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THROUGH A LEAN PATCH: RATHOUR

HYDERABAD, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

## the pioneer

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'IT'S GOOD TO  
SEE COMMERCIAL  
MOVIES BACK  
IN GAME'

Page 11

ISRO puts three  
satellites into orbit  
successfully

PNS ■ SRIHARIKOTA

The Indian Space Research Organisation on Monday successfully placed its earth observation satellite EOS-04 and two small satellites into the intended orbit, its first launch mission in 2022.

Following a smooth countdown of 25 hours and 30 minutes, the workhorse launch vehicle, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C52) with the three satellites onboard blasted off at 5.59 am from here amid dark, early morning skies.

ISRO said the important flight events -- stage and strap-on ignitions, heat shield separation, stages and strap-on separation and satellite injection -- took place exactly as planned.

It said after a flight of about 17 minutes, 34 seconds, the three satellites -- EOS-04, INSPIRESat-1 and INST-2TD -- were injected successfully into a sun-synchronous polar orbit of 529 km, and the orbit achieved for the satellites is "very close" to the intended orbits.

After the separation, the two solar arrays of EOS-04 deployed automatically and ISRO Telemetry Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC) at Bengaluru, assumed the control of the satellite, it said, adding that, in the coming days the satellite will be brought to its final operational configuration following which it will begin to provide the data.

Asking proofs for surgical strike  
echoes Pakistan stance: Modi

PM has indirect dig at KCR, asks: 'What kind of people are these?'

- KCR and Congress are in competition to prove their loyalty to the Gandhi family: Assam CM
- Surgical strike in Huzurabad affected KCR: Anurag Thakur
- KCR can seek further proof from Pakistan PM Imran Khan: Kishan

NAVEENA GHANATE  
■ HYDERABAD

At a time when Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao seconded beleaguered Congress MP Rahul Gandhi in demanding proof for surgical strike, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday questioned: "What kind of people are these? What kind of history they have?"

It may be mentioned here that on 29 September 2016, India announced that it conducted surgical strikes against militant launch pads across the Line of Control in Pakistani-administered Kashmir, inflicting "significant casualties". Pakistan then rejected India's claim, and maintained that Indian troops did not cross the Line of Control and had only skirmishes with Pakistani troops at the



**We strengthen the borders, give powers to the Army. But their party leaders call the Army chiefs goons. They question us on the sacrifices of our sainiks. Such people deserve to be jailed**

border. The casualty figures (ranging from 30-70, reportedly of targeted ultras) banded about in the Indian media have been contested by Pakistan.

Speaking at a public rally in Punjab, Modi said: "Punjab has to be aware of these people (Congress)

who want to surrender youth to drug mafia. Remember, these are the people who are asking the Army to show proof of the surgical strike. They are singing tunes sung by Pakistan".

2

## Don't use Srisaillam water for 'power'

Krishna River Board tells Telangana and Andhra Pradesh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Krishna River Board Management (KRMB) has once again directed Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to stop power generation using water from the Srisaillam Reservoir.

The KRMB asked both the states not to take water from the Srisaillam Reservoir for generating power.

This is the second time the KRMB is sending letters to the Telugu states asking them to stop generating power using Srisaillam water. The KRMB expressed anger at the states for not responding to the letters sent by it already. The KRMB directed the Telugu states to stop power generation keeping the future use of



Srisaillam water in mind. Telangana needs three TMCs of water and Andhra Pradesh needs six TMCs of water for drinking purposes.

The Srisaillam Reservoir now has only 34.24 TMCs of water. KRMB expressed concern at the water level as it has fallen to 35 TMCs dead storage from its original capacity of 215

TMCs.

Power generation experts have been saying that the situation arose due to the competitive generation of power by both the states. Both the states have been generating 40 per cent of their hydropower using Srisaillam Reservoir water and hence water levels have fallen to dead storage. The KRMB had sent letters to both the states warning of this and had asked them to generate power only if there is more water after drinking water and irrigation needs are met. But both the states have been discharging water to the sea after using it for power generation. Due to this, both the states will not be in a position to use water for drinking purposes.

Mamata does not want  
Congress in Oppn alliance

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

After reaching out to regional leaders MK Stalin and K. Chandrasekhar Rao to weld together an anti-BJP alliance a day before, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday tried to edge out the Congress from the formation, saying that no regional outfit has cordial relations with the Congress and that the "Congress can go its own way."

Amid signs of increasing bonhomie between her and her Telangana and Tamil Nadu counterparts KCR and Stalin, Mamata had approached the two on Sunday to organise meetings of opposition chief ministers.

"The country's federal structure has been bulldozed...the country's Constitution is being demolished. We need to come together



to protect it," she said on Monday after her TMC swept elections to the four municipal corporations in West Bengal, dealing yet another body blow to the BJP after the saffron party's humiliation in the Assembly elections in 2021.

Investors' wealth  
tumbles by over  
Rs 8.47 lakh crSensex tanks over 1,700  
pts; Nifty cracks below 17K

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth plummeted by more than Rs 8.47 lakh crore on Monday as the stock market continued to be ravaged by weak global sentiments triggered by mounting tensions between Russia and Ukraine.

The domestic market remained in the red for the second straight session after witnessing a massive sell-off on Friday.

As the counters closed for the day on Monday, the 30-share benchmark Sensex had plunged 1,747.08 points to 56,405.84 points, a decline of 3 per cent.

Reflecting the rout, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies or the notional investors' wealth eroded massively by Rs 8,47,160.93 crore to Rs 2,55,42,725.42 crore. On Friday too, investors' wealth had taken a beating when it tumbled over Rs 3.91 lakh crore.

2

KCR's welfare schemes a  
model for the nation: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Opposition parties have nothing else to do but criticise KCR, Industries Minister KT Rama Rao said on Monday.

"Are the welfare schemes being implemented in Telangana being implemented anywhere else in the country? If they have the guts they should show that," he asked.

KTR was inaugurating model anganwadis in the Gudam village of Mustabad. The complex has child-friendly modern classrooms, an interactive play area, kitchen, toilets and other facilities. It was developed by a We-Hub entrepreneur.

KTR addressed a function organised on the occasion of the



Minister KTR having lunch with beneficiaries of 2BHK units at Mustabad in Siricilla.

inauguration of double bedroom houses at Mustabad in Siricilla. He said the development and welfare schemes implemented by KCR are becoming a role model for the entire country.

"We are building double bedroom houses at a cost of Rs 18,000 crore. Regardless of village or town, we are building these houses for the poor."

2

ED conducts 'hair-  
raising' searches in Hyd

Money laundering probe in intl human hair smuggling case

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Enforcement Directorate conducted search operations on

February 9th and 10th, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) 2002, at multiple locations, spread from Hyderabad to Aizwal & further up to the Myanmar border town of

Champai in Mizoram. These searches were conducted as part of money laundering investigation pertaining to smuggling of raw human hair from India to Myanmar through illegal land routes via Mizoram involving huge cash transfers.

2

LAND REGULARISATION  
Application time  
extended to March 31

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The State government on Monday extended the time limit for applications to Mar 31" so as to give 'final opportunity' for assignment/regularization and transfer of rights over encroachments on 'unobjectionable' State Government lands and the lands owned by various Departments/Corporations/ Institutions.

2

## Telangana says no to alternative to diesel

Govt objects to Centre's plan for zero use of diesel in Agriculture

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Centre's plan to reduce diesel consumption in agriculture to zero by 2024 has met with sharp criticism in Telangana.

Agriculture Minister Niranjan Reddy said, "This announcement is like their earlier announcement that they will double farmers' income by 2022. Neither will happen."

He said that there is no alterna-

tive for diesel now. "In the agricultural sector, it is possible to use solar power only for pumps. There is no other alternative fuel to power tractors, harvesters and other machines used in farms. The Centre does not have a proper action plan and everything they say is far from reality," Niranjan added.

The Union Ministry of Power on Friday said that the country will replace diesel with renewables to eliminate the use of diesel in the



agricultural sector by 2024.

"We are working for a modern

2

ASSAM SPECIALITY TEA AUCTIONED  
AT RECORD RS 99,999 PER KG

A speciality tea from Assam's Dibrugarh district was on Monday auctioned at Rs 99,999 per kg, a record price fetched for the second time in two months for such a high-end variety of the commodity from the state, officials said. 'Golden Pearl' tea, owned by AFT Techno Trade, went under the hammer at Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC), he said. With over 850 big tea gardens, Assam is the world's largest tea growing region and contributes over 52% of total tea production in the country. But stagnant prices since 2014, adverse climatic condition and increase in production cost has left the ind...

CRYPTOCURRENCIES LIKE 'PONZI SCHEMES,  
MAYBE WORSE': RBI DEPUTY GOVERNOR

Cryptocurrencies are akin to Ponzi schemes or even worse and banning these is the most sensible option for India, the Reserve Bank of India's deputy governor said on Monday. "We have also seen that cryptocurrencies are not amenable to definition as a currency, asset or commodity; they have no underlying cash flows, they have no intrinsic value; they are akin to Ponzi schemes, and may be even be worse," T Rabi Sankar said in a speech. "All these factors lead to the conclusion that banning cryptocurrency is perhaps the most advisable choice open to India," he added.

TELUGU-AMERICAN JAILED FOR  
10 MONTHS FOR FRAUD, BRIBERY

A 28-year-old Indian-origin former employee of Amazon has been sentenced to 10 months' imprisonment for his involvement in an international bribery scheme to steal confidential information and manipulate the Marketplace platform of the e-commerce giant. Rohit Kadimisetty of California's Northridge, pleaded guilty to conspiracy in September 2021, the Department of Justice (DoJ) said in a statement. He is one of the six consultants indicted in September 2020 for a fraud and bribery scheme targeting the Seattle-headquartered e-commerce giant and its online Marketplace.

SHIV SENA MP FACES JAIL TERM IN CHEQUE  
BOUNCING CASE, FINED RS 1.75 CRORE

A court at Palghar in Maharashtra on Monday sentenced local Shiv Sena MP Rajendra Gavit to one-year imprisonment after convicting him in a cheque bouncing case and directed him to pay the compensation of Rs 1.75 crore. The court of Judicial Magistrate First Class, VP Khandare, stayed the execution of the order for one month to allow Gavit to file an appeal and obtain orders from the appellate court. "The amount of compensation is huge and therefore, in my view, time can be granted to the convict for the payment of the same."



No one knows when a sensitive issue will flare up in the country. Unable to face Prime Minister Narendra Modi politically, opposition parties are trying to fan disaffection among people. They are raking up various controversies on the basis of narrow considerations of caste, religion, groups, and nationality.

All political leaders, right from Mahabooba Mufti in Jammu and Kashmir to K Chandrashekar Rao in Telangana, are criticising the BJP for the hijab controversy raging in Karnataka. It shows their impatience and lack of awareness on the issue.

The Kerala High Court, in 2018, gave its decision on the students' dress code and put the ball in educational institutions' court. High Court Judge Mohammad Mustaq, responding to a petition filed by two college students, Tasneem and Hafza Parvin, gave his decision giving precedence to protection of larger interests of the people over the protection of the private rights of girl students.

An organisation will have

certain fundamental rights. But the Court would have to strike a balance between fundamental rights and personal issues. He left the choice of allowing the students to wear a head scarf or not to the educational institution. Yet, the opposition parties in Karnataka seem determined to sling mud on the Modi government to create an impression that people's freedom is being curtailed.

Wearing hijab is not a traditional practice, like the Sikhs wearing turban, according to Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan and several other Muslim elders. Wearing a hijab is not a constitutional right of the Muslims either. Aroosa Parvez, who topped the 12th Board examinations in J and K, said that wearing hijab is not necessary to prove one as a good Muslim. Aroosa Parvez said that she followed the Muslim religious rules.

The school dress signifies that there is no discrimination between the rich and poor. The Government of Karnataka did not give any new order. The present regime in Karnataka,

# Uniform Civil Code need of the hour

**Wearing hijab is not a traditional practice, like the Sikhs wearing turban, according to Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan and several other Muslim elders. Wearing a hijab is not a constitutional right of the Muslims either.**

following Section 133 of the Karnataka Education Act of 1983, passed by the erstwhile Janata Party Government, headed by Ramakrishna Hegde in 1983, issued the orders.

The relevant section lays emphasis on compulsory wearing of uniforms by students and gave the choice to private educational institutions to decide on uniforms for their students. The College Management Committees will decide on the dress code for the college students.

Why some students last year decided to attend colleges in Udupi and Chikmagalur districts by wearing hijabs?

What are the circumstances that led five organisations to prohibit wearing of hijabs by Muslim girls? Why did the girls' conduct encourage Hindu students attending college to wear saffron shawls and spread the state like wildfire? Does wearing uniform promote equality or not? How can it divide the country as is being alleged by leaders of the ilk of Mahabooba Mufti and KCR? What is atrocious is Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi advocating that girls attending college could wear the dress of their choice, including bikini, let alone hijab. Does anyone



Y SATYA KUMAR  
BJP National Secretary

attend school by wearing bikini? Is this the definition that Congress gives to freedom?

Shiv Sena supremo and Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray condemned Priyanka's statements in spite of Shiv Sena being a political ally of the Congress. He made it clear that students should attend schools wearing only the prescribed uniform.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement that some

vested interests had been inventing new ways to trample on the rights of Muslims in women and resisting their progress is 100 per cent true. It is pertinent to note here that it is the BJP government that has saved Muslim women from the problem of triple talaq.

After the French Revolution, the whole world waged several struggles to achieve equality, ensure equal opportunities for all, and eradicate socio-economic discrepancies. All sections of society fought against the British rule in India. The Constitution of India, helmed by Dr BR Ambedkar, regards all as equal before it, irrespective of their caste, religion, nationality and creed.

In the country, while 80 per cent of people follow similar civil codes, a section of society follows a different civil code. Besides Ambedkar, leaders like

Alladi Krishna Swamy and KM Munshi, advocated Uniform Civil Code in the country during discussions held in the Constituent Assembly.

Article 44 under the Directive Principles of State Policy recommends a Uniform Civil Code across the country. However, as per the recommendations of the BN Rao Committee, constituted in independent India, the Hindu Succession Act was passed in 1986. The country allowed Muslims, Christians and Parsis to have their own civil codes.

Deciding the Shah Bano case in 1985, the Supreme Court suggested the introduction of a Uniform Civil Code. But the Congress government, out of vested interests, stalled the implementation of the verdict through an act of Parliament. A bench of the Delhi High Court headed by Justice Pratibha Singh subsequently advocated that

Uniform Civil Code should not remain a mere dream.

In the light of the debates held in constitutional bodies, and as per the verdicts of the Supreme Court and other courts as well as the objectives of Babasaheb Ambedkar, a Uniform Civil Code is necessary to give protection to all women, including minorities and the down-trodden sections in the country. It promotes uniformity among the women of the country. For, same rules would be applicable to marriages, succession of property, and adoption of children, thus removing complexities, if any. It would end gender-based discrimination in the country.

To create India as a secular republic, as mentioned in the Preamble to the Constitution, a Uniform Civil Code is necessary.

Will pseudo-secularists, who have been advocating students wearing hijab, agree to a Uniform Civil Code?

## Manickam Tagore, Kavitha fight it out on Twitter

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A Twitter war broke out between Telangana Congress affairs in-charge Manickam Tagore and TRS MLC K. Kavitha on Monday.

Manickam Tagore started the war by Tweeting, "Usaravelli Specialty?" by posting the image of a chameleon. Reacting, TPCC Chief Revanth Reddy re-Tweeted, "KCR's role model..."

Reacting to it, TRS MLC K. Kavitha Tweeted, "Just setting the record straight Manickam Ji once and for all. KCR Garu and TRS led the people's movement for Telangana. It was not a GIFT. It was a FIGHT and TRUTH won." Once again Manickam Tagore re-Tweeted, "Kavitha Garu, Telangana wasn't a one leader movement."

## KTR asks Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages to invest more in TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congratulating Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages (HCCB) on completing 25 years TS Industries Minister KT Rama Rao said, "We want HCCB to invest more in Telangana. We also welcome other players to come and establish their presence."

Speaking at a function held virtually KTR said, "I must also congratulate all of you for taking up the mission of planting 25 lakh trees to celebrate the milestone of reaching 25 years. A green environment and a green ecosystem are the need of the hour. There cannot be a better way to mark the occasion. I am also glad to know that you are partnering with the Ameenpur Municipality to establish a more refined solid



waste management system in the area, on the occasion of your 25th anniversary and I appreciate that."

HCCB's mega factory is located at Ameenpur near Hyderabad. The factory has been operating from 1998. Telangana is also one of the largest markets for HCCB. The company's virtual event

to mark its 25th-anniversary celebrations was attended by employees, partners, suppliers including Marcelo Boffi, the President of the Bottling Investments Group of Coca-Cola, Sanket Ray, the President, Coca-Cola India, and Southwest Asia Operating Unit, and Neeraj Garg, the Chairman and CEO of HCCB.

KTR added, "Telangana values your presence in our state. We are amongst India's most progressive states with progressive policies for industry. We understand that industrial growth and development in a sustainable manner is important to our progress. Telangana is home to some of the most famous corporate names in the world because of our policies. We would like all of you to be ambassadors of

our state."

HCCB has come a long way and is now able to serve 25 lakh retailers, 3,500 distributors and 6,500 employees. Around 250,000 farmers grow agricultural crops that HCCB uses in making its products.

The company is headquartered in Bengaluru and its operations are spread across 22 states, three UTs and 376 districts in South, West, and Eastern India. Through its 15 factories spread across India, it manufactures 60 different products in 200 different sizes across seven categories.

It produces some of India's most popular beverages like Minute Maid, Maaza, SmartWater, Kinley, Thums Up, Sprite, Coca-Cola, Limca, Fanta, the Georgia range of tea and coffee etc.

## KCR attacking BJP, PM to further his national ambitions

SNCN ACHARYULU  
■ HYDERABAD

Why is Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao stepping up his attacks on Prime Minister Modi and the BJP?

KCR who has ambitions in national politics may want to remove the impression that he has a soft corner for Prime Minister Modi and also prove that he is also a staunch opponent of the BJP.

Like KCR, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is also showing interest in entering national politics. Mamata is known as a staunch opponent of the BJP in national politics.

After the Lok Sabha elections, the TRS had supported the Centre in Parliament at crucial times and KCR had a soft corner for Prime Minister Modi. But recent-

ly KCR changed his mind and became a strong opponent of the BJP and Modi.

KCR is attacking BJP and Prime Minister Modi to prove that he is also a staunch opponent of the BJP like Mamata.

With his strong criticism of Prime Minister Modi, KCR wants to remove the impression that he has a soft corner for the PM.

In the past when Trinamool Congress MPs boycotted Parliament protesting against the Centre on some issues TRS MPs had supported the Centre.

At one stage Mamata had even commented to her MPs that the TRS is not a reliable ally in fighting the BJP.

KCR is now attacking the BJP and the PM every day on some issue as he wants to play a key role in national politics and in removing the BJP from power.

## Numaish to resume from Feb 25

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the impact of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 significantly down, the Exhibition Society has received permission from the Police Commissioner of Hyderabad to resume the 81st All India Industrial Exhibition 2022 from February 25.

The 81st All India Industrial Exhibition 2022 which was inaugurated by the Governor, Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan, on January 1 was suspended on January 2 as per the directions of the Hyderabad Police based on GO MS. No: 1 dated January 1, 2022, issued by the Telangana Government.

The Exhibition Society said the 81st All India Industrial Exhibition 2022 will be open from 4 pm to 10.30 pm on weekdays and from 4 pm to 11 pm on weekends.

## 'Museums Reimaging in India' global summit starts today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Cultural Department is conducting a two-day online global summit named 'Museums Reimaging in India' on February 15 and 16 at the Salarjung Museum here. This is the first such summit in Hyderabad.

Museum experts from Australia, France, Italy, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and other nations would participate in the summit apart from India.

The public too can participate in the summit. The summit's organisers said that 2,300 persons have enrolled their names for participating

in the summit. The summit is being conducted as part of the Azadi Ka Amruth Mahotsav programme.

Union Culture and Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy will inaugurate the summit. Union Minister Kishan Reddy said on Monday that India has a great cultural heritage. He said that the Centre is concentrating on protecting India's cultural heritage on a permanent basis on the occasion of Azadi Ka Amruth Mahotsav.

He said that around 1,000 museums across the nation are exhibiting their cultural heritage and playing a key role in creating awareness among future generations.

## Centre running on TS Govt's benevolence, says Talasani

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Centre is running on the benevolence of the Telangana government, Animal Husbandry Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav said on Monday.

He said it was shameful on the part of the Centre to install electricity meters on agricultural pump set motors. He alleged that BJP leaders don't know anything except to instigate communal riots. The BJP has been using the Army to gain political mileage, he added.

## Jagan's key aide Praveen Prakash shifted to AP Bhavan

SNV SUDHIR  
■ VIJAYAWADA

In a surprise development, senior bureaucrat Praveen Prakash, considered as Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's 'go-to man' and who called the shots in the government, has been transferred from the CMO to Delhi as AP Bhavan's Principal Resident Commissioner.

Order transferring the 1994 batch IAS officer Praveen Prakash to AP Bhavan's post was issued by Chief Secretary Sameer Sharma on Monday evening.

Interestingly, Praveen Prakash's wife Bhavana Saxena, an IPS officer who has been the Resident Commissioner at AP Bhavan, was also relieved by the gov-

ernment on Monday for her to proceed on central deputation to join the Ministry of External Affairs' G 20 Secretariat as Joint Secretary. Before joining Jagan's CMO, Praveen Prakash was working at AP Bhavan.

In July last year, Praveen Prakash was stripped of the crucial responsibility of Principal Secretary (Political) in the General Administration Department which he was holding as an additional charge along with the post of Chief Minister's Principal Secretary.

The issuance of several GOs as GAD's top man has led to several controversies and also run-ins with several other senior bureaucrats in the state due to which he was said to have been stripped of the GAD job.

## Rawat likely to join CMO

Finance Secretary SS Rawat, who has been seen as effectively handling the contentious subject is likely to join the CMO. It is learnt that apart from holding the fort in stabilising the State's stretched financial condition, Rawat also worked effectively in managing the PRC issue through a delicate balancing act on the finance front, especially when the state has been staring at a precarious situation due to a steep fall in the revenues owing to Covid-induced situation. He played a key role in raising debt from the market, convincing the Centre on it and then judiciously allocating the funds without spoiling the ambitious welfare agenda of CM YS Jaganmohan Reddy has turned a herculean task which Rawat had handled efficiently.

## Sanjay condemns KCR casting doubts on surgical strikes

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State unit of BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar has described speaking in 'insulting manner' over the sacrifices of soldiers as nothing but treason. He claimed that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao said the surgical strike had not taken place. "Speaking in this manner amounts to treason only," he felt.

Finding fault with the KCR for not believing in Army and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statements on surgical strike, Sanjay Kumar questioned KCR to tell whether he believed in most wanted terrorist Masood Azhar'd report. He

demanding that the Chief Minister tender apologies to the people for making comments that would demoralise the Army.

He said the people had held celebrations as surgical strikes eliminated terrorists. Everyone, except KCR and Rahul Gandhi, joined the celebrations, he said. There was no point in KCR remaining in India as he had insulted the Army, he claimed.

He felt that KCR has been following 10 Janpath these days. He may move to Gandhi Bhavan from Pragati Bhavan soon, he said. The Supreme Court gave a clean chit on the Rafale deal. He has no belief in the PM, three army chiefs and Supreme Court.

## Investors' wealth...

Continued from page 1

In just two sessions, the total investors' wealth has eroded by more than Rs 12 lakh crore. The BSE Sensex on Monday plunged 1,747 points while the broader NSE Nifty plummeted 531.95 points or 3.06 per cent to 16,842.80 -- closing below the key 17,000-level for the first time this year.

The rupee too slumped 24 paise to close at 75.60 against the US dollar.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹214
Without Skin	₹200
Broiler at Farm	₹116

EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	388
VIJAYAWADA	415
VISAKHAPATNAM	425
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹3.88

## Asking proofs for surgical ..

Continued from page 1

Modi also said: "We strengthen the borders, give powers to the Army. But their party leaders call the Army chiefs goons. They question us on the sacrifices of our sainiks. Such people deserve to be jailed".

Union Ministers, BJP Chief Minister of Assam and the who's who of BJP reacted sharply to this criticism.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sharma, whose

initial remarks snowballed into a raging controversy, tweeted: "Dear KCR garu, here is the videographic evidence of the surgical strike by our brave army. In spite of this, you question the valor of our Armed forces and insult them. Why are you so desperate to attack and malign our Army? New India will not tolerate insults against our Army. On the anniversary of the Pulwama attack the Opposition has chosen to insult our martyrs by again question-

ing the surgical strike. KCR and Congress are in competition to prove their loyalty to the Gandhi family. Our loyalty is with Bharat. Those questioning the armed forces won't be spared."

Union Minister Anurag Thakur said: "Words of Congress and TRS sound similar to those of Pakistan. Whenever elections come, they do new experiments - be it hijab or surgical strike because they can't compete with BJP as far as development is concerned".

## KCR's welfare schemes...

Continued from page 1

Double bedroom houses will be built in Mustabad and given to deserving persons," he added. KTR made it clear that the government will keep its word. He said, "After the formation of Telangana we are constructing double bedroom houses to give self-respect to the poor. If these houses are built by a private builder they would charge Rs 20 to Rs 25 lakh. We are allocating houses to all those who are eligible without any politics."

KTR said, "Many welfare schemes have been implemented after the KCR government came to power. Some people are talking whatever they want about the KCR government. Are there any double bedroom houses like this in any other state? Are schemes like Raitu Bandhu, Kalyana Lakshmi, KCR Kit being implemented anywhere else? KCR is a determined man. He will not leave until the work is completed. Double bedroom houses will be built and given to every poor man in TS"

## Telangana says no to...

Continued from page 1

This announcement comes at a time when the TRS has been alleging that the clean energy drive is intended to benefit private companies who have invested heavily in solar power. Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has been saying that the Centre's power reforms are intended to benefit Modi's friends who have invested heavily in solar power.

On Sunday, the CM alleged that Raj Kumar Singh is pressuring PPC and REC not to give loans to Telangana even though the state is prudent in fiscal matters.

## ED conducts 'hair-raising' searches...

Continued from page 1

A large part of the cash thus generated was used for making illegal compensatory payments through unauthorised channels for smuggled hair and undervalued exports of human hair from entities spread across India, according to ED officials.

The ED initiated money laundering investigation after it came across large hawala payments to local hair traders in the fund trail investigation of online Chinese betting mobile applications. Subsequently, based on ED's complaint, the CCS Hyderabad Police registered a fresh FIR under various sections of IPC Act, 1860, wherein, it was alleged that one M/s Nayla

Family Exports Private Limited (Director Md Ibrahim Patel) exported human hair by using benami Import Export Code (IEC) of multiple local proprietary firms. Also large-scale domestic sales of raw human hair were taking place from AP and Telangana to Guwahati and Kolkata. All this domestically sold hair was ultimately finding its way to China via Myanmar and the sale proceeds were surprisingly being received from shell Bank Accounts in Mizoram.

The ED conducted fund trail investigation and zeroed in on several shell firms (listed below) based in Mizoram that were obtaining hundreds of crores of rupees in cash deposits and then

remitting the collected amount to several hair merchants spread across India:

(a) M/s St Mary's Gem Industries Champai

(b) M/s Sun Moon Human Hair Champai

(c) M/s Thari Enterprises Aizwaland,

Mr Lucas Thangmangliana (resident of remote Champai District) is the chief facilitator of this mammoth hawala operation.

The ED has seized various incriminating documents, hand-written diaries, digital devices, and also recovered Rs 1.20 crore in cash. The ED identified various suspicious bank A/cs which were being used for huge cash deposits.

Somanath said.

Today's launch also happens to be the first mission after Somanath took over as the Secretary, Department of Space and Chairman, Space Commission, recently.

Thanking everyone for mak-

ing the mission possible, he said: "This spacecraft is going to be one of the biggest assets for us to serve the country."

Mission Director S R Biju said, "What we have accomplished today is really marvelous."

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IT Minister K T Rama Rao presenting cheques to the girl students in Hyderabad on Monday

# KTR extends financial aid to two girl students to pursue MBBS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

IT Minister K T Rama Rao has come forward to extend financial support to two brilliant students who were struggling to pursue their MBBS course due to their financial limitations.

Avunuri Akhila's father Prabhakar is a farmer and her mother is a homemaker. Akhila completed her

Intermediate with an aggregate of 97.7% and was selected for MBBS course in Mallareddy College for Women, Suraram, on the outskirts of Hyderabad.

Minister K T Rama Rao learnt about Avunuri Akhila's financial situation through Twitter and promised to provide support to her in completing her education. On Monday, the Minister met Akhila in Hyderabad and

enquired about her hardships. Rama Rao provided financial assistance for her college fee and also assured that he would support Akhila in completing her MBBS course.

In another instance, KTR financially helped Spandana, a student from Bhadradri Kothagudem district who secured 95.2% in her intermediate. Spandana got admission in TRR Medical College,

Patancheru, for MBBS course under A-Category. Her parents are daily wage workers and hail from a very poor background. Knowing the plight of the student, Minister KTR promised Spandana to support her for completing her MBBS course. The Minister encouraged the students and wished them success in their studies. Both Akhila and Spandana expressed happiness

over receiving help from the Minister and said that they will complete their courses and give back to the society.

This was not the first time that Minister KTR came forward to help students coming from financially weaker sections. Earlier, Minister KTR helped several students to pursue Engineering, Medicine and other professional courses.

## Helicopter services to Medaram from today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Now devotees can fly to Medaram from Hanamkonda on helicopters to attend the biggest tribal Jataara in Telangana. Telangana Tourism has decided to provide helicopters and the fare is Rs 19,999. The fare is Rs 3,700 for an aerial survey of the Jataara venue.

V. Srinivas Goud, Minister for Tourism and Culture, will launch the helicopter service from Hyderabad Begumpet Airport to Medaram, Karimnagar to Medaram and Mahbubnagar to Medaram at 3 pm on February 15.



## Thank Goddesses, TSRTC will come out of crisis: Sajjanar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TSRTC Managing Director VC Sajjanar has advised the officers to take Medaram Jathara as very prestigious event to the TSRTC. He asked them to coordinate among themselves and carry out the operations, maintenance etc, without causing inconvenience to passengers/pilgrims coming to Medaram Jathara and make the Jathara successful. He also instructed them to coordinate with all stakeholders. While addressing the officers, including Assistant Managers, Security officers deputed to Medaram Jathara, at Warangal Zonal Training College, VC Sajjanar also advised the staff to behave well with passengers, crew, and solve any issues to make sure Jathara goes peacefully. "With the blessings of Goddesses, TSRTC will come out of the crisis in the year 2022," he said.

He urged them to give wide publicity to Medaram with TSRTC mobile application for a hassle-free journey in TSRTC buses. He felicitated the KITS professors and students who developed the app. He also said carrying Bangaram through our cargo services & then delivering prasadam to devotees this year is also a very



good initiative. He commended the efforts made by all the employees of Warangal from the last two months to complete all arrangements in time and further said that TSRTC arrangements are very good.

Further, Sajjanar launched a CD on Medaram Jathara songs on TSRTC by Shivala, a conductor with Warangal-1 depot and lauded her talent in bringing out these songs. Jathara kits containing, first aid kit, telephone directory, Caps, masks wireless sets were handed over to all officers. A Maintenance manual book on Medaram Jathara was also released by Sajjanar. Executive Directors C Vinod Kumar ED (E), E Yadagiri ED (O&A), PV Munisekhar ED (H&K), DVijaya Bhasker, Regional Manager Warangal and other HoD's, RM's DVM's DM's were present in the meeting.

## NTPC officials distribute notebooks



NTPC officials distributing notebooks to poor students in Secunderabad on Monday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"Notebooks are just not paper. It's proper use coupled with sincere efforts will carve bright future for students," says Munish Jauhari, Regional Executive Director (South & Western Region-I), NTPC while distributing notebooks to students on Monday.

At a programme held at NTPC-Southern Region Headquarters in Secunderabad, Jauhari, along with Mridula Jauhari, president (Dakshin Deepanjali Mahila Samithi) and Sakshi Mahila Samithi) and Mani Kant, GM (HR), launched the distribution of notebooks to 10,582 students of Five Primary Schools, 23 High

Schools and three Colleges of nearby areas. In view of Covid protocol, limited students were invited to the programme while rest will receive the notebooks in phased manner.

On this occasion, Mani Kant, GM (HR) highlighted on various CSR initiatives being undertaken by NTPC Southern Region for overall development of nearby people. Students and teachers also appreciated NTPC management for its proactive CSR activities especially in the area of education.

Office bearers of Dakshin Deepanjali Mahila Samithi, teachers from various schools and NTPC officials were present.

## mPowerO, Robotex to train underprivileged students

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

On a mission to teach new-age technologies to underprivileged, mPowerO and Robotex have announced plans to train two lakh students from economically weaker sections on the concept of robotics over mPowerO's eLearning platform. Until now, concepts like robotics or advanced STEM projects were only accessible to children from

financially well sections. This learning app which hosted the robotics course was piloted with 500 students between 6th to 12th Standard, from government schools in Pune, Maharashtra.

The fully digital course taught the children how to programme and operate a robot via a combination of LMS (Learning Management Systems) and live sessions with the experts in a Hybrid model.

## 70-yr-old banyan tree gets new lease of life

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 70 year old huge Banyan tree in Rajanna Sircilla district in the state which was uprooted due to heavy rains during the monsoon season has been given a new lease of life and translocated elsewhere.

TRS Rajya Sabha MP J Santosh Kumar who took up the initiative with the cooperation of the district administration said the uprooted tree started drying up due to lack of water and appeared as if it was dead on the outskirts of Suddala village in

The 70-year-old banyan tree being transported for translocation



Konaraopet Mandal. The tree was successfully translocated on Sunday, he said. Earlier, Dobbala Prakash, a nature lover from the

same village who noticed the tree, started watering it for two months, following which new leaves started sprouting.

## Jyothiba schools staff pay hiked

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Government of Telangana has issued orders in revising the pay scales, 2020 to teaching and non teaching staff working under the management of Mahatma Jyothiba Phule Telangana Backward Classes Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society. The orders were issued by B Venkatesham, Secretary to Government.

## Govt schools hesitate to enrol new students Heads of institutions demand Aadhaar card for admissions

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Transfer of new students from private to government schools is mired with procedural issues. Without Aadhaar, they are not enrolling students, even when the academic year is nearing completion. Parents struggling with Covid hit low income levels are approaching government schools to enroll their children. They have to run from pillar to post as the schools seek transfer certificates or bonafide from parents even for classes below seventh standard. Complainants were registered with the Parents' Association in this regard.

Government schools are collecting Aadhaar cards as mandatory to fill the State student portal ISMS. One of the members of Hyderabad Schools Parents Association, Murali Radha, said "Some of the parents are interested in getting admissions in government schools for their children because their financial status for two years is at risk. But government schools are not cooperating with them. Officials are directing government teachers to collect previous year study certificates of

first to fifth also, which according to us is unnecessary. Parents are opting these government schools because they are not able to pay fee in private schools." The association is hoping to get a clarification from the Education Minister on these issues and help the innocent population, she said.

Government schools are in line to increase the strength, but complaints are more on this issue after this recent vacation. A headmaster Gopal Reddy requesting to be anonymous said, "We are open for admissions and my school has one to

seventh grade students. If student comes for eighth class admission, then we are advised to ask for certificates. However, in some cases there are migrated students. In such cases, I am collecting Aadhar because we also know the effort of them travelling from home which is expensive." He shows an evidence, who has no certificates but requested him for admission. "These are the rules and we cannot avoid them," he said.

Another school principal also rejects the complaints of admission problems.

## 4 youth held, 4kg ganja seized

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI

Keesara police of Rachakonda Commissionerate nabbed four persons and seized 4 kg of ganja from the arrested persons. The accused are identified as Saadu Koteswara Rao (22) and Naidu Manoj Kumar (28). They are the residents of Chennapuram village, Narsannapet Mandal, Srikakulam Dist. They hatched a plan for their lavish life. They collected the mobile phone numbers of Nenavath Pentya (23) and Panta Sainath (23), resident of Medchal district.

The first two accused entered into agreement with the others to supply ganja to them at Rs.

15,000 per kg. On 12th February, the accused left from Srikakulam along with 4 kg of ganja. They reached to L.B.Nagar Hyderabad on the next day, contacted with Nenavath Pentya and Panta Sainath who directed them to come to Bandlaguda. The two came to forest area opp: to ICOMM and handed over 4 kg of ganja to the other two. Meanwhile on receipt of credible information, the Police conducted raid and seized ganja from the accused persons. The case has been investigated under the leadership Mahesh M. Bhagwat, Commissioner of Police, G. Sudheer Babu, Addl. CP Rachakonda.

## 2 killed in separate road accidents

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two people were killed in separate road accidents in different places in Medchal-Malkajgiri district on Monday morning. In the first case, one person died on the spot after his bike was hit by a lorry in Dhulapally. The victim was yet to be identified. The police rushed to the spot and launched an investigation. In the second case, a bike was hit by an unknown vehicle in Ayodhyannagar of the district.

## ISB tops two global MBA rankings

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian School of Business (ISB) has topped the chart among the Indian business schools in two prestigious global rankings. ISB's Post Graduate Programme in Management (PGP) has been ranked #32 globally in the Financial Times (FT) Global MBA 2022 ranking, and ISB has been ranked #11 globally in the Poets & Quants (P&Q) composite ranking of the top international MBA programmes 2021-2022.

Professor Ramabhadran Thirumalai, Deputy Dean - Academic Programmes said, "ISB has carved a niche and



stands tall as a much sought-after business school in India. The rankings awarded by Financial Times and Poets & Quants bear testimony to this fact. The career progression of ISB students has always

been inspiring and has paved the way for new growth trajectories. FT ranks us as #1 globally in salary percentage increase, reiterating that ISB offers a fulfilling and rewarding career path."

## Addl.CP explains duties of interceptor staff

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI

Addl.CP Rachakonda G.Sudheer Babu conducted a meeting with all 8 Interceptor vehicles staff at CAR HQrts, Amberpet, wherein he explained the duties and responsibilities of Interceptor staff with emphasis on Visible Policing and to respond quickly to any Law and Order contingencies. With an aim of providing Quality of Life, sense of security and better living conditions to the people.

## Two inter-state burglars held, property worth Rs 27 lakh seized

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI

The sleuths of CCS LB Nagar police, along with Vanasthalipuram Police of Rachakonda Police Commissionerate, apprehended two inter-state professional burglars. The police teams recovered gold and silver ornaments all worth over Rs 27 lakh from the arrested persons. The police solved 5 grave cases and 9 non-grave cases.

Rachakonda Commissioner of Police, Mahesh Bhagwat said to the media persons at CP office that the offenders Rafikul Khan and Suraj Shaik belong to Murshidabad district of West Bengal state. They stayed in neighbouring villages and became friends. Earlier they used to do mason work in their village. They decided to earn easy money by committing property offences. As per their



Police officials showing seized ornaments to media persons in Hyderabad on Monday

plan they went to Kerala, Goa and Bengaluru and took rooms for rent and committed property offences. Later they came to Hyderabad, took rooms in Weaker Section colony, Saheb Nagar and also in Suryapet Town. They used to move in colonies by walk and bicycle and select the locked houses to commit the offences. They break the main door lock and steal gold and silver

ornaments besides cash. Police noticed the offenders when the culprits were moving on Atlas Cycle under suspicious circumstances under the limits of Vanastha lipuram PS. On questioning, the culprits revealed their names and also confessed that they have committed the property offences.

CRIME CORNER

## CV Anand launches anti-drug awareness campaign

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Police Commissioner CV Anand inaugurated an anti-drug awareness campaign at RTC Kalabhavan in the city on Monday. The campaign was to bring awareness

among students of various colleges. On the occasion, CV Anand said the Hyderabad Police were committed to combat illicit drugs and resolved to intensify the fight. "The approach of

the Hyderabad Police comprises awareness and strict enforcement of law. Our mission is supported by the local public and the State government," he said.





# Water level abysmally low in Srisaillam Reservoir

Fears over looming drinking water crisis voiced

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

With the water level in Srisaillam reservoir has going abysmally down, fears have been expressed over looming drinking water crisis. The water level has reached to minimum draw down level because of hydel power generation.

The condition of many reservoirs in the district is more or less the same.

The Srisaillam reservoir received over 1,000 tmcft of inflows during the last rainy season due to heavy rains experienced under a low pressure area during the last monsoon season. But, there is a sharp contrast in water level in the reservoir forcing the Krishna River Management Board dashing letters to governments of AP and Telangana, asking them to stop hydel power generation, sparing water to quench thirst of people during summer.



As there is no response from the States to its letters, the Board took a serious view of it. It is estimated that Telangana State would require 3 tmcft by May and 6 tmcft for Andhra Pradesh to meet drinking water needs.

The current water level in Srisaillam reservoir is put at 34.04 tmcft, indicating hard days ahead. On account of water shortage in the reservoir, the

right and left bank hydel power generations now stopped power generation.

Regarding Kalwakurthy lift irrigation scheme, 2,400 cusecs of water is released to the scheme from Regumangadda reservoir near Yelluru. The Ramanpadu reservoir has a storage of 1,071 feet of water as on Sunday, according to project engineer Assistant Engineer Anil Reddy. The Jurala left

canal is releasing 160 cusecs and right canal 365 cusecs to the ayacut lands and released 20 tmcft to meet drinking water needs.

The left bank of Koil Sagar Project released water to wet 10,427 acres of the ayacut lands twice. As the farmers of the right bank ayacut lands have been observing crop holiday, the release of water has been suspended.

## Process to procure ROs, water heaters for SC hostels

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

Tendering process was conducted on Monday for the supply of quality reverse osmosis (RO) plant and water heaters to 29 pre-metric and 6 post-metric Scheduled Castes hostel in the district. It was conducted at the Collectorate's meeting hall.

According to Additional Collector (Revenue) Rajesh Kumar, tendering process would be conducted for the supply steel plates, steel glasses, woolen blankets, cookers, lunch boxes, globes, maps, registrars, wall clocks, gas stoves and others. The Additional Collector said as many as 12 agencies participated in the process. The work orders would be given with the permission of the District Collector.

District Scheduled Castes Development Officer Ram Lal, District Industries Officer Hanumanth and others were present.

## Kalyana Lakshmi, Shaadi mubarak schemes benefit poor girls: Harish

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Finance and Health Minister T Harish Rao stated that Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has been implementing unique programmes like Kalyanalakshmi and Shaadi Mukbarak for the benefit girls from poor families.

The Minister said so far Rs 8,421 crore was spent for 10,56,239 marriages under the two schemes in the state. Harish Rao distributed cheques under the two schemes at his camp office at Siddipet on Monday. Lunch was arranged to 189 beneficiaries in Siddipet urban mandal of Siddipet Assembly segment at his camp office and a cheque of Rs 1,00,116 was given to each beneficiary. Totally, Rs 1,89,96,924 was distributed under the two schemes.

Addressing on the occasion, the Minister pointed out that the state government has been striving for the welfare of various sections of people in



Minister for Finance T Harish Rao serving lunch to people who came to his camp office in Siddipet on Monday

the state. Either the Congress or BJP governments never introduced such schemes, he said.

The TRS government besides giving Rs 1,00,116 to the marriage of poor girl, facilities are provided at government hospitals for free delivery. The women are also provided with KCR kits and they are taken to government hospitals in the vehicles provided by government, he said.

He asked the women to

seek the help from government hospitals for deliveries and said that 150 doctors are available at Siddipet Government Hospital. Diagnosis and CT scan will be done free of cost to poor people, he said. As part of Mana Vooru-Mana Badi, English medium will be introduced in Government schools for the benefit of people and government will be spending Rs 7,300 crore for the purpose, he added.

## Cong seeks Biswa's arrest for remarks against Rahul

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State unit of the Congress party has lodged complaints with the police against Assam Chief Minister Himantha Biswa Sarma, alleging that he had made derogatory remarks against former AICC chief Rahul Gandhi.

The Congress demanded that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao appoint a special police team to arrest the Assam Chief Minister and bring him to the State.

TPCC Chief Revanth Reddy, senior party leaders V Hanumantha Rao, Ponnala Laxmaiah, Renuka Chowdhary, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, T Jagga Reddy, S A Sampath Kumar, Bakka Judson, G Niranjan, A Maheshwar Reddy and others filed complaints in all the 709 police stations across the State on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, Revanth Reddy alleged that Himantha Biswa had also insulted women through his remarks.

He said the Election Commission should file criminal complaint against Biswa Sarma. Prime Minister Modi has been supporting Biswa Sarma shamelessly, he added.

He said that the Assam police and the Election Commission had failed to take action against Biswa Sarma. He said that women had felt insulted by the remarks of Biswas Sarma and that the Telangana Congress has been filing complaints against Biswa Sarma here.

He demanded that the Telangana police frame charges against Biswa Sarma and serve a notice on him. He also demanded that the police arrest Biswa Sarma and bring him to the State.

## BJP demands allotment of 2BHK units by March 31

PNS ■ KAMAREDDY

The BJP on Monday gave ultimatum to the ruling TRS to allot 324 2BHK houses built at a cost of Rs 16 crore to the beneficiaries by March 31. BJP Kamareddy Assembly constituency in-charge Katipalli Venkata Ramana Reddy warned that his party activists would hand over the houses to the poor if the government failed to allot them to the beneficiaries. Addressing the BJP activists, who staged a sit-in at Rajiv Nagar 2BHK colony, he said the BJP councillors supported allocation of Rs 1 crore by the Kamareddy municipality for repairs to the 2BHK houses at Rajiv Nagar because it would benefit the poor.

## DALIT BANDHU Minister promises benefits to every eligible family

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Minister for Education Sabita Indra Reddy on Monday promised that each and every eligible Dalit family in Rangareddy district would get Dalit Bandhu benefit. The Minister along with MLA Kale Yadav and ZP Chairperson Anita Reddy inaugurated several developmental works in Chevella constituency on Monday.

The Minister distributed dairy units to beneficiaries in Malkapur village. She also inaugurated the Co-operative Bank ATM centre at Chevella, the Co-operative Society warehouse, a cold storage plant and a veterinary hospital at Aluru village.

Sabita Indra Reddy said that every eligible family would get benefits under Dalit Bandhu scheme. Not a single



eligible person would be left unattended, she said.

She said a total of 2,000 Dalit families would be selected under the Dalit Bandhu scheme which would be launched in the district in March. She recalled that the government had continued to distribute pensions to the needy even during the pandemic. Those, who applied for pensions now, would get benefits from March. Chevella constituency is developing into an industrial hub with several new companies coming up.

## Officials told to promptly resolve grievances of people

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

District Collector R V Karnan on Monday directed the officials to ensure that the complaints received from people during the 'Dial Your Collector' programme are resolved without delay. He said the people from remote areas in the district were making complaints during the programme as they cannot visit the district headquarters all the way from their villages.

The Collector, while conducting the programme, asked the officials to resolve the grievances received from the people without any delay.

Additional Collector G V Shyam Prasad Lal suggested to the officials that they file counters in the cases pending in various courts in the district. He warned of departmental action against the authorities who failed to file counter in the



Karimnagar Collector R V Karnan conducting 'dial your Collector' programme in Karimnagar on Monday

cases. He also directed the officials to submit the number of vacancies in each department to the administration.

During the programme, a farmer, Veeraiah, from Madipally village under Jammikunta mandal, told the Collector that registration of his land in Dharnai portal had failed though he filed an application to this effect at Mee Seva centre. The Collector directed the Tahsildar concerned to ensure that the reg-

istration of the farmer's land is completed immediately. Another farmer, Rahim, from Elgandal village, too made the similar complaint.

A citizen, named Sadananda Chari, from Jammikunta, complained to the Collector that 12 guntas of endowment land belonging to a temple in the village, was encroached upon.

The Collector directed the Revenue Divisional Officer concerned to conduct survey and take action immediately.

## KCR's birthday to be celebrated on grand scale

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao on Monday called on the TRS leaders and activists to help celebrate Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's birthday on a grand scale. The Minister said the celebrations would be organised for three days - on February 15, 16 and 17. Blood donation camps would be organised in Assembly constituencies on February 16 and prayers and planting of saplings would be organised the next day, he said.



## Govt fails to protect endowments lands: BJP

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

BJP leader P Muralidhar Rao has alleged that there is no protection to temple lands in Telangana State and pointed out that 20,000 acres of endowments lands are under encroachment.

He alleged looting of the State in the past eight years under KCR's rule was unprecedented.

Addressing the media here on Monday, he accused KCR of confusing the people with his statements and called him 'Tupaki Ramudu'.

The century-old Amba Bhavani temple lands had been encroached upon with the 'blessings' of government elders, he alleged. The TRS leaders had deliberately misled the High Court, stating that the temple figured under survey numbers 7 and 8, he alleged. Tahsildar surveyed the temple lands on February 10 and declared that there is no private land, he said.



BJP leader P Muralidhar Rao speaking at a meeting in Mahabubnagar on Monday

He said that the BJP would launch State-wide agitation against the land encroachment encouraged by the TRS.

Similarly, a total of 102 acres of Jachcherla Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple was encroached upon, he said and alleged that there was collusion of officials and elected people's representatives.

Accusing the Chief Minister of rendering injustice to Mahabubnagar district, he questioned why the Chief

Minister had shelved Palamuru-Rangareddy, Narayanapeta and Kodangal lift irrigation schemes if he has true love for the district.

He expressed concern over only 20 per cent of the progress in the lift irrigation schemes that are capable of irrigating 12.50-lakh acres of ayacut lands.

Fixing meters to bore wells does not mean denial of subsidy to farmers, he said, questioning misinterpretation of

BJP stand.

The true face of KCR will be exposed to the people by undertaking door-to-door visit, he said. Turning his attention to Hijab issue, he wondered what is wrong on the part of Karnataka educational institution that prohibited students wearing uniform from wearing Hijab. Earlier, he expressed his solidarity with those who have been protesting against encroachment of Amba Bhavani temple lands.

## Integrated master plan is need of the hour: Minister

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Excise Minister V Srinivas Goud has suggested to the district authorities that the master plan be prepared keeping in mind local aspirations and needs and the total population in Mahabubnagar population by 2040. It would help develop the city on a par with the HMDA's master plan for Hyderabad development.

He was speaking as chief guest at a workshop on master plan development for the city under AMRUT scheme at the ZP meeting hall here on Monday.

Master plan forms the backbone of the development of the city that is why the suggestions and advice of officials concerned are crucial. The current population of Mahabubnagar city is 3.5 lakh. It is likely to increase to 10



Minister for Excise V Srinivas Goud at Zilla Parishad meeting in Mahabubnagar on Monday

lakh by 2040. Therefore, the master plan should keep in mind what would be the population of the city by

2040. After 20 years, the officials should assess what would be the drinking water, electricity, road and communications needs and traffic growth. The master plan should be devised according-

ly, he said.

The master plan should focus on beautification of the city, besides development of roads and other infrastructural amenities, industrial and traffic growth and so on.

The Mahabubnagar Urban Development Authority is going to be created with the merger of Bhutpur and

Jachcherla with the Mahabubnagar city. Moreover, the adjacent mandals would come under the development authority.

The area of the city has grown enormously to 99 square km in 2022, as against 32 square km in 2010 and 13 square km in 1952, he said asking the officials to assess

**Master plan forms the backbone of the development of the city that is why the suggestions and advice of officials concerned are crucial**

the growth of the city area by 2040. According to his vision for development of the city, an IT park will be located in 400 acres, Food Park will be set up in another 400 acres, KCR Urban Eco-Park will be located in 2,097 acres, development of Mahabubnagar and Chincholi Road, by-pass roads all around the city, development of a superspecialty hos-

pital in place of the old Collectorate.

He pointed out that an airport has been sanctioned at Manyamkonda near here. Soil test has already been completed as part of construction of the airport.

The Mahabubnagar Urban Development Authority should develop its master plan on the lines of HUDA master plan, he said asking all officials to play a crucial role in development of the master plan. The role of Traffic police, Roads and Buildings, Housing, Transport, Tourism and other relevant departments is very important, he said.

Mahabubnagar Master plan development should be completely in tune with the proposed master plan. Therefore, the officials should develop the wonderful master plan for the purpose, he felt.

## 'Black Day' observed to mark Pulwama attack

PNS ■ NALGONDA

The SR Educational Institutions across the State on Monday observed black day at their schools and colleges on the anniversary of Pulwama terrorist attack.

It was stressed that it was important to wean away the students from Western cul-

ture of celebrating Valentine's Day. Zonal in-charge of educational institutions D Srinivas Reddy, while addressing students, said that 40 Indian soldiers died in a bomb blast in Pulwama on February 14, 2019. In view of this, the Educational Institutions observe the black day, he said.



Students observing Black Day to mark terrorist strike in Pulwama, in Nalgonda on Monday



INDIA CORNER

HP govt decides to grant revised pension for 1.73 lakh pensioners

The Himachal Pradesh government on Monday has decided to grant revised pension and family pension to about 1.73 lakh pensioners in the state from February 1, an official spokesperson said. The decision was taken in a state cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur here, he added. About 43,000 employees who have retired between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2021 will also get revised pension and gratuity, the spokesperson said. The minimum pension and family pension will increase from Rs 3,500 per month to Rs 9,000 per month from January 1, 2016, he said. The state cabinet also approved increasing limit of gratuity from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 20 lakh from January 1, 2016 which would be applicable for NPS employees, he added. Pensioners and family pensioners above 80 years of age will be provided due additional pension benefit on revised pension and family pension, the spokesperson said.



Farooq Abdullah prevented from leaving residence in Srinagar

Former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir Farooq Abdullah was on Monday prevented from leaving his residence here in view of security concerns on the anniversary of the Pulwama terror attack, prompting him to lodge a strong protest. Sources in the National Conference, of which Abdullah is the president, said that he was scheduled to travel to Jammu by road, a stretch of nearly 300 kilometers. The information about the programme had been conveyed to authorities concerned five days ago, but to his dismay, Abdullah found that the exits from his house were barred. Abdullah, a former three-time chief minister and a sitting Lok Sabha member from Srinagar, managed to walk out of his house in the afternoon and is said to have hitched a ride from a passerby for a short distance before the security team persuaded him to return home in a police vehicle.



Authorities in Pak recover heroin worth US\$ 1.4 billion in international market

Authorities in Pakistan's Sindh province on Monday claimed to have seized a huge quantity of drugs, including heroin worth USD 1.4 billion in the international market, during a raid on the outskirts of Karachi. Sindh's Minister for Excise and Taxation and Narcotics Control Mukesh Kumar Chawla said the drugs were seized during a raid on a house in Surjani town on the outskirts of Karachi on Sunday. It is the largest drug bust in the history of Karachi, he said, adding that a suspect, Moha mmad Usman, has also been arrested. A huge quantity of drugs, including 304 kilograms of heroin and 500 kilograms of hashish (charas), were recovered during the raid, the official said. Chawla said the seized heroin was valued at USD 1.4 billion, while hashish was valued at USD 1.5 million in the international market.



Kanpur had 'tamancha' factories under previous govt: Adityanath

PNS ■ AKBERPUR

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday targeted the Samajwadi Party, saying that during its rule there were illegal country-made pistol ('tamancha') factories in Kanpur but his BJP dispensation is establishing a defence corridor. Addressing an election meeting here, he said, "Under the previous government, there were factories of 'tamancha' in Kanpur. Their name is 'Samajwadi', work is 'tamanchawadi' and thinking is 'pariwaradi'. Our government is making a defence corridor. Now, the youth of Kanpur will sit on tanks made in Kanpur, enter into the boundary of the enemy, and will raise the war cry for Bharat Mata."



of people also tried to mislead people on the coronavirus vaccine, calling it "Modi vaccine". "A person who stands by someone during a crisis is a true well-wisher. And a person who does not support during

a crisis is an opportunist," he said and urged people that it is an appropriate time to give a befitting reply to such people by defeating them in the elections. Referring to the same party

"A person who stands by someone during a crisis is a true well-wisher. And a person who does not support during a crisis is an opportunist," he said and urged people that it is an appropriate time to give a befitting reply to such people by defeating them in the elections.

rule in the state and at the Centre, he said that the "double-engine government" has given a double dose of ration to people. "Do you need a government which provides electricity or one which spreads darkness? Do you want a government that gives a double dose of ration or one which loots ration?" he told the gathering. Referring to the law and

order situation, he said, "Earlier, bombing used to take place in markets. The lives of our daughters and traders were in danger. But after 2017 the law and order situation of the state became an example. Now there are no riots, no bombing." Kanpur Dehat will vote on February 20 in the third of the seven-phase assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh.

AAP rivals targeting me, Bhagwant Mann: Kejriwal

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday claimed that the AAP's rival parties in Punjab are targeting him and its chief ministerial candidate Bhagwant Mann as they do not want the state to have an honest government. The national convenor of the Aam Aadmi Party said the only fault of his party and its leaders is that they talk about improving the condition of schools and hospitals in Punjab, giving jobs to people and ensuring justice in sacrilege cases. In a swipe at his Punjab counterpart, Kejriwal said Charanjit Singh Channi has been having nightmares about him and is unable to sleep these days. Blaming corruption for the inflow of drugs into the state, the AAP leader asserted it will stop once his party



comes to power. Addressing a news conference in Amritsar, Kejriwal said, "During the past few days you must have observed that all parties and their leaders are only abusing me and Bhagwant Mann. Yesterday, (Union Home Minister) Amit Shah came (to Punjab) and he abused me and the AAP." "Since morning till late evening Channi abuses me

and Mann, but he does not take the name of (SAD chief) Sukhbir Singh Badal. "Sukhbir Badal also abuses me and Bhagwant Mann, but he does not take Channi's name. Priyanka Gandhi (who was in Punjab on Sunday) also abused me. It seems they all have come together and are targeting us," he said. Kejriwal said all these rival parties do not want to defeat the AAP, but Punjab.

Putin urged to continue talks with West

PNS ■ MOSCOW

Russia's top diplomat advised President Vladimir Putin on Monday to continue talks with the West on Russian security demands amid tensions over Ukraine. The statement by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov appeared to signal the Kremlin's intention to stay on a diplomatic path even though the US has warned that Moscow could invade Ukraine at any moment. Speaking at the start of a

meeting with Putin, Lavrov suggested that Moscow should maintain a dialogue with the U.S. and its allies even though they have rejected Russia's main security demands. Moscow wants guarantees from the West that NATO won't allow Ukraine and other former Soviet countries to join as members, and that the alliance will halt weapons deployments to Ukraine and roll back its forces from Eastern Europe. Lavrov noted that even though the U.S. and its allies

have flatly rejected those demands, Washington has offered to conduct dialogue on limits for missile deployments in Europe, restrictions on military drills and other confidence-building measures. Putin has yet to formulate Russia's formal response to those proposals. Asked by Putin if it made sense to continue diplomatic efforts, Lavrov responded that possibilities for talks are far from being exhausted, and he proposed to continue the negotiations.

Rajnath, Jaishankar pay tributes to CRPF jawans

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday paid tributes to CRPF jawans killed in the dastardly Pulwama terror attack on this day three years ago. "This country will never forget the sacrifice of the brave CRPF jawans killed in Pulwama in 2019. I pay my tributes to them," Singh tweeted. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar also paid tributes to the CRPF jawans and said their memory will motivate India to fight the



"evil of cross-border terrorism". "Tributes to the brave jawans who made the supreme

sacrifice at Pulwama. Their memory will always motivate us to fight the evil of cross-border

"This country will never forget the sacrifice of the brave CRPF jawans killed in Pulwama in 2019."

(CRPF) in Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir, killing 40 personnel of the force. Days later, Indian warplanes struck the biggest terrorist training camp of JeM deep inside Pakistan's Balakot in retaliation to the dastardly terror attack. The Indian retaliation was seen as a doctrinal shift in its counter-terror policy. India has been following a policy of hot pursuit in dealing with cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir in the last few years.

China, India should follow through on border agreements: Beijing official

PNS ■ BEIJING

China and India should "follow through" on the border agreements to uphold peace and tranquility at the Line of Actual Control, a Chinese Foreign Ministry official said on Monday, after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar blamed Beijing for the current situation at the LAC due to the disregard of written agreements by China. "On the border issue, China always maintains that we should follow through on treaties and agreements we signed and we jointly uphold peace and tranquility at the border region," Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said while responding to Jaishankar's remarks. "We hope the two sides will continue to maintain communication through military and diplomatic channels to resolve the outstanding issues," Wang said. Speaking at a joint press conference along

"On the border issue, China always maintains that we should follow through on treaties and agreements we signed and we jointly uphold peace and tranquility at the border region," Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said while responding to Jaishankar's remarks.



with his Australian counterpart Marise Payne at Melbourne on Saturday, Jaishankar said when a large country disregards written commitments, it's an issue of legitimate concern for the entire international community. He was responding to a question on the eastern Ladakh border standoff between the Indian and

Chinese militaries. When asked whether the India-China border standoff issue came up for discussion during the Quad Foreign ministers' meeting here on Friday, Jaishankar replied, Yes. "Yes, we (Quad) had a discussion on India-China relations because it was part of how we briefed each other about what was happening in our neighbourhood.

People have cooled down Yogi's garmi: Akhilesh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Claiming historic voting for the SP-RLD candidates, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Monday said the people have subdued the garmi (haughtiness) of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in the first two phases of the UP assembly elections. Yadav took on Adityanath saying he used to claim ahead of the elections that khoon ki garmi (haughtiness, enthusiasm) of the SP and RLD leaders would be subdued after the elections. "After the first two phases, the people have pacified 'garmi' of those who were talking of curbing others' enthusiasm (garmi nikal denge) after the elections, Yadav said while addressing an election rally in the Bundelkhand region.

SC transfers pleas challenging Bihar liquor law to itself from Patna HC, seeks state's response

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Bihar government to file response within three weeks on the pleas challenging the Constitutional validity of its stringent liquor law and also ordered transfer of similar petitions to itself from the Patna High Court. As identical issue is pending consideration before this court, it is appropriate that the other writ petitions filed before the high court need to be transferred and heard along with the SLP pending here. The transfer petition is allowed, said the bench which comprised Justices A M Khanwilkar and C T Ravikumar. The bench was hearing three petitions on the issue, including the one filed by the International Spirits and Wines Association of India. The bench said the issue in all the petitions pertained to the validity of the Act and



asked the state government, represented by senior advocate Ranjit Kumar, to file the reply within three weeks and list the cases for hearing the first week of April. This is all about the validity of the Act. The reply has been filed before the Patna High Court and now it cannot be improved. You file your affidavit. Same arguments, same affidavit and same material will be relevant in all the cases as the validity is under challenge in all of them, the bench

said. On January 27, another bench headed by Chief Justice N V Ramana had refused to entertain a plea of the Bihar government seeking an observation that it did not make any remark on January 11 on the validity of a provision of the state liquor law, prohibiting the grant of anticipatory bail. The apex court had approved orders of the Patna High Court granting pre-arrest bail in such cases. The top court, on January 11, had dismissed 40 appeals of

the state government challenging the grant of anticipatory bail to accused under stringent state law, the Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act, 2016, saying these matters have choked courts and 14-15 Patna high court judges are hearing these cases only. As per a recent report of the Patna High Court Registry, presently 39,622 bail applications, which include 21,671 anticipatory and 17,951 regular bail applications, are pending before the assigned benches. Further, 36,416 fresh bail applications, including 20,498 anticipatory and 15,918 regular bail applications are yet to be taken up. As per the state's police records, 3,48,170 cases were lodged and 4,01,855 arrests made under the Bihar Prohibition and Excise law until October last year and about 20,000 bail pleas in such cases are pending disposal either in the high court or in district courts.

Schools reopen in Karnataka amid prohibitory orders

PNS ■ BENGALURU

After a near week-long hijab row forced holiday, high schools in Karnataka reopened on Monday, amid prohibitory orders in Udupi, which witnessed violence and tension last week, and sensitive areas of Dakshina Kannada and Bengaluru. Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code has been imposed in sensitive areas in the said districts. In Udupi district, all the schools that reopened witnessed normal attendance,



Education Department sources said. Muslim girl students who reached the school campuses wearing hijabs, and

removed them before entering classes. Examinations scheduled for the day are also going on in the

institutions. The district administration has imposed Section 144 of CrPc around 200-metre radius of all high schools in the district from Monday till February 19 to maintain peace. Udupi Tahsildar Pradeep Kurudekar, who visited a few schools, said Muslim students were abiding by the High Court's interim order by removing hijabs before entering classes. There were no reports of Hindu students turning up in saffron shawls. Police personnel have been posted in Udupi town and

near the schools to maintain law and order and to avoid any untoward incident. Meanwhile, in a statement, Udupi Pejawar mutt chief Swami Vishwaprassanna Teertha appealed to all sections to avoid chaos and maintain peace. In some government schools in Koppal and Kalaburagi districts, students appeared in classrooms wearing hijab as well as burqa, sources in the Education Department said. However, officials who reached the spot later asked the students to remove them.

49 CONVICTS IN AHMEDABAD SERIAL BLASTS CASE Prosecution concludes arguments on quantum of sentence to be awarded

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

The prosecution on Monday concluded arguments on the quantum of sentence for the 49 convicts in the 2008 Ahmedabad serial bomb blast case. Special judge AR Patel will hear the arguments of the defence on Tuesday, special public prosecutor Sudhir Brahmhbhatt said. The court has barred the print and electronic media



from reporting the details of the arguments on the quantum of sentence until the final verdict is awarded, Brahmhbhatt said. The court had said that

details of the arguments made by the accused and their lawyers as well as the prosecution should not be published in print or electronic media until the final verdict is pronounced. The special court had last Tuesday convicted 49 people and acquitted 28 others, over 13 years after a series of coordinated bomb blasts killed 56 people and left more than 200 injured in Ahmedabad, within 70 minutes, on July 26, 2008.





## Uniformity

The need is to promote secularism among the citizenry without State interference

The Karnataka hijab controversy has triggered a spate of petitions in courts. One of them is by a law student who wants the Supreme Court to direct the Centre and States to implement a common dress code for all registered and recognised schools and colleges in the country. He believes the code alone can preserve the secular character of educational institutes. It is his understanding that students insisting on attending classes wearing accessories citing essential religious practice can erode that character. The PIL says the common dress code can also curtail the menace of casteism, communalism and fundamentalism. The petitioner has submitted that educational institutes are secular public places and are meant to impart knowledge and wisdom, employment, good health, and contribute to nation-building, not for following essential and non-essential religious practices. Irrespective of how the apex court deals with this petition, it is reflective of the intellectual confusion that prevails among thinking minds in the country. The problem revolves around the phrase, 'being secular'. It is so smudged by politics of recent years that its meaning is by no means clear. In the context of the hijab controversy, Devadatt Kamat, the lawyer representing the Muslim girls in the hijab case, is in the middle of a storm for his "secular" action. The local Ramakrishna Ashram has, however, come out in his support, saying he is doing a professional duty and cannot be branded "as a cause against Hindu religion".



On the other hand, the Muslim wing of the RSS came out in support of the burqa-clad college girl who challenged some youth clad in saffron shawls opposing the hijab. If both are "secular" actions, then the problem should not have arisen in the first place. While dealing with the hijab case, the courts should be requested to re-visit the definition of 'secularism' in so far as wearing religious accessories in schools and

colleges is concerned. There is secularism that exists without any interference from the State. Here, it does not matter if students wear a hijab, *patka*, *bindi* or a cross. There is also secularism that exists with clear interference from the State. In this case, students are not allowed to wear essentials of religious practice. Either brand of secularism does not affect students' studies. However, they deeply impact their character and their right to religion and choice. A common dress code that the PIL demands is by itself not secular; it represents uniformity and, at its political extreme, homogeneity. Its secular character depends on how it deals with the daily use of essentials of religious practice. There is also the issue of the universal dress code applying to students of minority institutions where, by definition, students wear religious essentials. And what about the assembly prayers and moral science classes which defer to various religions in various schools? The need is to promote secularism without State interference. That takes care of the religion and choice questions.

### PICTALK



Austrian skiers (centre) after winning gold in the men's team ski jumping event at Winter Olympics

AP

## Back to school

Young students must be taught to follow a healthy lifestyle, food and take up exercising

After two years, all the children are finally going back to school. Some kids, especially those in primary classes, would attend school for the first time in their lives. Schools from Class I to VIII are also open from Delhi to Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. After the reduction in the number of Corona cases, junior schools have been reopened in many States where senior classes had already been started. In Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, students of primary class have started attending offline classes from February 14. Schools were reopened for senior classes in Delhi last week after a lot of pressure from parents who were worried about their kids sitting at home for nearly two years now. Children from nursery to class VIII will also be able to go to school in the Capital now. It is indeed a matter of great relief across States that life is limping back to normal and the scare of the pandemic is slowly fading away. Not that it has vanished altogether but its severity is now significantly compromised. Moreover, after a successful vaccination drive undertaken by the Government, people are much more confident now than they were in the aftermath of the second wave. Of course, the fear of the pandemic will remain for a long time even after it is gone.



People who have lost their loved ones during this period would find it difficult to forget it in their lifetime. There's no option but to face it unitedly. It was a challenge to our survival and the human race has once again proved its resilience. The one positive thing about the pandemic has been that it brought out the goodness of people in more ways than one. People helped each other and stood with their kith and kin in times of their need. It gave time to people to think about life, the purpose of life itself and, of course, the frailty of it. Now that we are coming out of it, we must ensure that we are prepared for such challenges in the future. We must plug all the gaps in our healthcare system and promote a healthy lifestyle that boosts immunity. Our ancient medicine system must be strengthened to deal with such threats. The children now must be taught in schools to follow a healthy lifestyle, besides taking up exercise and healthy food. But then, often, what we learn from any crisis is that we don't learn anything from it.

# UN must crack whip on global terrorism

India has once again requested the world body for a comprehensive convention against terror as it doesn't even have a common definition



JL KOUL **JALALI**

India has urged UN member States to shed procrastination and conclude a comprehensive convention against international terrorism. It has expressed concern that the world body has neither agreed on a common definition of terrorism nor laid down a coordinated policy to tackle and root out the global scourge. Second Secretary in India's Permanent Mission to the UN Dinesh Setia told the UN General Assembly that the world body's inability to address the scourge casts doubts on its relevance to discharge its obligations under the UN charter.

Way back in 1986, India had proposed a draft document on the comprehensive convention on international terrorism at the UN but it has not been implemented because of lack of unity on definition of terrorism among the member States. Let us take a view of how this procrastination by the world body has affected global security. When India proposed this draft, apart from recurring terror acts, Pakistan was also planning to perpetrate cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. Earlier, after erstwhile Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan had joined the US effort to dislodge the erstwhile Soviet forces from Afghanistan. In the process, Pakistan turned into a conduit for supply of US arms and equipment and money for equipping and training students from Afghan refugees in Pakistan named as Taliban to dislodge Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

With some of these funds and equipment, Pakistan also created Taliban Islamic Movement to acquire leverage in Afghanistan vis-à-vis India. But to foster geo-political and other interests in the area, the US appeared to connive with Pakistan's ulterior motives. With the then Saudi fugitive Osama bin Laden already present in the area and declaring jihad against the West, Pakistan with its calculated use of terrorism as a tool of its State policy itself turned into hub of terrorism from where most of the terror crimes in the world originate.

During subsequent decades, amid repeated heinous and gory



terror incidents, the world appeared to be veering round to Indian point of view that the menace of cross-border terrorism needs to be tackled effectively at international level. Addressing the 54th session of UN General Assembly in September 1999, then US President Bill Clinton urged the UNGA members to meet the challenges posed by terrorism with serious, deliberate and disciplined concern and effective cooperation. The UN Security Council also passed a resolution to this effect. It prompted an article, 'International Drive To Fight Terrorism', on October 2, 1999, but this was not to be.

Hardly any effective action was taken to counter terrorism. Repeated dastardly terrorist acts continued to rock the world and terrorism assumed deadly proportions, turning it into a serious problem. Barbaric terrorist attacks in America on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon on September 11, 2001, gave a big boost to jihadi terrorism. Their ranks swelled and, like al-Qaeda, they too targeted the West for perceived injustice.

The terror attack on Mumbai on November 26, 2008, was a big eye-opener in India. By 2015, terrorism had

WAY BACK IN 1986, INDIA HAD PROPOSED A DRAFT DOCUMENT ON THE COMPREHENSIVE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM AT THE UN BUT IT HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BECAUSE OF LACK OF UNITY ON DEFINITION OF TERRORISM AMONG THE MEMBER STATES

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF PULWAMA ATTACK

Sir — February 14 is known as a 'black day' for India on account of the brutal and cowardly Pulwama attack, one of the deadliest attacks on Indian security forces to date which claimed the lives of 40 CRPF bravehearts. The attack took place on February 14, 2019, making it the incident's third anniversary on Monday. This day three years ago, the nation was brought to a standstill as the news of 40 CRPF officers losing their lives broke out on our TV screens. On the fateful day, the CRPF officers were martyred in a terrorist attack in Pulwama city of Jammu and Kashmir, which was carried out by Jaish-e-Mohammad, a Pakistan-based terrorist organisation.

The incident unfolded when more than 2,500 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were travelling in a convoy of 78 vehicles from Jammu to Srinagar, through National Highway 44, where the attack took place. A car carrying explosives rammed into a vehicle carrying multiple CRPF men, causing a fatal blast. Besides killing the unsuspecting bravehearts, the attack left several other personnel injured. Soon after the attack, Jaish-e-Mohammad claimed responsibility for the attack. Though the horrors of the Pulwama attack are three years old now, the day is still observed as a 'black day' for Indians.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

### GOA ELECTION CALLS THE SHOTS

Sir — Even though Goa is a small State with only 40 Assembly seats, the election has generated a keen interest as several parties are vying for majority of the seats. The ruling BJP is sitting pretty and likely to retain power in the Assembly. It will be a tug of war for the crucial segments and that will ultimately decide the course of results. Although all the four major claimants for power in Goa — the BJP, the Congress-Goa Forward Party alliance, the Trinamool Congress-Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party alliance and the AAP — are claiming that they will clinch majority, there is no perceptible wave to sweep the stakeholders

## Tollywood is not at all inferior



This is in response to Prafull Goradia's article, 'A few reasons why Tollywood languishes' (February 10). Tollywood "languishes" economically compared to Bollywood not due to the quality of films churned out, but due to other factors. One, India's Bengali-speaking world is much smaller than Hindi-speaking domain, especially after Partition of Bengal/India in 1947. So how can Tollywood films marketed only in West Bengal (and possibly Tripura) compete economically with Bollywood films having a monopoly in as many as nine Hindi-speaking States? Two, thanks to the zealous

promotion of Hindi by the Centre since Independence, the language has extended its influence in almost all parts of the country, thereby boosting the Bollywood market.

Three, the resultant brute commercial clout of Bollywood not only augments the technical quality of its films, its economic muscle also succeeds in edging out Tollywood films from the theatres of even West Bengal. Four, while Bengalis are liberal enough to embrace Hindi films, the hard reality remains that the Hindi-speaking world is not ready to accept the culture of Bengal and its films, thereby restricting Tollywood market. With enough talent pool but the industry not large in proportion, it is natural that many gifted Bengalis ventured into Bollywood for decades for more exposure, opportunities, fame and moolah. But despite being economically poor, it required a Satyajit Ray to place Indian films on the world map.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

to power on their own strength.

The absence of a wave is not due to voter indifference but due to the localisation of choices. The party is important but, in most cases, the candidate is more important than the party. As such there is no wave to favour any one party and that will ensure that it's a fair election. The results will be binding on the work done by the legislators in each pocket; thankfully, money power may not come to the fore as an influencer.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

### IPL MUST SHOW FARSIGHTEDNESS

Sir — It refers to 'Power of purse' (February 14). Since money power is at the centre of such IPL mega auctions, hence at times it is difficult to fathom some of the buys by these franchises. Uncapped players are being sold at massive ₹10 crore just because a left-arm pacer is a premium product in IPL matches and many other foreign players are bought only on reputation while performance

should always supersede reputation. Despite massive amounts of money being flooded into this game, there is still a huge gulf between the few superstars of cricket and how kids from the not-so-privileged classes get to play.

Cricket coaching has mushroomed everywhere in the country but still a lot of work needs done to ensure that proper infrastructure is available to all budding talented kids, even in semi-urban or rural areas. And that is where these deep-pocketed big franchises can play a part by investing in these facilities and nurturing and grooming talent, which can go on to represent their own franchises in the future. Last but not the least, it is high time that the BCCI started a women's IPL too to ensure that our women players also get the much-needed fame and money.

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## SOUND BITE



To save our farmers from climate challenge, our focus is on the fusion of 'Back to basics' and 'March to future'.

Prime Minister  
—Narendra Modi

My India is one and united. Perhaps Rahul Gandhi was referring to pre-2014 when only corruption and mismanagement existed.



Union Minister  
—Jyotiraditya Scindia

The AAP will develop Uttarakhand as the global spiritual capital. It's the land of deities, shrines and holy places.



AAP national convener  
—Arvind Kejriwal

The BJP promised action against corruption and goondas last time...It has no agenda in this election.



AAP leader  
—Sanjay Singh



RLD chief  
—Jayant Chaudhary



FIRST COLUMN

AFRICAN COUPS AND THE NARCO ANGLE

Guinea-Bissau is a cocaine transit point, apart from being one of the poorest African nations



GWYNNE DYER

Military coups are back in fashion in Africa. There have been over 200 attempted coups in the continent since 1960, about half of them successful, but in the past two decades they had dropped to only two a year. Last year saw six, however, and there have been two already this year. The latest is in Guinea-Bissau.

Guinea-Bissau is one of the poorest and least well regarded of Africa's 54 countries - it even has to share the name with its bigger neighbour Guinea, more distant Equatorial Guinea, and very distant Papua New Guinea. But the former Portuguese colony on the West African coast has two distinctions: it has seen 9 coups or attempted coups since 1980, and it is the continent's leading 'narco-state'.

The most recent successful coup in Guinea-Bissau was the 2012 'narco-coup', led by army chief of staff General Antonio Indjai. It was,



according to a report by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, intended mainly to "achieve control of the rapidly growing lucrative cocaine trade."

Civilian democracy is back now in Guinea-Bissau, although in the person of a former army general, President Umaro Cissoko Embaló, who was elected in late 2019. He and his cabinet spent five hours under fire in the presidential palace on Tuesday, as heavily armed men in civilian clothes (but probably soldiers, really) tried to kill them.

They survived, although a lot of other people died, but you have to expect this sort of thing when your country becomes a major transit point for Latin American cocaine heading to Europe and the Middle East. Embaló himself said that the attackers were linked to drugs in the country, but he didn't explain why that would make him a target.

As a former general, Embaló would have to be associated with one of those factions. Even if he is not, or not any longer, active in the drug trade himself, his faction will be, and that makes him a target for the other factions.

Guinea-Bissau stands out because there is so much drug money sloshing around, but the coup phenomenon is much broader than this. In fact, that old phrase 'the Coup Belt' is coming back into use, because the great majority of the coups are happening in the wide central belt of Africa that stretches from the Atlantic coast across the Sahel to the Red Sea.

This is undoubtedly the poorest region of Africa, with per capita incomes often under a dollar a day, and it's also the least well educated. Climate change is starting to hit it hard, since hotter weather generally means less rain - and what does fall evaporates again more quickly.

The fact that almost all these countries are Muslim means that they are all vulnerable to attacks by jihadi extremists who engage in wholesale massacres of those less extreme than themselves. The armies fighting these fanatics, especially Mali (8 coups and attempted coups), Niger (7), Burkina Faso (9) and Chad (8), have taken heavy casualties and feel under-appreciated and underpaid.

But a sense of proportion is needed. In southern and eastern Africa there have been hardly any military coups in the past twenty years apart from Burundi, Lesotho and once in Zimbabwe.

The heyday of military coups in the Middle East was in 1945-75, since when Africa has dominated this particular field of activity. But if the recent surge in Africa's 'Coup Belt' is really connected to global warming, then we can also look forward to a resurgence in other parts of the world. Contrary to popular belief, most people do not behave well under pressure.

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'The Shortest History of War'. The views expressed are personal.)

# The Budget's food subsidy conundrum

The subsidy currently covers 800 million and is meant for the poor. Heavily subsidised food is for the very poor. How can 2/3rd of Indians be very poor?



UTTAM GUPTA

In the Union Budget for 2022-23, the Modi government has allocated Rs 207,000 crore for food subsidy which is ₹79,000 crore less than the actual expenditure of ₹286,000 crore during 2021-22 as per the revised estimate (RE). Under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, the Union Government directs the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other state agencies to procure food from the farmers at MSP (minimum support price) and organize its distribution to a mammoth population of 800 million people through an elaborate network of fair price shops (FPS) at the subsidized price (call it 'issue price') of ₹2, ₹3 and Rs 1 per kg for wheat, rice, and coarse cereals, respectively. Each person is eligible to receive 5 kg of cereals per month.

Considering that the cost of procurement, handling, and distribution is higher than these ridiculously low selling prices, the Centre reimburses the excess amount as 'food subsidy' to the FCI and other agencies and is paid from the Union Budget.

The three key factors impacting subsidy are the issue price, per unit cost of supply (MSP plus handling and distribution cost or HDC) and the quantity of food grain given to the beneficiaries. With these basics, the reduction in subsidy allocation for 2022-23 could either point towards increase in issue price or reduction in MSP/HDC or reduction in the quantity or a combination all three.

The current issue price of ₹2/3/1 per kg was specified in the NFSA legislation. The law enacted in 2013 had frozen these rates for three years. In 2017, the then minister for consumer affairs, Ram Vilas Paswan promised not to revise the price for three years. The status quo continues till date. Given the political sensitivities associated with the low price and elections happening every now and then, it is unlikely that Modi will dare raise the price.

Coming to MSP, this being dependent on the cost of production, in the present environment of rising cost of agricultural inputs, this will only increase. Likewise, HDC will also increase especially in view of the diesel and petrol price remaining high.

As for the quantity, during 2020-21 and 2021-22, to mitigate the Covid, the government distributed free ration to all 800 million under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY). Although, the pandemic is waning, there is no certainty that this scheme will stop next year. In any case, subsidy boost from hike in MSP, increase in the quantum of purchase and increase in HDC is inevitable.

How will the government deal with such an eventuality? To get an idea, let us look at how it addressed similar situation in the past.

During 2019-20, the FM had made budget provision of ₹184,000 crore. Against this, she released only ₹109,000



UNQUESTIONABLY, THE COVERAGE SHOULD BE DRASTICALLY CUT. THE LEAST THE GOVERNMENT CAN DO IS TO IMPLEMENT THE SHANTA KUMAR COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION TO CUT DOWN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE ELIGIBLE FOR SUBSIDISED FOOD FROM 67 PER CENT TO 40 PER CENT

(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)



crore being the revised estimate (RE) for the year. But, the actual requirement was ₹219,000 crore. The deficit of ₹110,000 crore was made up by FCI having to borrow the amount from the NSRF.

For 2020-21, the budget allocation was ₹116,000 crore even as the government expected the FCI to borrow ₹137,000 crore to fund a total requirement of ₹253,000 crore. Add to this the Covid related burden of under PMGKAY about ₹134,000 crore, the total liability came to ₹387,000 crore. Against this, the FM actually gave ₹525,000 crore, the balance was used to clear FCI dues to NSRF. For 2021-22, Sitharaman made budget allocation of ₹243,000 crore.

Against this, she has finally given ₹286,000 crore as per RE given in the budget for 2022-23.

Thus, during these years, the actual requirement was substantially higher than BE which was met in full either through facilitating loans from the NSRF (2019-20) or making additional provision through supplementary grants (2020-21/2021-22). This was made possible because of the very generous fiscal deficit (FD) of 9.2 percent of GDP or about ₹18,00,000 crore during 2020-21 and 6.9 percent of GDP or ₹15,90,000 crore during 2021-22.

In sync with this trend, when, it comes to 2022-23, there is no reason to worry as with FD of 6.4 percent of GDP or around ₹16,60,000 crore, even if the subsidy demand turns out to be higher (albeit substantially) than the BE, the govern-

ment will pay for it from the budget in full. But it cannot continue the business as usual. Someday, it will have to get back to fiscal discipline. The reasons are:

First, with Covid fizzling out, it won't have any justification to continue with the current fiscal splurge. Second, thanks to heavy borrowings during the last two years, already, Centre's debt has zoomed to 60 percent of GDP against medium term target of 40 percent. Third, interest payments have shot up by 50 percent; currently these are more than a quarter of the budget and consume half of its net tax revenue.

So, what can the government do to trim food subsidy?

In the Economic Survey for 2019-20, the then Chief Economic Adviser (CEA), Krishnamurthy Venkata Subramanian had proposed limiting the scheme's coverage and increasing the issue price. The present coverage is over 800 million or nearly 2/3rds of the population. Fundamentally, subsidized food is meant for the poor; in fact, heavily subsidized food (₹1/2/3 a kg) should be only for the very poor. To say that 2/3rd of Indians are very poor is absurd.

Unquestionably, the coverage should be drastically cut. The least the government can do is to implement the Shanta Kumar committee (2015) recommendation to cut down the number of people eligible for subsidized food from present 67 percent to 40 percent. Moreover, sanspoorest of the poor under 'Antyodaya Anna Yojana' (they

can continue to pay @ ₹1/2/3 per kg), others should pay 50 percent of MSP.

Denying subsidy to 27 percent of the population or around 380 million will result in saving of about ₹64,000 crore annually (28x5x380x12). This calculation is based on a beneficiary taking all of his/her 5 kg monthly quota as wheat and subsidy @ ₹28 per kg arrived at by deducting from the cost of supply or ₹30/- (MSP: Rs 20/- plus HDC: ₹10/-) the issue price or ₹2/-.

The beneficiaries other than those under AAY are 320 million (total beneficiaries under NFSA or 820 million minus 'those excluded' from the scheme or 380 million minus 'those under AAY' or 120 million). On supplies to them, the issue price being ₹10 per kg (50 percent of MSP), there will be saving of ₹8 per kg which will yield annual saving of about ₹15,000 crore.

The above two changes yield saving of close to ₹80,000 crore annually. Additionally, if subsidy money is credited to the account of the beneficiary through DBT mode instead of the current practice of giving food at subsidized price, there will be more savings by curbing pilferage (rampant under the existing dispensation).

All put together, the government should be able to save at least ₹100,000 crore annually. But, the big question: in a politically surcharged atmosphere wherein, even a whisper of denying benefit leads to a big uproar, will the Prime Minister bell the cat?

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

IT DOES NOT SUIT THE PRIME MINISTER TO DO POLITICS ON THE SUFFERINGS OF THE PEOPLE.  
—DELHI CHIEF MINISTER  
ARVIND KEJRIWAL



KEJRIWAL'S STATEMENT ABOUT THE PM IS HIGHLY CONDEMNABLE. HE SHOULD APOLOGISE TO THE ENTIRE NATION.  
—UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER  
YOGI ADITYANATH

# Status of the Centre's dialogue with Ulfa

The dialogue must be comprehensive but Paresh Barua's absence, who continues to maintain an anti-talk stance, doesn't make it all-inclusive

If reliable reports are anything to go by, formal dialogue with ULFA (Pro-Talk)-which began in 2011 but had stalled with the end of the interlocutorship of A.B. Mathur-is, in all probability, going to experience a revival soon. By all accounts the last round of talks ended on a positive note with the organisation expressing its satisfaction about the initiatives which New Delhi has taken.

ULFA's 12-point charter of demands was formally handed over to New Delhi on August 5, 2011. The demands were broad in nature and scraped out by the Arabinda Rajkhowa faction of ULFA (Pro-Talk from a 37-page charter that was presented to the Pro-Talk group by Sanmilito Jatiyo Abhiborton, the civil society body that took the ini-



JAIDEEP SAIKIA

(The writer is conflict expert and author of books on security and strategy. The views expressed are personal.)

tiative to bring about an interface between the faction of the ULFA and the government.

Not all the demands are unreasonable, such as prevention of illegal migration from Bangladesh and correct redressal to the problem of floods in Assam. Demands such as Constitutional reforms may not be acceptable to New Delhi, but negotiations always proceed from the intractable to the acceptable by application of compromise.

How far is New Delhi prepared to go in its accommodative posture vis-a-vis the demands of ULFA (Pro-Talk)? It can possibly grant of some rights to backward states, especially by way of rights over natural resources and land, prevention of illegal migration and proper management of floods.



There have been myriad attempts to engage the ULFA in a dialogue in the past. But the process has never quite reached a station that it is presently positioned in. Indeed, for the first time ever a solution seems to be within arm's reach, and one that could be acceptable to the pro-talk faction of the organisation. But an important question that is also being raised is whether

there is merit in talking to a group that holds the guns, or with one that has no guns.

Moreover, there seems to be a more mellowed ULFA chief of staff, Paresh Barua, as compared to his earlier avatar who would not be moved from his position that sovereignty of Assam must be discussed. Baruah and his faction, albeit considerably depleted as a result of desertions, have

also made welcome announcements by way of three back-to-back unilateral ceasefires. These are interesting pointers which both New Delhi and Dispur should take note of and take steps to anvil a comprehensive peace process with a unified ULFA.

To return to the ULFA, New Delhi must be ready to provide certain concessions, some of which may even be unacceptable. Indeed, it may wish to actually profitably gain from the close nexus that ULFA has with NSCN (IM), aiding thereby the vexed interstate boundary problem. It can also witness economic development, further people to people interface and thereby providing a fillip to the "Act east Policy". It must also be caveat-ed at this juncture that the cadres of the organisation should

be rehabilitated in a manner that would make them self-reliant. Mere transfer of funds would disallow them from standing on their own feet and could witness a scenario of return to belligerence. The accent should be not to present them fish to eat, but teach them how to fish for an honourable livelihood.

New Delhi can hold talks only within the ambit of the constitution and after such groups abjure violence. Dialogue with ULFA must be a comprehensive affair. Dialogue in the absence of Paresh Barua, who continues to maintain an anti-talk stance, is not going to be all-inclusive. The analogy that can be proffered at this juncture is to stress on the point as to whether 'peaceful nights would prevail if even one tiger out of the nine caged is on the prowl'.

The point about Paresh Baruah is particularly important since he has declared a unilateral ceasefire, but because Chinese or Pakistani interests seem to be continuing to chaperon him, and may even prevent him from returning to India even if he wishes to. A psychological profile of Paresh Barua leads to the summation that he does not quite perceive a role for himself in a peaceful settlement. He prides on his 'military' innards, considers himself to be a modern day Lachit Barphukan and would, if the need arises, go down fighting.

In any event, the fact of the matter is that only a dialogue with a united ULFA would entail a peace process that can be said to be a comprehensive affair.



# Discussions on with RBI over digital currency: FM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said discussions with regard to central bank-backed digital currency have been going on with the Reserve Bank and a decision will be taken after due deliberations.

Sitharaman in her Budget speech on February 1 had announced that Digital Rupee or Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) would be issued by the RBI in the coming fiscal year. She had also announced the government will levy 30 per cent tax on gains made from any other private digital assets from April 1.

Replying to questions after addressing the RBI's Central Board of Directors here on Monday, Sitharaman said the central bank and the government are on board regarding digital currencies.

She said the discussions with the RBI regarding the CBDC were going on prior to the Budget announcement, and they are continuing.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das added that like several other issues, this particular



**The Trend and Progress of Banking in India report, released by the RBI in December last year, had said that given the CBDC's dynamic impact on macroeconomic policy making, it is necessary to adopt basic models initially, and test comprehensively so that it has minimal impact on monetary policy and the banking system.**

issue is internally under discussion between the RBI and the government. "Whatever points we have

we discuss with the government," he added.

CBDC is a digital or virtual currency but it is not comparable to the private virtual currencies or cryptocurrency that have mushroomed over the last decade. Private virtual currencies do not represent any person's debt or liabilities as there is no issuer. They are not money and certainly not currency.

Last week, Das had said the central bank does not want to rush and is carefully examining all aspects before introduction of the CBDC.

The Trend and Progress of Banking in India report, released by the RBI in December last year, had said that given the CBDC's dynamic impact on macroeconomic policy making, it is necessary to adopt basic models initially, and test comprehensively so that it has minimal impact on monetary policy and the banking system.

India's progress in payment systems will provide a useful backbone to make a state-of-the-art CBDC available to its citizens and financial institutions, it had said.

## Covid-19 fuels growth of personal mobility segment, says report

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to the growth of the personal mobility segment with many customers going in for pre-owned vehicles, as per the annual automobile trends report for 2021 by online marketplace for automobiles Droom. The pandemic has pushed the buyer preference to opt for personal mobility over public transportation and ride sharing, as per the report. Besides, the customers are now increasingly looking at pre-owned cars as opposed to buying new ones with Delhi, Jaipur, Mumbai, and Hyderabad emerging as the largest markets for the transaction in CY2021, it added. The report also observed that the SUV segment topped the chart in the four wheeler segment with Hyundai emerging on the top followed by Maruti Suzuki Vitara Brezza and Toyota Fortuner. In the two-wheeler segment Bajaj Pulsar emerged as the top preference, followed by TVS Apache RTR, Bajaj Pulsar NS, and Bajaj Avenger, it added. "The Calendar Year 2021 was more of a recovery year for business from the ongoing impact of COVID, and the same was reflected in our annual automobile trend report 2021.

## Momentum of inflation on downward slope, says RBI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das on Monday said that the "momentum of inflation is on a downward slope" and the central bank would continue to strike a delicate balance between the need to contain price rise and ensure economic growth.

The Reserve Bank's inflation projections, Das said, are "robust" but contingent on downside and upside risks associated with the movement of global crude oil prices.

The RBI takes into account a particular range within which crude prices are expected to fluctuate considering all the factors that can be anticipated and that can be sort of foreseen as of today, he said.

He was responding to questions after the meeting of the RBI's Central Board of Directors. The meeting was addressed by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

"... Our inflation projections... I would say it is quite robust and we stand by it. If there is something of course totally unforeseen and you know, which nobody can



expect that is different and we have said that it is contingent on you know the risk the downside or the upside risk to these projections is the crude prices," the Governor added. He further said price stability, which basically means maintaining and adhering to the inflation target, is definitely uppermost in "our mind" and the Reserve Bank is fully aware of its commitment to inflation, keeping in mind the objective of growth, he added.

"... If you look at the momentum of inflation, right from October onwards, last October onwards, the momentum of inflation is on the downward slope" Das

said. He further said it is primarily the statistical reasons which has resulted in higher inflation, especially in the third quarter, and the same base effect will play in different ways in the coming months. Last week, the RBI had said headline inflation is expected to peak in the fourth quarter of the 2021-22, within the tolerance band and then moderate closer to target in the second half of 2022-23, providing room for monetary policy to remain accommodative. The government has tasked the RBI to keep Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation between 2-6 per cent.

## MONEY MATTERS

### Tata Sons appoints Ilker Ayci CEO & MD of Air India



Tata Sons on Monday announced the appointment of former chairman of Turkish Airlines Ilker Ayci as the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Air India. The Air India board met this afternoon to consider the candidature of Ilker Ayci and after due deliberations approved the appointment of Ayci as the CEO & MD of Air India, Tata Sons said in a statement. Tata Sons chairman N Chandrasekaran was a special invitee to this board meeting, it added. Ayci will assume his new responsibilities on or before April 1 this year, it said. The statement also added that Ayci's appointment to the new position is subject to requisite regulatory approvals. Tatas regained ownership of Air India late last month, nearly seven decades after it lost control to the government. "Ilker is an aviation industry leader who led Turkish Airlines to its current success during his tenure there. We are delighted to welcome Ilker to the Tata Group where he would lead Air India into the new era, said Chandrasekaran. A 1994 alumni of Bilkent University, after a research stay on political science at the Leeds University in the UK in 1995, he completed a Master's Programme in International Relations from Istanbul's Marmara University in 1997, according to the statement. I am delighted and honored to accept the privilege of leading an iconic airline and to join the Tata Group.

### Vedanta joins hands with Foxconn to manufacture semiconductors



Indian conglomerate Vedanta on Monday said it has signed a pact with electronics manufacturing services giant Foxconn to form a joint venture (JV) for manufacturing semiconductors in India. Vedanta is the first company to make the announcement to invest in semiconductor manufacturing after the government announced a Rs 76,000-crore programme to boost electronic chip and display ecosystem in the country. This is also the second attempt of Vedanta to enter the semiconductor space after its earlier plans to set up a display unit with about Rs 60,000 crore investment could not take off. According to the MoU (memorandum of understanding) signed between the two companies, Vedanta will hold the majority equity in the JV, while Foxconn will be the minority shareholder, the statement said. It added that Vedanta Chairman Anil Agarwal will be the chairman of the joint venture. The targeted project plans to invest in manufacturing semiconductors. "It will provide a significant boost to domestic manufacturing of electronics in India. Discussions are currently ongoing with a few state governments to finalise the location of the plant," the statement said. The collaboration between Vedanta and Foxconn follows the government's recent policy announcement for electronics manufacturing and PLI scheme for incentivising organisations to contribute towards the development of this sector.

### Manappuram Finance Dec qtr net profit falls 46% to Rs 261 crore

Manappuram Finance on Monday reported nearly 46 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 261 crore in the quarter ended December 2021 as income fell. The non-banking finance company (NBFC) had posted a net profit of Rs 483 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago. Total income during the October-December period of 2021-22 was down at Rs 1,506.85 crore, as against Rs 1,650 crore in same period of 2020-21, Manappuram Finance said in a regulatory filing.

**GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**  
NIT No & Date: 27/DB/EE/Quithbullapur Circle/GHMC/2021-22, Dt:12.02.2022  
Name of the work: CC road, Office maintenance works etc., Estimate Amount in Rupees in Lakhs: 84.60, Start Date & Time: 15.02.2022, 3.00 P.M. Name & Address of EE: Executive Engineer Cell no: 9701908887, Head Draughtman Cell no: 7331189482. Further details can be seen at e-procurement @www.tender.telangana.gov.in Sd/- Executive Engineer, DIPR No. 21340-PP/CL/Adv/1/2021-22, Quithbullapur Circle-25, GHMC.

**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
Rc.No. C1 / 156 / 2022, OPEN AUCTION dt:-11.02.2022  
The open auction for disposal of unserviceable Tents etc., through open auction will be held on 18-02-2022 at 11.00 am in the battalion Stores, Office of the Commandant 8th Bn TSSP, Kondapur, Rangareddy District Telangana. The interested bidders are requested to participate in the Open auction along with their Aadhar Card. Sd/-Commandant, R.O.No. 1061-OP/CL/AGENCY/1/2021-22 Dt:14.02.2022 8th Bn TSSP, Kondapur Rangareddy District.

## Kal Airways, Maran say no to two proposals for settlement

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Kal Airways and media baron Kalanithi Maran on Monday told the Supreme Court that they were not agreeable to two proposals to settle their dispute with SpiceJet on payment of interest in connection with a share transfer issue as the low-cost airline owed them around Rs 920 crore in pursuance of an arbitral award.

A bench comprising Chief Justice N V Ramana and Justices A S Bopanna and Hima Kohli, at the outset, inquired about the view of Kal Airways Pvt Ltd and Maran whether they were agreeable to the two proposals of SpiceJet to settle the dispute.

SpiceJet, in its first offer, proposed that it would pay Rs 300 crores towards a full and final settlement of the dispute or secondly, out of the Bank Guarantee of Rs 270 Crores deposited with the Delhi High Court, the low-cost airlines will give Rs 100 crores for now and an order will be passed by the



apex court urging the high court to expeditiously decide the case related to the arbitral award.

They (Kal Airways and Maran) have considered the offer made by my friend (Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi on behalf of SpiceJet). But they have not found them acceptable, senior counsel Maninder Singh, who was assisted by, Karanjawala and Co, told the bench.

After being told about the views on the proposals, the bench listed the case for hearing the arguments on March 2

which was accepted by SpiceJet, represented by Rohatgi.

Earlier on February 10, the bench had asked Singh to take instructions from Kal Airways and Maran on the proposals made by SpiceJet and had listed the matter on Monday.

Rohatgi had also said that SpiceJet, in pursuance of an arbitral award in favour of Kal Airways, has paid Rs 308 crore and submitted a bank guarantee of Rs 275 crore with the Delhi High Court.

## ‘India needs to develop a market for distressed assets’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India needs to develop a market for distressed assets as market participants are strongly dependent on loans from banks and the corporate bond market is under-penetrated, says a report by Nangia Andersen LLP.

Also, with strategic factors like plentiful supply of stressed assets, regulatory transparency, favourable currency rates and robustness and potential for greater returns on investment as compared to global stressed assets, the Indian stressed-asset market is very attractive for foreign investors, the report added.

The report said, to free up banks so they can focus on new lending and to reduce the burden on their resources for debt



collection, there is a dire need to develop a secondary market for non-performing assets (NPAs).

"A market for distressed assets would also support corporate restructuring and expand sources of financing. It would improve secondary market liquidity for loans and attract a wider range of institu-

tional investors to assist in corporate restructuring," the report said.

Distressed assets investment firms are minuscule in the large pool of the global asset management industry, but they are adept at generating capital from sophisticated investors in specialist investment purpose vehicles and have played an integral

role in some of the major corporate restructurings over the last three decades, the report said. Even though from a banker's perspective, "stressed assets/loans" mean loan exposures that are classified as NPAs, the report said that stressed assets present opportunities for investors to purchase operational and good quality underlying assets at attractive valuations with turnaround potential and can enable strategic investors to expand capacity in a cost-effective manner.

"For an emerging economy like India, where market participants are strongly dependent on loans from banks and where the corporate bond market is under-penetrated, developing a market for distressed assets is vital.

## Large deals, startup investments propel PE/VC

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Thirteen large deals of over USD 100 million each and heightened focus on startups helped the Indian venture investing ecosystem post a 180 per cent increase in the overall activity in January to USD 4.5 billion across 117 transactions.

The private equity and venture capital funds had invested USD 4.4 billion across 102 deals in the preceding month of December.

One of the major driver for the activity in March was investments in startups by venture capital funds, which surged to USD 3.1 billion in 85 deals, which was way higher than the USD 700 million in

the year-ago period but down from December's USD 3.2 billion, as per the monthly round up by the consultancy firm EY and industry lobby grouping IVCA.

E-commerce was the most active sector when it comes to inflows, accounting for USD 1.7 billion of investments in 20 deals, it said.

"While we remain sanguine about the Indian PE/VC sector in the medium to long term, downside risks like rising global inflation, rising crude oil prices, interest rate tightening by the US Fed and impending elections in five key states in India remain key sensitivity factors to consider in the short-term," Vivek Soni, a partner at EY, said.

## Asset quality issues to hit real estate-focused non-banks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The real estate asset under management (AUM) of non-banks, which registered degrowth of 10 per cent in 2021, is likely to further contract by 5-10 per cent in 2022 and stabilise in the next year, says a report.

The performance of non-banks (non-banking financial companies and housing finance companies) in recent years has been marred by several challenges as entities have grappled with fund-raising challenges and asset quality issues, domestic rating agency Icri Ratings said in a report on Monday.

The outlook for real estate-oriented non-banks remains negative due to the asset quality pressures over the near to medium term and the muted

growth expectation, the agency said.

The real estate AUM of non-banks contracted by 17.64 per cent to Rs 2.8 lakh crore as of March 2021 from Rs 3.4 lakh crore as of March 2019.

"Icri expects the same to contract further by 5-10 per cent in the current fiscal. It is expected to stabilise in FY2023 (0-5 per cent degrowth)," the agency said.

Its Vice President and Sector Head (Financial Sector Ratings) Samridhi Chowdhary said non-banks witnessed a significant slowdown in growth since H2 FY2019, following the liquidity crisis, and consequently moderated their disbursements.

The impact was more pronounced on wholesale financiers with sizeable real



estate exposures compared to their retail counterparts owing to a prolonged period of risk aversion by investors and other stakeholders, she said.

"Given the fund-raising challenges, real estate oriented non-banks not only limited

incremental disbursements to this sector but also attempted to scale down their portfolios through asset sell-down to shore up liquidity," Chowdhary said.

The agency said non-banks have also witnessed stress

build-up in the real estate portfolio since FY2019, given the slowdown in the underlying segment.

Real estate gross non-performing assets (GNPAs) for non-banks increased to 5.1 per cent as of March 2020 from

2.1 per cent as of March 2019 and have remained on an uptick since then.

They increased further to 6.2 per cent as of March 2021 and 6.8 per cent as of September 2021.

The rating agency expects an increase of 180-250 basis points (bps) in GNPAs in the real estate segment in FY2022, Chowdhary said.

However, players with a diversified credit book across asset classes are likely to witness a relatively lower increase in NPAs, she said.

The agency said the real estate oriented non-banks have witnessed an improvement in their capitalisation profiles since March 2018 driven by the moderation in the AUM growth coupled with sizable capital raise in a bid to strengthen their balance sheets.





## SURVIVAL OF THE CIRCUS IN QUESTION!

TANISHA SAXENA

When we see collective number of magicians, acrobats and illusionists performing in reality television shows and trying so hard to captivate their audiences so that they are able to suffice in these unprecedented times where circus is almost taking its last breath — it does make us feel sad. Someone is performing a death defying act, some a jaw-dropping flip and some just showing us the clean tricks of their hand, but all of them have a sob story. Each one of them wants the circus to revive, they plead the audiences to come visit them at the circus — the same hippodrome where once Raj Kapoor reverberated the importance of a circus in 1970s. Where's this spectacle now? How are the artists sufficing on a daily basis? Certainly, the past few decades have had been hard for circus business in the country, and there are various factors that led to this condition of an industry once so prosperous. To know what's happening in that big top, *The Pioneer* ushers in conversation with a few of the circus-oriented artists and others.

Representative of the famous Ajanta circus, Rajiv Armand Alexander felt so nostalgic while talking to us, "Winters in our country have always involved going to picnics, zoo, entertainment parks, and circus. Circus had to be mandatory visit for all! After the Central authority banned the performance of animals in the circus, that interest went on to a steady decline. We somehow managed to pull strings and pull off a show but post pandemic, the industry was devastated. With artists and managers getting involved in other work fields, getting them back was an uphill task. Later on they agreed to return, because somewhere down the line we all have our emotions attached to our circus. With immense courage we kick started the circus, and we did receive immense love and support. It's pure hardwork. To the extent where I have personally attended to every query, calls and messages. Sadly, just when the response was getting better, covid cases rose and the circus was asked to run with 50% seating capacity. People were afraid to visit us once again, and we were down rock bottom. This made me remember the he cult dialogue of Raj Kapoor *Saab in Mera Naam Joker*, 'the show must go on' and with the support of the public and our crew we hope to take the show forward — keeping innovation as our foundation."

The art form may already be breathing its last due to the challenges of rising costs, at-home entertainment options, a ban on using animals, and the pandemic-triggered health crisis but the hopes are still high. Biju Nair, the principal clown at Rambo Circus shares, "When I joined the circus as a clown that is 20 years ago, showmanship was at its peak and thousands would line up to see dancers,

stuntmen, clowns, acrobats, and trapeze artists. Gradually, things changed. Between the advent of televisions sets to streaming platforms, our profession died a slow death. The working conditions went from bad to worse. Children have kicked me in my stomach, slapped me and audiences have made faces that scream boredom. I remember how circus artists would take pride and look forward to making their children carry forward the legacy but now, it's the opposite. In fact, I too, ensured that my children were educated in good schools, and encouraged them to join other professions. In the last six months, we have not done a single show and have been endlessly waiting for the pandemic to subside so that we can earn again. The situation is so bad that a majority of circus companies have pulled down the curtains and artists have returned to their homes. Many of our shows have been cancelled and our investments (some of which are worth lakhs) have gone down the drain. It was when Sujit Dilip, the owner of Rambo Circus, discussed the idea of bringing a digital revolution to the circus with me in April, it felt like a tiny ray of hope in these dark times. Maybe, we could revive India's oldest form of entertainment, using the very tool (OTT platforms) that had actually played a role in our downfall. We are also entertainers, and even though we rarely receive awards for what we do, we continue to put in our best efforts. Our livelihood completely depends on the audience and today we need you more than ever. Whatever we earn through this programme, we will use it to feed our families. We have put in everything for this show but only with your help can we revive the circus now."

While Rambo and Ajanta circus are trying to stay strong atleast, The Great Bombay Circus is seeking help at Milaap, a fundraiser portal. K.M. Sanjeev, owner of The Great Bombay circus, sitting in a tent in Managudi that would have been alive with lights and applause had it not been for the coronavirus outbreak opines, "It was really heartbreaking for us. All our shows were stopped. We had to send members of the troupe back to their native places because it was hard to sustain when everything was shut. Things looked bizarre and clouds of uncertainty were looming above our heads. I have seen the circus go from being a major national attraction to just another event. It hasn't been the same for the past 10 years, with newer forms of entertainment and a ban on performing animals. And, covid-19 has brought India's circus industry, which employs close to 1,500 artists, to a standstill. It's not the end though. We are not yet giving up. Its time

that people help us not just sustain but grow. Since, things are better now so I called back everyone and resumed our shows because life shouldn't stop. This is where I have earned respect and been



loved since childhood, the circus is our home."

Tulsi Das Choudary is one of their oldest members in the troupe, he has been working with them for the last 61 years now. He's survived two cancers and wants to keep performing with the troupe till he dies. He says, "This is where home is. Till today, we have provided entertainment for people and their children, it's their turn to repay now."

We also didn't leave the opportunity of contacting an international illusionist-cum-magician from Vizag city who has recently made it to *India's Got Talent* top 14, B S Reddy says, "Everyone says magic is a dying art in India, while I assert that magic is that crazy art form which is here to stay for a long time. We are obsessed with fantasies, we live dreaming but the question arises when it's time to crack it in reality. That's where the world of magic steps in. Though it's an illusion, people still like to see it! At every chronological turn, people want amusement. It started as a hobby for me, today I am a pro-

fessional magician representing my country on an international level. At the moment, I am a part of *India's Got Talent* and shows like these play a major role. We get to showcase our talents to a larger audience which we might not get anywhere else. People not just in India but worldwide are watching us and appreciating us — this is nothing short of magic. These platforms are pivotal and they provide us many more opportunities further. When audience experiences an extreme best performance on a television platform, they love to see the same as a live performance too! So after appearing on a big television show, we artists are getting so many invitations. I am all set to bring the Las Vegas's magic show to India now!"

The ban on the use of animals at circuses is one of the many reasons why the circuses have not been able to pull it off. And, Telangana's widely known animal activist seconds this!

He continues, "No human should support an animal's captivity in circuses. The way the animals are treated and especially trained to entertain, they go through various forms of abuses and the trainers do not use pragmatic ways but rather go with a punishment method which is not natural to animals. Animals breed in captivity, separated from the wild, held prisoner all their lives and subjected to extreme cruelty as objects of entertainment and public display. It is nothing but shame on humanity. Circuses must come up with more innovative ways."

Let's not make these glorious days a thing in the distant past!

## Have a healthy & a happy liver

Of the approximately 500 functions of the liver, the most important include synthesis of amino acids and cholesterol, metabolism of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats and the production of bile, which assists in digestion in the small intestine. The liver plays several roles in the regulation of the blood, breaks down insulin and toxic substances, and allows them to be excreted. In short, the liver supports almost every other organ in the body.

Broadly speaking, the liver is responsible for processing almost all the food that we consume, all that we drink, and more. Over 90% of the medicines that we have are ultimately processed by the liver. Our liver is responsible for synthesizing proteins, cholesterol, bile, and lot many other chemicals, which are essential for the normal homeostasis of our day-to-day functioning.

Any diet with 10 to 35 % of calories from protein, 20 to 35% from fat, and 45 to 65% from carbohydrates is a balanced diet, with enough sources of essential minerals and micro-nutrients added to it. A caveat here is that the source of our consumption and what forms part of our daily diet is variable, and changes per regionalities and ethnicities. Depending upon geographic locations and food sources, people from one specific region may get deficient in certain micro-nutrients which could lead to some disorders. For example, people living at high altitudes and consuming non-iodinated rock salt report more of goitre.

Another important thing to note here is the lifestyle we follow:

the above numbers and percentages may change for those having an active physical lifestyle to those with moderate activity to those who primarily follow sedentary lifestyles. Bringing the focus back to healthy liver food, some of the other important factors to consider are adequate sleep and consumption of antioxidants.

Fatty liver is a common term, which we all hear every now and then. It is also known as non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD). Considered to be a silent epidemic in itself, instances of NAFLD have increased to such large volumes in last few years that liver failures that require liver transplant to the tune of 15%, today are because of NAFLD. Plant-based food like avocados, bananas, barley, broccoli, beets, brown rice, carrots, figs, etc. coffee, oatmeal, berries and fatty fish or fish oil supplements can help protect and strengthen our liver in a huge way. Many reviews and studies conducted across the world indicate adding protective antioxidants, specific fibre, antioxidants specially from dark berries like blueberries, raspberries and cranberries that contain antioxidants called polyphenols can prevent liver from fatty liver diseases, by reducing fat build-up in the liver.

Last, but certainly not the least, nuts are the simplest and surest way to keep liver healthy and protect against NAFLD. Nuts generally contain unsaturated fatty acids, vitamin E and antioxidants. These compounds help prevent NAFLD and reduce inflammation and oxidative stress.

(The writer, Dr Ankur Garg, is currently Director, Surgical Gastroenterology & Liver Transplant at Metro Hospitals & Heart Institutes)



## Protect organisational data

Growing cases of novel ransomware threats puts organisations at a greater risk. It can especially cause a lot of damage in the absence of crucial safeguards. It is important for security teams to get an insight into the different modes of attack that cybercriminals use and be better prepared to combat any resultant threats. According to Cyber Signals, a *Microsoft Threat Intelligence Report*, basic cybersecurity hygiene can go as far as protecting against 98% of attacks.

**Here are six quick tips from Microsoft Security for security teams to protect their organisations from cyber-attacks:**

- Accelerate safeguards through zero-trust practices: As ransomware thrives on default or compromised credentials, reduce risk by implementing zero-trust practices like multi-factor authentication (MFA) and passwordless upgrades on all user accounts and prioritizing configurations and other privileged roles.
- Monitor and act on anomalies: Though

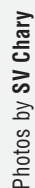
early logins, file movement, and other behaviors that introduce ransomware can seem nondescript, teams need to identify how to spot telltale anomalies in time to act on them swiftly.

- Manage alerts and move fast on mitigation: Strengthen weak security configurations that allow the ransomware attack to succeed and manage security configurations so alerts and detections are being responded to properly.
- Visualise and practice full restorations: Have a ransomware response plan and

conduct recovery exercises to understand how full restorations will look.

- Audit access privileges: Practice frequent audits of access privileges, using the principle of least-privilege granted to enable employees to get jobs done.
- Verify the authenticity of users and activities: Thoroughly review all tenant administrator users or accounts tied to delegated administrative privileges to verify their authenticity and disable or remove any unused delegated administrative privileges.





**A**ctress Supriya Naidu, along with Glammon Mrs India (plus size) Samiara and fashion lovers, graced the launch of Sutaraa fashion and lifestyle exhibition. The exhibition will go on until February 16 at Hotel Taj Krishna.

"In *Rudra - The Edge of Darkness*, we are excited to bring a riveting thriller with one of India's most loved actors, Ajay Devgn," said Gaurav Banerjee, Head, Content Disney+ Hotstar, and HSM Entertainment Network, Disney Star. Sameer Nair, CEO, Applause Entertainment, added, "We are truly excited to be part of Ajay Devgn's digital debut at such an ambitious scale with *Rudra - The Edge Of Darkness*. It's been a terrific experience working on this unique narrative together with an amazing cast, crew and our production partners, BBC Studios."

Vaani is paired opposite superstar Ranbir. The Karan Malhotra action extravaganza that has been produced by Aditya Chopra, is set to release in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu on July 22.

**SOLUTION** ---

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## Kailash Kher on board *Bheemla Nayak*

**S**inger Kailash Kher comes together with Tollywood music director Thaman, for the most awaited Telugu movie *Bheemla Nayak*. The *Teri Deewani* singer, who has crooned a number of songs in Telugu, is all set to lend his voice for a song in the Pawan Kalyan and Rana Daggubati starrer. Music director S. Thaman, who seems excited to have Kailash on board for his upcoming composition, took to Twitter to make an announcement regarding the same. "Our New Crazy Addition To #SenationalBheemlaNayak

Soon will be ur #Addiction tooo @Kailashkher with My Genius dear director Shri #Trivikram gaaru and the Pen tat always carries Some Soul and Some Soil in it @ramjowrites gaaru Was a Magical day for Us," he said. Thaman has been busy with a handful of music albums in his kitty, as he now starts working on a song for *Bheemla Nayak*. The song is being penned by Telugu's popular lyricist Ramjogayya Sastry, while Kailash will sing it. *Bheemla Nayak* is the adaptation of hit Malayalam movie *Ayyappanum Koshiyum*. Directed by Sagar K. Chandra, the upcoming action-drama will have Pawan Kalyan playing

a cop, while Rana Daggubati will appear as his opponent. *Bheemla Nayak* is slated for its release soon, as the makers will pick a date from the two available release dates.

## SJ Suryah likely to be cast in Ram Charan-Shankar movie

**T**amil actor-director S.J. Suryah is likely to play an important role in Ram Charan's much-hyped upcoming movie which is being directed by Shankar Shanmugam. Reports suggest that S.J. Suryah is being considered to play the main antagonist opposite *RRR* actor Ram Charan in his upcoming venture. Tentatively titled *RC15*, the movie is one of the most anticipated projects, which is being made with a huge budget. S.J. Suryah, who directed blockbuster hit

*Kushi* in Telugu, failed to impress the audience with his movie *Nani*, which had Mahesh Babu and Ameesha Patel in the lead roles.



Despite his mind-blowing performance in Mahesh Babu's psycho

thriller *Spyder*, S.J. Suryah did not get a reasonable response among the Telugu audience.

But, Suryah's recent appearance in Tamil movie *Maanadu* is being praised, and the makers of *RC15* are hopeful to get the director-cum-actor on board for a strongly-written role.

*RC15* also features Srikanth, Sunil, Anjali, Jayaram, and others in key roles. Thaman is the film's music director.

Kiara Advani, who has appeared alongside Ram Charan in *Vinaya Vidhey* Rama earlier, is the female lead in *RC15*. The big-budget movie is produced by Dil Raju.



being mounted on grand scale by People's Media Factory and Abhishek Aggarwal Arts. TG Vishwa Prasad is producing the movie, while Vivek Kuchibhotla is the co-producer.

Actress Sreeleela, who shot to fame with Pelli SandaD, is roped in to play the female lead opposite Ravi Teja in the film. On the occasion of Valentine's, her first look poster has been revealed featuring Ravi Teja and Sreeleela. Sreeleela's character name in the film is Pranavi. Sreeleela can be seen eating palli and gives a thoughtful expression, as Ravi Teja tells her something serious. Ravi Teja looks young and dynamic, while Sreeleela looks cute in the poster.



The first look of Krithi Shetty from *The Warrior*, ace director N Lingusamy's upcoming Telugu-Tamil bilingual starring Tollywood young gun Ram Pothineni, was released on Monday, along with the name of her character. Interestingly, the name of Krithi Shetty in the movie is Whistle Mahalakshmi. In her first look poster, she is seen riding a scooter in a cool and composed manner. Aadhi Pinisetty, who is popular in both Kollywood and Tollywood, plays the antagonist and Akshara Gowda will be seen in an important role in this flick.

## F3 releasing on May 27

**V**ictory Venkatesh and Mega Prince Varun Tej's highly-anticipated fun-filled entertainer *F3* being directed by blockbuster maker Anil Ravipudi and produced on grand scale by Tollywood's leading production house Sri Venkateswara Creations is gear-

ing up for its theatrical release. According to latest update from the makers of the film, *F3* will now arrive in theatres on May 27. Devi Sri Prasad has scored music for *F3* and the film's first single *Lab Dab Dabbo* was released few days ago to overwhelming response.

While Tamannaah Bhatia and

Mehreen Pirzada are the heroines opposite Venkatesh and Varun Tej respectively, Rajendra Prasad will be seen in a hilarious role. Sonal Chauhan and Sunil are roped in to add more fun to the film. Sai Sriram cranks the camera, while Tammiraju is the editor. Harshith Reddy is the co-producer.



## SHUKRA director announces his second film

**S**uku Purvaj, who won the critics appreciation with his first film *Shukra*, has announced his new project, *Maataraani Mounamidhi*.

The title poster of the film was unveiled on Monday and it publicises that the film is titled *Maataraani Mounamidhi*. We see a girl and a boy in the title poster covering their faces and that might be an indication of the film's story. "Love & Mystery," the poster reads.

Produced by Rudra Pictures & PCR group, Asheer Luke, who produced some chilling background score and music for *Shukra* is composing the music for the film. More details about the project will be out soon.



**R**udra: *The Edge of Darkness* trailer is here — the show is out March 4. Disney+ Hotstar unveiled a second trailer for its next Hotstar Specials original series led by Ajay Devgn. He plays DCP Rudra Veer Singh who has solved the most cases for SCU. His marriage is falling apart, his wife essayed by Esha Deol is seeing someone else. There are criminals, bomb blasts, murder, and suspense — the trailer keeps you on edge. From the looks of it, Raashi Khanna plays Alia. Raashi seemed so excited because this is going to be her digital debut, she goes onto say, "Rudra is a dream project for me. It is the most difficult character I have played so far and it definitely pushed me out of my comfort zone. I hope the audience loves it as much as I loved playing it. I am also very grateful to be sharing screen space with a celebrated actor like Ajay Devgn sir."

While all the actors are much excited about the show, the makers unveiled the awaited trailer and it can't stop garnering views on YouTube! Sameer Nair, CEO, Applause Entertainment, said, "We are truly excited to be part of Ajay Devgn's digital debut at such an ambitious scale with *Rudra* — *The Edge Of Darkness*. It's been a terrific experience working on this unique narrative together with an amazing cast, crew and our production partners, BBC Studios. At Applause, we believe in the power of stories and storytelling, and with *Rudra*, we take forward our creative partnership with industry leader Disney+ Hotstar, and hope to continue entertaining audiences across the globe."

**Rudra is a dream project for me: Raashi**

Helmed by ace director Rajesh Mapuskar, *Rudra: The Edge of Darkness* is the official remake of the British psychological drama *Luther*, which starred Idris Elba. Ajay Devgn will play the role of a cop in the web series which is touted to be much darker than any of his films so far. Director Rajesh Mapuskar said, "Rudra spins a darker and grimmer tale to the usual cop and crime drama. The psyche of criminal minds is explored unusually with a hero who is quite dark himself, all through his pursuit of the truth. It was absorbing and enthralling to make and I hope it feels like that in the viewing."



## 'It's good to see commercial movies back in game'

SHIKHA DUGGAL

**B**hamakalapam starring Priyamani in the lead role was recently released on Telugu OTT platform Aha Video. The story is centred on the female protagonist Anupama Mohan essayed by Priyamani, who is a home-maker and YouTuber known for her culinary skills.

And, this movie is shining across the southern region and more. Hence, Priyamani spoke to us in the wake of the super response to the film! Starting off with, she speaks, "I have the entire satisfaction blooming inside me after the movie's release and the kind of varied responses are pouring in. I can hear audiences are casting their eyes upon it, it's trending on social media too. The foremost takeaway for me as a leading lady is my own portion in the movie — it just doesn't look good but one can resonate with it. Director really convinced me a big time. You mustn't have ever seen me as a middle-class housewife doing the rounds in Telugu cinema, I gave it my best shot to look and act like one in

the most novel manner." You can see her using skill sets for something darker in the movie, incidents of crime keep happening and on occasions, what happens around them is a laugh riot. She continued, "A Faberge egg worth Rs 200 crore made the plot so interesting for me! I never knew eggs could drive someone insane, it's intertwined with some originality in the movie. Not everything is unbelievable. The plot is as such and I have my fans coming up to me saying how they couldn't stop watching it for multiple times because of the character Anupama. While commencing to shoot this movie, it felt like a struggle but gradually we moved ahead with ease. It's not at all difficult to portray a bold or a straightforward character, what makes it hard is to showcase innocence which I tried to do." Anchored with a statement to look within to find God, an egg becomes the symbol of God's return to the earth and the lamb that has steered off course is also part of the discourse. This is how the director made it so interesting for the audiences to watch! Priyamani Raj carried on, "Middle-class women were ringing the most with my role in *Bhamakalapam*. While in real life, I am a different kind of a woman. I don't like cooking at all, you'll

hardly see me going into the kitchen and experiment but I only prefer home-cooked food. I will eat anything made with pure love." The question on how comfortable was she acting in a saree, did it ever turn out to be an obstacle? To that she replies, "Oh, wearing a saree was an enjoyable moment. Over all, the character indeed made me feel I was aptly suited for it! I made the comedy as an important aspect of my life. There were people in United States of America downloading the Aha app and watching this movie, feels so warm." Meanwhile, you'll see the expert hand featuring in movies like *Virata Parvam*, *Maidaan*, *Dr.56*, *Quotation Gang* and *Family Man* Season 3 — she's all over it. She goes on, "Whatever I do, I do it with sincerity and be it any genre. I never have the habit of pointing fingers especially at my directors! Whenever they narrate the scenes to me, I visualise it creatively and go on to deliver my performance. If in case I would like to improvise, I ask whether I can inculcate such expressions. It's good to see that commercial movies are back in game, and with a better scope of accommodating female characters. Variety on the platter is too many to choose from and it's a plus point, especially since the advent of OTT."



# PSG-Real Madrid highlights last 16

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Champions League is back. It's the start of the knockout stage, with the headline match being the meeting between European football's aristocrat — the 13-time winner Real Madrid — and an upstart in Paris Saint-Germain, which is looking to be continental champion for the first time. A look at that match and the three other first-leg games in the last 16 this week:

## PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN VS. REAL MADRID

Paris Saint-Germain's dream of winning a first Champions League title faces a potentially rude awakening against 13-time champion Real Madrid. PSG has struggled all season against teams that play quickly on the counterattack and Madrid is arguably the best around at swift transition play.

However, those attacks rely heavily on star forward Karim Benzema's movement, touch and awareness. He is in the Madrid squad but doubtful to play as he works his way back from a hamstring injury that has kept him out since last month. Madrid hasn't reached the final since completing a straight hat trick of European Cups in 2018. Now Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti travels to face the side he once coached with only one win in four matches in all competitions. Without Benzema it will be more difficult, and a backup option is resorting to perennially out-of-favor Gareth Bale. Once the world's most expensive player, the forward

only made his first appearance since August when starting in the 0-0 draw at Villarreal on Saturday.

But PSG is probably even more reliant on Kylian Mbappe than Madrid is on Benzema, and Mbappe's injury-time winner on Friday against Rennes glossed over another laborious performance. Even without Benzema, Madrid has the edge in midfield with Luka Modric and Casemiro.

## SPORTING VS. MANCHESTER CITY

A welcome draw — on paper, at least — and a fully fit and in-form squad, Manchester City is in great shape at the start of the knockout stage as the English club goes in search of that elusive Champions League title. City's only loss in all competitions since Oct. 30 — a run of 20 games — was 2-1 at Leipzig in the final match in the Champions League group stage, which meant little since Pep Guardiola's team was already assured of advancing.

Indeed, more significant than the loss was the red card shown to Kyle Walker that will deprive Guardiola of his first-choice right back for both legs against Sporting and the first leg of the quarterfinals should City progress.

Joao Cancelo, rested like Kevin De Bruyne and Aymeric Laporte in the Premier League at the weekend, will fill in at right back with Oleksandr Zinchenko set to cover on the left. City, the beaten finalist last season, is heavy favorite against a Portuguese opponent which is making only its second appearance



PSG VS REAL MADRID  
Live from  
01:15 am IST  
SONY TEN 2 NETWORK

in the knockout stage, and first since 2008-09. On that occasion, Sporting was humiliated 12-1 on aggregate by Bayern Munich. Sporting was in the competition's group stage this season for the first time since 2017-18 and finished ahead of Borussia Dortmund to advance. The

Portuguese champions relinquished a two-goal lead in a heated 2-2 draw at domestic league leader Porto on Friday, staying six points off the top.

## SALZBURG VS. BAYERN MUNICH

The importance of captain

Manuel Neuer to Bayern Munich was illustrated in the Bavarian powerhouse's shock loss to promoted Bochum in the Bundesliga on Saturday. Neuer opted for surgery on a troublesome knee problem at this stage of the season on the premise that he can be fit again for

the business end, including Champions League semifinals. Replacement goalkeeper Sven Ulreich has played twice in the Bundesliga, and Bayern has lost both games.

While the 33-year-old Ulreich has shown his prowess before, it's

clear that Bayern's defenders don't play with the same security when Neuer, the Germany goalkeeper, isn't there. Salzburg came from behind to beat Rapid Vienna 2-1 on Friday.

Salzburg's German forward Karim Adeyemi is reportedly a transfer target for Bayern's Bundesliga rival Borussia Dortmund, but he will need to avoid a yellow card if he wants to make the second leg in Munich.

## INTER MILAN VS. LIVERPOOL

The San Siro will be a familiar stadium for Liverpool. After all, the six-time European champions have already played there this season having been drawn with AC Milan in the group stage.

Liverpool beat Milan 2-1 away in December in the final group game to complete a clean sweep of six wins, becoming the first English team to do so. It bolsters Liverpool's status as one of the favorites for a title the club last won in 2019, especially with Mohamed Salah back in its ranks after the African Cup of Nations.

Salah has scored 11 goals in his last 11 Champions League matches, and 23 goals in 27 games in all competitions this season. Inter is also a multiple European champion — the last of its three titles came in 2010 — but is playing in the last 16 for the first time since 2011-12.

The Italian team, engaged in a tight race for the Serie A title with Milan and Napoli, will be without Italy midfielder Nicolò Barella, who is suspended.

# India seek to sort out batting and fielding woes against NZ

PTI ■ QUEENSTOWN

The crushing defeat in the opening game exposed a lot of chinks in their armour and a depleted India will be eager to address their batting and fielding woes when they face New Zealand in the second women's ODI here on Tuesday. Nothing worked for India in the first ODI on Saturday with the bowlers allowing the hosts to pile on 275 before the batters, except for captain Mithali Raj, flopped to be all out for 213 and lose the match by 62 runs.

Raj was virtually the lone hand with a well-crafted 59 while rookie Yastika Bhatia made 41.

All the other batters, including vice captain Harmanpreet Kuar (10 off 22 balls), failed to make any significant contribution in the face of a clinical bowling show from New Zealand led by Jesse Kerr (4 for 35). The Indians' cause was not helped by the absence of senior opener Smriti Mandhana who missed the first ODI due to extended quarantine, along with Renuka Singh and Meghana Singh. Mandhana and Meghana are not likely to be available for the second ODI either but pacer Renuka could make the team as she is out of her quarantine. In the first ODI, India collapsed from 105 for 2 to 165 for



6 as New Zealand kept their line and length accurate. With both experienced batters Raj and Harmanpreet dismissed in quick succession by the 33rd over, both by Jess Kerr, India could not chase down the target. Before that, the Indian bowlers let New Zealand score 275. The Indians seemed to have tied down the New Zealand batters till around the halfway mark but the hosts upped the ante in the middle overs to reach a big score. Centurion Suzie Bates was let off early when she was 13 with Rajeshwari Gayakwad dropping her at point and that sloppy fielding cost India dear. Bates went on to score 106

to anchor the New Zealand innings. The return to form of opener Bates, who scored her 11th ODI hundred and first in 19 innings, could be ominous for India. The only positive from the first game was that barring Harmanpreet, all the Indian bowlers were among wickets with Deepti Sharma, Pooja Vastrakar, Jhulan Goswami and Rajeshwari Gayakwad taking two apiece, while Poonam Yadav got one.

With the 50-over World Cup less than three weeks away, Raj was a bit concerned, especially on the batting front, though she expected the team to make improvements.



## We wanted strong Indian core and we got it: Royals owner Badale

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rajasthan Royals succeeded in building a strong Indian core but failing to retain England pacer Jofra Archer, despite his unavailability for the upcoming season, was a disappointment for the IPL franchise, lead owner Manoj Badale said.

Mumbai Indians, looking as a long term investment, bought Archer for Rs 8 crore at the IPL mega auction in Bengaluru on Sunday.

Badale said his franchise approached the auction with a certain aim and largely got what they wanted.

"Our priority this year was to build a strong Indian core, which we have done with the likes of Ashwin, Chahal, Karun, Saini, Devdutt, Prasidh along with Sanju and Yashasvi already retained," Badale said in a media release.

"Our focus was always on having a world-class XI, which is visible in the way we have gone about our business as we tried to utilize the majority of our funds on the starting XI.

"We've tried our best to also go for familiar faces, who we are excited to have at the Royals again. In terms of the international players, we've secured some amazing buys and I'm looking forward to seeing them in pink."

However, Badale said it's obviously disappointing to lose out on a player like Jofra but circumstances dictated the call.

"He's been an integral part of our team for the past few years and grew in stature with us.

# Franchises cautious while going for U-19 stars

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Cricket is a lot about timing and the Under-19 cricket team got it just right by lifting the World Cup before IPL's mega-auction. But did that translate into big bucks for the stars of that triumph?

At the end of two days of bidding wars, it seems the franchises chose to tread on the side of caution when it came to loosening the purse strings for the newest batch of young talent in Indian cricket.

While some uncapped, but proven performers like Avesh Khan, were laughing all their way to the bank with bids as high as Rs 10 crore, only a few of the Under-19 stars, skipper Yash Dhull included, managed to land deals with IPL teams in the two-day mega auction held in Bengaluru. Dhull, a product of the academy run by Delhi Capitals and top-scorer of the U-19 World Cup, was picked up for Rs 50 lakh by the franchise that groomed him.

Exciting all-rounder Raj Bawa won a Rs 2 crore bid from



Punjab Kings, while Rajvardhan Hangargekar (with a base price Rs 30 lakh) was roped in by four-time IPL champions Chennai Super Kings for Rs 1.50 crore.

Dhull's teammate Vicky Ostwal was snapped up by Delhi Capitals later in the auction at his base price of Rs 20 lakh. Hangargekar, the new entrant into the CSK stable, will hope to learn tricks of the trade from the legendary M S Dhoni,

skipper of the four-time champion franchise.

The talented Maharashtra all-rounder is known for the ability to bowl yorkers at will, not so easy at any level, and can only get better by rubbing shoulders with Dhoni and the other big names at Super Kings.

It must be said that the various IPL teams seemed to be cautious while bidding for the under-19 players and did not appear ready to splurge.

# Don't think Kohli going through a lean patch: Rathour

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Virat Kohli's prolonged lean patch is not a concern for the Indian team, batting coach Vikram Rathour said on Monday, expressing confidence that the superstar batter would be back among runs in the upcoming T20I series against West Indies here.

The 33-year-old, whose tenure as India captain across formats came to an end last month, had a disappointing run in the recently-concluded three match ODI series with a total score of 26 runs at an average of 8.6 with a best of 18.

Rathour said it does not mean lack of form as Kohli has been doing well in the nets.

"I don't think he's going through a lean phase. I understand he had a poor series against the West Indies (in ODIs) but no conversation as such,"



Rathour said in a media interaction in the build-up to the three-match T20I series beginning at the Eden Gardens on Wednesday.

Across formats, Kohli is yet to score an International century in

more than two years. His last century came against Bangladesh in India's first pink ball Day/Night Test at Eden Gardens here in November 2019.

In ODIs, Kohli last scored a century against the West Indies in August 2019, in Port of Spain and since then, he has had 10 50-plus scores but failed to convert them into a ton. In the last 12 months, he has been part of nine ODIs and scored a total of 271 runs in them.

"He's batting really well in the nets and the kind of preparation he's putting in. We are waiting for... I'm certain that in one of these innings he will be back among runs," the batting coach said, strongly backing the former skipper. The series is seen as India's preparation for the T20 World Cup slated in Australia in October and Rathour said he's confident that the batters will put up a strong show Down Under.

## Lahore thumps Quetta in PSL, Karachi crashes to 6th defeat

AP ■ LAHORE

Shaheen Shah Afridi dealt two early blows and Fakhar Zaman continued his rich run of batting form as Lahore Qalandars inflicted a crushing eight-wicket defeat on Quetta Gladiators in the Pakistan Super League.

Earlier, Karachi Kings had its sixth successive loss when Peshawar Zalmi handed the 2020 champion a 55-run defeat.

Left-hander Fakhar (53 runs off 42 balls) scored his fifth half century — to go along with his century against Karachi — as Lahore romped to 143-2 in 17.4 overs.

Made to bat first, Quetta had to settle for a below-par total of 141-7 after Afridi removed Jason Roy and James Vince, both without scoring, in his superb first over of the match.

Fakhar hit six boundaries in his seventh PSL game this season and stretched his runs tally to 469 to be the leading run-scorer in the tournament before he skied a slog-sweep to midwicket in the 16th over.

## Russian skater can compete, but will miss medal ceremony

AP ■ BEIJING

Russian teenager Kamila Valieva has been cleared to compete in the women's figure skating competition at the Winter Olympics despite failing a pre-Games drug test, setting her up for an attempt at a second gold medal.

Whatever happens on the ice, Valieva will not get a medal ceremony moment in Beijing. Nor will any skater who finishes in the top three with her.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport cleared Valieva to skate less than 12 hours after a hastily arranged hearing that lasted into early Monday morning. A panel of judges ruled that the 15-year-old Valieva, the favorite for the women's individual gold, does not need to be provisionally suspended ahead of a full investigation.

The court gave her a favorable decision in part



because she is a minor, known in Olympic jargon as a "protected person," and is subject to different rules from an adult athlete.

"The panel considered that preventing the athlete to compete at the Olympic Games would cause her irreparable harm in the cir-

cumstances," CAS Director General Matthieu Reeb said.

Now, Valieva and her fellow Russian skaters can aim for the first podium sweep of women's figure skating in Olympic history. The event starts with the short program Tuesday and concludes Thursday with

the free skate.

The International Olympic Committee said Monday afternoon that if Valieva finishes in the top three, there will be no medal ceremony during the Games. There will also be no ceremony for the team event won by Valieva and the Russian team a week ago.

"It would not be appropriate to hold the medal ceremony," the IOC said.

Valieva landed the first quadruple jumps by a woman at the Olympics as the Russian team won gold in a dominant performance.

The decision not to award medals also affects Nathan Chen and the rest of the second-place American team, who will leave Beijing unsure if they won silver or gold. It would be Chen's second gold of the Games. If Valieva and Russia are disqualified, Japan moves up to silver and Canada wins bronze.

## Work begins on new NCA in Bengaluru foundation stone laid by BCCI brass

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Work has begun on the country's new National Cricket Academy (NCA) with the BCCI brass, including president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah, laying the foundation stone of the complex here on Monday.

The BCCI has secured the land on a 99-year lease. "The new National cricket Academy starts from today..Laid the foundation stone of the new place today in Bengaluru," Ganguly tweeted and also shared images of the ceremony. Shah wrote on his Twitter handle, "Laid the foundation stone for @BCCI's new NCA. It is our collective vision to have a Centre of Excellence which nurtures talent and supports the cricket ecosystem in India."

The foundation stone was laid in the presence of BCCI vice president Rajeev Shukla, treasurer Arun Dhumal, joint secretary Jayesh



George and NCA head VVS Laxman. Since the existing NCA's establishment in 2000, it has been running from the premises of the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in the heart of the city. The Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), which owns the stadium, had rented out to the BCCI its Ground B for outdoor practice,