 21st December. On this special occasion, an interactive session named "Dare to Achieve" was held with renowned actor and theatre personality Anupam Kher.

PARTY

Photos by SV Chary



Aruna



Sidharth Malani



Arthi Shah



Ankit



Viren Shah



Ronil



Bhavya Sree

WILD WILD WEST

A cowboy-themed party in Rock Heights saw Bollywood's favourites and the who's who of the business world. The fashion show's highlight was the show-stopper Lion Kiron. The show had Bollywood dances and a lot of other fun attractions that made it a memorable night for everyone who was present.



Ali



Lion Kiron



Priyanka



Rao Ramesh



Shiva Reddy



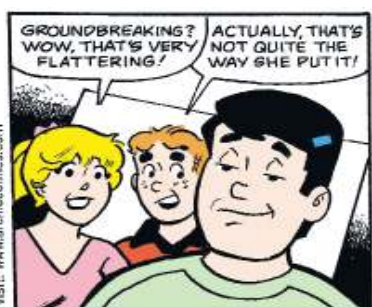
Sravan



Lifeway and Holman Bible Publishers announced the launch of *The Lifeway Telugu Study Bible*, for the Telugu community.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



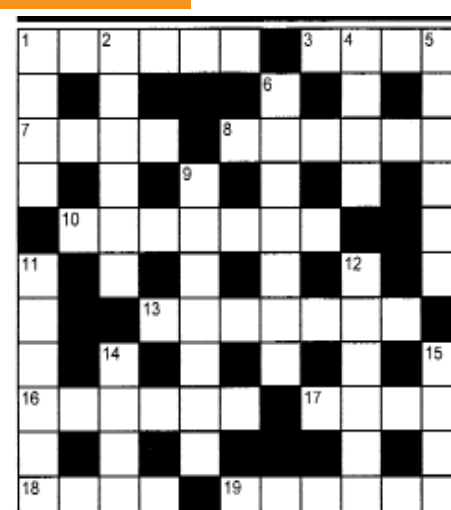
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU



Yesterdays solution
8 7 3 1 4 9 5 6 2
4 1 2 5 7 6 9 8 3
6 9 5 3 2 8 7 4 1
3 4 6 9 8 7 2 1 5
5 8 7 2 1 4 6 3 9
1 2 9 6 5 3 8 7 4
7 3 1 8 9 2 4 5 6
2 5 4 7 6 1 3 9 8
9 6 8 4 3 5 1 2 7

Rules

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

ACROSS

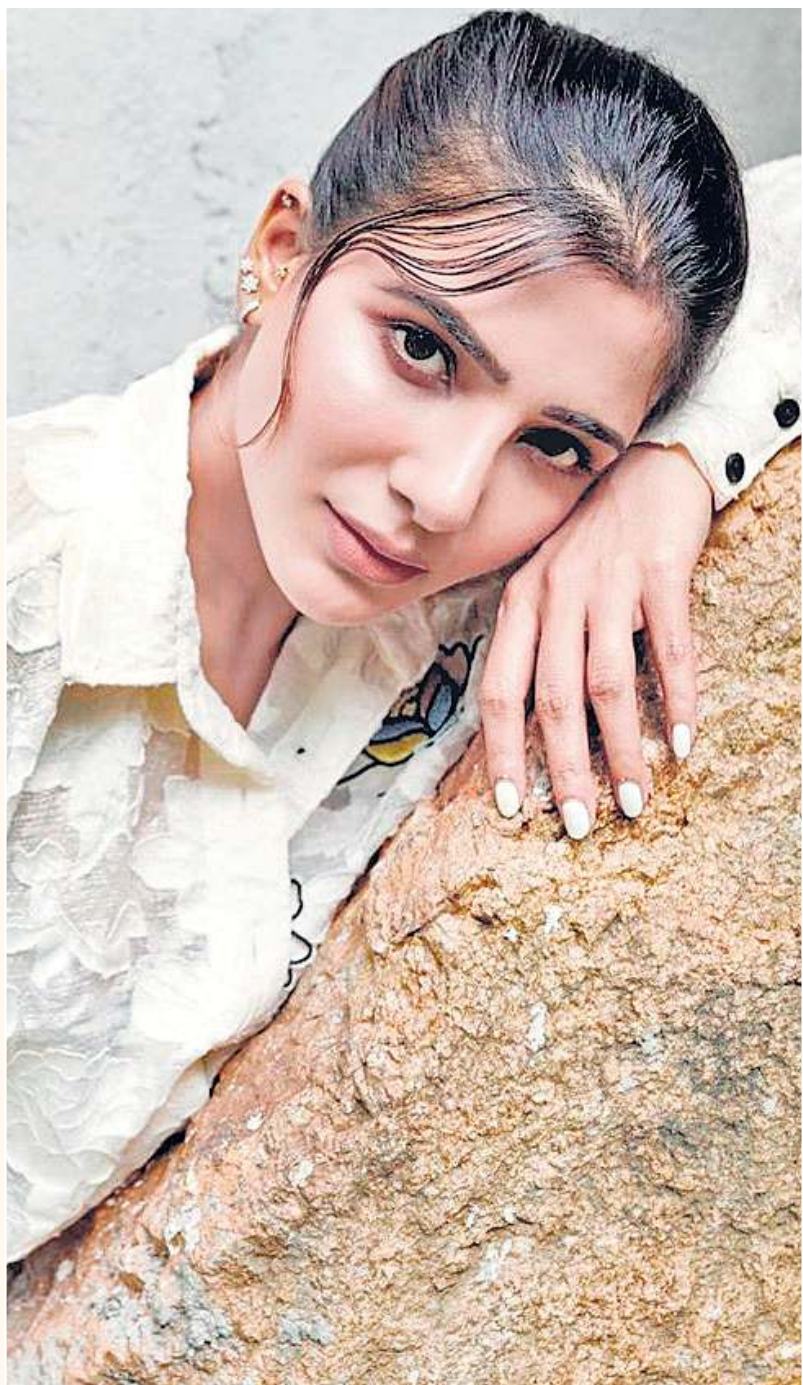
- Cleaned with water
- A wartime explosive
- One quarter of thirty-six
- A robber at sea
- Old-aged
- Using a shovel
- Talented, skilful
- Wicked
- Gritty stuff on the beach
- Connected together

DOWN

- Close and open one eye quickly
- Unmarried
- Egg-shaped

SOLUTION

S	R	A	T	C	H	E	D	
H	D	E	A					
A	M	A	D	O	R	G	A	N
U	N	S	E	I	O			
S	O	R	E	S	E	C	R	E
T	A	I	L	E				
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A	R	G	U	E				
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Samantha shuts down troll who accused her of 'robbing' Rs 50 cr from ex-husband

Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu shut down a troll on social media who accused her of "robbing" Rs 50 crore from her ex-husband and actor Naga Chaitanya as alimony after their divorce.

Samantha has been trending on social media ever since her item song *Oo Antava* from *Pushpa* was released.

While a huge section of the Internet was busy lauding the actress for the newest hat she has worn, one section has been degrading her for her 'boldness' in the song. On Tuesday, one troll commented on her marital status, as he also accused her of robbing Rs 50 crore from

a "gentleman". His comment implies that the actress had taken alimony from Naga Chaitanya, related to their separation.

Samantha, who usually ignores her social media trolls by simply blocking them, replied, "God bless your soul."

With this reply, the troll deleted his disrespectful comment soon. Samantha's subtle, yet hitting reply caught the attention of all.

On the work front, Samantha Ruth Prabhu is to appear in Gunasekhar's directorial *Shaakunthalam*, while she has a couple of multilingual movies in her kitty. She also has a Hollywood movie titled *The Arrangements Of Love* on her list.

Plan to release *Pushpa: The Rule* in Dec 2022: Sukumar

Director Sukumar who is presently enjoying the success of *Pushpa: The Rise*, says he is yet to start work on the sequel *Pushpa: The Rule*. According to the director, the shooting of *Pushpa part 2* will begin in February next year.

"I have shot some portions for *Pushpa: The Rule* but then, these will have to be reshot. I will have to shoot the entire film and we intend to start shooting in February next year. We intend to release the film on December 16 next year, just like how we released *Pushpa: The Rise* on December 17 this year," he said. Explaining what inspired him to come up with such a story, Sukumar said, "Six years ago, an encounter

happened and that was in connection with the smuggling of red sanders. That incident became the headlines in all the media. It was after that we came to know of the magnitude and significance of the red sanders that was exclusive to the region. We got to know that the red sanders smuggling market was around a whopping Rs 2 lakh crore and we also realised that these trees grow only in the Chittoor belt of Andhra Pradesh. Nowhere else in the world can you find this wood. It was then that a thought struck me as to why not make a big commercial entertainer with this as the backdrop." Sukumar, who is known for being thorough in whatever he does, did extensive research on the topic before beginning work on the

film, which stars Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna in the lead.

The director said, "We did research on the topic for almost a period of six months. Originally, we thought of making this as a web series but then, eventually, we made it into a film."



Rashmika Mandanna celebrates 25 million followers on Instagram

South star Rashmika Mandanna on Wednesday crossed the 25 million follower-mark on Instagram and said she was touched by the endless love coming her way. The actor, who currently stars in the

Telugu actioner *Pushpa: The Rise*, opposite Allu Arjun, took to Instagram and posted a reel, where she was seen cutting a cake to celebrate the milestone. "Before I forget. 25 million fan, now 25.8 million family... We celebrated this. I love you," she captioned.

The 25-year-old actor also shared the post on her Instagram story and wrote, "I celebrate all your love everyday, but here is a special one."

Mandanna, best known for starring in Kannada film *Anjani Putra* and Telugu title *Geetha Govindam*, will soon make her Hindi debut with espionage thriller *Mission Majnu*, co-starring Sidharth Malhotra.

The film is scheduled to be released in May next year. The actor will also be seen in Hindi film *Goodbye*, featuring megastar Amitabh Bachchan.



Sree Vishnu's *Bhala Thandanana* to give good dose of action

Promising young hero Sree Vishnu is presently starring in the commercial entertainer *Bhala Thandanana* being helmed by Chaitanya Dantuluri of *Baanam* fame. Catherine Tresa is paired opposite Sree Vishnu in the movie. The shoot of *Bhala Thandanana* has been completed. The makers announced the same through the film's first look poster. Dressed in a denim shirt with a white T-shirt inside and blue jeans, Sree Vishnu looks manly in the poster. He looks aggressive as he holds two guns, wherein we can observe a rowdy batch approaching him with guns in their hand. Going by the poster, *Bhala Thandanana* will have a good dose of

action. Director Chaitanya Dantuluri is presenting Sree Vishnu in a never seen before role, while Catherine who is selectively doing films has got a meaty role in *Bhala Thandanana*. Ramachandra Raju of *KGF* fame is playing the main antagonist.

Popular production house Vaaraahi Chalana Chitram is bankrolling the film to be presented by Sai Korrapati. Rajani Korrapati is the producer. Melody Brahma Mani Sharma scores music, while Suresh Ragutu cranks the camera. Srikanth Vissa is the writer, while Marthand K Venkatesh is the editor.

Gandhi Nadikudikar is the art director. India's top stunt director Peter Hein supervises the action part.



Sonal Chauhan roped in *The Ghost*?

Ever since Nagarjuna announced *The Ghost* project, there have been numerous talks about the leading lady of the film.

The latest buzz we hear from the film industry is that the makers of *The Ghost* are planning to rope in actress Sonal Chauhan to be the film's leading lady. Praveen Sattaru is directing the film, whose first look poster already impressed fans. The poster showed Nagarjuna walking with a sword with blood dripping from it.

Initially, the makers of *The Ghost* signed Kajal Aggarwal to play the film's female lead, however, owing to the actress' pregnancy, she decided to walk out of the film sometime and the hunt for a female lead was on ever since.

We earlier heard that the makers approached Amala Paul, who later walked out for reasons best known to them. We also heard that Meheern Kaur Pirzada will play the female lead in *The Ghost*.

However, if the ongoing buzz is to be believed, Nagarjuna has apparently finalised Sonal Chauhan for the film.

The Ghost is being bankrolled by Narayan Das K Narang, Puskur Ram Mohan Rao, and Sharrath Marar under Sree Venkateshwara Cinemas LLP and Northstar Entertainment.



Popular production house Sithara Entertainment along with Fortune Cinemas roped in national award-winning actor Dhanush K Raja for their upcoming Telugu-Tamil film. Written and directed by Venky Atluri, the film will be produced by Vamsi and Sai Soujanya. Further details of the film will be revealed soon.

Ilayaraja's *Music School* wraps up second schedule

The Ilayaraja musical titled *Music School*, starring Sharman Joshi and Shriya Saran finished its second schedule of 30 days in Hyderabad.

The team at *Music School* immersed in a month of hard-core rehearsals before the first schedule rolled out in Goa. After finishing a significant portion of the songs, the musical that marks the Hindi directorial debut of Papa Rao Biyyala was shot in Annapoorana Studios. Papa Rao Biyyala said, "The end of the year nears as we wrap the second

schedule of *Music School*. I'm grateful to have a team that's super enthusiastic and a pitch-perfect cast. Playing off to the ambience created by maestro Ilayaraja is a dream."

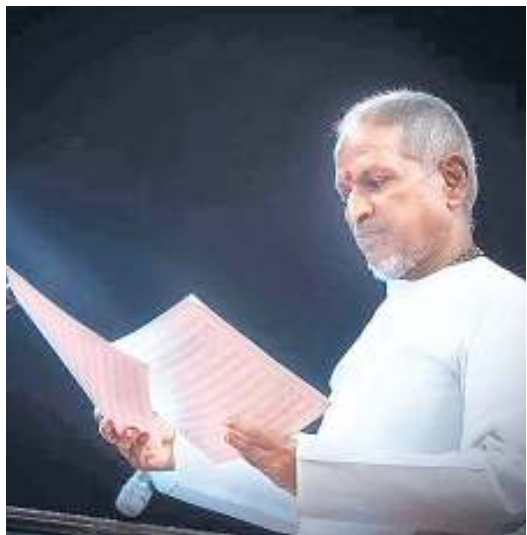
Cinematographer Kiran Deohans has been a big source of encouragement for the debut director.

"His cinematography is taking the film to a different level of visual treatment. The experience of making a film becomes compelling and enjoyable when you have brilliant minds on board."

The Ilayaraja musical is about two teachers, Mary

D'Cruz and Manoj (played by Shriya and Sharman respectively) who introduce the rich culture and refinement of music and theatre to students who have been conditioned to accept an unimaginative education system.

Produced by Yamini Films, the bilingual film (Hindi and Telugu) also features Shaan, Suhasini Mulay, Prakash Raj, Benjamin Gilani, Srikanth Iyengar, Vinay Varma, Mona Ambegaonkar, Gracy Goswami, Ozu Barua, Bugs Bhargava, Mangala Bhatt, Phani Eggoti, and Vaquar Shaikh.



India beat Pak 4-3 in thriller to win bronze

PTI ■ DHAKA

Amisfiring India were made to toil hard before getting the better of arch-rivals Pakistan 4-3 in a pulsating third-fourth place contest to clinch the bronze medal at the Asian Champions Trophy men's hockey tournament here on Wednesday.

After having topped the round-robin stages, the Tokyo Olympics bronze medallists were far from impressive in their last two games, and the Manpreet Singh-led side had to play out of its skin to outwit Pakistan and finish on the podium.

After being stunned by Japan 3-5 in the semifinal on Tuesday, much was expected from India against Pakistan. They did press hard and created numerous chances, including 11 penalty corners, out of which they made use of just two.

India, who were the defending champions along with Pakistan in the last edition of the tournament in Muscat, will thus return with a consolation prize. The Indian team took the lead in the very first minute through vice-captain Harmanpreet

Singh before Sumit (45th), Varun Kumar (53rd) and Akashdeep Singh (57th) struck a goal each.

Pakistan's goals were scored by Afraz (10th), Abdul Rana (33rd) and Ahmed Nadeem (57th).

It was India's second win over Pakistan in the tournament after having beaten them 3-1 in the round-robin stages.

In the summit clash late on Wednesday, South Korea will play Japan. India started the match on a bright note, pressing the Pakistani defence from the onset.

Unlike against Japan, India came out attacking and secured as many as four penalty corners straightaway, the last of which was converted by Harmanpreet with a powerful low flick in the first minute.

The Indians kept up the pressure with numerous raids inside the Pakistan circle but failed to create a clear-cut chance.

Pakistan grew in confidence as time passed by and drew level in the 10th minute courtesy some sloppy defending by the Indians, in particular Harmanpreet, as he failed to clear a loose ball inside the circle, and Afraz



did enough to get past onrushing goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak.

The Indians responded after conceding the goal and earned their fifth penalty corner soon, but

Harmanpreet's flick was saved by the Pakistani defence. In the 14th minute, Pakistan got their first penalty corner, which was saved by Pathak.

It was a fighting contest in the

second quarter as Pakistan defended in numbers to deny their neighbours.

In the 22nd minute, India secured another penalty corner, but once again, Pakistan goalkeeper

Amjad Ali came to his side's rescue by denying Harmanpreet.

Four minutes later, Amjad Ali was again in the thick of things when he saved Akashdeep Singh's reverse hit from close range.

India continued their attacking spree and earned their seventh penalty corner soon, but an alert Amjad Ali made twin saves to deny Jarmanpreet Singh.

At the stroke of the half-time hooter, India secured their eighth penalty corner but, as has been the case, the finishing was not up to the mark. Three minutes after the change of ends, it was Pakistan who surged ahead when Abdul Rana scored from a rebound from the team's second penalty corner.

India were lucky not to concede another, in the 43rd minute, as Abdul Rana's attempt from Ali Shan's pass hit the near post.

But three seconds from the third quarter, Gursahibjit Singh created a chance from nowhere and Sumit found himself at the perfect position xinside the Pakistan circle to tap the ball in and draw level.

With the scores tied at 2-2, the

fourth and final quarter produced end-to-end hockey from both the teams.

India had the better share of chances but Pakistan too didn't give up without a fight.

Lalit Upadhayay came close to handing India the lead, only to see his deflection sail inches wide off the target from Gurinder Singh's cross.

India secured two more penalty corners soon and this time, Varun was bang on target to make it 3-2 in his side's favour.

Pakistan responded immediately by earning two penalty corners in succession but India skipper Manpreet defended brilliantly as first rusher.

Three minutes from the final hooter, Akashdeep scored with a reverse hit from a pass off Lalit, but Pakistan responded within no time when Nadeem deflected in a long ball to reduce the margin, from the next move.

Two unnecessary yellow cards, to Hardik Singh and Sumit, in the last five minutes didn't help India, but the suspensions didn't hurt the side either.

IPL mega auction likely in Bengaluru on Feb 7, 8

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI is planning to hold the two-day mega Indian Premier League auction on February 7 and 8 in Bengaluru, a senior BCCI official said on Wednesday.

It could well be the last mega auction that BCCI might conduct as most of the original IPL franchises want it to be discontinued.

"Unless the COVID-19 situation worsens, we will have the IPL mega auction in India. The two-day event will be held on February 7 and 8 and like other years, we plan to hold it in Bengaluru. Preparations are



underway," a senior BCCI official told PTI on conditions of anonymity. There were reports that auction will be held in the

UAE but as of now, BCCI has no such plans.

However with the emergence of Omicron variant of COVID-19 and cases on the rise, the situation will remain fluid but if there are restrictions with regards to overseas travel (unless all owners decide to use charter planes), conducting it in India will be less of a logistical nightmare.

This year's IPL will be a 10-team affair with Sanjiv Goenka owned Lucknow franchise along with venture capital firm CVC owned Ahmedabad making their debut in the cash rich league.

CVC is however waiting

for its Letter of Intent from the BCCI but is expected to get an all clear in the next few weeks.

Both teams have time till Christmas to announce their three draft picks but BCCI might extend the dates for both as CVC is yet to get clearance.

Most of the franchise owners feel that mega auctions have passed their sell-by-date and a team's composition and balance gets severely compromised when there are auctions after every three years.

Delhi Capitals co-owner Parth Jindal had in fact said this on record how it is tough to release players after having put in effort to build a team.

SRIKANTH RETURNS TO TOP 10

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Riding on his historic World Championship silver, India's Kidambi Srikanth jumped four places to regain his place in the world's top 10 in the latest Badminton World Federation (BWF) rankings.

The 28-year-old from Guntur was rewarded for his final finish in Huelva, Spain as he grabbed the 10th position in the rankings.

Young Lakshya Sen, who also secured a maiden bronze at World Championship in his first campaign at the event, jumped two spots to the 17th



position but B Sai Praneeth slipped two places to be at the 18th spot.

H S Prannoy's quarterfinal finish in Spain saw him improve six places to the 26th spot.

In women's singles, two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu remained static at seventh place, while Saina Nehwal, who is recovering from multiple injuries, is at the 25th place.

Men's doubles pair of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy slipped one place to the 10th position, while Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy regained their place in the top 20 in the women's doubles.

Positive Covid cases will be isolated, matches to continue

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI and Cricket South Africa have mutually agreed that the upcoming Test and ODI series between the two teams will continue even if there is any COVID-19 case among players or support staff and close contacts will not be forced into isolation, the host board's medical officer Shuaib Manjra has said.

India will start their three-match Test series against the Proteas on December 26 at the Centurion followed by Tests in Johannesburg (January 3-7) and Cape Town (Jan 11-15).

The Tests will be followed by three ODIs on January 19, 21 and 23.

While there is a specific agreement that BCCI can pull out of the tour in case situation in South Africa, where the new variant

Omicron was found, worsens, a senior official said that they are not contemplating any such move as of now.

"There is an agreed medical protocol between Cricket South Africa (CSA) and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)," Cricket South Africa provided Manjra's comments to PTI.

"Considering that everyone within the Bio-Secure Environments" (BSE) and the broader cricket ecosystem will be vaccinated, any positive case will isolate within their designated hotel room if clinically stable, or an alternate space within the hotel," he added.

Respective team doctors will take care of the players in case any of them test positive for the virus.

"They will remain under the care of their respective team doctors.



Any contacts (close or incidental) will continue playing and training with non-pharmaceutical interventions strictly observed. All team members will undergo symptom screen-

ing and COVID-19 testing daily, and the tour will proceed as planned," he added.

It is understood that Rapid Antigen Tests will be carried out daily and both teams are ready for the eventuality that there will be positive cases. But as long as proper precautions are taken, the series will continue.

Even hotel staff were put in a bio-bubble one week before the Indian contingent's arrival.

"The BCCI is very satisfied with the kind of bio-bubble that CSA has provided for the Indian team. Yes, we will definitely take a decision which is in best interests of our players and their families.

"As of now, everyone is in the bubble and being tested regularly," a senior BCCI official told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Saurashtra slay Vidarbha to enter semifinals



PTI ■ JAIPUR

Saurashtra produced another dominating display to steamroll Vidarbha by seven wickets and storm into the semifinals of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Wednesday.

First, Saurashtra bowlers-led by skipper Jaydev Unadkat (2/25) dished out a clinical show and bundled out the opposition for a paltry 150 in 40.3 overs, despite Apoorv Wankhede's hard-fought 72.

They then rode on Prerak Mankad's gusty unbeaten 77 off 72 balls to chase the target with 20.1 overs to spare despite a top-order failure.

Put into bat at the Sai Mansingh Stadium, Vidarbha lost their first three batters inside the first eight overs as Unadkat and young speedster Chetan Sakariya (1/12) wreaked havoc.

Vidarbha lost in-form opener Atharva Taide (1), who became Unadkat's first scalp. Ganesh Satish (1) and Yash Rathod (1) also faltered cheaply. Then skipper Faiz Fazal (23) and wicket-keeper bater Akshay Wadkar (18) tried to rally the innings with their 45-run stand

for the fourth wicket.

But it was medium-pace Prerak Mankad (1/22), who broke the stand after cleaning up Wadkar, to leave them reeling at 54/4.

Vidarbha lost half their side for 66. Only Apoorva Wankhede, who hammered five boundaries and as many maximums, showed mettle and hit a quick-fire 72 off 69 balls, but was devoid of partners in the crunch game as Saurashtra bowlers bowled in the right areas.

Aditya Sarwate (14), Lalit Yadav (1), Yash Thakur (0) and last man Aditya Thakare (0) made a beeline to the pavilion. Mankad, medium-pace Chirag Jani (2/34), seasoned left-arm orthodox spinner Dharmendrasinh Jadeja (2/34) and leg-spinner Yuvraj Chudasama (2/15) played their parts to perfection.

Chasing 151, Saurashtra lost openers Vishwaraj Jadeja (0) and Harvik Desai (9) early as pacer Aditya Thakare (2/13) struck twice inside the first five overs.

Then Sheldon Jackson and Mankad tried to steady the ship but were able to add only 22 runs for the third wicket.

Services thrash Kerala by seven wickets to storm into semifinals

Services put up an allround show to sail into the Vijay Hazare Trophy semi-finals with a facile seven-wicket win over Kerala at the K L Saini Stadium here on Wednesday.

Chasing a paltry 176, Services cantered home in 30.5 overs with opener Raj Chauhan top-scoring with a 90-ball 95 (13x4, 3x6) and skipper Rajat Paliwal making a 86-ball 65 (8x4).

Paliwal won the toss and sent Kerala in as their bowling department led by seasoned medium pacer Diwesh Pathania (8-2-19-3) rattled the Kerala top-order before bowling them out for a paltry 175 in 40.4 overs.

Later, Pulkit Narang (2/51), Abhishek Tiwari (2/33 from 7.4 overs) and Rahul Singh (1/35 from 9 overs) made their presence felt to polish off the tail.

Services were also brilliant on the field and ran out Rohan Kunnummal -- the Kerala top-scorer -- for 85 to restrict them to a below-par total.

The 32-year-old Pathania struck twice in the seventh over when he dismissed Mohammed Azharuddeen (7) and Jalaj Saxena (0) in successive balls to give them a perfect start.

It was Kerala's rookie opener Kunnummal (85 from 106 balls; 7x4, 2x6) who kept them on the track with a resolute half-century, reaching his second List A fifty in 77 balls. Kerala No 4 Vinoop Manoharan gave a fine support with a brisk 41 off 54 balls laced with four boundaries and one six as the duo put together a fine 80-run partnership for the third wicket to repair the early damage.

Ganguly shouldn't have spoken on Virat's captaincy issue, says Vengsarkar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former India captain and chairman of selectors Dilip Vengsarkar feels that board president Sourav Ganguly wasn't right in airing his views on behalf of national selectors Virat Kohli's captaincy saga which has triggered a controversy.

Ahead of their departure to South Africa, Virat Kohli in a media conference said that no one from BCCI told him not to quit T20 captaincy, contrary to Ganguly's claims that he had spoken to the skipper on the issue.

The 'Colonel' on his part, opined thar Ganguly had no business to speak in the matter.

"The thing is that Ganguly had no business to speak on behalf of the selection committee. He is the BCCI president. Any issue about selection or captaincy, it's the chairman of selection committee Chetan Sharma, who should speak," Vengsarkar, a veteran of 116 Tests told PTI on Wednesday.

Confident Hyderabad face stumbling SC East Bengal

PTI ■ BAMBOLIM

Aconfident Hyderabad FC will look to keep the juggernaut rolling and bridge the gap on leaders Mumbai City FC when they take on wooden spooners SC East Bengal in the Indian Super League here on Thursday.

Hyderabad are on a five-match unbeaten streak, the joint longest unbeaten streak this season along with Kerala Blasters. They have a game in hand and with a win against lowly East Bengal, they can move to the second spot with 14 points, one adrift of Mumbai who have 15 from seven matches.

The Nizams have looked one of the most balanced sides this season with attack and defence clicking in tandem. Australian forward Joel Chianese has been impactful for Hyderabad chipping in with one goal and two assists in 282 minutes this season.



Chianese has played as the second striker behind Bart Ogbache and has rotated with Edu Garcia for a place in the starting XI.

Hyderabad have conceded five goals in six league games this season, they boast the second-best defensive record in the league after Chennaiyin FC. Manolo Marquez will know all too well that this is their best opportunity to cut the gap at the top of the heap. In East

Bengal, they have a side who are on an 11-match winless streak (4 matches last season and 7 matches this season).

East Bengal are a different story altogether. Jose Manuel Diaz's men are at the foot of the table with three points from seven engagements. They lost 0-2 to NorthEast United FC in their last encounter and also saw their best player, Antonio Perosevic, sent off.

Juve beats Cagliari to close gap on top 4 as Atalanta draws

AP ■ MILAN

Juventus ended the year on a positive note by beating relegation-threatened Cagliari 2-0 to close the gap to the top four in Serie A.

Moise Kean and Federico Bernardeschi scored as Juventus moved to within four points of Atalanta, which was surprisingly held to a 0-0 draw at struggling Genoa.

Atalanta was in fourth place and the final Champions League qualifying berth. Juventus had struggled at the start of the season but things were starting to click under returning coach Massimiliano Allegri and the Bianconeri came into the match having won five of its past six matches, drawing the other.

It almost took an early lead but Kean headed Juan Cuadrado's cross off the far post.

He did better five minutes from half-time when he headed in Bernardeschi's cross following a superb run from the winger.

And Bernardeschi got on the score-



sheet himself seven minutes from time when he turned in a pass from Dejan Kulusevski for his first goal since July 2020. He received a standing ovation from the crowd in Turin for ending his 43-match drought.

ONE-WAY TRAFFIC

Atalanta tried everything but could not find a way past a resilient Genoa team and missed the chance to move into second place in Serie A. It was one-way traffic but when Atalanta did find a way

through the defense it was denied by good saves from Genoa goalkeeper Salvatore Sirigu. Atalanta could have moved a point above Napoli and AC Milan before their games on Wednesday. Genoa remained in the drop zone but inched to within two points of safety. It is one point above Cagliari.

COVID OUTBREAK

Salernitana's match at Udinese was not officially postponed but it could not take place because of a coronavirus outbreak at the visiting club.

Salernitana was blocked by local health authorities from traveling to Udine after at least two members of the team tested positive for COVID-19.

The league's governing body said on Twitter: "The match #UdineseSalernitana was not held due to Salernitana failing to show up." A similar incident happened last year when Napoli couldn't travel to Juventus. Napoli was initially handed a 3-0 loss and docked a point but it won on appeal and the sentence was revoked and the match rescheduled.

