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MONEY 8 INDIA'S ECONOMY SET TO IMPROVE OVER NEXT 12 MONTHS: PWC REPORT

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HYDERABAD, TUESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



I NEVER TAKE UP ROLES FOR FAME AND FORTUNE: RAVI VARMA

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SC ASKS LAWYERS, LITIGANTS TO USE COMPUTERS FOR VIRTUAL HEARINGS

Hours after Chief Justice of India (CJI) N V Ramana expressed unhappiness over disruptions during virtual hearings due to the use of mobiles, the Supreme Court on Monday asked the advocates and litigants to use a desktop or the laptop with a stable internet connection to join proceedings conducted through video conferencing. "All advocates and party-in person are requested to join the CISO Webex application for joining the court hearing through video conferencing (VC) via a desktop/laptop with a stable internet connectivity, preferably wired, to avoid any disruption and inconvenience to the Hon'ble Judges," the notification issued by the apex court registry said.

CENTRE VISTA PROJECT ON SCHEDULE DESPITE RAINS: PURI

With days to go for the Republic Day parade at Rajpath, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Monday visited the Central Vista Avenue redevelopment project site and said work is progressing as per schedule despite the recent "unprecedented" rains and the Omicron outbreak. The Union housing and urban affairs minister also shared on Twitter photos of the newly developed Rajpath that comes under the Central Vista Avenue stretching from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate. "Visited Central Vista Avenue to review progress of the project."

JAISHANKAR SPEAKS WITH EU COUNTERPART, DISCUSSES AFGHAN, MYANMAR

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday discussed the strategic facets of the India-EU cooperation with European Union's (EU) High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell Fontelles and also deliberated upon global hotspots, including Afghanistan and Myanmar. Jaishankar also spoke with his counterparts from Hungary and Sweden separately and discussed bilateral cooperation. "A warm conversation with EU HRPV @Josep Borrell, our first this year. Reviewed trade & investment, connectivity, climate action and strategic facets of India-EU cooperation," Jaishankar said in a tweet after speaking with the EU official.

UP POLLS: AGRA CANTONMENT SEAT GETS A TRANSGENDER CANDIDATE

A transgender person is set to contest from Agra Cantonment assembly seat in the coming Uttar Pradesh election. Radhika Bai, aged nearly 26 years, on Monday filed her nomination papers from the seat to raise voice for the people of her community. Also known as Akash Soni, Radhika Bai claimed that she is the first transgender woman from Agra to contest the assembly polls. "The aim of contesting the election is that I want to do a lot for the people of 'kinnar' community. We have been neglected by society. I would educate people of my community that there is a lot more than dancing on roads and begging," Radhika Bai told PTI.

English to be medium of instruction in TS govt schools

State Cabinet decides to bring in new law in the next legislature session Rs.7,289 cr for better amenities, high-quality teaching under 'Mana Vooru-Mana Badi' plan

ML MELLY MAITREY HYDERABAD

In a significant decision, the State Cabinet has decided to bring a new piece of legislation to introduce English as the medium of instruction in government schools from the next academic year as well as to regulate fees in private schools, junior and degree colleges.

The State Cabinet, which met at Pragathi Bhavan here on Monday with Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao in the chair, resolved to constitute a Cabinet Sub Committee to study the above two proposals and formulate required guidelines.

The Cabinet Sub Committee, to be headed by Education Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy, will have Ministers Koppula Eshwar, Thalasanani Srinivas Yadav, Niranjan Reddy,



Srinivas Goud, Jagadish Reddy, Harish Rao, Prashanth Reddy, Puvvada Ajay Kumar, Errabelli Dayakar Rao and K T Rama Rao as members.

The new piece of legislation will be introduced in the next Legislature session. The Cabinet also decided to strengthen government schools in the

State. Towards this end, the Cabinet approved a special plan 'Mana Vooru-Mana Badi' (Our village- Our School) at a cost of Rs.7,289 crore to provide quality teaching in government schools and better basic amenities.

120 medics at Gandhi Hospital test positive

PNS HYDERABAD

Nearly 120 staffers at the Gandhi Hospital have reportedly tested positive to Covid-19. Of these, 40 are PG students, 38 house surgeons, 35 MBBS students and six are faculty members. Corona test reports relating to some more doctors and staff are yet to come. Once the results are in, the number of corona victims could rise further.

In all, 139 people with Covid-19 have been admitted in Gandhi hospital. As per doctors, the cases are not severe; while those that are severe are mainly due to underlying co-morbidities. Even in Chest Hospital, seven staff members have tested positive. The Erragadda Mental hospital witnessed a total of 57 in-patients testing positive for COVID-19. Mass testing was done after one patient showed symptoms on Sunday. Another 9 medical staffers also tested positive.

KCR plans conclave of Oppn parties

SNCN ACHARYULU HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao is planning to hold a conclave of anti-BJP parties in Hyderabad as part of his moves to intensify opposition to the BJP.

It seems that KCR is following the footsteps of his favourite hero, the late NT Rama Rao, who was the founder president of the Telugu Desam Party and a former Chief Minister. In 1983, after becoming the first non-Congress Chief Minister of united Andhra Pradesh, NTR held an opposition conclave at Vijayawada with anti-Congress parties. This conclave was attended by leaders of the BJP and the Left and has remained in the history of Andhra Pradesh politics.

In the same way, KCR is also planning to hold a conference of regional parties at Hyderabad. According to sources this idea came to KCR after his recent meetings with the leaders of the Left and RJD leader Tejaswi Yadav.

KCR is thinking of using the opportunity presented by the reopening of the famous Yadadri Temple in March. In fact, KCR had



invited Prime Minister Modi for the inauguration of renovated Yadadri Temple complex.

When terms were good with the BJP leadership, KCR extended the invitation to Prime Minister Modi when he met him on September 4, 2021. But now things have changed and KCR wants to use the same occasion to unite political parties against the BJP. KCR is likely to invite the leaders of regional parties and ideological forces which are against the BJP.

TRS leaders think that by March the intensity of the Covid pandemic is likely to decline. Once the Covid pandemic comes under control KCR will finalise dates for reopening the Yadadri Temple. Meanwhile, KCR is likely to consult various political leaders and prepare the ground for holding an opposition conclave on the occasion of Yadadri Temple reopening. KCR wants to emphasise the need for the unity of democratic, secular forces at the national level against the BJP.



CM wants vaccination to be speeded up

PNS HYDERABAD

Although over five crore doses of Covid vaccines have been administered till date across the State, Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao on Monday directed Health Minister T Harish Rao to speed up the vaccination process and cover every eligible person.

The Medical and Health Department should expedite the process by coordinating with the Panchayat Raj and Rural Development as well as the Municipal Administration and Urban Development department officials. He directed all district Ministers and Collectors to hold review meetings to assess the situation and take appropriate measures.

The State Cabinet, which met at Pragathi Bhavan under the chairmanship of KCR here on Monday, reviewed the Covid-19 situation and measures taken to contain the spread of Covid-19 variants in the State.

Minister KTR invited to Diriyah E-Prix 2022 Saudi Arabia

PNS HYDERABAD

Formula E Chief Championship Officer (COO) Alberto Longo has invited IT and Industries Minister KTR to attend the 2022 ABB FIA Formula E Diriyah E-Prix Saudi Arabia, being held on the 28 and 29 January 2022. ABB FIA Formula E World Championship is the first full electric world single-seater motorsport championship.

Since the inaugural championship race held in Beijing in September 2014, Formula E has continuously reinvented motorsport racing and been contributing to the acceleration of the electric



IT Minister KT Rama Rao at the signing of a Letter Of Intent (LOI) between Telangana and Formula E on Monday.

revolution, with a unique proposition in urban racetracks, unpre-

dictable action, and iconic city-centre settings.

BJP lens on leaders who attended secret meets

PNS HYDERABAD

The BJP high command has asked former Telangana BJP chief and Joinings Committee chairman Nallu Indrasena Reddy to probe the secret meetings of Karimnagar and Nizamabad BJP leaders.

The party is going to serve notices to the leaders who participated in the secret meetings seeking their explanation. Indrasena Reddy enquired about the secret meetings and

summoned the alleged leaders who participated in the secret meetings to Hyderabad. The BJP high command also gave full authority to take action against the leaders for holding secret meetings.

The leaders who participated in the secret meetings came to Hyderabad and had a meeting with Indrasena Reddy and told him their problems. It is learnt that Indrasena Reddy was not satisfied by the explanation given by the leaders.

Four kids with rare genetic liver disorder treated at OGH

PNS HYDERABAD

Four children with Progressive Familial Intrahepatic Cholestasis (PFIC), a rare genetic condition, were treated successfully at the Osmania Hospital here. PFIC affected children are not able to drain bile from the liver even though the large bile ducts are open. This leads to liver damage, liver cancer and death.

Dr CH Madhusudhan, Head, Department of Surgical Gastroenterology and Liver Transplantation, said, "We have treated four PFIC affected children at the Osmania Hospital."

AICC secretaries to hold talks on TPCC issues

PNS HYDERABAD

The AICC secretaries in-charge of Telangana Congress, Bose Raju and Srinivasa Krishnan, are coming to the state on January 19 to discuss various issues including the discipline of party leaders and the progress of the digital membership drive with state leaders.

Sources said Bose Raju and Srinivasa Krishnan would hold a meeting with TS party leaders and will discuss disciplinary action committee issues and the digital membership drive.

Many TPCC leaders test corona positive

PNS HYDERABAD

The corona pandemic has been creating tension at Gandhi Bhavan, the headquarters of the Telangana Congress. TPCC chief Revanth Reddy had tested positive on January 3 and he took treatment after isolating himself at home.

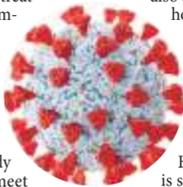
Revanth came to Gandhi Bhavan five days after he tested positive and had a meeting with party leaders.

Later, Revanth Reddy conducted a press meet too. Now it has been confirmed that many leaders had participated in the press meet along with Revanth. CLP leader Mallu Bhatti

Vikramarka, AICC programme implementation committee chairman A. Maheshwar Reddy, PAC chairman Shabbir Ali and Kisan Congress vice president M. Kodanda Reddy have tested positive. It is also learnt that several DCC presidents also tested positive and are in home isolation now. Some

journalists have also tested corona positive. The number may increase if more tests are conducted. Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka has been admitted to Apollo Hospital. He said that he is stable at the hospital.

AICC Telangana in-charge Manickam Tagore and other AICC leaders spoke to the leaders who had tested positive on the phone.



Strengthen rail network in TS: KTR to Gadkari

Less than 120 km railway line added since 2014

NAVEENA GHANATE HYDERABAD

TS IT and Municipal Administration Minister K T Rama Rao has expressed his displeasure over the fact that the railways have been neglected in Telangana since 2014.

The Minister participated in PM Gati Shakti South Zone Virtual Conference chaired by Union Road, Transport & Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Monday.

KTR said, "In 2014, Telangana had 1,753 km railway network and in November 2021, it increased to 1,870 km. Just about 120 km of railway line has been added since 2014. "This is something we should think about. We request you to



IT Minister KT Rama Rao participated in PM Gati Shakti South Zone Virtual Conference chaired by Union Road, Transport & Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Monday

increase the railway connectivity. While Hyderabad is well-connected by passenger train to all ports,

there is a problem faced with the frequency of trains to ports."

TODAY ALMANAC

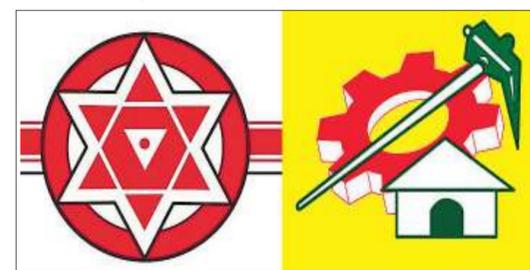
Month & Paksham: Pausa & Sukla Paksha Tithi : Pratipada, Jan 18 05:18 AM to Jan 19 00:54 AM Nakshatram : Pushya, Jan 18 04:37 AM to Jan 19 05:42 AM Ashlesha, Jan 19 05:42 AM to Jan 20 02:24 AM Rahukalam : 3:13 PM to 4:36 PM Yamagandam : 9:40 AM to 11:03 AM Varjyam : 08:25 PM to 10:07 PM Gulika : 12:26 PM to 1:49 PM Amritakalam : 11:45 PM to 01:29 AM Abhijit Muhurtham : 12:04 PM to 12:48 PM

HYDRABAD WEATHER Forecast: CLOUDY Temp: 27° Humidity: 74% Sunrise: 6:53 AM Sunset: 5:59 PM Updated: JANUARY 17, 2021 5:00 PM

Chandrababu in a fix over tie-up with Jana Sena

PNS HYDERABAD

TDP supremo N. Chandrababu Naidu is in a fix as Jana Sena President Pavan Kalyan is playing safe on the issue of a political alliance. After the Tirupati Lok Sabha by-election, there were indications that Pavan Kalyan will break ties with the BJP and opt for an alliance with the TDP. Supporting this, Pavan Kalyan had launched a stir against the privatisation of the Vizag steel factory opposing the Centre's decision. In local body elections also in some places the TDP and the Jana Sena had an alliance against the YSR Congress. This happened as per the deci-



sions of the local leaders of both parties. The leaderships of both parties did not object to this. Accordingly, there were strong

speculations in both the parties that the TDP and the Jana Sena will have an alliance in the coming Assembly elections against the YSR

Congress.

TDP supremo Chandrababu also strongly believed that the Jana Sena will approach for an alliance with his party. But suddenly the Kapu leaders of the BJP, the TDP and the Congress held a meeting and decided to work together to make a Kapu leader the Chief Minister after the next Assembly elections. During preliminary discussions, they had three options for this. The options were to go with Pavan Kalyan, to go with the BJP if it proposes a Kapu leader as CM candidate or float a new political party.

Will Hyderabad join International Metropolitan Trails soon?

PNS HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Metropolitan Trail could join the International Metropolitan Trails Organization, making Hyderabad the first city in Asia to take this decisive step towards a metropolis favourable to walking and pedestrians and therefore even more attractive at the national and international levels.

Special Chief Secretary Arvind Kumar took to twitter on Monday and said, "We plan to be a part of the Metropolitan Trails alliance soon."



BJP striving to render justice to all sections of people

With advent of Narendra Modi in main stream national politics, the weaker sections, Backward Classes and down-trodden segments of population see a ray of hope in Modi. For, the BJP, being above caste and religious affiliations, is striving to render justice to all.

Compared to other parties, the BJP has a record of sending the highest number of BCs and Dalits to the Lok Sabha. In fact, in 1991, non-Yadav BCs and non-Jat BCs gave their mandate to the BJP government led by Kalyan Singh in the UP. As a result, the BJP was voted to power in UP with a tally of 221 seats.

With the BJP fielding Narendra Modi (who hails from the OBC community) for the PM post in 2014, awareness dawned among the OBCs in a big way across the country. Importantly, OBCs of UP took Modi under their

wings. Out of the 42.63 per cent of votes polled to the BJP, majority of the voters included OBCs and Dalits.

Out of the 80 Lok Sabha candidates, the BJP fielded 27 OBCs from UP. In an election rally, over 15,000 Rajbharas joined the BJP. Apart from non-Yadav BCs, non-Jat Dalits and other Dalit groups got attracted to Modi's leadership. Dalits across the country welcomed the Modi wave. Out of every four Dalits, one voted for the BJP, going by an analysis of the 2014 election results.

Myths about Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party and Samajwadi Party among Dalits were dispelled with the emergence of Modi. They have realised the fact that the economic condition of the BCs and Dalits did not improve in independent India.

The concept of Atma Nirbhar would have meaning only when the fruits of economic reforms trickle down to all. All sections of society have valued BJP's economic philosophy. Under the direct benefit transfer mode, funds under various government schemes have been deposited in the bank accounts of beneficiaries, eliminating middlemen. The OBCs have been observing Modi's policies leading to increased representation of the OBCs and Dalits in the BJP and also among its elected people's representatives.

According to a CSDS survey conducted in 2019, one-third of the Dalits across the country - 34 per cent - have voted in favour of the BJP. The BJP gave top priority to non-Yadav OBCs in UP.

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The credit for sending the highest number of OBCs, Dalit people's representatives

to Parliament and Assemblies goes to the BJP. The BJP also empowered those who did not receive socio-economic benefits among the OBCs and Dalits.

In the 2017 Assembly elections, the BJP gave 52.8 per cent of the seats to OBCs and SCs. Similarly, in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, 57.5 per cent of the seats were given away to these sections. In these elections, 31.5 per cent of the OBCs, 20.8 per cent of the SCs, 0.49 per cent of the STs were elected MLAs. In all, 30.9 per cent of the OBCs, 19 per cent of the SCs, and 2.3



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

per cent of the STs constituted the BJP office-bearers.

In Yogi Adityanath's Cabinet in UP, 35.1 per cent belong to the OBCs and 12.9 per cent to the ST communities. Among the BJP district presidents, 30 per cent are OBCs and 6.12 per cent are SCs. Out of 303 MPs of the BJP, elected in 2019 elections, 209 belong to castes other than Hindus. This constitutes 68.9

per cent of the total MPs.

According to a CSDS survey conducted in 2019, one-third of the Dalits across the country - 34 per cent - have voted in favour of the BJP. The BJP gave top priority to non-Yadav OBCs in UP.

In fact, 72 per cent of the non-Yadav OBCs supported the BJP. Out of the 113 OBC MPs, 53 are SCs, 43 are STs. Moreover, 61 per cent of the members of the Modi Cabinet are OBCs, SCs and STs.

The credit for giving ministerial berths to 61 per cent OBCs, SCs and STs goes to the PM. There are 27 OBCs, 12 SCs and 8 STs in the Cabinet.

In the first list of 105 candidates released by the BJP Parliamentary Board for the UP Assembly elections, there are 44 OBCs and 19 SCs. In fact, 60 per cent of the party

tickets were given to OBCs and Dalits.

Two or three ministers resigned from the UP Cabinet alleging injustice to Dalits and OBCs by the BJP. But the facts are different. There is no big deal in Ministers resigning from the party after failing to get party tickets to their political heirs and followers. One should not forget that Sanghamitra is the daughter of Swamy Prasad Maurya, who stepped out of the Yogi Adityanath's Cabinet. He aspired for party nomination to him and also to his son, but failed to impress the party leadership and joined the Samajwadi Party. Sanghamitra quit the BSP and joined the BJP and tasted electoral success. However, her brother contested the Assembly elections twice unsuccessfully.

The BJP would not give party nominations to political

heirs that easily. The BJP chose to give tickets to party candidates after intensive study of the background, on the basis of reports from observers without giving scope for any undue influences. What is wrong in it?

Another Minister in the UP Cabinet Dara Singh Chauhan, having lost at the hands of his BJP rival in the last Lok Sabha elections, quit BSP and joined the BJP. The BJP got him elected as MLA and made him BJP's OBC Morcha President. Another Minister who crossed over to the BJP from the BSP - Dharam Singh Saini - was given a berth in the UP Cabinet. Is there any meaning in their criticism that the BJP rendered injustice to the OBCs? The BJP is a disciplined party.

The BJP unleashed a social revolution in the UP. Those who had benefited by it are sure to patronise the BJP.



Cabinet nod for irrigation works worth over Rs.1,800 cr

ML MELLY MAITREYI
HYDERABAD

The State Cabinet, which met here on Monday, gave approval to several projects designed to provide irrigation facility to agricultural lands in various districts. It approved the Link canal from the Mallanna Sagar reservoir to the Tapaspalli reservoir at a cost of Rs.388.2 crore to provide assured irrigation facility to 1.29 lakh acres in Siddipeta district and green-lighted the restoration of the Pedda Cheruvu tank at a cost of Rs.44.71 crore in Buddaram village of Gopalpeta mandal in Wanaparthy district.

The Cabinet also approved

of the Ghanpur branch canal, as part of the Mahatma Gandhi Kalwakurthy Lift Irrigation Scheme, at a cost of Rs.144.43 crore to irrigate 25,000 acres in Ghanpur and Addakula mandals. It approved the estimated expenditure of Rs.669 crore for the proposed Nalasomanadri Gattu Lift Irrigation Scheme in Gadwal district. The Cabinet approved the proposal to invite tenders.

It was decided to set up Manjira Lift Irrigation Corporation Ltd under the Companies Act for mobilization of funds for the Sangameswara, Basaveswara lift irrigation schemes in Sanga Reddy district. Special Chief Secretary or Principal Secretary

of Irrigation Department will act as Chairman of this Corporation. Engineer in Chief (General) E in C (Gajwel) and Joint Secretaries of Finance, Irrigation Departments and Sangareddy Chief Engineers will be the Directors of the Corporation.

The Cabinet revised the estimated expenditure of the Chanaka Korata barrage on the Penganga River in Adilabad district to Rs.795.94 crore. The construction of barrage under the project has been completed and the construction of pump house is on. This project would irrigate 50,000 acres in Bhimpur, Jainadh, Bhela and Adilabad mandals in Adilabad district.

The following are other

irrigation works that were approved: Administrative approval to leftover works under modernisation of the Ghanpur anicut canal system in Medak district at a cost of Rs.50.32 crore to bring 25,000 acres under cultivation; approval for construction of 11 check-dams in Wanaparthy and Gadwal districts at a cost of Rs.27.36 crore; Rs.10.01 crore for restoration and beautification of the Goapala Samudram tank in Veltur village of Wanaparthy district. The Cabinet approval was also given works to be taken up as part of the Devadula scheme to take water to higher altitude areas at a cost of Rs.104.92 crore.

TS HC directs state to conduct 1 lakh tests per day

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Monday directed the state government to ramp up daily numbers of RT-PCR tests for Covid-19. The court asked the health authorities to conduct a lakh RT-PCR tests every day. It also directed them to provide separate details about the RT-PCR and Rapid Antigen tests in the daily Covid bulletin.

The court gave the directions while hearing petitions related to Covid situation in the state. A division bench comprising Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice N. Tukaramji underlined the need to be more alert to check the spread of Covid-19.

The court said Covid rules like social distancing and wearing of masks need to be strict-

ly implemented.

During the hearing, Advocate General informed the court that the state Cabinet will be meeting later in the day to discuss the Covid-19 situation in the state.

The meeting to be presided over by Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu is likely to decide new measures to curb the spread of the pandemic.

The bench directed the government to submit a detailed report on the measures taken and adjourned the hearing to January 25.

The High Court's direction on RT-PCR tests is significant as the medical and health department in its daily Covid bulletin has not been sharing the break-up of the tests conducted on a daily basis.

The order came amid criti-

cism for fewer covid tests conducted in the state.

The daily Covid cases in the state have surged five-fold since the beginning of the new year. On average, the state is reporting 2,000 new cases. On Sunday, the state logged 2,047 Covid cases. The health authorities conducted 55,883 Covid tests in the 24-hour period that ended at 5.30 p.m. Sunday.

The number of daily tests has come down due to the Sankranti festival and weekend.

As part of its efforts to check the spread of Covid, the state government has already banned rallies, public meetings and other public gatherings.

It has also extended holidays for all educational institutions till January 30.

CM to tour undivided Warangal district today to assess crop damage

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu will tour undivided Warangal district on Tuesday to assess the damage to crops due to the untimely rains in the last four days.

The Cabinet which met here on Monday discussed agriculture-related issues and the Cabinet decided that the Chief Minister should visit the district, particularly Parakala and Narsampeta constituencies. Agriculture Minister S. Niranjan Reddy, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar and other senior officials would accompany the CM.

The Cabinet took another decision to continue purchase centres till the entire paddy being brought by farmers was procured.

English to be

Continued from page 1

Nod for Mahila University in Telangana The Cabinet approved the proposal of Education Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy to set up a Mahila University in Telangana State.

The Cabinet instructed the Chief Secretary to come with detailed proposals on the Mahila University to the next Cabinet meeting. Green light for Forest University The State Cabinet approved the proposal to set up a Forest University in Telangana. Forest Department officials submitted a preliminary report to the Cabinet and they were instructed to come with a full-fledged report to the next Cabinet meeting.

State Cabinet resolved to extend reservations under various categories to eligible students who had completed four-year B.Sc Forestry (Honours) course in Forest College and Research Institute in the direct recruitment to fill posts in the Forest Department. As part of reservations, the Cabinet decided to extend 25 per cent of reservations in posts in the Office of Assistant Conservator of Forests, 50 per cent reservations in Forest Range Officer wing, and 50 per cent reservations in Foresters wing. The Cabinet also resolved to amend the Telangana State Forest Service Rules (1997) and the Telangana State Forest Subordinate Service Rules (2000).

120 medics at...

Continued from page 1

Nearly 500 cops test positive A large number of staffers in many police stations are also suffering from corona. Nearly 500 cops reportedly tested positive for Covid-19 recently. In Medipally PS, 5 cops, 16 in Rajendranagar PS 16, and 12 in Yadagirigutta were diagnosed with the virus.

Strengthen rail network in TS: KTR to Gadkari

Continued from page 1

KTR urged the Union government to consider increasing the frequency of trains for faster movement of goods.

The Minister said that running trains were often canceled owing to lesser load, often with little notice, creating uncertainty in the minds of exporters, who were being forced to use trucks as the mode of transport - which is significantly leading to increased logistic costs.

KTR said that Telangana was a landlocked State. A few

AICC secretaries to hold talks on TPCC issues...

Continued from page 1

It is also learnt that they will discuss the complaints filed by party leaders with the AICC regarding the unilateral decisions of TPCC chief Revanth Reddy.

Several DCC presidents and senior leaders had lodged complaints with the AICC against the unilateral decisions of the TPCC chief and this will also

be discussed at the meeting. Senior leaders like V. Hanumantha Rao were upset with the TPCC disciplinary action committee as it had failed to take action against Adilabad leaders for blocking VH and hurling abuses at him during his recent tour of Adilabad district which was undertaken as per directions of the state leadership.

It is also learnt that Bose Raju had given his word to the Telangana Mahila Congress that he will address their problems too if any.

According to sources, the in-charge secretaries may also hold talks with Mahila Congress leaders during their visit. It may be recalled that Mahila Congress leaders are not actively participating in any party programmes since two months.

Four kids with...

Continued from page 1

PFIC is an inherited disease in which the bile acid transport gene is defective. This leads to liver damage, fat malabsorption and Vitamin A, D, E, and K deficiency, cirrhosis and liver cancer. If we detect the PFIC disease late we need to do liver transplantation. If we detect early before cirrhosis we can do other procedures like PEBD (partial external biliary drainage) and ileal exclusion so that liver transplantation can be avoided.

Will Hyderabad join International Metropolitan...

Continued from page 1

In September 2021, Bruit du Frigo, Bordeaux Métropole and the Alliance Française of Hyderabad launched the Hyderabad Urban Trail project. This Urban Trails project questions the practice of walking and the place of the pedestrian in Hyderabad by inviting local and passing by walkers to discover the city through the prism of a path crossing its different parts, serving as a physical and symbolic link between them while creating a contemporary narrative of the city.

The team in its report said, "This experience revealed that Hyderabad is a spectacular

city with incredible potential for walking. It offers the opportunity to create a metropolitan route linking all the emblematic places located in its periphery, from the best known to the most hidden. Created by nature or shaped by man, these places comprising lakes, rocks, neighbourhoods and local communities, retain traces of their evolution over time and are presented as constituent elements of history and the identity of Hyderabad."

The trail report added, "The process of creating the Hyderabad Metropolitan Trail potentially offers a space for constructive dialogue between local communities, profession-

als and competent authorities, making it possible to imagine new approaches to urban planning with a view to preserving and enhancing this little-known and yet invaluable."

The first test march took place in the suburbs of Hyderabad. As was anticipated, the imagined route came up against a number of physical obstacles that the walkers tried to circumvent with the help of local residents. Alternative paths taken were immediately mapped and the trail updated. Walkers were thus able to discover places where geology, hydrography and flora had combined to create unique natural settings.

CM wants...

Continued from page 1

Harish Rao gave a detailed explanation about the situation, along with the data, and said that the situation was under control and that the Medical and Health Department was ready to face any situation in the State.

Chandrababu in a ...

Continued from page 1

Meanwhile, prominent Kapu leader Mudragant Padmanabham wanted to unite the Kapu, Backward Class and Dalit communities to make a Kapu leader the Chief Minister.

After this, Pavan Kalyan changed his mind on an alliance with the TDP.

While the BJP wants to continue the alliance with Jana Sena the TDP wants an alliance with the Jana Sena. After Kapu leaders' meeting, Pavan Kalyan is playing safe on the issue of an alliance with the BJP and the TDP.

It may be recalled that the Pavan Kalyan had openly declared several times that he will be the Chief Minister after the next

Assembly elections. TDP supremo Chandrababu also wants to become the Chief Minister after the next Assembly elections.

When the chiefs of both the parties want to become the Chief Minister it is not possible to have an alliance unless one backs down.

A senior most leader of Jana Sena and a close associate of Pavan Kalyan said, "Chandrababu must decide whether he wants to become the Chief Minister or remove the YSR Congress from power."

He said if Chandrababu wants to remove the YSR Congress from power he must compromise on the CM's post and support Pavan Kalyan's CM candidature to have an alliance with the Jana Sena.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹231
Without Skin	₹251
Broiler at Farm	₹127

EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	435
VIJAYAWADA	455
VISAKHAPATNAM	450
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.35

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

NOTICE No. 37, Name of Work : For 19 No. works of Annual Maintenance by Manual Means/Mechanical Means/Bucket Machine (Desilting works) etc. in Rajendranagar Circle-11, GHMC. **Estimate Amount/ECV :** Rs.197.20 Lakhs. **Downloading Start Date & Time :** 18-01-2022 at 2.30PM. **Last Date & Time for Receipts of Bid Dt :** 21-01-2022 at 2.45PM. **Name & Address of E/ES/E :** Executive Engineer Rajendranagar Div.No.11 GHMC, Cell No: 9989930608, e-mail id-ec11.gmcc2@gmail.com. **Sd/- Executive Engineer, DIPP.No.20219-PP/CL/Adv/1/2021-22. Division-XI, (RJR), GHMC.**

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Centre copies another TS model

Turning Tier two and Tier three cities into IT Hubs

NAVEENA GHANATE
HYDERABAD

Vindicating TS IT Minister K T Rama Rao's refrain 'What Telangana does today, India does tomorrow', Union Minister Piyush Goyal has asked the IT industry to expand in Tier-2 and Tier-3 towns. He welcomed the IT industry's proposal to start IT hubs in Tier-2 and Tier-3 towns, saying it would create numerous jobs and help develop the regions. On Sunday, Goyal said that the IT industry should identify towns for such expansion and the Centre would assist the players by providing infrastructure and other facilities. For equitable development, the Telangana government has been encouraging IT companies to set up their offices in Tier II cities. Telangana has been promoting Tier-2 cities like Warangal,



Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Nalgonda, Siddipet, Mahabubnagar in a big way and has created 'plug-and-play' infrastructure. It may be mentioned here in December, Genpact announced the setting up of their facility in Warangal. The Telangana government has set up IT Towers in Khimma, Karimnagar and Warangal, where operations have already begun. The works of IT towers in

Nizamabad, Mahabubnagar and Siddipet are at various stages of completion. Tech Mahindra, Mindtree and Cyient have already established their campuses in Warangal. Genpact is the new addition to the list. In the first week of January, Minister KTR said that the state government was expanding the IT units to the Tier-II cities in the state and nearly 1,800 startups had been set up so far.



Mayor inspects Langar House HUDA Park

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi said that the park developed by Hyderabad Urban Development Authority (Huda) at Langer House will be fully developed. On Monday, the Mayor along with Karwan legislator Kausar Mohiuddin, inspected the park. Speaking on the occasion, she said, "The zonal commissioner has been directed to take immediate steps to ensure that sanitation measures are taken immediately." Officials were asked to prepare proposals for the development of the pond along with Huda Park. Solid Waste Management Engineering, EE Lake officials should take steps to carry out water treatment by chemicals to com-

pletely remove the horseshoe in the Langar House tank, the Mayor said. The entomology department should also take steps to eradicate mosquitoes. The Langar House tank will also be developed along with Huda Park which will be developed on 40 acres, she added. Vijayalakshmi also said that steps will be taken for beautification through Urban Biodiversity (UBD) scheme. Local legislator Kausar Mohiuddin said that steps should be taken to ensure that the Gachibowli, Banjara Hills, Jubilee Hills, Tolichowki nala water shouldn't mix in the Langar House pond and should go into Musi to prevent water from reaching Nala. He also urged the Mayor to take steps for dredging works.

Online operations for hotel rooms to come under scanner

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As there were complaints that the hotel rooms booked online were misused, Hyderabad City Police planning to conduct a meeting with the hotel managements to address the issue and to stop violation of law in such hotel rooms.

There were several instances in the city recently, where the police raided rooms of online hotel chains and found that rooms booked over the internet were being misused for gambling and other anti-social activities.

"As there is not much interaction between the managements nor proper surveillance on the accommodation, people are checking in and indulging in unlawful activities," a police official said. Following complaints from local people, the police had in the past raided a few rooms in apartments that were leased out to such hotel room operators and arrested people for carrying out illegal activities. "For hotels and lodges, it is mandatory that the management approaches the authorities concerned and obtain various



In recent raids, police found that rooms booked over the internet were being misused for gambling and other anti-social activities.



clearances before starting their business. The online hotel room operators were not informing the police which in turn is resulting in misuse of hotel rooms," the official said.

City Police Commissioner CV Anand, following several complaints and police cases, is now planning to hold a meeting with managements and proper-

ty owners to explain to them the necessity of checking luggage, maintaining records of visitors and installing CCTV cameras for surveillance. "People are just walking in after booking a room online. It is quite risky and a threat. Already in several cases, police teams caught people for illegal activities in such rooms and sealed the premises.

TSCHE asks varsities to put off exams

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Council for Higher Education chairman Prof Limbadri has appealed to universities for cancellation of their examination schedule and also the internal examinations. In a statement issued here on Monday, he said that all exams scheduled between Jan 17 and 30 stands postponed. It is applicable to all exams - both theory and practical exams. In view of the Covid-19 and Omicron threat, the state government extended holidays to educational institutions till Jan 30. That is why, the exams should be postponed temporarily, he added.

NIRD & PR, NCGG ink MoU to promote good governance

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD & PR), Hyderabad, and the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), New Delhi, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Monday to promote good governance, strengthen local institutions and effectively implement government programmes.

The main purpose of the agreement is to focus on collaborative activities by harnessing the strengths of the two national institutions for bringing better good governance mechanisms into prac-

tice across all programmes and schemes. Both the institutions agreed to exchange knowhow and take up capacity building of functionaries at all levels of government, including Panchayat Raj institutions.

Many key mutual areas of interest were identified as actionable points, including benchmarking of good governance index at the local body level, enhancing state capacities on SDGs, leveraging e-governance at the panchayat level, documenting good governance models at the panchayat level, simplification of forms and so on. The MoU will help not only in the appli-

cation of good governance principles in the true spirit but will also ensure their effective implementation in terms of transparency and accountability in the utilisation of public funds in the intended manner for delivering services to rural communities.

The MoU was signed online by Dr G. Narendra Kumar, IAS, Director General (NIRD-PR) and V. Srinivas, IAS, Director General (NCGG), and officials Shashi Bhushan, the Deputy Director General, Dr Partha Pratim Sahu and Dr Srikanth, NIRDPR faculty and Prof. Poonam Singh, Dr AP Singh and Dr B.S. Bisht from NCGG.

Banned manja kills one and leaves one injured in Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The banned Chinese manja killed one man and while one survived apart from leaving injuries for several birds in Hyderabad. A 22-year-old male patient in a life and death condition due to a deep cut in the neck suffered from kite manja thread, was successfully treated by Apollo Hospitals, Hyderabad. The patient Ayaan, was profusely bleeding from neck when brought to the emergency room of the Hospital. He was rushed to the operation theatre without losing time. He seemed pale and had an

abnormally rapid heart rate with reasonable blood pressure. The injury was intense and had severed several blood vessels including external jugular, thyroid gland and neck muscles. The windpipe too had a cut but the injury didn't protrude deep inside air way. Considering the extensive internal injuries, any delay in his arrival and performing of the surgery would have proved fatal.

Dr K Venkat Reddy, Senior Consultant & Chief Cardiac Surgeon; and team of specialist surgeons; sutured the vessels quickly and stopped the severe bleeding, later neck

muscles were approximated and helped stabilize the patient. Later skin and the subcutaneous tissues were approximated and the patient was shifted to ICU care. Patient has since recovered, is conscious, coherent, hemodynamically stable and started taking soft diet in ICU. It may be mentioned here that in another incident a man riding a bike in Hyderabad on Saturday, January 15, died after his throat was slashed by manja (rope) hanging from a tree. Bheemaiah, (39), who worked as a labourer, was riding on his bike with his wife when the incident happened.



Banned manja kills one and deeply injured one in Telangana

City to hold E-racing, first in the country

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

IT and Industries Minister K T Rama Rao, on Monday, inked a pact with Formula-E team and the event promoter Greenko, making Telangana the first state in the country to hold the race.

FIA Formula E Chief Championship Officer Alberto Longo, Greenko Group Chief Executive Officer Anil Chalamasetty, Mahindra Racing CEO and Team Principal Dilbagh Gill and other officials were present at the programme.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister termed the pact as a beginning for the new era and said that the Telangana government is providing high-class facilities for the interna-

tional firms. "It is a right step taken by the team to host the race in Hyderabad which is also a hub for electric vehicles. The development is a perfect combination of future technology and sustainability," he said. Rama Rao further said that he was elated to launch the Formula-E racing in Hyderabad. "In the coming days, Hyderabad will be the host for E-race," the minister added. The E-racing court will come into existence for about 2.37 kilometres around Secretariat, Telugu Thalli flyover, Hussain Sagar. "The state government plans to promote awareness around EVs and encourage innovation by hosting an EV summit parallel to the Formula E championship," he said.

Seat allotment for LLB and LLM courses

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Lawcet convener Prof P Ramesh Babu announced that second and final phase of seat allotments for LLB - 3 Years, LLB - 5 years and LLM courses have been released on Monday. The convener mentioned in the press note the total number of seats available under convener quota for LLB - 3/5 years and LLM courses for second and final phase is 2,896. Number of candidates who exercised web options was 8,347, out of which 2,292 students were allotted seats in the second and final phases of counselling. The convener stated that the students have to download a joining letter, Challan form for payment of tuition fee (if applicable).

Teachers, lecturers continue stir, demand scrapping of GO 317

Several teachers tried to agitate near BRK Bhavan, Pragati Bhavan, and DSE

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Government teachers, lecturers and employees continue their agitations in Hyderabad with the demand to scrap the controversial GO No. 317. They allege that the GO comprises several discrepancies and the process adopted by Telangana government for transfer is creating numerous problems to teachers and lecturers. Scientific methods were not being adopted in deciding zonal and multi-zonal system in transfers, the teachers say. They demand that a new GO be issued for transfers replacing the GO No. 317. As part of agitation, teachers, headmasters and lecturers tried to lay siege Burgula Rama Krishnarao (BRK) Bhavan (present secretariat) here on Monday. However, police personnel took them into custody and shifted them Saifabad police station. They also held agitations at Pragati Bhavan and at the office of Director of School Education on the day in support of their demand. There were irregularities in allocating 40 headmasters of Sangareddy district to multi-



zone. And injustice has been done to the headmasters, they say. The government has been carrying out multi-zonal allocations without following any systematic procedures, the leaders regret. "The officials claim that transfers are being done as per guidelines from General Administration Department. But in reality, the transfers are being done without following any guidelines, the teachers complain before media persons at

BRK Bhavan. It may be noted that several teachers tried to lay siege Pragati Bhavan on Saturday and agitated at BRK Bhavan on Monday. So, as a precautionary measure, Police made elaborate security arrangements at Pragati Bhavan on Monday to prevent any agitations. But, scores of teachers, including women, rushed towards Pragati Bhavan in the afternoon. The police stopped them and shifted them to police

station. Meanwhile, several teachers tried to stage dharna at the office of Director of School Education (DSE) at Telephone Bhavan. When they tried to enter the office, they were stopped by the police. Teachers and lecturers demanded that a decision be taken at the Cabinet meeting to scrap the GO No. 317. They also demanded that the spouse issues of transfers in 13 districts be settled at the earliest.

Man killed in road crash



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A delivery executive, working for an e-commerce service died after his bike lost control and crashed into the road median near the Miyapur metro station on Sunday night. The victim was identified as R.Durga Prasad (37) from Prajaya City in Miyapur and a native of Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh.

According to the police, the incident occurred around 11 pm, when Durga Prasad was proceeding from Kukatpally towards Miyapur on his motorcycle. On approaching metro station pillar no.631, Durga Prasad who was driving quite speed, lost control of the motorcycle and crashed into the road median near the Miyapur metro station.

"He lost control of the bike and fell on the road. He suffered grievous bleeding injuries on the head and died on the spot," said an official. Passersby who noticed the accident stopped and rushed to his rescue, but in vain as he had died by then.

Based on a complaint from Durga Prasad's father Naga Kumar, the Miyapur police booked a case and took up investigation.

Warangal bags 10th rank among smart cities

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Warangal has secured the 10th position among smart cities selected in the 'Nurturing Neighbourhood Challenge' category. The Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry announced the top 10 smart cities on Monday in the challenge. The Smart Cities Mission, an initiative spread over three years, is aimed at making urban spaces friendly for the 0-5 age group. It was done in collaboration with the Bernard Von



Leer Foundation (BvLF) and the World Resources Institute (WRI). The finalists were selected after a comprehensive evaluation by a

jury from MoHUA, BvLF, and independent experts in urban design and early childhood development.

Telangana Special Chief Secretary Arvind Kumar congratulated GWMC and said, "The cities will scale up infant, toddler, caregiver friendly neighborhood interventions." Warangal improved play spaces in an Anganwadi and provided safer access to it by improving pedestrian infrastructure along streets and junctions in the area.

New variant casts its shadow on education

DUGAM SRINIVAS
HYDERABAD

Earlier Covid-19 and now, new variant of Omicron have applied brakes on class room teaching, casting its shadow on the sphere of education.

The government has been forced to close down educational institutions to protect children from the virus threat. As a result, there was a temporary break in the classroom teaching. The primary education has been kept out of bounds for children for the past two years. Those who turned three years, in 2020,



have been kept waiting to enrol in schools. They are growing older without having to go to schools. What would be the possible impact of this on the future generation could not be

immediately known. As the Delta variant showed let up in the country and educational institutions have resumed classroom teaching, children are slowly coming to schools. But,

the Omicron variant has forced extension of summer holidays further.

Enrolment of students in private schools has begun, but their enrolment in government schools has been delayed pouring cold water on the aspirations of the parents of poor children. The condition of students of primary and secondary classes has worsened further. Though online classes are conducted by private schools, the attention being paid by teachers and students to these classes, compared to physical classes, is somewhat less. The primary class stu-

dents have almost forgotten education. Moreover, poor students of Government schools have no laptops, mobile phones and TVs to tune to online classes. Because of lack of equipment, 70 per cent of the students could not attend online classes, casting shadow on the education of the students. The adverse impact of Covid on Intermediate students, which is very important in one's career, is more. If they did not get proper training, their career would be in jeopardy, feel the academicians who insist that the physical classes should be made compulsory.



BACK TO HYDERABAD

Secunderabad Railway Station - People returning to city from their native places after celebrating Sankranti festival

Complete all works by month-end: Ministers to MPs, MLAs & ZP heads

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Panchayat Raj Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao and Agriculture Minister S Niranjan Reddy and Excise Minister Dr V Srinivas Goud have called upon the MPs, MLAs, ZP chairmen, ZPTCs and Sarpanches to take upon them the responsibility to develop the backward Mahabubnagar district.

Reviewing the progress of the district with elected people's representatives and officials at Mission Bhagiradha Conference hall here on Tuesday, they said that the works suggested by the elected people's representatives and clearance of the pending bills should not be neglected under any circumstances. All works under progress should be concluded by Jan-end, they added.

Errabelli asked officials to use NREGS funds for construction of panchayat buildings and desilting of canals. He told them to execute as many works as possible before March this year. He said that he would act as per the CM's instructions on the use of SC-ST sub-plan funds for development of newly created tribal village panchayats and SC reserved village panchayats. Village sec-



Ministers Errabelli Dayakar Rao, S Niranjan Reddy and V Srinivas Goud at a review meeting in Mahabubnagar on Monday

retaries' activities are being geo-tagged. Therefore, the secretaries and officials should work with alertness.

The Centre has declared all villages in Telangana to be developed as model villages. This rare feat has been achieved because of the Palle Pragati and Pattana Pragati programmes implemented in the state by the CM, he said.

The panchayats earned Rs 300 crore by turning garbage into bio-compost, he said.

Niranjan Reddy directed the officials to desilt irrigation canals and build in-fall regulators to Kalwakurthy LI Scheme pump house, as directed by the CM earlier. Top priority should be given to desilting of main canals, distributaries, minor canals. He suggested increasing the number of field employees in the agencies concerned to resolve the problems immediately. The CC roads damaged due to laying of the Mission Bhagiradha pipelines should be

repaired immediately, he told the officials. He also asked them to step up the pace of execution of roads under the PMGSY. A special drive should be implemented in undivided Mahabubnagar and Hyderabad districts for development of roads and drainages, solving drinking water and power problems in SC and ST Colonies Minister Srinivas Goud sought Koil Sagar Project waters to meet the drinking water needs of the people as

The panchayats earned Rs 300 crore by turning garbage into bio-compost, he said. Niranjan Reddy directed the officials to desilt irrigation canals and build in-fall regulators to Kalwakurthy LI Scheme pump house, as directed by the CM earlier. Top priority should be given to desilting of main canals, distributaries, minor canals.

directed by KCR earlier. A water tank has been built near Mannem Konda.

MP M Srinivas reddy, MLCs K Damodar Reddy, K Narayana Reddy, PV Vani Devi, MLAs Lakshma Reddy, G Balaraju, Maheswar Reddy, Chittam Rammohan Reddy, panchayat raj commissioner Sarat, Panchayat Raj ENC Sanjivarao, Mission Bhagiradha ENC Krupakar Reddy, SEs, EEs of concerned government departments, district panchayat officers and others took part in the meeting.



Congress MLA D Sridhar Babu inspecting damaged chilli crop at Mahadevpur in Jayashankar Bhupalapally district on Monday

MIRCHI CROP DAMAGE

Ex-Minister demands compensation to farmers

PNS ■ JAYASHANKER BHUPALAPALLY

Manthani MLA and former minister D Sridhar Babu demanded the state government to pay compensation to the Mirchi farmers who have lost their crops due to recent unseasonal rains.

Sridhar Babu spoke to Agriculture Minister Niranjan Reddy over the phone and stated that the district has been receiving unseasonal rains for the past four days and Mirchi farmers in Malhar, Mahamu ttaram, Kataram, and Mahadevpur mandals

In addition to unseasonal rains, the mirchi crop was also damaged due to crop diseases

have incurred heavy losses due to damages to their Mirchi crop. In addition to unseasonal rains, the Mirchi crop was also damaged due to crop diseases, he said. Manthani MLA inspected the damaged Mirchi crop in the mandals on Monday and

interacted with the farmers.

Sridhar Babu spoke to Minister over the phone and explained the damage caused to Mirchi crop in the mandals and also the problems being faced by the farmers. He asked the Minister to take steps to conduct a survey by officials to estimate the quantum of losses being incurred by farmers due to the mirchi crop damage in several villages in the mandals. He demanded the Minister an assurance to pay compensation to the mirchi farmers who had incurred losses due to crop damage.

Collector, MLA direct officials to speed up civic works

PNS ■ NALGONDA

District Collector Prashant Jeevan Patil on Monday directed the authorities to prepare estimates for civic works in Halia and Nandikonda municipalities. The District Collector along with local MLA Nomula Bhagath and MLC Koti Reddy visited Halia and Nandikonda

Municipalities and interacted with the officials. The MLA wanted a mini tank bund to be constructed along the Sagar left canal. As part of the project, Telangana Thalli statue, seating for tourists, and a walking track should also be constructed. He also urged the Collector to ensure that an integrated vegetable and non-vegetable market stadium is built. He wanted a degree college to be built near the proposed mini



District Collector Prashant Jeevan Patil interacting with officials at Halia in Nalgonda district on Monday

tank bund. Later, the Collector visited Nandikonda Municipality and reviewed the progress of civic works. He stressed the need to speed up developmental works. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao instructed the district admin-

istration to take steps for As part of the development of Nandikonda Municipality, the Collector asked the engineers concerned to prepare proposals for cement roads, drainage works, a park in the bus station area, town hall

and library. The Municipal Commissioner was directed to expedite the construction work of the vegetable and non-vegetable market.

Bhagat said Minister for Municipal and Urban Development K Tarakarama Rao is scheduled to Nagarju nasagar constituency soon.

Additional Collector Rahul Sharma, Miryalaguda Revenue Divisional Officer Rohit Singh, TUFIDC (Public Health) Superintending Engineer Kandukuri Venkateshwarlu, Public Health Superintending Engineer P Venkateshwarlu, Satya Narayana, RW SE K Suresh, Nandikonda Municipal Commissioner Ravinder Reddy, Haliya Municipal Commissioner Vemareddy and others were present.

Five youngsters meet with watery grave

PNS ■ SURYAPET/MANCHERIAL

Five youngsters met with the watery grave in two separate incidents in the State on Monday. Two youth, according to police, drowned in the River Krishna at Adluru under Chinthalapalem mandal in Suryapet district. The tragedy occurred when Gopi and Chandrasekhar, who hailed from Adluru village, went fishing on a small boat on Monday morning. They were washed away by strong currents.

The police deployed swimmers to retrieve the bodies.

Meanwhile, three students drowned in Pranahita when they went for swimming in the tributary of Godavari river at Alugamma village under Kotapalli mandal in Mancherial district.

Don't delay medical college at Ramagundam

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLY

Ramagundam MLA Korukanti Chander has said that the mortuary in the Area Hospital here has been posing problems and hence it would be relocated elsewhere. Besides, a compound wall would be constructed to the hospital.

Participating in the Area Hospital Development Committee meeting held here on Monday, he said that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao sanctioned medical college for the coal belt area to extend the most modern medical and health facilities to the poor and middle classes.

The SCCL management allocated Rs 500 crore for the construction of the hospital. The health commissioner Ramesh Reddy allotted principal, vice-

principal, professors, 20 specialist doctors, 114 staff nurses to the medical college. The hospital would have 330 beds and would be ready soon.

The CM KCR, health minister T Harish Rao, Welfare Minister Koppula Eswar have been reviewing the progress from time to time. The medical college would be ready as early as possible, he said.

SCCL children would have reservation in medical college seats, besides the college addressing the unemployment problem to an extent. Temporary arrangements are being made for students to be admitted in academic year 2022-23. Once the college building is ready with all amenities, the medical and nursing colleges would be relocated to their own premises. The MLA has warned

the officials that he will not tolerate any delay in execution of the construction of the college building. The CM sanctioned the medical college to Ramagundam - the eighth in the state - with a lot of love for the people of the region.

Therefore, he said that there should be no compromise on the quality of the construction, he cautioned the officials.

The college should be completed as per schedule with all state-of-the-art amenities. City Mayor Bangi Anil Kumar, ZPTC Amula Narayana, corporators Saganti Sankar, Balraj Kumar, hospital in-charge Dr Bheeshma, college professors, R and B engineers, TSIC representatives, revenue employees and hospital development committee members and others took part in the meeting.

MLA promises free medical camps

PNS ■ JAYASHANKER BHUPALAPALLY

Manthani MLA Sridhar Babu stated that he will strive to conduct medical camps for health-check up to all the people in his constituency which has spread in two districts of Jayasankar Bhupalpally and Peddapalli. He said that he had already discussed with Epic fusion Healthcare Solutions company which belongs to his friends and free medical camps will be held for the benefit of people in his constituency. Sridhar Babu inaugurated a free medical camp at his village Duvvada in the district on Monday which was organised under the supervision of Epicfusion Healthcare Solutions Company. Free medical camps will be held in the remote villages which do not

He said that he had already discussed with Epic fusion Healthcare Solutions company which belongs to his friends and free medical camps will be held for the benefit of people in his constituency

have medical facilities and the health profiles of patients will be prepared. Depending on the necessity, tests would be conducted and medicines and other help would be given to the needy patients, the Ex-Minister said. He urged the people to make use of the free medical camps.



Additional District Collector Rajarshi Shah releasing The Pioneer calendar in Sangareddy on Monday

Addl Collector extends best wishes to The Pioneer

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

Sangareddy Additional Collector Rajarshi Shah on Monday lauded The Pioneer, an English newspaper, for being committed to ethical practices in journalism. The newspaper is delivering valuable news, he said. While releasing The Pioneer Calendar, the Additional Collector suggested that the newspapers help the people get the benefit of the

government's welfare schemes. They also should bring to the notice of the officials the lapses in delivery of benefits of the schemes to the people, he said. He wished The Pioneer the greater success in the coming years.

District Public Relations Officer Vijayalakshmi expressed happiness over the unveiling of The Pioneer calendar. She extended her best wishes to The Pioneer management.

MLAs laud 'The Pioneer' for highlighting people's problems

PNS ■ JAYASHANKER BHUPALAPALLY

Manthani MLA Sridhar Babu and Bhupalapally MLA Gandra Venkataramana Reddy have lauded that The Pioneer English daily has been striving to highlight problems being faced by the people. Several issues which have been pending for many years in Telangana were settled as they were highlighted by the newspaper, they said. Gandra Venkata ramana Reddy released New Year calendar brought out by The Pioneer in Bhupalapally on Monday. Similarly, Sridhar Babu released the calendar of the English daily at his village Duvvada on the day. "The newspaper has been publishing outstanding



MLA Gandra Venkatramana Reddy unveiling The Pioneer calendar in Bhupalapally on Monday

news reports and stories regularly and thus it has become favorite newspaper among students, educated persons, officials, and politicians," the MLAs said. The newspaper has been striving to bring awareness among people by explaining several welfare schemes being implemented by the

state government. "It has been publishing analytical news stories so that officials can understand the people's problems," they lauded and wished that the newspaper attain more achievements in the future. Several leaders and officials participated in the programmes held separately.

Faction fight erupts in Cong

PNS ■ NALGONDA

A tussle has broken out in the open between two factions in the Congress in Miryalaguda city. It has led to the building up of tension in the city. The party activists in both factions raised slogans against each other in the presence of the former minister and senior Congress leader K Jana Reddy and former TPCC president and MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy. The conflict between the two groups broke out in the open during the review meeting on party, membership drive at Miryalaguda on Monday. Trouble began when Congress party floor leader in Municipal council B Lakshma Reddy was invited on to the stage to speak. Lakshma Reddy's followers questioned the party leaders why their leader's photo was not printed on the Flexi. Followers of Lakshma Reddy and District Congress Committee president Shankarnayak raised slogans against each other.

BJP & TRS blamed for not getting rly projects

PNS ■ WARANGAL

CPI state executive member Takkallapalli Srinivasa Rao alleged that Government at the Centre and TRS government in the state have not been showing interest to get Railway Coach Factory in Khazipet and other railway projects in the state.

CPI organised a party meeting at Khazipet Mandal of Hanumakonda district on Monday which was presided over by Bottu Bikshapathi. Srinivasa Rao was the chief guest at the and addressed the meeting. He said that the BJP government at the Centre and TRS government in the state have been misleading the peo-



ple of Telangana by playing hide-and-seek game with regard to Railway Coach Factory in Khazipet and other projects.

The parties have been blaming each other for their failure to get the factory, he said.

"The TRS government claims that it had allocated necessary land for establishing coach factory and the Centre was not sanctioning funds," he said and added that the issue has been pending for many years. He pointed out that several of the

'The parties have been blaming each other for their failure to get the coach factory and other railway projects'

promises made during state-bifurcation were not fulfilled by the Centre. The state government also failed to get clearances for several railway projects and due to this great injustice has been done to Warangal district, he alleged.

He urged the people of the district not to be misled by the

BJP and TRS parties in connection with the projects. He demanded the government to establish industries in the district to provide job opportunities to the youth. He also urged the government to provide house site pattas and construct double bedroom houses to the poor. People should stage agitations against the Centre and state governments for the frequent increase in prices of petrol, diesel, cooking gas, and other essentials, he said. CPI district secretary Mekala Ravi, state executive member Nedururi Jyothi, district joint secretary Karre Bikshapathi, leader Thota Bikshapathi, and others participated in the meeting.

Warangal Mayor tests positive for Covid-19



PNS ■ WARANGAL

Mayor Gundu Sudharani tested positive for Covid-19 on Monday. The Mayor, in a statement here, revealed that she had tested positive for Covid-19. She said she was now in isolation on the advice of the doctors. She appealed to people not to come to meet her.

Special drive launched to demolish illegal constructions

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJIGIRI

The Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) officials, on Monday, launched special drive to demolish illegal constructions within its limits in the district. The demolition drive was taken up with the cooperation of District Task Force, Municipal and Police officials. On the first day, as many as 10 illegal constructions were demolished by the squads.

It may be noted that HMDA Commissioner Aravind Kumar had

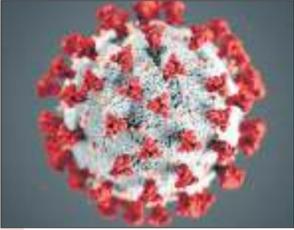
arranged four teams for the demolition task. The teams made field surveys for four days and submitted report to higher officials. Based on the report, the HMDA officials, along with Task Force officials, launched the special drive. In the first phase, demolition works started at 10 constructions with more than 600 sq yards.

HMDA directors, planning officials, HMDA enforcement officials, District Task Force teams, local Municipal Commissioners and police officials participated in the demolition works.

INDIA CORNER

100% state-run school students have received COVID jabs: TN govt

The government has completed 100 per cent, the first dose of vaccination against COVID for state-run school students of 15-18 years of age, Tamil Nadu Health Minister Ma Subramanian said here on Monday. As far as government schools in Tamil Nadu are concerned, the vaccination for students in the 15 to 18 age group was inaugurated by Chief Minister M K Stalin here on January 3, the Minister said. Since that drive was launched in Tamil Nadu on the very same day it was rolled out by the Centre, the government has now completed inoculation for teenage students 100 per cent as regards state-run schools, the Minister told reporters. In private schools and other institutions like the polytechnic colleges, students of that age group are being vaccinated continuously, he noted. In total, 76 per cent students in the 15-18 age bracket have been vaccinated in Tamil Nadu (first dose) and it is a matter of big satisfaction, he said.



Daily virus cases in Russia double as Omicron spreads

Russian authorities on Monday reported a sharp spike in new coronavirus cases, apparently driven by the rapid spread of the omicron variant health officials warned about last week. The country's state coronavirus task force registered 30,726 new infections over the last 24 hours, which is twice as many as 15,830 just a week ago and the highest daily tally since early December. The task force has also reported 670 deaths. The omicron variant spreads much more easily than other coronavirus strains, and has already become dominant in many countries. It also more easily infects those who have been vaccinated or had previously been infected by prior versions of the virus. However, early studies show omicron is less likely to cause severe illness than the previous delta variant. Infections in Russia steadily climbed all of last week, and officials sounded the alarm about a looming surge of cases driven by omicron's rapid spread.



Delhi's skill varsity begins prelims for National Environment Youth Parliament

The Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University (DSEU) has begun the prelims for the National Environment Youth Parliament 2022 - "Nurturing Environment Leaders" is being organised by Paryavaran Sanrakshan Gatvidhi (PSG) amongst universities across the country to sensitise the youth about the prevailing environmental problems posing a serious threat to the safety and welfare of humans. "Now that the discussion on environmental concerns has begun amongst our students, our aim is to ensure that we continue on this path and encourage our students to solve the most complex problems of the 21st century and find a way to create a sustainable future," said DSEU Vice Chancellor Neharika Vohra. The National Environment Youth Parliament 2022 will be organised at three levels - university level, regional and zonal level, and national level.



Largest flypast with 75 aircraft on Republic Day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Republic Day parade at the Rajpath this year will see the "grandest and largest" flypast ever with the participation of 75 aircraft to mark the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations, an IAF official said on Monday.

The flypast will conclude with seven jaguar fighter aircraft flying in the 'Amrit' formation to commemorate the 75 years of Independence.

"The flypast this year will be the grandest and largest with 75 aircraft from IAF, Army and Navy flying during the Republic Day parade. This is in line with the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations," IAF PRO Wing Commander Indranil Nandi said at a press briefing.



"The flypast will include 'Tangail' formation which will have one Dakota and two Dornier flying in Vic formation. This is a tribute to the Tangail airdrop operations of the 1971 War. There will also be Meghna formation of 1 Chinook and four Mi-17s," he said. The flypast will begin with

the 'Dhwaj' formation with four Mi-17 aircraft, followed by 'Rudra' and 'Rahat' formations with four and five Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH), respectively.

Among the other aircraft that will display their might at the parade are Rafale, Indian Navy's MiG29K, P-81 surveillance aircraft and Jaguar fighter jets.

The Indian Air force also unveiled its tableau for the Republic Day celebrations, with assets like Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) armed with AT Dhruvastra missile, Ashlesha Mk1 radar, Gnat, Rafale, MIG 21 on display. Given the COVID-19 situation in the national capital, approximately 24,000 people will be permitted to attend the Republic Day parade on January 26 this year.

In 2020, before the pandemic struck India, around 1.25 lakh people were permitted to attend the parade, they noted.

Last year's Republic Day parade took place amid the pandemic and close to 25,000 people were allowed to attend it, sources mentioned

Disappointed over rejection of TN tableau for Republic

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Monday expressed disappointment over the Centre's rejection of the State Tableau for the Republic Day celebrations in the national capital and sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's immediate intervention to have it included.

Excluding the tableau would deeply hurt the sentiments and patriotic feelings of the people of Tamil Nadu, he said. "That the expert committee chooses to ignore and reject all the seven designs shown to it as per the modifications suggested by its members is unacceptable," the Chief Minister said.

"I am given to understand that Tamil Nadu was not called for the fourth round of meeting and it was informed that Tamil Nadu has been left out while shortlisting," Stalin claimed in the letter addressed to the Prime



Minister, a copy of which was made available to the media here.

Stating that this was a "matter of grave concern to Tamil Nadu and its people," he sought the PM's "urgent intervention to arrange to include the tableau of Tamil Nadu" that will showcase the freedom fighters of Tamil Nadu in the Republic Day parade 2022 in New Delhi.

Expressing "disappointment" to know that Tamil Nadu has been deprived of the opportunity to participate in the ensu-

ing Republic Day parade on January 26 in New Delhi, he said the Defence Ministry had proposed 'India @ 75 Freedom Struggle, Ideas @ 75, Achievements @ 75, Actions @ 75, & Resolve @ 75' as the theme of the tableaux for Republic Day Parade, 2022.

Accordingly, Tamil Nadu submitted sketches choosing the theme "Tamil Nadu in the Freedom Struggle" depicting the renowned freedom fighters from Tamil Nadu.

The State representatives appeared before the expert committee for tableaux selection thrice. In the first meeting, the expert committee expressed satisfaction about Tamil Nadu's theme which depicted freedom fighters of Tamil Nadu during the British Raj at the front and during the East India company's period at the rear of the tableau, he said.

Environmentalist M K Prasad passes away

PNS ■ KOCHI

Noted environmentalist Prof M K Prasad, a prominent figure in the historic grassroot level movement to save the evergreen tropical rain forests in Kerala's Silent Valley from destruction, passed away on Monday morning, his colleagues said here.

He breathed his last at a private hospital here while undergoing treatment for Covid related complications, they said.

Prasad, 89, is survived by his wife and two children. His cremation was held at a crematorium in Raviapuram here.

An all-time source of energy for environmental activists, Prasad gave effective leadership to a progressive people's science movement called "Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishath" (KSSP).

SP promises MSP for every crop, free irrigation, cane arrear in 15 days

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav Monday made several promises to the farmers of Uttar Pradesh including MSP for every crop, free irrigation facilities, payment of arrears to cane-growers in 15 days, interest-free loans, and insurance and pension.

Yadav also said that cases lodged against farmers during their agitation against the now-repealed farm laws would be withdrawn, and the families of farmers who died during the protest would be given Rs 25 lakh each.

Speaking to the media here, the SP supremo said all these



promises would be part of the party's election manifesto for the assembly elections in the state.

He said a special 'Farmers Revolving Fund' would be created, if needed, to ensure the payment of arrears to sugarcane farmers in 15 days.

Before announcing the blueprint, the SP chief took an "Anna Sankalp" (food commitment) to express his firm resolve for the welfare of the farmers in the state.

He said the party has already vowed to provide 300 units of electricity to everybody. The Samajwadi Party, which has entered into an alliance with the Rashtriya Lok Dal, is trying to cash in on the recent farmers' agitation.

The western Uttar Pradesh, from where many farmers had participated in the stir against the agri-marketing laws on Delhi borders, is scheduled to vote in the first phase of voting on February 10.

Time to revisit Inter-state River Water Act: Bommai

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Monday said the time has come to revisit the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act as it creates more disputes than resolving them.

The Chief Minister spoke virtually at the inaugural of the 'PM Gati Shakti' southern zone conference chaired by Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari.

"There are some legal interventions that are necessary. Delay is the most costly affair which has been affecting our infrastructure. The delay in our irrigation projects are bogged down by the Inter-

State Water Disputes Act. In fact, it creates more disputes than resolving them," Bommai said.

He said the time has come to revisit the legislation and see to it that the multifold levels of addressing the inter-state water disputes are removed at one single stage.

"Especially on the basis of maximum utility of a river basin capacity and using technology, and giving away all political considerations, a win-win situation for all riparian states can be the solution. Let us start thinking anew on that. The structure and content in resolving these issues has to be re-addressed by the Government of India, he added.

International Film Fest of Kerala postponed

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The 26th International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) has been postponed in the wake of surging COVID-19 cases, State Cultural Minister Saji Cherian said.

The festival was scheduled to be held here from February 4 to 11.

He said the IFFK will be held after bringing the COVID situation under control.

The new date will be announced later, the minister said in a Facebook post.

The southern state has been witnessing a sharp spike in the COVID-19 cases for the past one week.

SC asks DMs to involve SJPUs, DLSA, voluntary organisations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Monday directed all the District Magistrates to involve Special Juvenile Police Units (SJPU), District Legal Service Authority (DLSA), and voluntary organisations in the identification and rehabilitation of children in street situations, adversely hit by COVID-19 pandemic, without any further delay.

A bench comprising Justices L Nageswara Rao and B V Nagarathna said the problem for these children in street situations would be in an aggravated form in winters and immediate steps should be taken by the states and Union Territories to shift them to shelter homes.

"As the implementation of directions issued by this court on earlier occasions relating to identification and rehabilitation does not brook further delay, we direct all DMs to involve DLSA and voluntary organisations in the identification of children on streets without any further delay. The DMs are also directed to upload the information at all stages on the web portal of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (Baal Swaraj)," the bench said.

The top court, hearing a suo motu case about the children who are adversely affected by the pandemic by losing either one or both the parents, also

directed the states with the guidance of NCCPCR to formulate a policy for rehabilitation after they have been identified and asked them to file a status report within three weeks.

It also directed the states and UTs to instruct concerned authorities not to delay the identification and rehabilitation of children.

At the outset, Additional Solicitor General K M Nataraj, appearing for NCCPCR, submitted that many states have not uploaded the details of children in street situations on the Baal Swaraj Portal.

Concerning Delhi, the apex court noted that while earlier 70,000 children were identified, the AAP government has now them to shelter homes. 428 children.

"This is not a normal case. The problem would be in an aggravated form for these children in street situations. There are children who don't have anybody to take care of them. The condition of children would become worse in northern parts of the country.

"Just imagine how they are surviving on the streets. You have to immediately shift them to 'rain basera', shelter homes. This is your duty. We need not tell you to keep doing this and that. Act immediately. This one month is very difficult. Let them be removed to a shelter home immediately," the bench said.

'Bulli Bai' case accused used Sikh names in accounts

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Three students arrested in connection with a case pertaining to the 'Bulli Bai' app, which targeted Muslim women, deceptively used names belonging to the Sikh community for their social media accounts with an intention to breach peace in the society and create animosity among religious groups, the Mumbai police told a local court on Monday.

The city police's cyber cell submitted its affidavit before the metropolitan magistrate in suburban Bandra opposing the bail pleas filed by the three accused in the case - Vishal Kumar Jha, Shweta Singh and Mayank Rawat.

Singh (18) and Rawat (21) were arrested by the Mumbai police's cyber cell from Uttarakhand on January 5, while Jha was nabbed from Bengaluru on January 4. All three are currently in judicial custody with Jha and Rawat quarantined in a BMC-run facility after they tested positive for coronavirus.

The court heard the arguments put forth by the accused's advocates and posted the bail applications for further hearing on Tuesday.

The police on Monday sought the court to reject their

bailed, arguing the accused could flee or tamper with evidence in the case.

The cyber cell added that a police team has been sent to the national capital to seek custody of two more persons Niraj Bishnoi, arrested in another Bulli Bai app case lodged by the Delhi police, and one Omkareshwar Thakur, apprehended in the 'Sulli' deals app case.

According to the police's affidavit, Jha, Singh and Rawat were part of several social media groups operating with a specific mindset. The accused were highly active on social media and were posting material which could cause breach of

peace in the society, it said. These accused falsely included names and words from the Sikh community in their Twitter handles and also while posting messages through these social media accounts with an intention to create animosity between two religions, the affidavit maintained.

HC allows re-examination of witnesses in actor sexual assault

PNS ■ KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Monday allowed re-examination of three witnesses and summoned five additional witnesses in the case relating to the sexual assault of an actress in which Malayalam actor Dileep is among the accused.

Justice Kausar Edappagath allowed the state government's appeals and struck down the trial court's orders, declining its pleas to summon several more witnesses and get certified copies of the call detail records of the accused in the actor sexual assault case of 2017.

"The entire exercise of adding additional evidence allowed as per this order shall be completed within ten days from the

date of the receipt of the copy of this order by the court..." the court said.

The director general of prosecution shall see that a new special public prosecutor is deputed or some other alternative arrangement is made to conduct the case on behalf, the court said.

Dileep was represented by advocates Philip T Varghese and Thomas T Varghese.

The trial court, on December 21, had allowed the summoning of the three witnesses and rejected the request for summoning the others.

The prosecution had contended that the lower court was wrong in holding that there was a delay in filing the application seeking the call records and original customer details.

Power sector employees to go on 2-day strike in Feb: AIPEF

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The All India Power Engineers Federation (AIPEF) on Monday said that around 15 lakh power sector employees will go on nationwide strike for two days from February 23 to protest against privatisation.

"National Coordination Committee of Electricity Employees & Engineers (NCCOEEE) has decided to resort to two days nationwide strike along with call given by All India Trade Unions on 23rd and 24th February," an AIPEF statement said. According to the statement, the NCCOEEE has also decided that core committee leaders of NCCOEEE will meet Governor Punjab on February 1 and handover memorandum to

him against privatization of Chandigarh UT Power Department. AIPEF Chairman Shailendra Dubey said that on call of NCCOEEE about 1.5 million power employees & engineers across the country will resort to two days strike on 23rd and 24th February against privatization policies of the central government.

He said that main demands of power sector employees are: withdrawal of Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2021, scrap decision of privatization of profit making power departments of Union Territories Chandigarh, Dadra Nagar Haveli Daman & Diu and Puducherry, Integrate all unbundled power utilities in states like KSEB Ltd in Kerala and HPSEB Ltd in Himachal Pradesh.

Netaji's legacy partly exploited for political reasons: Anita

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday, voicing her "shock" at the rejection of the tableau, which also featured other Bengal icons like Rabindranath Tagore, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and others.

"I have heard about it. I don't know under what circumstances it happened and why the tableau was not included. There might be some reasons. We can't imagine that the Republic Day function in the year when my father would have turned 125 is being held and his tableau was not included, it seems very strange,"

Amid a controversy over the rejection of West Bengal's tableau for the Republic Day parade themed on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his Indian National Army, his daughter Anita Bose-Pfaff said on Monday the legendary freedom fighter's legacy has often been "partly exploited" for political reasons.

She minced no words while acknowledging the fanfare that marked the start of the 125th birth anniversary year celebrations of Bose in 2021 in Kolkata had something to do with the elections in West Bengal.



Bose-Pfaff told PTI in a telephonic interview from Germany where she lives.

"And last year, the opening of the anniversary year was cele-

brated in a bigger way, of all places in Kolkata, (it) had something to do with election and election prospects in Bengal. The fact that nothing happened this year...certainly the issue is not as important as last year," she said.

"Certainly and partly for political reasons," she said while responding to a question about whether the legacy of the national hero was exploited for political purposes.

She, however, proceeded to add that she would not criticise it as politics is about coming across people and communicating. "So if an event like that touches many people, they

would do it," she said. Banerjee, while urging the prime minister to reconsider the decision, said it will cause "pain" to the people of West Bengal. She said no reason was put forth for rejecting the tableau.

Bose-Pfaff, who lauded the BJP government for declassifying files related to Netaji, however, deplored a high-level committee that was formed last year to plan a grand year-long programme to celebrate the 125th birth anniversary of the freedom fighter never even contacted her.

"I am supposed to be a member of that committee, but I have never heard that it has called a meeting... or any written com-

munication. As far as I know, there has been no meeting. For me, it's a non-existent committee," she said.

Bose, who Mahatma Gandhi once referred to as the 'prince among the patriots', was one of the foremost icons of Bengal whose legacy the ruling TMC and challenger BJP had tried to appropriate in the run-up to the assembly elections last year.

Bose-Pfaff once again asked the Government of India to ensure DNA tests are done on the ashes kept at Renkoji temple in Japan that many claim belong to Bose to bring out the truth and resolve the mystery surrounding his end.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Shadowboxing

A section of population feels that the jab drive violates human rights and personal freedom

Strangely, the exit of Novak Djokovic from Australia saw more anti-vaxxers getting angry than tennis fans. An anti-lockdown and anti-vaccine group quickly surfaced in Australia wondering if the tennis great was the "beacon of hope" to lead the fight against vaccination. Such segments of population exist across the world today. To them, it is not a question of an unvaccinated person posing a risk to oneself and family and friends and colleagues. Refusal to vaccinate is for them a political issue, largely the right-wing variety. Western anti-vaxxers link their hesitation to growing distrust in Government institutions and policies. People's frustration has generally mounted since 2020 because of lockdowns and restrictions turning their routines topsy-turvy. Their frustration often extends to vaccination campaigns to control the transmission of the Coronavirus. It is also true, however, that absence of scientific rigour in a few past cases of inoculation has made some Europeans wary of public health programmes. The pro-Djokovic camp in Turkey is an anti-vaccination party that fears vaccination guidelines violate human rights and personal freedom. A party in Austria is gaining popularity for a similar stand. In the United States, the Republicans are against vaccination, in contrast to the Democrats. Some countries like Russia, vexed with the anti-vaccination politics, want to bring in a QR code system to prevent the unvaccinated from accessing public places. France has a Government divided on the issue. President Emmanuel Macron raised a storm by making public his displeasure against the anti-vaxxers.



But his Sports Minister strangely said he would allow an unvaccinated Djokovic to play in the French Open. The vaccination drive is now stuck in a political row. India is not unaffected by the global movement. The opinion is sharply divided on Djokovic's stand. The Indian Government, for the first time, clarified its stand when it told the Supreme Court that "no person can be forced to be vaccinated against their wishes". It will also not make it mandatory to carry vaccination certificates for any purpose. The statement comes in the wake of some States and private businesses wanting to disincentivise people refusing to get vaccinated. To be sure, the unvaccinated are a risk to themselves and others. But one should notice a fundamental difference between the anti-vaxxers in India and the west. The Indians in this group are vaccine-hesitant, not anti-vaccination as such. They are not, as of date, part of a political movement like in Europe. Concerns of safety, side effects, rushed vaccine approvals, quick human trials and scientific scepticism are some of the factors that hold them from taking the vaccine. Hesitancy has reduced where their concerns have been redressed. The sudden onslaught of the highly transmissible Omicron variant made them quickly change their mind about vaccination. The priority is a trust-building national campaign to personally reach out to the unvaccinated. Prefer reason over a rule.

Now, let us examine whether the tribals have a "religion" as described by Kishore Chandra Deo. The concept of dharma is different from religion, as we all know. Even to assume that tribals have no religion is historically wrong. Here, I have just picked a few examples from the Santal segment of the tribal population. Surely, this is true of other tribal societies, too.

All human beings are born without a 'belief system' or religion is true but they embrace the practices, rituals and the overall religio-cultural traits from their parents and the immediate neighbourhood. Like picking up the mother tongue, it happens effortlessly and without any tutoring. One can assert that trib-

PICTALK



Locals look on as workers clear water hyacinth from the Powai lake, in Mumbai

Tribals and their divinity concept

Contrary to perception, tribals in India have a belief system which is no less profound and spiritual than other religions practised in the country



SARADINDU MUKHERJI

Former Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, Kishore Chandra Deo, had in the last week of December 2021 said: "Tribals are not born into any religion and are treated as indigenous entities. Therefore, when certain sections of the Scheduled Tribes choose to practice any religion — say, Christianity or Buddhism in the Northeast, or Islam in places like Lakshadweep, or Hindu, Sikh or any other religion — it is never a case of religious conversion because, since the tribals are not born into a religion, there can't be a case of them converting to a religion." This, incidentally, is the opinion of an important politician who also belongs to the tribal community; this was said in the context of the Karnataka Anti-Conversion Bill.



LM Shrikant, the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, had pointed out on February 21, 1952, in a note that tribals in India have three common features: a) Tribal origin; b) Primitive way of life and habitation in remote and less accessible areas; and, c) general backwardness in all respects. He discovered after extensive travel all over India how the tribals lived in semi-slavish conditions, amidst abysmal poverty. He also noted the harm caused by the Criminal Tribes Act of 1926. In various reports, no one has ever mentioned that tribals lack a 'belief system' or religion.

Now, let us examine whether the tribals have a "religion" as described by Kishore Chandra Deo. The concept of dharma is different from religion, as we all know. Even to assume that tribals have no religion is historically wrong. Here, I have just picked a few examples from the Santal segment of the tribal population. Surely, this is true of other tribal societies, too.

All human beings are born without a 'belief system' or religion is true but they embrace the practices, rituals and the overall religio-cultural traits from their parents and the immediate neighbourhood. Like picking up the mother tongue, it happens effortlessly and without any tutoring. One can assert that trib-

als in India have a belief system which is no less profound and spiritual than other religions/dharma that are practised in India. As Suniti Kumar Chatterjee had pointed out: "All the Austric tribes in India had just a little oral literature, handed down from generation to generation, consisting of their mythological and semi-mythological legends and traditions, and some folk poetry, partly relating to their religious ceremonies ('The Cultural Heritage of India'; Vol 5, p.670)." Chatterjee had further observed: "In Bengal, there is a sizeable Santal population following its own traditional religion, which is in a way akin to Puranic Hinduism. Being within the orbit of Brahmanism, the Santals have been very largely influenced by Hindu notions (p.671)." Chatterjee also complimented Ramdas Majhi Tudu for his *Kherawal-Vamsa* (or *Dharam-puthi* or 'The Sacred Book of the Kherawal race') which contains the traditions of his people "and their religious and social culture" (p.672). He has also referred to Sadhu Ramchand Murmu Thakur, described as a "religious reformer and teacher of the Santal philosophy of religion" (p.673). There is no



THE ORIGINAL 'BELIEF SYSTEM' OF HUMANKIND HAS REVOLVED AROUND NATURE WORSHIP — THE RIVERS, MOON, TREES AND ANCESTOR WORSHIP. ALL THESE ARE IMPORTANT INGREDIENTS IN THE TRIBALS' PERCEPTION OF THE DIVINE

dearth of examples to show how the tribals were never devoid of religion.

The original 'belief system' of humankind has revolved around nature worship — the Sun, the Moon, rivers, mountains, trees and ancestor worship. All these are important ingredients in the tribals' perception of the Divine. Unfortunately, the conventional view of religion is based on a division of humanity into "believers" and "non-believers" where the conquest of "the other" is the *sine qua non*. The belief systems manifest in the Sanatan Dharma, paganism, animism and Shintoism across the continents are what the tribals in India consider sacred.

As Iravati Karve had pointed out, the "cultural compromise" that goes on in India was made possible because it was helped by "polytheism and its logical concomitant — an attitude of tolerance towards other gods, other creeds and other customs". All scholars who have studied India's tribal society — like Nirmal Bose, Ghurye and Kumar Suresh Singh — have also expressed similar views. James Cowan, writing on the aborigines of Australia, had observed that they "represent

the conscience of us all as they recognise and acknowledge at all times the metaphysical origins of the human spirit".

We end this short essay with an anecdote. This was in 1902 at the Belur Math, where Santal labourers used to come for work. Swami Vivekananda liked their company immensely. Not only did he give them meals, he also took care that it was without salt. It happened because he had been told by them that they don't take food that has salt in it or has been touched by others. Swamiji observed: "You are Narayans, God manifest. Today, I have offered food to Narayan." After the Santals had retired for rest after the meal, Swamiji told his disciples that he found the Santals to be a "veritable embodiment of God" (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol 7, p.244-245). Perhaps this incident would prove once again how the tribals are to be judged regarding their 'belief system' and, that too, by one of the greatest Indians of all times and a true Hindu.

(The writer is an academic and historian. A former Member of ICSSR, he is currently Member, the Indian Council of Historical Research. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PT BIRJU MAHARAJ WILL BE MISSED

Sir — Padma Vibhushan awardee and legendary Kathak dancer Brij Mohan Nath Mishra, alias Pandit Birju Maharaj (83), died at his home in Delhi. Though he was best known as a Kathak dancer, he was also a singer par excellence, having command over *thumri*, *dadra*, *bhajan* and *ghazal*. He composed and sang for two sequences in Satyajit Ray's *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* and also choreographed for *Devdas*, received the Filmfare Award for Best Choreography for *Mohe Rang Do Lal* from *Bajirao Mastani*, and was noticed for *Gadar*, *Vishwaroopam* and *Deh Ishqiya*. The versatile Kathak legend was also a superb drummer, playing nearly all drums with ease and precision; he was especially fond of playing the *tabla* and *baal*, besides being a poet and painter.

As per media, Panditji was also a master storyteller; he interlaced his performances with incidents from his life, narrated to captivate the audience. It will be great if some of his disciples carry forward his legacy beyond the heights he himself achieved. Such a great humble personality, Birju Maharaj never ran behind fame and that is the reason everyone has a lot of respect for him. We have lost one of India's biggest traditional dancers of our era. May your soul achieve solace! Heartfelt condolences to his family, fans and disciples.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

BAD NEWS FROM CHINA

Sir — Sir — The companies are bracing for another round of potentially debilitating supply chain disruptions as China, home to about one-third of global manufacturing, imposes sweeping lockdowns in an attempt to keep the Omicron variant under control ahead of the Winter Olympic Games and the Asian Games, 2022. At least 20 million people, or about 1.5 per cent of China's population, are in lockdown, mostly in the city of Xi'an in western China and in the Henan province in north-central China.

The country's zero-tolerance policy has manufacturers — already on edge after spending the last two years dealing

Implement the poll rally ban



The Election Commission has extended the moratorium on open public rallies, except indoor meetings with 300 people or 50 per cent of the hall capacity can be held with COVID protocols. The onus of following the norms shall be on the political parties. The purpose of public rallies is to convince floating/undecided voters to vote for them. But most of the 300 people allowed will be dedicated party workers and the undecided voters will still remain out of reach. However, it is a welcome move by the EC to safeguard public health, which has been prioritised over

campaigning. Extending the ban on political rallies till January 22 would definitely be frustrating for major players and their over-eager candidates.

Contrary to the obvious dejection of the political class, all those citizens who fear mass gatherings would wholeheartedly welcome the EC's decision for no right-thinking person would be happy at the prospect of deterioration in the already scary pandemic situation. Similar to all virus containment measures, effective enforcement of the ban would depend on the due diligence of officials who are entrusted to ensure compliance by the political parties. Unlike in the past, the upcoming elections would test the resilience and efficiency of the EC as the task ahead is not only limited to facilitating smooth transition of power in the five States but also ensuring compliance of all directions related to the poll code.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

with crippling supply chain woes — worried about another round of shutdowns at Chinese factories and ports. Additional disruptions to the global supply chain would come at a fraught moment for companies, which are struggling with rising prices for raw materials and shipping along with extended delivery times and worker shortages. If lockdowns become more widespread, their effect on supply chains could be felt across the United States. And major new disruptions could exacerbate inflation, which is already at a 40-year high.

MR Jayanthi | Mumbai

NEW ISRO CHAIRMAN AT THE HELM

Sir — The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has been blessed with yet another stalwart in space science in the form of S Somnath, who recently assumed charge as its chairman. The timing is crucial as India opens its space sector to private firms and startups to build rockets and satellites for both domestic and global markets. When the privatisa-

tion reforms got underway with the launch of the New Space India Limited (NSIL) in March 2019, ISRO's commercial arm was even more firmly established. Somnath has worked as Director, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC). An alumni of the Indian Institute of Science, he was instrumental in developing India's most powerful rocket, GSVL Mk 3, which can be an asset for our human space mission. He has also worked on the Cryogenic PSLV rocket.

Like the success stories of the Mars Orbiter Mission and Chandrayaan 2 had ignited new hopes and aspirations, his tenure will see the launch of Gaganyaan, the human space flight, considering that India aims to send astronauts into space on its own by 2023. He has its task cut out in terms of increasing the agency's output, especially in the times of the COVID crisis.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Naimital

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

I don't know under what circumstances it happened and why the tableau was not included. There might be some reasons.



Netaji Bose's daughter

—Anita Bose-Pfaff



This (Texas synagogue attack) was, quite simply, a hate crime and an act of anti-Semitism.

British Prime Minister

—Boris Johnson

Looking forward to bringing to the audience the story of India's most beloved *Funkaar*, Kapil Sharma.



Film director

—Mridhdeep Singh Lamba



He (Virat Kohli) told us in a meeting that he will be stepping down from the Test captaincy.

Indian pacer

—Jasprit Bumrah

I assure you that the roads will be smoother than the cheeks of film actress Kangana Ranaut.



Jharkhand Congress MLA

—Dr Irfan Ansari

A curious move

If Punjab poll date can be deferred, why not delay this entire round owing to Omicron?

At the outset, let it be made very clear that this write-up seeks to cast no aspersions on the intent of the Election Commission of India, which is an autonomous body established by the Constitution. If anything, it only tries to assess whether the deferment of the Punjab Assembly election date is a case of double standards or even misplaced priority. The point is pertinent because all the major political parties in the fray in Punjab had in one voice demanded that the election date be put off in view of the Guru Ravi Das Jayanti celebrations, which would be celebrated on February 16. They said a large number of people were expected to move from Punjab to Varanasi



for participating in the celebrations. The Election Commission acquiesced and has postponed the date to February 20. Now, the development spawns a couple of related questions. One, aren't the parties clearly in a game of upmanship here to woo the electorate by showing how much they care for the latter's religious sentiments? And, isn't the poll panel looking like it is playing into their hands rather than diligently fulfilling its constitutional mandate?

Two, is the issue of celebrating Guru Ravi Das Jayanti, or any other religious or community-based festival for that matter, is of bigger importance than the collective health and well-being of our nation's people? Because, admit it or choose to ignore it at your own peril, the truth of the matter as bright as daylight is that the Omicron-led third wave of the pandemic is well and truly upon us. Highly transmissible as this COVID-19 variant is, our population is contracting it left, right and centre, as is evident by the skyrocketing number of the people contracted thus far. Also, by the parties' own admission, lakhs of devotees would travel from Punjab to Varanasi for participating in the celebrations. Isn't it a logical corollary and real and present risk that they could transmit the highly infectious virus to other, unaffected people on their two-way journey? And if the decision has come about for considerations other than a prominent sect's religious sentiments, then why not extend the same yardstick to the other four States too that are going to polls in February and March? After all, by any measure, safety and good health for all citizens take precedence any day over a region- and religion-specific demand, isn't it?



FIRST COLUMN SOCIALISING DIGITAL BRAND COMMUNICATION

Digital avatars and 'phygital' communication are the new drivers



UTTAM CHAKRABORTY SANTOSH K BISWAL

In the wake of technological upgradations, the space of media and communication is getting re-defined. Digital capital, digital representation, leap-frogging, technological determinism and communication revolution are the new buzz words. Narratives of digital marketing communications are changing fast. The advent and proliferation of 5G, increasingly adoption of popular culture and technological determinism have become the new landmarks of brand communication. There is no novelty in digitalizing the brand communication. However, socializing the digital platforms is the fad in the world of brand communication. Digital avatars, 'phygital' and immersive communication are the new explorations which have started influence the world of brands. Digital humanism is the larger talking point. Keeping Metaverse, social commerce and personalisation in their kitties, brand communicators are going to actualize the alternate digital realities in the dominant ecosystem of digital marketing space.



Metaverse espousing the unique digital articulations and communication will eventually shape up the influencer marketing. This new shift taking place in the business world must be reckoned with varied yardsticks. Content creators, brands and advertisers have come forward to capitalize on Metaverse. It is going to retell the narratives of advertising through immersive storytelling. Immersive storytelling through immersive communication is a multichannel, multisensory experience - what you can see and hear. It is non-linear and exploratory in which the audiences are free to interact with whoever they want to interact with or consume content and take full control over it. It is suitable for adding gamification and interaction. The frequency of inventions and upgrades in the technological world for the last few decades enriches the platform of the metaverse and one after one technical organisations eventually incorporate them. It has been observed that metaverse is one of the significant platforms for achieving success in executing the brand strategies.

Brands are now-a-days creating immersive experiences for their consumers. They are hiring metaverse engineering directors and utilising augmented tools to simultaneously collaborate on fashion, entertainment, and gaming innovations. Metaverse also opens up opportunities to involve consumers with the platform. Value creation is one of the key aspects of this platform. Metaverse has attempted to create a new universe of fashion. Fashion is an important aspect for the human for its self-expression and also beneficial for them to create identity like the way in real life. The new virtual digital platforms open the opportunities to experience a newly three-dimensional experience. However, various studies propose that fashion will top the virtual world than the physical world because of the involvement of metaverse in the daily lives of humans.

Digital avatars are the animated or photographic images, that web surfers use to identify themselves and communicate on the online platforms. Avatars tend to enhance the entertainment and information value and improve the overall satisfaction of web-based activities. Digital representation is getting more apparent. Apart from content creation, there is also the facility of interacting live with an audience using an avatar. Studies find that in high-involvement situation, the consumers are more likely to contemplate the content of an argument. That's why, avatar-mediated platform is providing Philip to business, branding and communications. Tellingly, metaverse will influence traditional jobs or activities including business activities. Its impact on human especially human and society in overall will be significant. Immersive, interactive, and collaborative form of communication is going to be next level order.

(Chakraborty and Biswal teach at Jaipuria Institute of Management, Lucknow and Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication, Symbiosis International (Deemed University), Pune, respectively. The views expressed are personal.)

Delink disinvestment & budgetary exercise



UTTAM GUPTA

The lengthy and cumbersome process of approval and bureaucratic red tape undermines the disinvestment process

With the financial year ending in two months, the Government is no close to meeting the target of ₹175,000 crore from disinvestment of Central Public Sector Undertakings set in the Union Budget for 2021-22. It has so far realized less than ₹10,000 crore. Even after adding around ₹100,000 crore, being the expected proceeds from sale of its 10 percent shares in Life Insurance Corporation of India, (on the premise that it goes through before the year-end), there will be a whopping shortfall of ₹65,000 crore. This is not new.

It is a continuation of a trend seen during the previous six years under the Modi dispensation when in all years except during 2017-18 (in that year, the proceeds from disinvestment of a little over ₹100,000 crore were slightly higher than the target; courtesy, sale of its 51.11 percent shareholding in oil downstream CPSU Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited to another CPSU in the upstream segment, ONGC), the collection was far short of the target.

During this period, the Government laid greater emphasis on 'strategic' disinvestment (a sophisticated nomenclature for share sale that reduces its holding in the PSU to below 50 percent). On this front also, the outcome has been disappointing. For instance, during 2015-16, proceeds from sale through this route were 'nil' against budget provision of ₹28,500 crore. For 2016-17, the target itself was reduced from ₹20,500 crore to ₹5,500 crore.

In the following two years, the target for 'strategic' disinvestment could be met largely because of the sale of Government's majority holding in one PSU to another: 51.11 percent shareholding in HPCL to ONGC in 2017-18 and 52.63 percent stake in the Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) to Power Finance Corporation (PFC) in 2018-19. During 2019-20, 100 percent of its shareholding in NEEPCO and 75 percent in THDC India Limited were sold to National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) - another CPSU in the power sector.

These sales can't be termed as strategic as the purchaser being another PSU namely ONGC/PFC/NTPC, the Government continues to have effective ownership and control over the divested entity viz. HPCL/REC/NEEPCO/THDC.

A number of major strategic sales such as Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited or BPCL (53.29 percent); Container Corporation or ConCor (30 percent); Shipping Corporation of India or SCI (63.75 percent) planned during 2019-20 besides Air India or AI (and its subsidiaries) - a carry forward from the previous year - didn't materialize. These sales didn't happen during 2020-21 also. While, AI et al were sold in September, 2021, sale of BPCL/SCI are unlikely to get



IN THE BUDGET FOR 2021-22, THE FINANCE MINISTER ANNOUNCED THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO PRIVATISE ALL CPSUS IN NON-STRATEGIC SECTORS AND UNDERTAKE PRIVATISATION EVEN IN THE STRATEGIC SECTOR WITH A RIDER OF RETAINING AT LEAST ONE UNDERTAKING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR. THESE EFFORTS WILL BEAR FRUIT ONLY WHEN THE PROCESS IS UNSHACKLED FROM BUREAUCRATIC RED TAPE AND BUDGET-MAKING

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



consummated even during the current FY.

An overarching reason as to why the actual proceeds from disinvestment have fallen short of the target has to do with the very premise of treating these as a source of revenue (albeit for plugging fiscal deficit) which is flawed. Unlike tax revenue, which can be projected with a degree of certainty, the same cannot be said about proceeds from disinvestment. In this case, a lot depends on the market scenario and, in particular, the perception of investors about the PSU in which share-sale is contemplated.

In cases, where strategic sale is mooted, the Government faces a bigger challenge as apart from a favorable market, it needs bidders with deep pockets. For instance, in case of BPCL (disinvestment in the oil behemoth was originally planned for 2019-20), it needed a strategic investor who could pay around ₹60,000 crore (prevailing share price multiplied by the number of shares corresponding to 53.29 percent holding).

The lengthy and cumbersome process of approval and bureaucratic red tape further undermines the chances of the Government kicking the ball rolling just around the time when the strategic investors are ready to put in their bets.

The NITI Aayog identifies companies for divestment which are then considered by the Core Group of Secretaries on Divestment (CGD), a long-drawn process by itself, which takes it to the Alternative Mechanism (AM) - a group of ministers including finance, road transport & highways, administrative reforms etc -

for approval. After AM's approval, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) moves proposal for in-principle approval of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA). All put together, strategic divestment involves around 12 steps.

This leads to delay and by the time, all approvals are in place, the market scenario becomes adverse. In case of BPCL, during 2019-20, the international price of crude oil (fortunes of oil companies move in tandem with it) was hovering around \$70 per barrel. But the bureaucrats were not ready. During 2020-21, COVID-19 spoiled the party as the average crude price declined to just about \$40 per barrel (in April 2020, it had plummeted to a low of \$20 per barrel). During the current year, even as the price recovered ruling above \$70 per barrel most of the time, the officials are not ready yet again leading to deferment of its divestment to 2022-23.

In the past, successive governments used PSUs as milch cows to serve their budgetary needs. While, extracting high dividend, special dividend, bonus has been a standard practice, during 2004-2014, the then UPA - regime went a step ahead during the time to extend petroleum subsidies (for instance, ONGC was asked to give discount on crude supplies to Indian Oil Corporation or IOCL, BPCL and HPCL to enable the latter keep the price of diesel, petrol, LPG, and kerosene low; ONGC gave a total discount of over ₹200,000 crore during this period). The same mindset drives them to look for revenue even while divesting shares of these undertakings. The

ball does not stop here.

The official think tank is ever keen that even after completing the strategic sale, the Government remains in the driver's seat. A clear indication of this was given by the FM in her Budget speech for 2019-20. She had stated the intent was to change the existing policy from "directly" holding 51 percent or above in a CPSU, to one where-by its total holding, "direct" plus "indirect", is maintained at 51 percent. Such a signal deters potential investors.

To conclude, the government should delink disinvestment from budgetary exercise. In other words, while projecting its revenue receipt, the Government should not include any contribution from disinvestment proceeds.

For the purpose of executing share sale, it should set up a holding company on the lines of a bank investment company recommended by the RBI committee under P Nayak for public sector banks - where all its shares in the PSUs be vested. The HC to be manned by eminent professionals should be fully empowered and given freedom to take all decisions - in consultation with the management - in regard to valuation, quantum of shares, timing of sale, etc., keeping in mind the market conditions.

In the budget for 2021-22, the finance minister had announced the government's decision to privatize all CPSUs in non-strategic sectors and undertake privatization even in the strategic sector with a rider of retaining at least one undertaking in the public sector. These efforts will bear fruit only when the process is unshackled from bureaucratic red-tape and budget-making.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

I'M HURT BY THE DECISION OF THE GOI TO ABRUPTLY EXCLUDE WEST BENGAL'S PROPOSED TABLEAU WITHOUT ANY REASON.
—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER
MAMATA BANERJEE



THE TMC GOVERNMENT PURPOSELY MAKES SUCH TABLEAUX WHICH GET REJECTED, SO THEY CAN DO POLITICS OVER IT.
—BJP NATIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT
DILIP GHOSH

Readying India for the mammoth vaccination drive

A first-person, behind-the-scenes account straight from the trenches

Score: 156 crore vaccines. Pitch: Pandemic, War: Team Health India vs Covid-19. One year, 156 crore vaccinations. Roughly 42 lakh vaccinations plus daily. The story of the unparalleled journey of an extraordinary achievement of "Team Health India".



MANOHAR AGNANI

Before the world's largest vaccination drive was launched, several experts expressed doubts based on course of their experiences, facts, and hypotheses. Will we be able to make vaccines available as per the nation's needs? Do we possess storage capacities for such huge numbers? Do we have the necessary transport arrangements and trained manpower? It will take too long to ready the manpower to vaccinate such a large population.

(The writer is Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, GoI and Nodal Officer for the COVID-19 vaccination drive. The views expressed are personal.)

ulation. We have not even digitized information on children's vaccination. How will we address vaccine hesitancy among people? How will vaccine reach timely and safely to far flung regions? Who will vaccinate them?

Amid this environment of criticism, "Team Health India" counted on known strengths:

- Decades of running our National Immunization Programme.
- Over 25 years of administering polio drops to almost 10 crore infants.
- Vaccinating over 35 crore children upto age 15 against measles and rubella.
- Experience of storing vaccines in 29,000 cold chain points and sending to far flung areas.
- Monitoring storage and distribution through e-Vin (Electronic Vaccine Intelligence



Network).

Implementing 'Mission Indradhanush' to vaccinate left-out children and expectant mothers.

The most important reason behind this self-confidence was the unshakable conviction of the Prime Minister in the hidden potential of the citizens of our country, which became the greatest strength of "Team Health India".

The team first focused on resolving the doubts raised by the experts. So began an endless marathon of meetings on the vaccination drive. It was exact-

ly a year ago from today, before the launch of the world's largest vaccination drive by the Prime Minister, that we finalized the basic guidelines and completed necessary trainings.

"Team Health India" had the following ready much before January 16, 2021:

- Operational guidelines for Covid vaccination.
- Identified manpower for the drive and training them.
- Systems for transporting vaccines and extra storage capacities.
- Communication strategy for vaccine hesitancy, Covid Appropriate Behaviour.
- The CoWIN platform to enable vaccination in a digitized system.

A dry run was carried out in all States and UTs. The night of January 15 was a night to

remember, with chilling cold and nail-biting suspense to resolve a technical glitch CoWIN faced. Thousands were awake fixing the snag. Being the nodal officer for the National Covid Vaccination Programme, I too was present in the headquarters. I remember feeling like scientists sitting in a command centre about to experience the launch of a space shuttle. Words fail me in describing those moments of anxious anticipation or the deep sense of satisfaction on resolving the glitch. CoWIN was successfully kickstarted on time and we are all witness to the many benefits of the extraordinary Indian digital platform, which has continuously adapted to the evolving requirements of the programme.

This was just the beginning. In the first phase, vaccine avail-

ability was limited, and expectations were many. Rationalized distribution of the limited number of vaccines was a big challenge and criticism was inevitable. "Team Health India" worked on with virtual meetings for hours on end every day with vaccine manufacturers, vaccine transport agencies, storage centres, cold chain points and Covid Vaccination Centres with the singular aim-optimal use of every drop of the vaccine.

Next, imagine how the vaccines reached our remotest corners. Where there were no roads, cycles were used; in the deserts, camels helped; boats carried them across rivers; in the hills, vaccines were carried on backs. People were invited for vaccination with offerings of turmeric rice. For the vaccine hesitant, doors were knocked under 'Har

Ghar Dastak'. All this while, we didn't follow any western model; it bore the unique stamp of India's ingenuity.

The preparations required were enormous and time too little. We kept learning from experiences gathered from the field. In this pursuit, "Team Health India" neglected their personal needs, families, dreams; many even lost their loved ones to Covid. Despite that, there was an indescribable pride "Team Health India" felt in serving the nation in this once-in-a-century crisis. What I saw or write, is just the tip of the iceberg. For "Team Health India", there would be countless such moments of struggle and satisfaction, examples that are symbols of humanitarianism, examples that impart a sense of deep gratitude and hope.

India's economy set to improve over next 12 months: PwC report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's economic growth is all set to improve over the next 12 months despite the coronavirus pandemic-related problems and global headwinds, says the PwC Annual Global CEO Survey. The findings are based on a survey by the global consultancy that covered 4,446 CEOs in 89 countries and territories, including 77 from India, in October and November of 2021.

Despite a variety of headwinds, most notably those related to the ongoing pandemic, CEOs in India are significantly optimistic about the prospects for a stronger economy in the coming year, as per the survey released on Monday.

99 per cent of CEOs in India believe India's economic growth will improve over the next 12 months, with 94 per cent of India CEOs being optimistic about global economic growth improving over the next 12 months as against 77 per cent of global CEOs," it said.



When it comes to the revenue prospects of their own companies, 98 per cent of CEOs are confident about growth during the same time period. While for the most part, CEOs globally are at least as optimistic as they were last year about the prospects for economic growth in 2022, the optimism of India CEOs, up from 88 per cent last year, stands out at 94 per cent. Sanjeev Krishan, Chairman

of PwC in India, said that while Omicron has cast a shadow and CEOs are focused on the health and safety of their employees at the moment, their confidence and optimism over the past one year is a testimony to the resilience of Indian companies. The vigour with which most Indian business leaders took the challenges brought in by the pandemic head on, coupled with the will to emerge stronger

in the face of adversity, has led to sustained growth for businesses in India, he said. "Perhaps owing to the futuristic groundwork done during the difficult times, 97 per cent of India CEOs are confident about their own company's prospects for revenue growth not only in the near term but also over the next three years," he said. Last year, 70 per cent of India CEOs viewed the pandemic as a top

threat to growth while 62 per cent considered cyber threats as an impediment to growth.

This year, 15 per cent of CEOs in India are apprehensive about cyber risks hindering their company's ability to raise capital. "India CEOs also agree that cyber risks could cause severe revenue disruptions, with 64 per cent of respondents fearing a breach could hinder sales of products or services. Besides business disruptions, 47 per cent of chief executives believe cyber threats could impede their ability to develop products and services," the survey said.

Further, it said that among the India companies that participated in the survey, 27 per cent already have a net-zero commitment (22 per cent globally) in place, 40 per cent are in the process of developing and articulating their commitments (29 per cent globally), and only 30 per cent have neither made nor are in the process of making any net-zero commitment (globally 44 per cent).

Budget 2022: FADA seeks GST rate cut on two-wheelers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Automobile dealers' body FADA has urged the government to reduce GST rates on two-wheelers to 18 per cent in order to generate demand in the segment. The Federation of Automobile Dealers Association (FADA), which represents over 15,000 automobile dealers having 26,500 dealerships, noted that two-wheelers are not a luxury item and hence GST rates need to come down.

"FADA requests the Ministry of Finance to regulate and reduce GST rates on two-wheelers to 18 per cent and continue to move our nation to global leadership," the industry body stated on Monday.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Union Budget 2022-23 in Parliament on February 1.

It is noteworthy that two-wheelers are used not as a luxury thing but as a necessity to travel distances, especially by people in rural areas, for their daily working needs, it added.

"Hence the rationale of 28 per cent GST + 2 per cent cess which is for luxury/sin products



does not hold good for the two-wheeler category," FADA noted.

At a time when vehicle prices are increasing after a gap of 3-4 months due to rise in input costs and various other factors, a reduction in the GST rate will counter the price hike and help spur demand, it added. "FADA believes that the growth in demand and the ripple effects it will have on many dependent sectors will increase the tax collections. In the mid to long-term it will actually be revenue positive and also help bring in positivity in the overall consumer sentiment and thereby the overall economy," the industry body stated.

It also sought a uniform GST

rate of 5 per cent on the margin for all used vehicles, to create a win-win situation for the government, dealers, and vehicle owners.

"With the reduction in GST, it will help the industry to shift from unorganised segment to organised segment thus bringing in more business under the ambit of GST helping in putting brake on tax leakages," FADA noted.

The government currently charges GST on used cars at the rate of 12 and 18 per cent.

The cars under 4,000 mm are charged 12 per cent GST and the vehicles above the 4,000 mm mark are taxed at 18 per cent.

Hiring activity in Dec grew 2 pc sequentially on demand

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Hiring activity in December 2021 showed a marginal growth of two per cent compared to the previous month, mainly on positive demand in retail and agro-based industries, according to a report.

December 2021 saw a monthly rise of 2 per cent in hiring activity compared to the previous month as retail and agro-based industries witnessed a positive incline of 12 per cent on account of multi-channel approaches, technological adoption and government initiatives, according to the Monster Employment



Index, a report by Monster.com, a Qeess company. However, demand for talent surged 12 per cent year-on-year in December 2021, compared to the same month in

2020, showcasing an optimistic recovery cycle at the close of the year, the report added.

The report showed that month-on-month, the demand for roles in healthcare witnessed a surge of 6 per cent on account of rising COVID-19 cases in the country, while roles in HR and admin (5 per cent) and finance and accounts (4 per cent) also saw an uptick.

Further, it is quite encouraging to note that the demand for entry-level and intermediate roles saw the highest monthly growth at 2 per cent compared to other experience levels, it added.

Tech Mahindra acquires European tech firm for EUR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT company Tech Mahindra on Monday announced acquisition of 100 per cent stake in Europe-based Comtec Co IT (CTC) and 25 per cent stake in two IT platforms for a total of EUR 330 million (about Rs 2,800 crore). The company said the acquisitions will strengthen its digital engineering and insurance technology businesses. The acquisition of CTC is the second-largest acquisition that the company has made after scam-hit Satyam in April 2010.

Goenka takes over as AEPC Chairman; expects exports to register healthy growth in 2022

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Founder and Managing Director of Textport Industries Narendra Kumar Goenka on Monday took over as the Chairman of the Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) and expressed hope that the sector's outbound shipments would record healthy growth in the coming months. He has replaced A Sakhivel. Goenka said the sector is witnessing a robust growth in exports and going by the orders in hand, this positive trend will further accelerate in the last quarter. "Apparel exports were 22 per cent up at USD 1.46 billion in December



2021 from USD 1.20 billion in December 2020. The same in the first nine months of this fiscal stood at USD 11.13 billion, 35 per cent more than USD

8.22 billion in April-December 2020. The trend is getting stronger," he said. Despite several disruptions in the global supply chain and demand, the

Indian apparel industry demonstrated its resilience by gradually inching back to the pre-pandemic growth path, he said, adding by the end of this financial year, "we will be looking at new targets". Goenka's Textport Industries is one of the largest apparel manufacturer-exporters in India and he has been associated with the council for more than two decades.

He was the Vice Chairman of the apex body of the Indian apparel exporters before taking charge as Chairman. "With global demand picking up gradually and industry reporting handsome orders in hand, apparel exports are likely to pick up in 2022.

Banks pitch for reduction of tax-free FD tenure to 3 years



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Banks have made a case for lowering fixed deposit (FD) tenure to three years for availing tax benefits, in line with mutual fund products like equity-linked savings scheme (ELSS).

Currently, the tax break is available on 5-year tax-saving FD schemes. One can claim an income tax deduction by investing money in a five-year FD scheme under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act, 1961. Section 80C is a wide bracket with a ceiling of Rs 1.50 lakh.

"As compared to other financial products (such as ELSS) available in the market, the tax-saver fixed deposit (FD) has become less attractive and if the lock-in period is reduced, this would make the product more attractive and provide more funds to the banks," IBA said in a pre-Budget proposal submitted to the government.

The lock-in period should be reduced to three years from the existing five years, the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) said in its proposal.

Banks have also sought special rebates or additional depreciation for expenditure made on financial inclusion activities and promoting digital banking, among other activities.

IBA further said banks do a lot of activities for promoting the weaker sector, promoting digital banking and for implementing various schemes of the government under financial inclusion.

"By making expenditure of IT, banks give benefits to masses i.e. ease of doing business, digital banking, etc. Therefore, some special incentives in the form of the special tax rebate or deduction or additional depreciation (say 125 per cent) over and above the actual capital expenditure made on such activities may be provided," it said.

Banks also want a special dispute resolution mechanism for faster disposal of cases related to taxation.

Banks' appeals involve substantial amounts but these are treated on a parity with appeals involving small amounts, it said.

Rupee falls by 10 paise to 74.25 on high dollar demand

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee declined by 10 paise to close at 74.25 against the US currency on Monday, declining for the second straight day due to high dollar demand and forex outflows.

Dollar buying by banks on behalf of importers and weak economic data weighed on the local unit, analysts said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local currency opened at 74.18 against the American currency and witnessed an intra-day high of 74.16 and a low of 74.36 during the session. The rupee finally settled at 74.25, down 10 paise over its previous close of 74.15 against the greenback. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six



currencies, was trading 0.05 per cent down at 95.11. "Weaker economic data, higher bond yields, and state-run banks dollar buying on behalf of importers weighed on rupee for the second day on the trot," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

Global forex markets remain calm as the US market remained closed on Monday on account of Martin Luther King Day. Meanwhile, Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.27 per cent to USD 85.83 per barrel. The rupee depreciated against the US Dollar

on Monday for the second straight session tracking losses in most regional peers, Sriram Iyer, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities said.

Most Asian currencies were weaker on Monday as a slew of Chinese economic data confirmed the deadening effect of coronavirus restrictions on consumer spending, prompting Beijing to again ease monetary policy, experts said.

China's economy expanded by 4 per cent y-o-y in the fourth quarter as Covid-19 restrictions and property woes hit demand. On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 85.88 points or 0.14 per cent higher at 61,308.91, while the broader NSE Nifty advanced 52.35 points or 0.29 per cent to 18,308.10 points.

Mahindra's Truck and Bus Division's mileage scheme

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Mahindra's Truck and Bus Division (MTB), part of the Mahindra Group, on Monday announced the 'Get More Mileage or Give Truck Back' guarantee for its entire range of BS-VI trucks. MTB offers a complete range of trucks from 3.5 tonnes to 55 tonnes, comprising HCV Blazo X, IVC Furio, and LCVs Furio 7 and Jayo range.

Third COVID wave undoes gains of biz

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The fast-spreading third wave of COVID-19 has undone the gains achieved due to resumption of business since the end of the lethal second wave last year, a Japanese brokerage said on Monday.

The Nomura India Business Resumption Index, which compares activity against the pre-pandemic levels of March 2020, fell to 102.9 for the week ended January 16 as against 107.9 in the previous week. The index has fallen by 17.4



percentage points (pp) since the third wave struck at the cusp of the new year.

The third wave -- which has seen daily infections climb to over 2.5 lakh from 1.70 lakh in

the week ago -- has undone business resumption gains since the second wave, Nomura said.

It can be noted that already, economists are estimating a dent of up to 0.40 per cent to the GDP because of the third wave, wherein an increasing number of states have resorted to restrictions on movements to contain the spread of infections.

The Omicron variant is said to be less potent as compared to the earlier Delta variant. For the week under review, the

Banking institutions staring at frauds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of COVID-19 and new digital operations, banking and financial institutions have been struggling to deal with an increasing number of fraud incidents and the trend is expected to continue, a Deloitte India survey said on Monday. Key reasons identified for the increase in fraud incidents over the next two years include large-scale remote working models, increase in customers using non-branch banking channels and the limited/ineffective use of forensic analytics tools.

India's apple exports up 82 pc since 2014: Commerce Min



Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh to further push the outbound shipments in different parts of the world. In value terms, exports rose to USD 14.45 million in 2020-21 from USD 8.6 million in 2014-15, the data showed. Apple exports during April-November this fiscal stood at USD 12.25 million, indicating healthy growth over the years. On the other hand, imports have increased 3.8 per cent to USD 240 million in 2020-21 from USD 230.8 million in 2014-15. About 82 per cent of apples imported into India are from Chile, New Zealand, Turkey, Italy, Brazil and the US.

India's apple exports have jumped 82 per cent since 2014, while fruit imports increased marginally by 3.8 per cent during the same time, according to the commerce ministry data. Increase in exports is helping the growers in

Sebi examines alternative dispute resolution mechanism



the 'Investor Charter' for securities markets to further augment its efforts to protect investors' interests, promote transparency in markets and enhance awareness, trust and confidence among investors. Since then, various steps have been taken to implement the charter, the regulator said. Separate charters regarding investor-related activities of various intermediaries have been developed by Sebi in consultation with the respective entities. The charter contains information related to details of various services provided by the intermediaries to investors, their timelines, importance of preservation of relevant documents by the investors, investor grievance redressal mechanism, etc.

To provide efficacious mechanism for resolving disputes between investors and regulated entities, capital markets regulator Sebi is examining introducing an alternate dispute resolution mechanism, a release said on Monday. Sebi in November 2021 published

Striking a balance



While several business-ess were hit due to the pandemic, the art market was among a few which was not affected much due to the economic dishevel. Like others, the business of art also

went online, with online art exhibitions, auctions and art previews. It resulted in reduced cost and carbon footprint by eliminating costs of printing catalogues, invites, international air travel for art fairs and packaging and shipping cost for fairs, et al. Also, going online proved to be a blessing in disguise for the art world with millennials becoming the new customers for art.

Choyals from Rajasthan, the three generation of artists who believe in striking a balance between the offline and online medium and have been actively tapping the online medium for their art, also did seemingly well this year.

"To understand the various nuances of the artwork and appreciate it, a physical display and exhibition of art is very important and you can't just do away with it. However, having a sizeable number of foreign art lovers, we do have our website running for more than a decade and have been showing online as well," says Akash Choyal, the youngest Choyal, known for his 3D illusion art and fibreglass sculptures.

"During the pandemic, being online certainly helped and added a new dimension to the art. Even the gallerists and art curators are tapping the medium but certainly not doing away with the offline shows. In fact, since mid 2021, physical shows are back

and the artists, art lovers and art collectors are indulging in it. The family of five artists sold quite a few artworks this year. Among their new art collectors were millennials, who are getting enthusiastic about the art as a viable investment option," Akash adds.

Swati Pasari, an spiritual-based artist from Kolkata saw a 15 per cent growth in sales of her artwork in 2020 and 2021. "The pandemic proved to be a blessing in disguise, as I ventured into the online space and could increase my sales. I participated in more than five exhibitions this year, both online and offline and am planning to continue my foray into the online exhibitions and art shows," shares Pasari.

She continues, "As people spent more time in their homes due to lockdown, they invested in decorating their space by buying colourful artworks, this was one of the major reasons for the growth in the art market. Also, along with decorating their space, people wanted to bring in more positivity in their homes," A Delhi based art curator and the founder of Art School & Gallery, The Art Hub, Bhavna Minocha, expresses, "During 2021, a year of challenges, despite the contraction of sales overall from the impact of Covid-19, it was interesting to see the new trends of shopping of art. In-person events went down, of course, but online sales went up. Interest in culture increased in the lockdowns. Young collectors were the highest spenders with online platforms enhancing accessibility. Affordable art created at our studio by upcoming artists sold very easily, but art collectors are waiting to buy the master's art when the studio is going to be a safer place for all of us to meet personally."

Meet Bros on touching bitter-sweet memories of *vidaai*



Bringing the most emotional moment of a wedding in the form of melodious tunes, Meet Bros has woven their magic again. They made the 'just married' tag a little more elaborate but by taking you on an emotional roller-coaster moment. In the western countries, this event is mostly celebrated with laughter, while bidding farewell to the bride with smiles and cheer. But here in India, things are a bit more intense and that's what the sibling duo presented with the help of television actress Divyanka Tripathi. They emphasised and appreciated the actress well enough for the kind of strong emotions she portrayed but while in conversation with them, we realised it was a song dedicated to the composer duo's father. It was a change for their audiences too, from grooving onto their peppy tracks, they boiled down to a really sentimental song called *Babul Da Vehda*. They felt lyricist Kumaar has done an amazing job by penning down the indescribable emotions because the song left everyone emotional and speechless, most surreal emotions were portrayed on screen with a mesmerising aura!

Further in conversation, they shared, "From childhood, our father used to always speak about how women get married and leave everything behind. It's a lot for a father to let go of their child, to describe that there was a folk song he used to tell us about. It's been in our mind to do a song, when he was alive we couldn't do it and sadly we lost him last year but this is our way of dedicating a tribute to him." Sharing the idea behind the song, they explain, "Everybody spoke a lot about *vidai* songs in India, but couldn't portray the complete emotion of it. So we came up with the idea of a song written in Punjabi slang. The motive was to portray the exact period.

On one hand, all the festivities of the wedding are going on, and there comes a moment when the bride sits in the car and bids goodbye to her family weeping. On the other hand, when she reaches her *sasural*, she's looking for a warm welcome. It's a sad reality that exists where one home is celebrating the welcome of their daughter in law, the other is grieving that their daughter left the home. *Babul Da Vehda* was made, tapping on that — a song which reminisces every emotion and memory connected to *vidai*."

Both the brothers didn't shy away from giving their strong opinions on a bal-

ance to be maintained in the marriage and gender equality issues. They opine, "We totally believe in the culture of our country. Let's take an example of one situation where a girl lives with her mother and they don't have a father, and has some needs to be taken care of. Another situation where a guy lives far away from his family, due to his work and makes his own home in another city. In such situations if a guy comes out and takes the charge, what's the harm in it? We should absolutely be open to such things. It's emotionally the same to bring up a girl or boy, so why not this could be also in respect to a culture that if somebody wants to do it in another way." Harmeet Singh continues, "The best compliment that I received was when someone said that this song is like an initiative. In a world where everything is completely dominated by men and women have to leave their houses — we should approach women organisations and ask why can't men leave their house and come and live with us? Why do women have to leave their houses, where they have been brought up and their whole childhood resides. *Sab chod chad ke*, they leave for another country or a city. It should be balanced. Women should take an initiative called *#marriagebalance* for an example. If a song can bring a revolution in the human kind and on the planet, why not. Even abroad, women leave their houses and come."

Manmeet asserts, "When we got these videos, we saw old men crying, watching the video. An emotion which takes a lot of stirring up, and a man who never cried, we've seen them weep and that's a big compliment in itself."

The biggest challenge for the composers was to bring into light, a face which is very relatable and easy to connect to. They have known Divyanka for a while and when they approached her saying they wanted to do a song with her, she felt so connected and gave an instant nod. Sure there are happy moments when everyone blesses the bride with a life full of happiness and love. But there is also an overwhelming sense of loss. Especially felt by the parents of a bride who find it extremely hard to say goodbye to their beloved daughter and that's what you'll see in *Babul Da Vehda*.

strengthens core muscles and hamstrings, glutes and external rotators. Keeping the hands behind your head during the walk loads the muscles around the shoulder, giving you a good burn. This

looks easy but it's not a cake walk either," says Zaineb Ali, a certified pilates instructor shedding light on an unusual exercise that initially caught the eyes of stars like Jennifer Lopez and Anne Hathaway.

Pilates is used by physiotherapists all over the world, to increase postural awareness and to alter faulty patterns of movement by addressing muscle imbalances. Through pilates,

many have noticed greater control in their spinal stability, pelvic stability and mobility, enabling them to improve their posture, inner strength and balance leading to an overall healthy movement, minimising stress to joints during everyday activities. Don't believe us? Check out your favourite star's social media accounts to cross-check. A lot of celebrities swear by pilates! From Deepika

Padukone to Sara Ali Khan, they love this form of exercise and often take to their social media accounts to share snippets from their fitness sessions. Katrina Kaif is the latest celebrity to join the pilates fan club.

Swearing by Pilates is the new thing to do

Doing pilates is the new OG thing to do! People, especially women are trading their sneakers and workouts for pilates because it has proven to be more popular than ever. If there was any good that came out of pandemic, it was to leave us with a greater appreciation for fitness and making us prioritise health like never before!

The months of lockdowns saw our living rooms turn into workout studios. A day back, actress Elli Avram shared a short glimpse of her pilates routine on her Instagram profile and it is redefining dedication, flexibility and balanced movements for us. In the video, Elli can be seen standing on a rail of sorts with her legs stretched to both sides. Then she can be seen bending her body and touching her feet with her other hand. She can be seen doing the process repeatedly and slaying it with her balanced movements. In the caption, Elli also clarified that even though the routine looks easy, it was very difficult to ace it and so does a fitness enthusiast seconds her opinion.

Shobana Mahansaria, Director of CoreFit Plus says, "What happens when you are suddenly told one day that you will never be able to walk again? In some cases, it can completely crush one's self esteem to live, but not in my case. Having an illness called Acute Disseminated Encephalomyelitis, it can be life-changing for anyone, as it was for me in many ways. But pilates also turned my life around."

To be able to rebuild her body back from the basics, to walking with a stick at the age of 35, to constantly be told that she should feel happy with her condition, just because she was better off than many, was a constant struggle for Shobhana which was not only physical but mental as well. But she learnt quickly that it is her mind that controls her body! "I have always felt that no matter how we feel on the inside, it is very important to get dressed and show up for recovery. Pilates has played a very important role in my recovery, which is why I

would recommend it to anyone who is struggling with rehabilitation of any kind. Pilates is a systemised form of exercise, which focuses on core strengthening, including our abdominal and our back muscles," she adds.

Pilates can seem very intimidating for someone who hasn't done it before, but it is really safe in which one focuses their concentration on each movement that are precise. It also includes a steady and controlled form of breathing. So, pilates can be done on an apparatus which works with spring, tension and resistance, called a reformer, or it can be done on a mat with the help of your own body weight. According to Nira Shah, a certified yoga instructor, "Pilates helps in strengthening mental health but is not a form of spiritual exercise. Pilates helps in gaining abs and other muscle groups. Pilates movements target a specific muscle group and they are repeated while breathing is controlled and it helps in maintaining endurance during repetitions. It is designed to make you feel stronger, aligned and flexible. It helps in the physical movement of the body efficiently."

Pilates is great not only for losing weight but for also chronic fatigue, and for rehabilitation purposes as well. The director of Corefit continues, "As it is a low impact exercise designed to strengthen key muscle groups without causing full-body fatigue, I could do pilates because my trainers could customise my exercise routine to a level that my body could tolerate, without too much of exertion. For me, pilates is a great way to ease into fitness and build strength. Since I am someone who has always tried to be active, given my physical limitations, it wasn't very hard to start it. Pilates helped me become attuned to my body and taught me how to really control my movement through proper breathing, correct pelvic and spinal alignment. This is how it automat-

ically helped in reduction of my pain because while performing these exercises breathing played a very important role. When my oxygen levels are good, I feel better and breathing also simultaneously helped in recovery of my muscles."

With this extraordinary vision for wellness in mind, she wanted to bring up spaces in India that facilitated holistic wellness among individuals starting at a very early age stressing on the comprehensive development of children and later, adults! "The 'Platypus Walk' is an incredibly accessible exercise done with a wide stance with feet turned, requiring loads of external rotation at hips. Standing and walking in that stance



what's brewing?

Bridal trends for this year!

Every bride in India wants to be picture-perfect on her wedding day. Exquisite jewellery, vibrant colours, and royal attire are all part of the ritual. Mohey has put together a stylish wedding collection with stunning embroidered work set in premium quality craftsmanship and design. To ensure that you look your best at all of your nuptial events, here are the bridal trends of 2022 from the brand's new wedding collection:



Colourful embroidery

While monochromatic lehengas are beautiful in their own right, multi-coloured lehengas call attention to and highlight the bride's vibrant and jazzy side, letting her to stand out among the crowd. Traditional functions such as Haldi and Mehendi ceremonies are all about colour and intricate decor, so choose a colourful drape, skirt, and lehenga to go with it. Keep it discreet with light floral jewellery or accessories.

Love for red and maroon

Red is one of those colours that will never go out of style. Use a combination of thread work embroidery on red or maroon velvet lehengas with floral patterns and designs to make your bridal ensemble breathtakingly lovely.

Drape a lehenga dupatta

Do you appreciate dupattas and wish to make them the focal point of your ensemble? The sight of a voluminous veil or dupatta falling down a bride's gown is breathtaking. The dupatta adds a well-designed touch to your wedding gown by emphasizing the classic and current style of a bridal lehenga. For an attractive and classy look that may make or break your wedding ensemble, choose a dupatta that contrasts with the lehenga or go monochrome.

Shades of pink

Choosing a wedding lehenga

colour is a difficult task for any bride who wants to avoid the traditional red. If you want to stand out from the crowd, go for a bright and cheerful pink wedding lehenga. This vibrant colour looks great on all skin tones and gives the bridal look a unique twist. These colours range from soft pastel pink to dusty pink and are suitable for both daytime and evening ceremonies.

Plunging neckline

Brides are opting for a deep neckline, which provides a whimsical twist and grace to traditional wedding attire while also adding a hint of seduction to the traditional style.

PARTY

Photos by SV Chary



● Aparna



● Ishwarya Vullingala

IN STYLE

Actress Ishwarya Vullingala, Priya Murthy, along with renowned models of the city and fashion lovers graced the curtain raiser of the three-day Hilife exhibition starting January 25.



● Srilekha



● Ananya



● Priya



● Sruthi



Valima ceremony

Retired IAS officer Alhaj Syed Azmatullah hosted his grandson Syed Ali Murtuza's valima ceremony in Banjara Hills over the weekend.



Gemma Arterton on her *The King's Man* character

British actress-producer Gemma Arterton, who essays the character of Polly,

the nanny of Harris Dickinson's Conrad in the recently released spy action comedy *The King's Man*, describes her character as an alpha that heads the household.

Talking about her character, the actress says, "She is Conrad's nanny, so she's taken care of him. But she's sort of the boss of everyone, including Oxford. She's very tough.



She doesn't take any crap. She's the cleverest person in the room. She's very, very smart. But also very funny. A wise-cracker."

She continues, "And because she's a servant and part of the staff, she is from a different social background. She's working class. So she isn't

posh. There are a lot of gentlemen in the film, and high society, and she's a bit more practical."

Commenting on her preparations, Arterton decided that the character should hail from the North of England. "We decided that Harrogate was the perfect accent, because it's a soft Yorkshire accent, but it's quite muscular."

She adds, "We wanted it to sound like a period of the time, but I like it because it gives her a bit of sass. She sounds different to everybody else in

the film. A little bit cheeky. A bit sassy."

Producer Karl Gjaldusek refers to her as a "crack-shot nanny" explaining, "She's one thing in front of the world and another thing behind closed doors, or with a gun in her hand."

Matthew Vaughn, director of the movie adds, "Gemma is an incredible actor. She's funny, she can do any accent, she's good at action. She's the whole package. So we were extremely lucky that she said yes to this."

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Air-holes in your nose
- 2 Become larger
- 3 A spider's trap
- 4 Topic
- 5 A chopping tool
- 6 An insect that flutters by
- 7 Speaks
- 8 Baby cats
- 9 The body's pump
- 10 Sea
- 11 Uncles' wives
- 12 Took away illegally
- 13 Hot coals left from a fire
- 14 Meat from a cow
- 15 Unexpectedly, without warning
- 16 Second-hand
- 17 A month

DOWN

- 1 A frightening dream
- 2 Small seat without a back
- 3 A feeling that makes you want to scratch



SUDOKU

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1	3	8						
8								9
				4	3			1
	8	2		7				6
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		4						2

Yesterday's solution

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

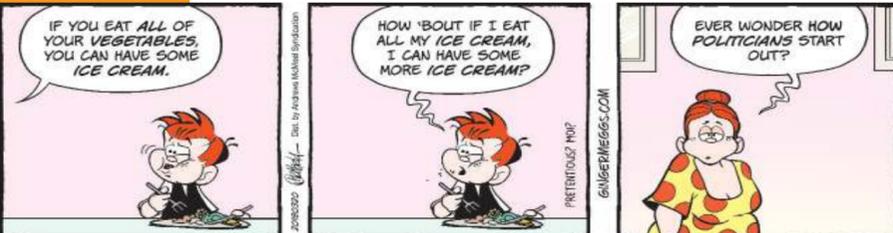
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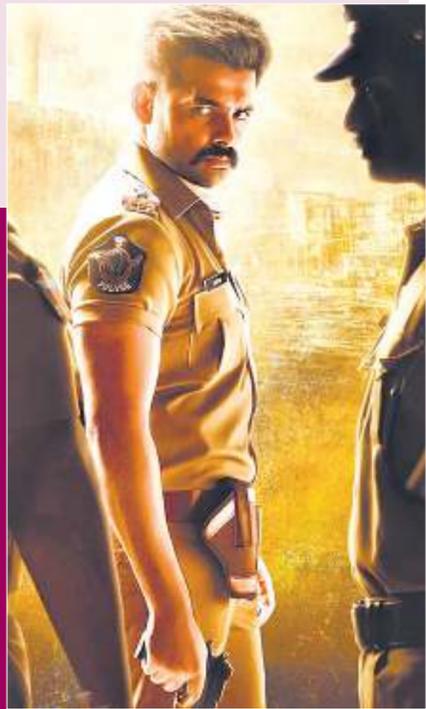
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NANCY



GINGER MEGGS





Ram dons khaki for the 1st time in *The Warrior*

The makers of director Lingusamy's film with Ram Pothineni in the lead on Monday announced that the film had been titled *The Warrior*. The Tamil-Telugu bilingual is an action drama that has triggered huge interest ever since it was first announced. On Monday, the team chose to release the title and the first look of the film. *The Warrior* poster features Ram Pothineni as a police officer wielding a gun with a tough look, while cops surround him. Says director Lingusamy, "The poster has triggered curiosity about the story that has the energetic star at its center. Fans are sure to find this film exciting as they will see Ram donning the khaki for the first time". Sources close to the unit say that a fresh schedule of *The Warrior* has commenced in which crucial scenes are being shot. The movie's team vouches that it will surpass the

expectations of fans and that it will be one of the memorable police stories of south Indian cinema. Aadhi Pinisetty, who is popular in both Kollywood and Tollywood, plays the antagonist. The film has Krithi Shetty in the lead, while Akshara Reddy will be seen in a pivotal role." Producer Srinivasaa Chitturi says, "We are happy to announce our association with Ram Pothineni and we have kickstarted 2022 with lots of excitement and are striving to bring the best to the audiences. We hope to make a film that is loved and enjoyed by the audience thoroughly. We hope we make the audience happy with our content." *The Warrior* is expected to be a feather in Srinivasaa Silver Screen's hat after the success of its recent sports drama, *Seetimaari*, which had Gopichand and Tamannah Bhatia in lead roles. The upcoming action-drama will be presented by Pavan Kumar and is a Devi Sri Prasad musical.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Initially, whether he wanted to make his living as an actor or not, the one thing Tollywood actor Ravi Varma knows now for a definite fact is that he wouldn't want to be typecast ever in this industry. This fine-drawn actor is known for being cast opposite T-Town biggies like Jr. NTR, Mahesh Babu, Vijay Deverakonda, and the list goes on. It was the movie *Vennela* that brought him so much of fame and marked his position here in the Telugu industry. Whenever there's a new antagonist role coming up, directors look for Ravi Varma. In a candid conversation with this well-spoken man, we heard from him saying, "I have given multiple interviews but nobody has ever touched upon the real aspects of acting that involves the combination of passion and emotion and here I am talking about it for the first time with you guys. If you see acting through my eyes, it's like living another life. I was always surrounded by doctors and principals, never knew I'll be an actor someday. I wanted to be each one of them and what better job than an actor's? Since the time I have joined films, it made me realise cinema is timeless."

His life as an actor also entailed a lot of sacrifices and struggles. While the biggest stars were commanding some of the heftiest paychecks in the world, there was actor Ravi Varma struggling to join the best acting course abroad but couldn't due to initial financial setbacks. Acting in Telugu industry didn't come steady for him but today he has joined the coveted ranks of best working actors here and that's what keeps him going. He recollects with us, "I am an easy Godavari child, I at first visited Hyderabad to explore my acting opportunities and landed up in Ram Gopal Varma's office. One of his associates suggested me to join an acting course abroad! I couldn't accomplish acting opportunity in USA, it was financially getting tougher for me to survive there. Surprisingly, I ended up doing my masters in maths and computers there. Even an acting diploma is so expensive there. The only thing I could manage was to get trained in New York Film Academy for a tenure of three months yet I managed to crack the code and started working for Telugu films and now happily foraying into Kannada language too." He calls himself to be a lucky chap who got selected for a Hollywood movie that left a great impact on the audiences, so much so that it was re-made in Telugu titled as *Vennela*. His role as an antagonist that garnered so much of appreciation across the state landed him opposite Jr. NTR in a very crucial role titled *Rakhi*.

"I was playing the brother in law of NTR, it was worth the wait especially being directed by a prominent director of his time that's Krishna Vamsi. People still call me Vennela Ravi and Rakhi Ravi but I never want to be typecasted. I don't like prefixes being added before my name!" he added. He has been so compliant since the time of his childhood that once his

teacher associated him with a bonafide artist of the same name, actor Ravi felt it so deeply that he begun painting. Moving ahead from there, he started training himself in the Kathak dance form, mime, bhanga, and naga dance form. He wasn't just stopping in pursuit of becoming one of the creative man alive! Also, dancing became his forte. He started expressing himself well and this helped him quite well whenever he's acting with emotions on-screen. Moreover, he strongly feels if he wouldn't have done mime acts in his life, he wouldn't have grabbed onto the depth of acting here. "I would love to play the role of a consequential actor than the protagonist having long dialogues on screen. My eyes do the talking! Maximum roles that I have played hits the chord of momentous than emotional aspect. I do

believe eyes are a reflection of your art, I consume this as a solemn truth. I never take up roles for fame or fortune! I do it as an experimental activity. Until now, I have played a villain in ten Telugu movies but the aura is always different," he mentioned. Sharing one of his fondest memories with Jr. NTR, he couldn't hold his excitement back on the telephonic call, and goes onto say, "It was my third Telugu movie in this industry and wasn't still known to be an experienced actor. And then, to deal with the A-listers of the entertainment era was another ball game for me. Shooting for *Vennela* went really smooth, did it in a single take but when there's an experienced actor present on the set, it's only human for us to shake up a little. But I figured it out on the sets of *Rakhi*. I still remember the scene where

NTR had to touch my feet, he eventually started ragging me. He cracked a deal to me for this — he said I'll have to accompany him to the movie screening and sit in the front row with him. His fans tortured me on a hilarious note because I was the 'bad guy' in the film." He also continued to reveal that Jr. NTR is a highly competitive colleague, but at the same time knows how to comfort his co-stars. Ravi can never forget the surprise birthday celebrations Jr. NTR held for him and took the effort of remembering his birthday on the sets. Ravi Varma was overwhelmed! He continued, "The co-director approached me asking whether am I free on my birthday or not. I said yes, and then he goes 'Perfect, we'll shoot your death sequences that day' and I was taken aback amusingly. NTR forced me to come on sets that day (he laughs hard). He ensured a grand celebration in the afternoon for me, both NTR and Krishna Vamsi *garu* smashed my face into the cake. Can never forget these happy memories." Not just this, his birthday present was equally amazing as the celebrations! He discloses to us, "On the same day, I had a shoot with Mahesh Babu for the movie *Sainikudu* and Gunashekhar *garu* added a whole scene for me present-ing me with some dialogues on the occasion of my birthday. Such things have happened here with me in

Tollywood which makes me work for them more." Looking forward to his Kannada stint now, actor Ravi Varma is all set to expand his horizons in the acting fraternity without being generalised in that industry. He concluded, "My profile always suggests directors to cast me as a villain, I am not going to do that anymore until and unless it's anything but crucial. My perspective is more inclined towards a supporting actor who is equally important as the protagonist these days!"

I never take up roles for fame and fortune: Ravi Varma



Director Kalyan Krishna who delivered Sankranthi blockbuster with Akkineeni Nagarjuna and Naga Chaitanya starrer *Bangaraju* will be collaborating with KE Gnanavel Raja of Studio Green production house for his next directorial venture.

One of the popular production houses in south India, Studio Green has been making content rich movies, besides producing high budget entertainers with star heroes. Equally popular in Telugu, several films made under the banner were dubbed and released in here.

"Happy to Announce, we have collaborated with Telugu Sankranti BLOCK BUSTER #Bangaraju Director @kalyankrishna_k for his next Big venture. Other details Soon.. @kegvrja #Sankranti #Bangaraju #BlockbusterBangaraju," announced the producer.

Kalyan Krishna joins hands with KE Gnanavel Raja

Known for making perfect family entertainers, Kalyan Krishna has been winning accolades for coming up with an ideal Sankranti movie with *Bangaraju* which is turning out to be a huge blockbuster. Other details will be announced soon.



Ganesh Bellamkonda drops feel-good glimpse

Swathi Muthyam is a refreshing family entertainer bankrolled by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi under the production house Sithara Entertainments. The film that marks the acting debut of Ganesh Bellamkonda, features Varsha

Bollamma as the female lead. Directed by Lakshman K Krishna, Swathi Muthyam has music by Mahathi Swara Sagar. Commemorating Sankranti, the makers have launched the film's first glimpse.

The first glimpse of *Swathi Muthyam* takes viewers through a tale of two youngsters on the cusp of marriage. A guy and a girl agree on an alliance fixed by their parents and meet each other. While the guy tries hard to get into the good books of the girl with a few gestures that turn unintentionally funny, the girl surprises him with her confidence when she asks him about his virginity. The glimpse ends on a funny

note when the bridegroom washes the legs of the bride's father as part of *kanyadanam*. Ganesh Bellamkonda's innocence and Varsha Bollamma's next-door-girl appeal in the first glimpse instantly win you over. Filming of major portions of *Swathi Muthyam* neared completion.

Anushka too scared to shoot

It has been a while since someone saw Anushka Shetty either on screen or at any of the film events. Sometime back Anushka Shetty announced a film with Naveen Naveen Polishetty to be directed by a newcomer Mahesh P. However, the film is yet to go on floors. The reason we hear is that Anushka is too scared to step out amidst the pandemic. We hear that the actress is in no mood to begin shooting and is not giving the dates for the shoots.



Dimple Hayathi tests positive for Covid

Actress Dimple Hayathi, who plays the female lead opposite Vishal in his upcoming action entertainer *Veerame Vaagai Soodum*, has announced that she has tested positive for Covid.

Taking to Instagram, the actress wrote, "Hi everyone, I have tested Covid positive yesterday, despite taking all the precautions. I am down with mild symptoms. Otherwise I'm fine."

"I am self isolating at home as per the (advice of) authorities. I'm double vaccinated, probably that's why the symptoms are mild. I request each and everyone to get vaccinated and wear masks and get sanitised every now and then. Will get back stronger."

The actress had only recently attended a press conference called by the *Veerame Vaagai Soodum* unit.



IF GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY, IT WILL BE AN HONOUR TO CAPTAIN INDIA: JASPRIT BUMRAH



PTI ■ PAARL (SOUTH AFRICA)

India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah on Monday said he is not averse to leading the national team if an opportunity comes knocking at his door in the near future.

With Virat Kohli's captaincy tenure in all formats coming to an end following his resignation from Test leadership, there are questions about who could be his long-term successor considering that Rohit Sharma will be 35 next year. "If given an opportunity, it will be an honour and I don't see any player (who) would say no and I am no different," Bumrah, who is KL Rahul's deputy for the ODI series against South Africa, replied to a query from PTI in a press conference ahead of the three-match rubber starting Wednesday. "Be it any leadership group, I always look to contribute however I can, to the best of my abilities," he added.

Bumrah said taking responsibility and helping teammates comes naturally to him.

"I look at this situation in the same manner... Taking responsibility and talking to players and helping them out has always been my approach and it will

always be my approach going further keeping any situation in mind."

The India pace spearhead believes that there would be no tangible change in his role although he is the vice-captain now. "Having post or not doesn't matter. I always focus on how I can contribute," he said.

"For me, the role doesn't change at all. I have to do my job first, isn't it? Trying to contribute as much as I can and then helping KL if he needs any assistance on the field and sharing a bowler's mindset on what kind of fields you can keep that I always look to do," Bumrah said. In fact, he has done all this and more even when he wasn't anointed the vice-captain.

"Even when I am not vice-captain, I try to talk to some of the younger guys, have a lot of discussions on what kind of fields that need to be set and the same role I will try to do that again as well."

"No specific role or added pressure I am going to take. Yes, helping KL in any way possible and trying to keep a calm head."

New Team Management? "Change is the only constant" The Indian team manage-

ment, following Virat Kohli's complete exit from captaincy roles across formats, bears a new look but Bumrah doesn't see "anything weird" and believes that one needs to respect the new set-up that's in place and start moving ahead.

"I can't speak for everyone but I can say that for me, it doesn't really make much of a difference. I am here to help all in whatever way I can. All the players are responding to the changes that have and everybody is respectful and understand how the processes are going."

"Change is the only constant and we are happy everybody is contributing and we are getting (acquiring) a lot of knowledge and trying to contribute to that. I don't think anybody is facing a problem or is in a weird space with the change that is happening," Bumrah spoke for himself.

Acceptance is key and that's what Bumrah expects from everyone. "Everybody understands change and have played enough cricket to understand that this is the way the game goes and this is how you move forward. So everyone in the team is quite positive and eager to contribute."



Rohit close to getting match-ready

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's white ball captain Rohit Sharma is recovering well from his left hamstring injury and has a bright chance of making a comeback for the six-match home white-ball series against the West Indies next month.

Rohit, who was also the designated Test vice-captain for the tour of South Africa, sustained a left-hamstring strain during a net session just prior to the team's departure for the tour and had to pull out.

He was subsequently also forced to skip the ODIs in South Africa, starting this Wednesday, as he couldn't attain full fitness before the selection committee announced the team.

"Rohit's rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy is going pretty well. He is

expected to be okay for the West Indies series.

It's still close to three weeks from now before the first ODI is played in Ahmedabad from February 6, a BCCI source privy to developments told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

The series against the West Indies comprises three ODIs and as many T20 Internationals. The one-dayers will be played February 6 to 12, followed by T20Is from February 15 to 20.

For Rohit, the hamstring has been a recurrent problem which also forced him to miss the first two Test matches as well as the white-ball leg of the tour of Australia in 2020-21.

He did make a comeback for the final two Tests after serving a two-week hard quarantine in Sydney for the last two Test matches.

Sindhu looks to end title drought at Syed Modi International



PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu will look to recover from her unexpected semi-final loss at the India Open and end her title drought at the Syed Modi International, which begins here on Tuesday.

The 26-year-old from Hyderabad was well on course to win her first title since the 2019 World Championship triumph last week before left-hander Supanida Katethong of Thailand shattered her hopes with a three-game win at the India Open.

Sindhu, who had finished runner-up at Swiss Open and World Tour Finals last year, will hope to turn things around this week when she begins her campaign against compatriot Tanya Hemant. The Indian will be itching to settle scores against Supanida, whom she is likely to face again at the semifinals at the Babu Banarasi Das Indoor Stadium here. Second seeded Canadian Michelle Li, a Commonwealth Games silver medallist, will be one of the strong contenders for the title in women's singles, which also has Polish eighth seed Jordan Hart, second seed Iris Wang of USA and Russia's fifth seed Evgeniya Kosetskaya.

Men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty has decided to give the Super 300 tournament a miss after claiming their maiden India Open Super 500 crown. Lakshya Sen, who secured his maiden Super 500 title at New Delhi on Sunday, also is likely to follow suit after playing continuously since October last year.

Among others, World Championships silver medallist and top seed Kidambi Srikanth also is unlikely to compete this week as he is undergoing seven-day mandatory quarantine after withdrawing from the main draw last week following a positive COVID-19 result.

Third seed B Sai Praneeth, who had pulled out of India Open after testing positive, is also awaiting a RT-PCR test result, while Ashwini Ponnappa and Manu Attri are yet to recover from the virus and will miss the tournament.

Ashwini is part of the top seeded women's doubles pairing, while Manu and B Sumeth Reddy are seeded third in the men's doubles event. On a comeback trail, former top-10 player H S Prannoy gave a good account of himself before being stopped by 20-year-old Sen in the quarterfinals last week.

England register seven-wicket win over Bangladesh

PTI ■ BASSETERRE (ST KITTS AND NEVIS)

Defending champions Bangladesh suffered a seven-wicket loss against England in a lop-sided contest to make a poor start to their campaign at the ICC U-19 World Cup here.

Opting to bat, Bangladesh were bundled out for a paltry 97 by England, who then returned to overhaul the target in 25.1 overs.

England produced a lethal bowling effort to reduce Bangladesh to 51 for nine in the 25th over at Warner Park in the Group A match.

No.11 Ripon Mondol hit 33 not out in a spirited last-wicket stand of 46 with Naimur Rohman (11) to drag Bangladesh close to the 100-mark.

Left-arm pacer Joshua Boyden was the pick of the bowlers for England with figures of four for 16, while right-arm fast bowler Thomas Aspinwall scalped two wickets, giving away 18 runs.



Besides, Tom Prest (1/5), Fateh Singh (1/29) and James Sales (1/29) took a wicket each.

In reply, England lost opener George Thomas (15) and captain Tom Prest (4) but Jacob Bethell (44) and James Rew (26 not out) put on 65 before the former was run out just shy of the finish line as England cruised to victory.

Earlier, Bangladesh's decision to bat first backfired

as they lost wickets at regular intervals and slumped to 26 for five by the 14th over. Bangladesh made a slow start to their innings before losing their first wicket -- Mahfijul Islam -- in the fifth over.

Bangladesh's struggle from the onset can be gauged from the fact that only four of their batters managed double digit scores, with last man Mondal top-scoring with a 41-ball unbeaten

knock which was studded with five boundaries and one six.

Chasing the total, England got off to a slightly nervy start as Bethell survived a run-out scare when SM Meherob could not gather the ball at the stumps with only five on the board.

He survived a close lbw appeal off Ashiqur shortly after before opening partner Thomas began to up the ante after a cautious start.

But having hit three fours, Thomas perished for 15 when he miscued another attacking shot off Ripon to leave England 20 for one in the ninth over.

That breakthrough gave Bangladesh a small glimmer of hope but when the English captain Prest nicked one behind off his counterpart Rakibul for four soon after, the game was very much on.

However, Rew joined hands with Bethell and together they batted superbly, counteracting the Bangladesh spin attack to alleviate any potential English nerves.

Ireland's historic ODI series win over West Indies

AP ■ KINGSTON

Ireland achieved a historic series win over the West Indies after winning their deciding one-day international by two wickets at Sabina Park.

The 2-1 come-from-behind series victory from the third ODI gave Ireland a first ODI series win away from home against a full member.

This also was only its second series win against a full member, after Zimbabwe at home in 2019. After bowling out the West Indies for 212 inside 45 overs, Ireland reached a winning 214-8 in the 45th.

It was a remarkable end to a COVID-19-disrupted two-nation tour which began with Ireland's own historic loss to a hosting United States in a Twenty20.

An over-eager William Porterfield was lost to the first ball of Ireland's chase on Sunday but the batting was mainly patient and practical.



The poised top order did its job. Stand-in captain Paul Stirling, dropped before he scored by Jason Holder in the slips, made 44 off 38 balls with five boundaries and a six. Stirling was out at 73-2. No. 3 batter Andy McBrine, after taking four wickets, scored 59 off 100 balls before he edged behind. He was out at 152-3 and eventually given a second straight man of the match award. That also earned him man of the series. His offspin earned 10 of the West Indies' 30 wickets in the series.

No. 4 Harry Tector notched a third half-century in three matches with his 52 off 76 balls. Tector lifted Ireland to the brink of victory when he was out at 197-6 in the 42nd over.

Two wickets in three balls by Akeal Hosein added some late drama, but tailender Craig Young completed Ireland's triumph with a boundary for the match and series with 5.1 overs to spare. The West Indies won the first ODI by defending 269 runs, lost the second on Thursday after making 229.

Djokovic heads for Belgrade after deportation from Australia

AP ■ DUBAI

Novak Djokovic was heading home to Serbia on Monday after his deportation from Australia over its required COVID-19 vaccination ended the No. 1-ranked men's tennis player's hopes of defending his Australian Open title.

An Emirates plane carrying him from Australia landed in Dubai early Monday, and Djokovic was later seen on board a plane due to land in the Serbian capital of Belgrade at 12:10 CET. His lawyers had argued in an Australian court on Sunday that he should be allowed to stay in the country and compete in the tournament under a medical exemption due to a coronavirus infection last month. Djokovic has won nine Australian Open titles, including three in a row, and a total of 20 Grand Slam singles trophies, tied with rivals Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal for the most in the history of men's tennis. Federer is not playing while recovering from injury, and Nadal is the only former Australian Open men's champion in the tournament that began Monday.



Djokovic's visa was initially canceled on Jan. 6 by a border official who decided he didn't qualify for a medical exemption from Australia's rules for unvaccinated visitors. He was exempted from the tournament's vaccine rules because he had been infected with the virus within the previous six months.

He won an appeal to stay for the tournament, but Australia's immigration minister later revoked his visa.

OSAKA, NADAL ADVANCE IN AUSTRALIA

AP ■ MELBOURNE

The first test of Naomi Osaka's new approach to tennis might have been when she completely whiffed an overhead to give her opponent a break point on Day 1 of the no-Novak-Djokovic Australian Open.

Osaka didn't chuck her racket. She didn't roll her eyes. She smiled.

"There are situations where I previously would get upset. But at this point in my life, like, I'm here because I want to be here and because I find that it's fun for me," Osaka said. "Might as well enjoy it while I still can."

In Osaka's mind, the drama involving nine-time champion Djokovic's deportation on the eve of the Australian Open was



something for the players in the men's draw to worry about. Her title defense began smoothly enough: She won the first five games on the way to a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Camila Osorio on the main court.

With so much attention on the 11-day saga of Djokovic's attempt to participate in the year's first Grand Slam tournament, and bid for a fourth consecutive title at Melbourne Park, the returns of Osaka and Rafael Nadal have been

overshadowed.

Osaka wasn't bothered by that. Nadal didn't seem to be put off by it, either, renewing his bid for a record 21st Grand Slam singles title with a 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 win over Marcos Giron.

"Growing up, I've looked up to him," said Giron, a 28-year-old from the U.S.

"He's one of the absolute legends of the game." Nadal is tied with Djokovic and Roger Federer with 20 major sin-

gles titles each, the most in the history of men's tennis. With Djokovic unable to defend his crown in Melbourne because he didn't meet Australia's strict COVID-19 vaccination criteria, the door is slightly more ajar to Nadal.

Osaka's main concern, meanwhile, is winning a fifth major title, and her third at the Australian Open.

"To be completely honest, it didn't really affect me," Osaka said about what went on with Djokovic.

"My goal, like even before this whole situation, is to just focus on myself more, what I need to do to become better."

"Me, I'm a tennis player. I'll focus on my matches. You as, I guess, an audience, focus on whatever is in the news, no?"

Real Madrid tops Athletic 2-0 to win Spanish Super Cup

AP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid won't be going a second consecutive season without a title.

After failing to lift a trophy under Zinedine Zidane last season, Carlo Ancelotti's Madrid secured the Spanish Super Cup with a 2-0 win over Athletic Bilbao on Sunday in Saudi Arabia. Luka Modric and Karim Benzema scored a goal in each half of the final as Madrid comfortably defeated the defending champions to reinforce its status as the top team in Spain this season.

Madrid has already beaten Barcelona twice — including in the

Super Cup semifinals — and Atlético Madrid once, and is more than 15 points ahead of both rivals halfway through the Spanish league season. Ancelotti has also led Madrid to the knockout stage of the Champions League.

Madrid went without a trophy for the first time in more than a decade last season under Zidane.

"This is motivation for us to keep going," Ancelotti said. "We have to keep competing like this." Madrid's 12th Super Cup title moves the club only one behind Barcelona, the competition's most successful team. Athletic was seeking its fourth Super Cup trophy.

It was Madrid's second Super Cup title since the competition was moved to Saudi Arabia in 2020. It had won the first edition of the tournament in the Middle East country by beating Atlético in the final.

The Super Cup returned to Spain in 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic. The Spanish soccer federation has had to defend itself from criticism from human rights groups for its decision to play in Saudi Arabia in a deal reportedly worth 30 million euros (\$34 million) a year through 2029.

Athletic was seeking its second consecutive title after defeating Barcelona in last year's final. It beat



Atlético in this year's semifinal in the revamped "Final Four" format.

Modric opened the scoring with a curling shot into the top corner after being set up by forward Rodrygo just inside the area in the 38th minute. Benzema added to the lead by converting a 51st-minute penalty kick after a handball determined by video review. Athletic had a chance to move closer in the final minutes but Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois saved Raúl García's penalty kick with his left foot. Madrid defender Eder Militao was sent off for the handball that prompted the penalty.

"We could have gotten back into

the game but Courtois ended our chances with that save," Athletic defender Oscar de Marcos said.

"It's a shame but we have to be proud. It's not easy to make it to these finals. We competed against great teams." Madrid's triumph gave veteran Brazil defender Marcelo a record-tying 23rd title with the club since he arrived in 2006, joining Paco Gento. It moved him ahead of former central defender Sergio Ramos, who is now with Paris Saint-Germain. It is Marcelo's fifth Spanish Super Cup title. He entered the match as a substitute in the 86th and lifted the trophy as team captain.