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MEET ALLAM GAARI PELLIKUTHURU RUKSHAR DHILLON
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AAP PICKS BHAGWANT MANN FOR PUNJAB, SAYS HE SCORED 93% IN TELEVOTE

Bhagwant Mann is Aam Aadmi Party (AAP's) chief ministerial candidate for Punjab, Arvind Kejriwal said today in a dramatic reveal of the results of the televoting drive in which people were asked to phone in their choice for the top post. Bhagwant Mann, a two-time AAP MP from Sangrur, received more than 93 per cent of the votes cast through phone and WhatsApp, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal told reporters. More than 21 lakh people participated in the vote, AAP said. Around 3 per cent votes were in the name of Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu, Mr Kejriwal shared. Some even chose Mr Kejriwal, the Chief Minister of Delhi, but those votes were considered invalid.

TWEAKS IN BJP'S UP SEAT STRATEGY FOLLOW RASH OF DEFECTIONS

With just a few weeks to go for the Uttar Pradesh elections, the ruling BJP is busy making changes to its seat distribution strategy - being more generous with its allies as well as incumbent legislators than earlier planned, sources in the party have said. While it has announced 107 candidates for the 403-seat assembly, discussions are still underway for others. UP votes in seven phases starting February 10 with results on March 10. The BJP, which had earlier planned to drop as many as 100-150 MLAs, now finds itself in a spot after a string of defections led by former minister SP Maurya that has seen two more ministers and a clutch of MLAs switch sides to its main challenger Samajwadi Party.

PIT BULL MAULS BOY IN NOIDA, DOG'S OWNERS ARRESTED: POLICE

A pit bull mauled a child at Sadopur village in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar district on Monday while the owners of the dog looked on. According to the Badalpur Police, during an argument with the boy's family, the owners, identified as Ravinder and Saurabh, allegedly let the dog attack the minor. "A complaint was received from the minor's family member. The complainant was identified as Vaadi Manvir. We have arrested Ravinder and Saurabh, while one person named Jagat is on-the-run," said the police. The police have registered a case under relevant of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

THREE NAVY PERSONNEL KILLED IN EXPLOSION ON INS RANVIR AT MUMBAI DOCKYARD

Three Navy personnel were killed and 11 injured in an explosion on-board the Indian Naval Ship (INS) Ranvir at the Naval dockyard in Mumbai on Tuesday, officials said. The incident took place at 4.30 pm, they added. "In an unfortunate incident today at Naval Dockyard Mumbai, three naval personnel succumbed to injuries caused by an explosion in an internal compartment onboard INS Ranvir," the statement by the Indian Navy said. The ship's crew responded immediately and brought the situation under control quickly, it added. "Three sailors have been killed and 11 injured due to the incident. The names (of the victims) will be made public after informing the families about the incident," an official said.

Third wave may peak in next three weeks

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to peak much earlier than anticipated and may take a maximum of three more weeks, even though the share of rural districts in new caseloads has increased significantly since December, says a report.

The optimism comes from the massive decline in new caseloads in the top 15 districts which had the maximum infections, SBI Research said in a report on Tuesday. Infections in the top 15 districts have declined to 37.4 per cent in January, from 67.9 per cent in December. The report, however, admitted that 10 of these top 15 districts are major cities and among them Bengaluru and Pune still have higher infection rates. The overall share of rural districts in new cases has increased to 32.6 per cent in January, from the lowest of 14.4 per cent in December, the report noted.

2

Fewer pyres, less hospitalisation amid third wave surge in Telangana

■ *Deaths nearly 13 times less than the peak figures in the second wave*

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

Although the number of people infected by Covid-19 is quite high, available data suggests that only a small number of Covid-designated beds are presently occupied. Also, the number of pyres being lit is relatively less.

Even though there are breakthrough infections, with some getting infected multiple times, their intensity has been less.

During the peak, India witnessed 4,529 deaths per day on 18 May, when the number of reported cases was 2,67,334. On 6 May, India witnessed, 4,14,188 cases with the number of deaths at 3,915. On Tuesday, the country recorded 2,38,018 new cases and 310 deaths.

If we compare these numbers, the number of deaths is 13 times less than the day India reported the highest deaths of 4,529. Over the past one week, the average death rate was 364, with highest being 822, recorded on January 12.

2

No tableau for TS at New Delhi R-Day parade

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Republic Day tableaux of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states have been rejected. This year, only 12 states have received approval.

Permissions have been granted to the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Goa, Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Meghalaya and Karnataka. Permissions have also been granted to the Departments of Education, Skill Development, Aviation, Information, Post, Home, Water Energy and Culture.

TPCC chief Revanth Reddy blamed KCR for Telangana missing out on displaying a tableau at the Republic Day parade. He took to twitter and termed it as an 'achievement of KCR.'

2

23 flights cancelled in 2 days at RGIA

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Airlines are cancelling or postponing flights as many of their employees are falling sick with the coronavirus. At the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport here on Monday, 15 flights were cancelled.

On Tuesday eight flights were cancelled. At the time of publishing, three flights have been cancelled on Wednesday. Nearly 10 flights were delayed at RGIA on Monday and 22 flights were delayed on Tuesday.

Cancellations have been much higher in New Delhi where 183 flights have been cancelled from Monday to Wednesday. In Mumbai 141 flights have been cancelled from Monday to Wednesday.

Sources said that airlines are doing their best to accommodate passengers in spite of widespread problems. Many flights were cancelled in advance so that passengers can be alerted early. Sources said that all scheduled domestic flight operations will continue at the Hyderabad Airport and that passengers are requested to get in touch with the airline concerned for updated flight information.

Rely on KCR, Ministers tell distraught farmers

■ *Loss of chilli and other crops in Warangal dist* ■ *CM cancels Warangal tour in the last minute*

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Ministers deputed by Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao to undivided Warangal district on Tuesday were witness to the heart-rending plight of farmers who had lost harvest-ready crops due to unseasonal rains.

The Ministers asked them not to despair and assured them that the KCR government would support them in every way and extend compensation.

Although the Chief Minister himself wanted to visit the affected areas, along with Agriculture Minister S Niranjan Reddy and other local people's representatives and officials, his programme was cancelled in the last minute. However, he asked Ministers to go round the affected areas and give him a first-hand account of the crop losses suffered by farmers.

TRS Ministers deputed by Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao assessing crop losses in undivided Warangal district on Tuesday

2

ENGLISH MEDIUM IN GOVT SCHOOLS

KCR's move bristles with political questions, admin gaps

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The decision taken by the KCR government on Monday to introduce English as the medium of instruction in government schools from the next academic year has triggered politically-motivated questions and highlighted administrative hiccups in implementing it. The moot political question is: Will TDP president N. Chandrababu Naidu, Jana Sena president Pavan Kalyan and BJP leaders question Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, considering that they had previously slammed AP Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy for taking similar decision.

Two years ago, when Jagan took a decision to introduce English medium in government schools, Chandrababu, Pavan Kalyan and other leaders strongly objected to it. BJP leader and Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu had also objected to it, saying it was not acceptable "at the cost of Telugu language". Chandrababu and Pavan Kalyan had said that introducing English medium in government schools was a "thoughtless decision." Chandrababu went on to claim Jagan's decision would "destroy Telugu language and literature". Pavan then taunted: "Will you also introduce English translation of suprabhatam at the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam?" In fact, Pavan then advised Jagan to "learn from his Telangana counterpart K. Chandrasekhar Rao how to protect the Telugu language".

A section of the media had also attacked Jagan for his decision to introduce English medium in government schools.

Now, the equations have changed, with KCR's decision to introduce English medium in government schools.

Although both TDP and Jana Sena have no presence in Telangana, as parties representing Telugus they can question KCR's decision. Political observers are awaiting the reactions of Chandrababu and Pavan Kalyan

KCR misleading people: Revanth

KCR was misleading people in the name of English medium education, TPCC president Revanth Reddy said on Tuesday. The state government was not issuing notification for recruiting teachers. "How can English medium education be imparted without appointing teachers?" he asked.

2

NGT notices to TS govt on illegal Mining in Hyd suburbs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Chennai Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has inquired about the irregularities in the mining zones located in the suburbs of Hyderabad on Tuesday.

2

Passport centres to handle only 50% appointments

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In view of the Omicron spread, only 50% of the appointments will be handled at all Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs), Passport Seva Laghu Kendra (PSLK) and 14 Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (PoPSKs) until 31 January.

Regional Passport Officer, Dasari Balaiah, said: "The reduction in the number of appointments handled at PSKs, PSLK and PoPSKs under Regional Passport Office, Hyderabad In the wake of prevailing COVID-19 situation, along with the looming threat of the new variant Omicron being identified in the country, and with a view to prevent Passport Seva Kendras (PSICs)/ Passport Seva Laghu Kendra (PSLK) and Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (PoPSKs) functioning under Regional Passport Office, Hyderabad, from turning into super spreaders of COVID-19". He said that only medical and genuine travel emergencies supported by proper documents would be entertained against the suspended appointments due to Covid-19 at the Public Enquiry Counter at Regional Passport Office, Hyderabad, near Prashant Theatre, Secunderabad. He added that the Public Enquiry Counter in the Regional Passport Office, Hyderabad would also function from 09:30 AM to 12:30 PM, instead of 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM till 31.01.2022.

Intelligence alerts Telangana BJP leaders
PAGE-2

Three Maoists killed in Mulugu district

PNS ■ MULUGU

Three Maoists were killed in an encounter with the police at Karriguttalu Forest area under Venkatapuram mandal in Mulugu district on Tuesday. It is on Chhattisgarh border. Mulugu Superintendent of Police Sagramsingh Ganpatrao Patil said, in a press statement, on a reliable information that a large gather of Communist Party of India-Maoist group (Telangana State committee) had been planning to abduct and kill prominent politicians and contractors, a joint operation by Chhattisgarh State police, CRPF and Telangana State police was launched on Sunday in the bordering areas of Mulugu-Bijapur districts.

He claimed that an exchange of fire between the Maoists and the police parties took place in Karriguttalu Forest area. The police, during the combing operation after the firing stopped, three dead bodies, including that of a woman, were found.

Freshers in high demand with multiple offers

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

The immediate consequence of 'The Great Resignation' - trend of 25-30% of employees quitting tech majors - - is that companies are now looking at hiring freshers. Most of the employees on-boarded are entry-level and junior-level candidates.

As per Indeed job site's India Hiring Tracker report, nearly 81% of employers hired entry-level candidates and 66% hired junior level candidates during HY-2, as compared to 69% and 57%, respectively, during HY-1.

Bharani Kumar Aroll of Hysea said, "Big companies TCS, Wipro and Infosys are planning to recruit nearly 1 lakh employees this fiscal. Junior resources are highly sought-after especially the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 batches are in high demand. They are having multiple offers and this will go on for a couple of years. These youngsters need not be trained on legacy systems and just can get on the digital technology which is driving the demand. Just about 20% of them are employment-ready and companies are gearing to equip them to make corporate-ready by taking up the finishing schools programs".

Nearly 81% of employers hired entry-level candidates and 66% hired junior level candidates during HY-2, as compared to 69% and 57%, respectively, during HY-1.

As per Monster.com, the demand for entry level/freshers and intermediate roles saw the highest monthly growth at 2%, as compared to other experience levels from November to December.

Freshers are in high demand for tech jobs and many already have multiple offers in hand.

Experts opine only 20% are employable and finishing schools' program gains prominence

Wipro announced that company was looking to hire 30,000 freshers in FY23 and added that the fresher hiring numbers were pegged at about 17,500 for FY22.Wipro also stated that it was on course to onboard over 70 per cent more fresh talent from the campus in FY22 against the previous year. Sashi Kumar, Head of Sales, Indeed India, said:"COVID-19 has led employers and employees to introspect their career and work priorities and the sentiment is rightly reflected. More employers are hiring in the second half of the year and businesses changing their hiring priorities from sales roles to data analytics roles indicate that businesses are well past the recovery phase and are poised for strong growth".

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:
Pausa & Sukla Paksha
Tithi : Pratipada : Jan 18 05:18 AM to Jan 19 06:54 AM
Dwitiya : Jan 19 06:54 AM to Jan 20 08:05 AM
Nakshatram : Ashlesha: Jan 19 06:42 AM to Jan 20 08:24 AM
Rahukalam : 12:26 PM to 1:50 PM
Yamagandam : 8:16 AM to 9:40 AM
Varjyam : 08:25 PM to 10:07 PM
Gulika : 11:03 AM to 12:26 PM
Amritakalam : None
Abhijit Muhurtham : Nil

HYDRABAD WEATHER

Forecast: CLOUDY
Temp: 28°C
Humidity: 51%
Sunrise: 6:53 AM
Sunset: 6:00 PM
Updated JANUARY 18, 2021 5:00 PM

Will Pawan help Jagan have the last laugh in 2024?

PIN POINT

Although Jana Sena Party Chief Pawan Kalyan appears to be sincere in his efforts to give a concrete shape to his new political outfit whose prime goal is to unseat the YSR Congress government, circumstances are pushing him into tricky situations that could water down the efforts towards opposition unity being made by like-minded parties and social groups.

One predominant view is that sincere efforts at opposition unity might yield fruits, given the resentment among various sections of society. Even as families below poverty line (BPL) are enjoying the benefits of welfare schemes, there are many from the same section of society fuming at the government for imposing unbearable financial burden on them. It is inevitable for any government to taste mixed responses from different sections of people and those elements do impact the political prospects of the ruling YSR Congress Party.

The state government seems to be prioritising those issues which had resulted in conflicts with various sections of people. It government generally gives priority to welfare schemes that cover large numbers of voters across the state. It believes that those who benefit from welfare schemes would naturally vote for the ruling party.

The state government has already declared that more than rupees one lakh crore of money has been deposited into the bank accounts of lakhs of beneficiaries. It has suggested that the scheme would continue only if the YSR Congress retains power.

As for retaining power, YSRCP is in a 'do or die ' situation in Andhra Pradesh as it has already boasted that it would remain in power "for three decades".

So, if there is lack of coordination among opposition parties, including TDP, BJP and JSP for the 2024 elections, it would be a poor show on the part of the opposition with possible split of anti-establishment votes.

The ruling party may be least bothered about disgruntled sections of society who are paying huge amounts as taxes and get nothing in return, even in the name of welfare measures, including 'Nava Ratnaalu', taken up by the ruling party. Will the angry voter spare the government? This is moot question for the five crore population of AP.

Film actor Pawan Kalyan seems to be anxious to launch a stir against the Jaganmohan Reddy government's policies, perhaps thinking that all-out efforts are needed to unseat the YSRC government. There was a big blow to his plans. An unexpected incident took place with mega star Chiranjeevi, elder brother of Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan, meeting Chief Minister Jaganmohan Reddy in the name of discussing the hike in ticket prices in cinema theatres across AP.

M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

The general public is of the opinion that the brothers are working unitedly for the common cause: unseating the ruling party. In any case, the talk of a stir aimed at ruling YSRC has been diluted by the mega star's meeting with the Chief Minister.

Acting swiftly, YSRC has kept the rumour mills active with talk that Rajya Sabha berth is being offered to Chiranjeevi. This development has done enormous damage to Pawan Kalyan's professed plans against the government.

Now it appears as the younger brother is struggling to emerge an alternative to the present regime headed by Jaganmohan Reddy, the elder brother has acted against the spirit of efforts aimed at unity by meeting the Chief Minister. There are hardly any takers for Chiranjeevi's categorical statement of not accepting RS seat given by ruling party. Finally, Chiranjeevi had to announce that he would not return to politics.

It may be recalled that Parimal Natvani, aide of Mukesh Ambani of Reliance Industries, had been given RS seat as per Jagan's understanding with Mukesh.

Kapus in Andhra Pradesh lack a new leader who can command the community's respect with his sheer confidence. At a time when people expected Chiranjeevi to work hard for helping Pawan emerge as that kind of a leader, the mega star had lunch with Jagan. If elections are held with there being no unifying factor among the opposition in AP, it would lead to a split in anti-government votes to the advantage of the ruling party.

So, if there is lack of coordination among opposition parties, including TDP, BJP and JSP for the 2024 elections, it would be a poor show on the part of the opposition with possible split of anti-establishment votes.

The absence of a united opposition came in handy for the Congress in 2009 Assembly polls in undivided AP, with YS Rajasekhara Reddy retaining power, though course with least margin. The presence of Praja Rajyam Party (PRP) headed by Chiranjeevi contributed much for his political persona in 2009, as it got 70 lakh votes all over the state and got 18 Assembly seats. TRS chief K.Chandrasekhar Rao also observed that the presence of PRP in the electoral fray of 2009 was the reason for his party's poor show then. The TRS got only 10 seats then.

TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu recently claimed that he would have become chief minister had Chiranjeevi not launched political party in 2009. The Congress party had got only 8 seats more than half way mark (148+8=156) in the total 294- member House. The final tally would have been different if there was a direct fight between the Congress and the united opposition i.e. without any split of anti-government votes, reasoned Chandrababu.

If a united opposition is not ensured for the 2024 polls, and if Pawan Kalyan chooses to contest without having alliance with principal opposition TDP, it may simply be a repeat of what happened in 2009!

Kakatiya period sculptures found accidentally in Nagarkurnool

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two beautiful sculptures of the Kakatiya period lying among the bushes were accidentally found by archaeologists at the famous Saivite Temple in Umamaheswaram in Nagarkurnool.

Nagarkurnool is considered to be the northern gate of Srisailam.

The two sculptures, a life-size sculpture of Siva and a Nandi idol carved out of black basalt stone, were seen by Dr E. Sivanagireddy, archaeologist and CEO, Pleach India Foundation by chance during his exploration at the Anjaneya temple at the foot of the hill on Tuesday conducted as part of the heritage awareness programme 'Preserve Heritage for Posterity.' The Saivite sculpture was found broken at the head and hands and the idol of Nandi too was damaged but the sculpture was decorated with ornamentation representing the artistic dexterity of the mature phase of Kakatiya art that flourished during the 14th century AD.

Sriramoju Haragopal, Convenor, Kotta Telangana Charitra Brindam, has confirmed that the mutilated Saivite sculpture represented Veerabhadra based on the style of art and iconography and based on a similar find at Devaracharla in Nalgonda district of the same period, Reddy said. Citing a reference to an inscription of the last Kakatiya ruler Prataparudra dated 1320 AD found inside the temple, Dr Reddy said that the inscription recorded donation of lands in 16 villages for the maintenance of Umamaheswara temple which proved Kakatiya patronage.

Dr Sivanagireddy disclosed that a 14th-century inscription at Umamaheswaram records the installation of the sculptures of Parvati, Chennakesava, Mahishasura mardhini, Veerabhadra and Nandikeswara (bull) by one Sadananda Swamy and was carved by two brothers, China Sarabhayya and Peda Sarabhayya.

He claimed that the sculptures of Veerabhadra and Nandi found by him in the bushes were none other than the ones mentioned in the above inscription.

The other three sculptures of Parvati, Chennakesava and Mahishamardhini are now seen inside the Mahamandapa of the Umamaheswara Temple.

He lamented the neglect of an inscription of the Recharla Chief Madanayaka dated 1377 AD. It was broken into four pieces and found scattered by the roadside at the Anjaneya Temple.

Dr Sivanagi Reddy sensitised the temple priests and the local community on the historical significance and archaeological importance of the sculptures and appealed to the authorities to preserve them for posterity by installing them on pedestals.

Fewer pyres, less...

Continued from page 1

Dr Sravan Kumar, pulmonologist at Varsha Hospital, said: "Most of the deaths being reported are among those unvaccinated. The number of Omicron is less likely to end up in the hospital than cases of Delta. The illness is relatively less severe not just because of the variant but also can be attributed to the excellent vaccination drive. Now, the onus is on the people to ensure that they follow Covid-appropriate behavior to reduce the spread".

Doctors point out that the onus is now on people as the Delta variant is still there in the community and is not replaced by Omicron. Dr Raja Rao of Gandhi Hospital said: "As this variant is highly infectious, the spread is more. Even in the coming days, it will spread, but because it is mild, hospitalisation may be less. A lot of people are asymptomatic and mild; all they need is bed rest, better hydration and may be paracetamol only if required.

UN Tourism Award won by Pochampally handed over to CM

ML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

Tourism Minister V. Srinivas Goud handed over the UNWTO Certificate of World's Best Tourism Village won by the Bhoodan Pochamapally village in Yadadri Bhongir district to Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao here on Tuesday. Srinivas Goud and Tourism Development Corporation MD B. Manohar Rao called on the Chief Minister at Pragathi Bhavan and handed over the certificate.

KCR felicitated the Minister with a shawl and congratulated Tourism Department officials for the achievement.

Pochampally was adjudged the best from 170 proposals from 75 countries in the competition organised by the UN's World Tourism Organisation in the Best Tourism Village category. The award was presented on December 2 at an event held at Madrid and was received by Indian Embassy official Suman Sekhar. Srinivas participated in the virtual award presentation programme from here.

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao receiving the UNWTO Certificate of World's Best Tourism Village won by Bhoodan Pochamapally village in Yadadri Bhongir district from Tourism Minister V Srinivas Goud on Tuesday

From India, apart from Bhoodan Pochampally, entries were also sent by Meghalaya and Madhya Pradesh.

Srinivas said that in the last seven and a half years after the formation of Telangana, the state's tourism sector has won recognition nationally and internationally.

DK Aruna's daughter files complaint against PVP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP vice-president DK Aruna's daughter Shruti Reddy has filed a complaint against YCP leader and prominent businessman Potluri Vara Prasad at the Banjara Hills police station.

The complaint said that PVP follower Balaji and another person entered the house of Aruna's daughter Shruti Reddy and smashed the flakes along the retaining wall with a JCB which she had built herself.

She also alleged in her complaint that she was threatened. Police registered a case against PVP and Balaji, who was present at the spot, and others who assisted him.

Many cases have been registered against PVP in the past. Buyers of villas built by his venture do not want to remodel them, and those who once bought a villa have clashed with him over renovation. They have also lodged a complaint with the police.

The incident became controversial after PVP released dogs on the police at his house when police came to

Intelligence alerts Telangana BJP leaders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP has received an alert from Intelligence to be careful as some unknown people have been visiting the Telangana BJP office frequently. The Intelligence asked state BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Union Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy and BJP leaders who visit the TS BJP office and important state leaders to take adequate security measures as there is a danger from terrorists in view of R-Day celebrations on January 26.

After the alert by state Intelligence, the BJP office beefed up security on Tuesday. The office authorities are not allowing in unknown persons even if they are party workers.

The BJP office authorities are also not allowing journalists if they are not familiar to the party authorities. They are allowing in only leaders and office staff inside the office now.

It may be recalled that the BJP decided to conduct virtual press meets and had asked its leaders and cadres except important ones not to come to the office till further notice due to surging corona cases.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Telangana BJP secretary Gujjula Premender Reddy said they have almost closed the state office due to corona.

He asked TRS working president KT Ramarao not to speak as he wished on the security of BJP leaders at least now onwards as Intelligence has cautioned BJP leaders to be alert.

He said that almost every terrorist act across the country has its roots in Hyderabad.

No tableau for...

Continued from page 1

TRS leaders came down heavily on Revanth and asked if "Congress had made a BJP stooge the PCC president." TRS leader Krishank Manne in a tweet said, "When States are questioning the Centre for rejecting Republic Day tableaux, your Telangana PCC chief instead of questioning the BJP blames State Governments. Who is the Congress fighting?"

NGT notices to TS Govt on...

Continued from page 1

The NGT issued notices to the Union Environment Ministry, the Telangana government, the TPCB, and the collectors of Ranga Reddy and Yadadri districts. The NGT directed the collectors of Ranga Reddy and Yadadri districts to conduct inspections. The NGT also inquired into the petitions of the victims of illegal mining.

The NGT asked the state what action it took against illegal excavations. The NGT tribunal set up a joint committee to assess the damage to the environment caused by illegal mining.

The committee includes representatives of the Union Environment Department, the Telangana Mining Department, the TPCB, and collectors of Ranga Reddy and Yadadri districts.The NGT has directed the panel to file a report by February 28. The next hearing is scheduled on February 28.

Rely on KCR, Ministers tell distraught farmers

Continued from page 1

Niranjan Reddy, District and Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao, MLAs, Rythu Bandhu Coordination Committee Chairman Palla Rajeswar Reddy, local bodies' representatives and agriculture department officials went round Parakala, Bhupalapalli, Narsampeta constituencies.

The Ministers, who had reached Parakala in a special helicopter, along with MLAs, went to Nagaram, Mallakkapeta villages to assess the crop damage. From there, they went to Narsakkapalli in Nadikuda mandal and the Nadikuda mandal headquarters. Farmers told the Ministers that their entire chilli crop had been destroyed due to rains. They said they had invested nearly Rs.10 lakh, though it was beyond their capacity as the hybrid variety of chilly commanded good price in the market. They conveyed to the Ministers that they would have to end their lives if the government did not come to their rescue.

Niranjan Reddy assured the farmers that they would extend maximum assistance possible on behalf of the government and criticized that farmers were not getting a fair deal due to the irrational and lopsided agricultural policies of the Centre. The KCR government alone remained committed to welfare of farmers in the country and was implementing free power supply, Rythu Bandhu, Rythu Bhima schemes.

The Ministers later went to assess the damage in agricultural fields in Regonda mandal in the Bhupalapalli constituency. They observed that the hailstorm had caused heavy damage to chilli farmers in Narsampeta, Regonda, Parakala, Duggondi, Chennaraopeta and other mandals.The Ministers faced restive farmers in Ippaltanda of Narsampeta mandal. These farmers complained that the government had not been paying attention to their issues and raised slogans seeking justice.

In Parakala mandal, some women farmers were in tears and fell on the feet of Ministers seeking succor from the government.

Niranjan Reddy asked farmers not to lose hope and assured them that the state government would do its best to help them. It was unfortunate that chilli crop ready for harvest had been damaged due to unseasonal rains. The damage was extensive in Narsampata, Parakala, Bhupalapalli, Manthani areas. He told farmers that they were visiting the affected areas on the instructions of Chief Minister and gathering details of loss suffered by farmers.

Steps would be taken to do justice to farmers. The gravity of the situation would be taken to the notice of Chief Minister who was committed to the welfare of farmers, they said.

Govt not taking steps to regulate fees Shabbir

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former minister Mohammed Ali Shabbir has alleged that the TRS government was not serious in regulating the exorbitant fees being collected by private educational institutions. "The decision taken by the Telangana Cabinet to constitute a Cabinet Sub-Committee and then draft a new law to regulate fees in private educational institutions is proof that it has failed to prevent looting by private schools and colleges. It also means that the Admission and Fee Regulatory Committee constituted by the Government was a farce and it could not stop extortion by private schools and colleges," Shabbir Ali alleged in a statement on Tuesday.

NDA Women Intake Same As Last Year. SC Seeks Explanation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Tuesday asked the Centre to explain why, despite its orders, the intake of women candidates in National Defence Academy (NDA) for year 2022 has been restricted to 19, the figure same as last year. It asked the Centre to place the figures on record about the total number of candidates including women who have appeared in the NDA examination 2021.

for entrance tests for Rashtriya Indian Military College (RIMC) and for Rashtriya Military School (RMS). A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and M M Sundresh told Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, that the government will have to explain why the figure of 19 women has been fixed for year 2022 as per the notification issued by UPSC.

AICC Secretaries take VH's version on Premsagar issue

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The AICC secretaries in-charge of Telangana Congress, Bose Raju and Srinivasa Krishnan, visited senior Congress leader V. Hanumantha Rao's residence along with TPCC Disciplinary Action Committee chairman G. Chinna Reddy on Tuesday in view of VH's letter to AICC chief Sonia Gandhi seeking disciplinary action against former MLC K. Premsagar Rao. It is learnt that they took VH's version on the issue while discussing several issues including the digital membership drive.

Speaking to The Pioneer, VH said that Premsagar Rao and his followers had insulted him when he went to Adilabad district as per the directions of TPCC chief Revanth Reddy.

He said that he had lodged a complaint with the TPCC Disciplinary Action Committee. But there was no action although the incident took place nearly two months ago. However, the Disciplinary Action Committee served notices on other leaders responding to complaints lodged by others.

KCR's move...

Continued from page 1

Not a single teacher had been appointed under the TRS government as KCR was focused on giving jobs to unemployed politicians, he alleged. KCR enacting drama: Sanjay Declaring that the BJP had no objection to introducing English medium, Telangana BJP chief Sanjay asked the CM to explain how English medium schools could function as there were no Vidya volunteers and teachers in schools.

KCR was enacting the English medium drama to threaten corporate schools and extort money from them, he claimed.

Third wave may peak in next three weeks

Continued from page 1

In comparison to the US, this is too low, where the new cases have soared by 6.9 times even though it has double-vaccinated over 80 per cent of its eligible population.

Another point of optimism stems from the fact that India has fully vaccinated 64 per cent of the eligible population, while 89 per cent of the eligible population have been given the first dose. Currently the 7-day median average of vaccination is 70 lakh. Rural vaccination share in total vaccination is now at 83 per cent, indicating that the rural populace may be largely protected in the current wave.

Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, MP, Telangana and Uttarakhand have already vaccinated more than 70 per cent of their eligible population with double doses. However, Punjab, UP and Jharkhand are still lagging. Significantly, new cases in Mumbai seem to have peaked (20,971 cases on January 7) but cases in other districts (Bengaluru, Pune, etc) are showing an increase in daily new numbers.

So, if other districts also implement strict measures and control the spread, then the national peak may come within two-three weeks from now, Soumyakanti Ghosh, the chief economic advisor at SBI said in the report.

The rural caseload is led by Andhra, Bihar, Himachal, Jammu & Kashmir, Odisha and Rajasthan, and rural vaccination is lower in Arunachal, Gujarat, Haryana and Karnataka.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin	₹231
Without Skin	₹190
Broiler at Farm	₹120

EGG RATES ₹/100

HYDERABAD	435
VIJAYAWADA	455
VISAKHAPATNAM	450
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.35

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Demolition drive continues

Altogether, 13 illegal constructions were demolished on Tuesday and 10 on Monday

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI

The Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) officials, launched a special drive to demolish illegal constructions within its limits in the district. The demolition drive was taken up with the cooperation of the District Task Force, Municipal and Police officials. On the first day on Monday, 10 illegal constructions were demolished. The drive continued on Tuesday and 13 more illegal constructions were demolished in the municipal limits of Sankarpally, Badangpet, Dundigal, Boduppal and Pocharam municipal corporations in HMDA limits. Altogether, Task Force officials have taken action against 23 illegal constructions in two days. The demolished illegal constructions include 4 in Sankarpally municipality, 3 in Dundigal, 3 in Badangpet, 2 in Pocharam, and one in Boduppal municipal limits. In this connection, notices were issued to the concerned planning officers of the municipalities asking them why they had not identified the illegal constructions at the

beginning stage. It may be noted that HMDA Commissioner Aravind Kumar had set up four teams to take up the demolition task. The teams conducted field surveys for four days and submitted reports 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.

Panjagutta graveyard steel bridge to open tomorrow

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A new steel bridge which will provide direct entry into the Punjagutta graveyard here will be inaugurated by Animal Husbandry Minister T. Srinivas Yadav on Thursday.

The GHMC had taken up construction of the 140-metre steel bridge to provide an access road to the Punjaguta graveyard opposite Chutneys Hotel. The GHMC is also constructing an exit road from the graveyard via Banjara Hills.

This bridge constructed at a cost of Rs 9 crore will ease traffic movement from NFCL Junction to KBR Park Junction and will prevent congestion at the existing gate of the graveyard.

As traffic on this route is very dense the GHMC constructed the dedicated access road to the graveyard by providing a steel bridge on the exit road from Road No: 1, Banjara Hills. It also widened the road

from the main gate of the graveyard to HT Tower.

City clubs fail to adhere to fire safety norms

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

After the massive fire at the Secunderabad Club, fire safety officers are inspecting clubs across the city to ascertain whether they comply with fire safety regulations.

Fire safety officials identified 15 major clubs in the city which were inspected on Monday and Tuesday. These are the Country Club, Jubilee Club, Gymkhana Club and FNCC Club.

Officers found that most of them did not comply with fire safety regulations and notices were issued to them. Some clubs had fire safety equipment that did not work while some had only gas sprayers.

Fire officers say that even though there was fire safety equipment at the FNCC club which was inspected on Tuesday, they were not working.

Some clubs do not renew the NoC regarding fire safety. The fire NoC has to be renewed every five years.

Fire Safety Officer Prasad said, "On Monday, in Secunderabad division, five clubs were inspected and today three clubs. Many have 100 per cent of equipment but do not maintain them. We are issuing notices to clubs to comply with norms."

236 test positive at IIT Hyderabad

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As many as 236 persons including students, faculty and staff tested positive for Covid-19 at the Indian Institute of Technology-Hyderabad (IIT-H) campus as on Tuesday. According to sources at the campus, 186 students, 50 faculty and staff tested positive for Covid-19. Since the first case was reported on January 6, the number of Covid-19 cases continued to increase on the campus. On Tuesday, 13 persons tested positive for Covid-19. However, Of the 186 students, only 72 are in isolation at the isolation rooms, and the rest had recovered fully. While 100 of the recovered students were still in the camps, 14 of them left for their homes.About 100 faculty members and 100 staff members live in the quarters with their families, and the staff and faculty who tested positive were isolated at their own residencies. The institute has been making door delivery of all essential requirements in the isolation rooms and at the staff quarters who are in isolation.

TITA, Jai Makthal Trust launch AI-based learning system

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a first-of-its-kind initiative, the Telangana Information Technology Association (TITA) and the Jai Makthal Trust have launched an Artificial Intelligence-based digital learning system for children at the Anganwadi Centre in the Yedavelli village of Narayanpet district on Monday.

TITA and the Jai Makthal Trust chief Sundeep Kumar Makthala took the initiative to ensure that children at Anganwadi Centres could learn uninterrupted even during the raging pandemic. The initiative was launched in the presence of foreign dignitaries.

The Jai Makthal Trust which has taken up numerous initiatives in various sectors has taken up digital learning for the students of Anganwadi centres to identify talent in children and ensure continuous learning despite the pandemic.

The Trust and Edu Project Global Tech came together to provide digital learning for children.

The Edu project, which is known for its 'Kids Go Bagless' initiative, came forward to provide digital learning based on AI tools in the remote Makthal constituency.

The Jai Makthal Trust is coordinating with the NGO for the novel initiative. Trust president Sundeep Kumar handed over a Smart TV to the Anganwadi Centre.

Through digital learning, the children in Anganwadi centres will learn pre-school disciplines aided with AI and 3D images. Children's attendance can be marked online. The initiative is being hailed as home-based learning.

Speaking about the new project, Sundeep Makthala said the Trust was trying to ensure that children from marginalised sections were not deprived of learning due to the pandemic and also to make learning more effective using AI tools.

Amit from Skanda IT Solutions, V. Jitendra, Narayanpet TITA secretary Shruti and foreign dignitaries, were present on the occasion.

Oppo India signs pact with Bits Pilani to train employees

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Oppo India has signed a memorandum of understanding with BITS Pilani to improve the skills of its research and development (R&D) engineers with advanced technical knowledge.

The smartphone maker has its largest R&D centre in India in Hyderabad and with the partnership with BITS Pilani, it wants to help its employees acquire skill upgradation while focusing on innovations centric to advance technologies.Under the partnership Work Integrated Learning Programme (WILP) division of Bits Pilani will support Oppo India R&D engineers to strengthen their technical knowledge through various courses.

Cyberabad cops seize 214 kg ganja, arrest 5 culprits

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a special drive, the Shamshabad police team, along with Kothur police, in the Cyberabad commissionerate limits, arrested five inter-state drug peddlers and seized 214 kg of ganja from them on Monday.

According to police, ganja was purchased at Sileru in AP and was being smuggled to Maharashtra through Hyderabad. Totally, 10 persons, including 4 seekers from Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, were involved in the network. It was reported that four persons from Ahmednagar, to avoid police surveillance, were waiting in two cars at Thimmapur Cross Roads on NH-44 (on the outskirts of Hyderabad). The material was brought to that place by two other persons. It was reported that the ganja was purchased at Rs 3,000 per kg and it was sold at Rs 20,000 per kg .

Police arrested the Ahmednagar residents - Babasow Chandekar, Phukmali Tirumali Balu, Ganesh Nolari and Rajendra. Along with them, a Suryapet resident Maloth Vinod, who was one of the transporters from Bhadrachalam to Hyderabad outskirts was also arrested .Supplier in the deal Ravi from Warangal, other drivers Balaraj, Nagaraju and Ganesh are yet to be arrested. In all, the police seized 214 kg of ganja (two- kg packets of 107) and Rs 2.10 lakh cash from them. Cases were registered against the arrested persons.

SCR suspends MMTS services between January 18&21

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Due to operational reasons and maintenance activity, South Central Railway has decided to suspend some MMTS services connecting various stations in the city from January 18 to 21. A total of six trains from Lingampally to Hyderabad (numbers 47132, 47133, 47135, 47136, 47138 and 47139), five trains from Hyderabad to Lingampally (47109, 47111, 47112, 47116 and 47116), five trains from Falaknuma to Lingampally (numbers 47165, 47216, 47166, 47220 and 47170), and six trains from Lingampally to Falaknuma (numbers 47189, 47186, 47210, 47187, 47191 and 47192) will not be operated from January 18 to 21.

In addition, a few more trains, from Lingampally to Hyderabad (numbers 47129 and 47140), from Hyderabad to Lingampally (numbers 47105, 47110, 47114 and 47120), from Falaknuma to Lingampally (47153, 47164 and 47203), from Lingampally to Falaknuma (47176, 47190), from Lingampally to Secunderabad (47150) and from Secunderabad to Lingampally (47195) will not operate from January 19 to 21.

Over 15 govt employees test positive for Covid-19

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Government employees working in ad hoc secretariat relocated to Burgula Rama krishna Rao Bhavan have been hesitating to discharge their duties freely as several of their colleagues have tested positive for Covid-19. Over 15 government employees posted in the GAD and Education Departments tested positive for Covid-19 when tests were run on them on Tuesday.

The affected include Education Secretary Sandeep Kumar Sultania. As a result, all those who are working in the department have been advised of home isolation. Similarly, three personal secretaries and some others in the office of the GAD tested positive for the virus. The principal secretary Vikas Raj has been sent to treatment in home isolation.

Night temp likely to dip in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

After two days of cloudy sky and rainfall, Hyderabad might witness a dip in the night temperature for the next couple of days. The average minimum temperature of 16.4 degree Celsius was recorded in the city in the early hours of Tuesday, which is at least two degree less than expected. Serilingampally recorded the lowest minimum temperature of 13.4 degree Celsius.

According to the forecast by Telangana State Development Planning Society (TSDPS), the minimum temperature in various places in the city, especially the outskirts, can dip by two to three degrees. The night temperature in areas including Begumpet, Malakpet, Jubilee Hills, Saroornagar and Karwan are likely to fall below 15 degree Celsius on Thursday and Friday.

5 held in 2 road accident cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Five persons who were involved in two fatal road accidents in Cyberabad limits were arrested by the police. In the first case, three persons Shashank Shekar, Manabendra Roy and Indukuri Srikanth were arrested by the Gachibowli police. In the early hours of December 31, Shekar, who was driving a car allegedly under the influence of alcohol, hit a cyclist Nithin Agarwal (45), who died the next day. Roy and Srikanth were sitting in the car and allowed Shekar to drive the car knowing well that he was intoxicated. In the other case, the KPHB police arrested two persons Odde Ravinder, driver of a tipper lorry and Kunchapu Venkatesh, the vehicle owner.

Scientists shed new light on defences against precancerous cells

M L MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

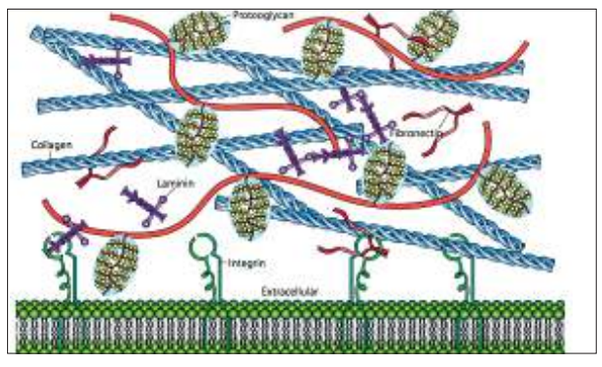
The stiffer the network of proteins and other molecules thasurround, support, and give structure to cells and tissues in the body (called ECM or extracellular matrix), the greater the susceptibility of a person to cancer, going by a TIFR study.

Researchers at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Hyderabad claim to have established a link between the elasticity of extracellular matrix and their defence against mutant genes that could cause cancer.

The extracellular matrix (ECM) helps cells attach to, and communicate with, nearby cells, and plays an important role in cell growth, cell movement, and other cell functions. The ECM is subject to what is technically called 'oncogenic insults'. Oncogene refers to a gene that is a mutated (changed) form of a gene involved in normal cell growth. Oncogenes may cause thegrowth of cancer cells. Mutations in genes that become oncogenes can be inherited or caused by being exposed to substances in the

environment that cause cancer. In their study, the researchers showed how the elasticity of\ extracellular matrix (ECM) of epithelial tissue affects their fundamental defence against such oncogenic insults. ECM forms the gel containing proteins and minerals in which our tissues are embedded. Diseases like obesity, fibrosis etc. are known

to cause pathological stiffening of this matrix. Patients with such conditions show heightened susceptibility to



cancer, though little is known as to what could be the cause, according to the researchers.

Shilpa P. Pothapragada (Ph.D. student at Tamal Das' lab in TIFR Hyderabad) and colleagues deciphered how ECM elasticity plays a decisive role in determining the outcome of this defence, also known as Epithelial Defence against Cancer (EDAC). They used Ras oncogenic mutation to create precancerous cells which when in contact with their normal counterparts, are forced to move out of the tissue only when the ECM is soft. When they used an ECM which is stiff instead, non-cancerous epithelial cells could now no longer remove these precancerous cells. As a result of this, the precancerous cells

The extracellular matrix (ECM) helps cells attach to, and communicate with, nearby cells, and plays an important role in cell growth, cell movement, and other cell functions.

can freely expand and grow without restriction. The scientists looked at molecular players to understand what leads to this failure in precancerous cell removal. When the ECM is soft, an actin crosslinking protein called Filamin comes to the interface between normal and precancerous cells in order to help push out the precancerous cells. Actin crosslinking proteins organise actin filaments into dynamic and complex subcellular scaffolds that orchestrate important mechanical functions, including cell motility\ and adhesion.

On a stiff ECM, however, Filamin gets scavenged around the nucleus of the normal cell. Thus, there is not enough Filamin available to help extrude precancerous cells.

The observations of this study explain the link between ECM stiffness and higher incidence of cancer which may pave way for therapeutic interventions in cancer prevention .

20 cops infected with Covid-19 at Narsingi PS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

About 20 police personnel at the Narsingi police station in Cyberabad police commissionerate limits tested positive for Covid-19. Some of them were down with fever and had exhibited symptoms. As they continued to have symptoms, they got tested and with the results showing them to be positive, they were shifted to home isolation. Their family members were advised home quarantine and get them tested for the virus as well. After the positive cases, the Madhapur zone police officials have got all the primary contacts tested and directed other staff members, who were primary contacts to the infected persons, to get tested.

TRS govt diverting central funds meant for Dalits, says BJP

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

"The TRS government is diverting the funds allotted by the Centre for the welfare of Dalits. We will expose this and tell the people how the TRS government is cheating them," said BJP Mission-19 (SC Coordination Committee) Chairman AP Jitendar Reddy.

The BJP is formulating plans to exploit the anti-establishment sentiment prevailing in these areas in order to ensure victory in all the 19 SC reserved Assembly constituencies in Telangana.

There is also an impression that the party which wins a majority of the SC reserved Assembly seats will form the government.

The TRS government failed in implementing the Dalit Bandhu scheme and KCR has forgotten his promise to make a Dalit the Chief Minister, said Jitendar Reddy.

Speaking to 'The Pioneer' Jitendar Reddy said that their Mission-19 action plan will start soon. He said that the action plan may start from Vikarabad, Chevella and Secunderabad Cantonment.

Jitendar said the Centre is implementing several welfare schemes for Dalits. He said that the schemes are divided into two categories. One is core schemes and the other is core of core schemes.

He said that under core schemes the Centre is providing 100 percent funds to states. Under the core of core schemes, the Centre is providing 60 percent of funds and the state has to provide 40 percent funds.

The BJP leader alleged that the TRS government is diverting all these funds at the cost of Dalits. He said that SCs and Dalits are looking to the BJP as an alternative to the TRS and

they are ready to vote for the BJP.

He said that in SC reserved Assembly constituencies the SC population is only about 15 percent and to win these constituencies the support of other communities is also required. For that we will campaign about other issues apart from Dalit issues, he said.

He clarified that they had not discussed the padayatras in SC reserved constituencies as speculated on social media. There are speculations that Telangana BJP President Bandi Sanjay Kumar will launch the Dalit Bahujana padayatra in SC reserved assembly constituencies in April.

Jitendar said that they had no plans for any kind of padayatras as of now.

Meanwhile, according to BJP sources, Telangana BJP chief Sanjay feels that Jitendar Reddy is the 'golden leg' of the BJP.

The BJP won in the Assembly by-elections of Dubbaka and Huzurabad when Jitendar was made in charge. In the GHMC and Warangal municipal corporation elections too Jitendar brought good results to the BJP in the areas where he was in charge. Keeping this in mind Sanjay thinks that Jitendar is the BJP's golden leg.

The victory in SC reserved Assembly constituencies has a key role in bagging power. Sanjay made Jitendar the chairman of Mission-19 to ensure victory in SC reserved constituencies, a senior BJP leader said.

Provide quality treatment to Covid-19 patients: MLA to doctors

PNS ■ JAYASANKAR BHUPALAPALLY

Manthani MLA and former minister D Sridhar Babu directed the doctors to provide quality and better treatment to the Covid-19 patients so that they can be recovered from the disease early.

Sridhar Babu inspected the Government Hospital at Manthani on Tuesday and held a review meeting with doctors, ANMs, and other staff at the hospital. He stressed on the need to bring awareness among the people from the village level about the measures to be taken to prevent the spread of Covid-19. He asked the doctors to complete 100 percent vaccination covering

all people and to arrange an adequate number of testing centres. Doctors, ANMs and other staff have to be kept available to the patients, he

D Sridhar Babu

said.He urged the people and doctors to make use of digital ex-ray and diagnostic machine set up by Bain & Company in the hospital. He asked the people to strictly follow the five principles suggested by doctors to avoid Covid-19 infection. Strive to give protection to party workers

Meanwhile, 50 TRS leaders and activists resigned to the party and joined the Congress party at Arenda village of Manthani Mandal on Tuesday. Addressing on the occasion, Sridhar Babu gave assurance that he would strive to give protection to Congress party workers. He welcomed the newly joined leaders into the Congress party and asked them to work hard like soldiers to bring the party to power in Telangana.

He alleged that the TRS government in the state and BJP government at Centre have been adopting anti-people policies.Earlier, the MLA performed special puja at Viswanatha Swamy temple at Arenda village.Congress leaders Seggem Rajesh, state Congress Kisan cell coordinator SasibhushanKache, Sekar, Machidi Ramu Goud and others were present.

AISF demands reopening of school immediately

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

All India Student Federation (AISF) on Tuesday demanded that the State government order the reopening of school immediately to ensure that the students do not suffer disruption to their learning process. The closure of schools meant making the lives of the

teachers in private schools miserable, the AISF said. Speaking to reporters here, AISF district unit secretary Manne Kumar said the TRS government had promised to give priority to education. The TRS came to power after several students sacrificed their lives. But, now the government had gone back on its promise, he said.It was good to close the school on the pretext of coro-

AISF office-bearers at a press conference in Siddipet on Tuesday

navirus time and again. The government had caused agony to the students and teachers. The decision to close the school on one or other pretext was to ensure that the students do not protest against the anti-people's policies of the government, he felt. Hequestioned why the government did not order the closure of liquor bars and theatres to prevent the spread of the virus and why the rule was applied to schools only.AISF district vice-president Jogari Raju, district unit assistant secretary P Subbulu and others were present.

BV Sankar Rao Rao made TRSKV Sangareddy district chief

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

BV Sankar Rao of Hatnura (Mandal and village) was appointed as Telangana Rashtra Samithi Karmika Vibhag (TRSKV) Sangareddy district president. To this effect, TRSKV state president Rambabu Yadav handed over the appointment order to Sankar Rao at the residence of Minister T Harish Rao in Gachibowli in the city on Tuesday. Sivasankar Rao, on the occasion, expressed his thanks to Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, Minister T Harish Rao, TRSKV state president Rambabu Yadav, state general secretary Narayana, state Mahila Commission chairperson Vakati Sunitha Lakshma Reddy, NarsapurMLA Madan Reddy, MP Kotha Prabhakar Reddy, district MLAs, and Telangana state Labour Welfare Board

B V Sankar Rao

Chairman Ummana Devender Reddy.

He said that he would strive to solve the problems of workers and would take up programmes to bring awareness among people on various welfare schemes being implemented by the Telangana government for workers.

Make use of holidays, Collector advises students

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

District In-charge Collector M Hanumantha Rao advised the students not to waste holidays. The students should learn a new topic along with academic subjects daily during the holidays, he said. He spoke to media persons here on Tuesday. As the doctors had suggested that the spread of Covid-19 would be maximum by the end ofthe month, the state government had declared holidays to all educational institutions up to January 30.

Students, who will be writing public examinations, have to be more alert. They can contact the teachers over the phone for clearing doubts,' Hanumantha Rao said. He also urged the parents to take care of the studies of their children, especially during holidays.

Nutri gardens to be set up at every Anganwadi centre

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

District Additional Collector Muzammil Khan on Tuesday said the district administration will set up nutri gardens on the

premises of every Anganwadis with permanent buildings. During his visit to Anganwadi centre at Subhashnagar-Prasanti Nagar here, the Additional Collector planted saplings for growing nutri garden. He interacted with the children. He said the administration would complete the nutri garden programme

in two months. A meeting to review the functioning of each The anganwadicentre would be held on every Friday, he said.Muzammil Khan further stressed the need for child growth monitoring. He also felt that there was a need to create awareness on the health of children and ensure that the children do not suffer malnutrition.

Additional District Collector Muzammil Khan interacting with children at an Anganwadi centre in Siddipet on Tuesday

Municipal Executive Engineer trapped

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Anti-Corruption Bureau officials claimed to have trapped Municipal Corporation Executive Engineer P Raman, while accepting Rs 17,000 bribe from a contractor at his chamber in the office on Tuesday.

According to ACB police, Raman demanded the bribe from a contractor, named Madhu, to clear his bills. The ACB police laid a trap and caught the Executive Engineer red-handed.

ACB DSP K Badraiah and the staff participated in the operation.

'Complete 100 pc second dose Covid-19 vaccine'

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Minister for Transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar on Tuesday directed the District Collector to appoint a special officer to speed up vaccination drive in the district. He stressed the need to curb the fast-surging Omnicron variant.

Urging the authorities to complete 100 per cent administration of second dose of vaccination by this month-end, the Minister suggested that special officers be appointed for Yerrupalem and Mudigonda mandals. He suggested the names of Appa Rao and ACP Sneha Mehra for Yerrupalem and Mudigonda mandals respectively as special officers to speed up the vaccination drive. He appealed to the Zilla Parishad Chairman to review the functioning of the Government Hospitals in the district.

Ajay Kumar directed the Telangana State Medical Infrastructure Development Corporation Executive Engineer to ensure that the 'trauma centre' in all major hospitals in the district is set up. Responding to the request by the Government Hospital

superintendent, he instructed the authorities to take steps for setting up a new lift for trauma centre in the Government Hospital. He also directed the District Collector to sanction funds for lift. He asked the administration to ensure that the tender process for the construction of 100-bed hospitals in Sathupally and Madhira is completed. He stressed the need to complete the construction of hospital. They would be inaugurated by Minister for Health T Harish Rao, he said. Later, the Minister reviewed the progress of Dalit Bandhu scheme with the officials and bankers. Madhira constituency in Khamma district has been selected as the second pilot project for launching Dalit

Minister for Transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar also reviewed the progress of Dalit Bandhu and directs officials to complete selection of beneficiaries for Dalit Bandhu in Madhira constituency

Bandhu scheme. The Dalit Bandhu funds were already credited to the account of the district administration. But the selection of beneficiaries has not yet been completed, he said. He suggested appointment of special officers for every mandal in the constituency to ensure that the funds are not misused and create awareness among the beneficiaries on various schemes.

Compensate farmers who lost crops, says Rythu Swarajya Vedika

M L MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

The Rythu Swarajya Vedika has demanded that the Telangana government should give compensation to the lakhs of farmers who had suffered loss of crops due to the heavy rains in 2020 and 2021.

Reacting to the decision of the Chief Minister to tour some constituencies in undivided Warangal district on Tuesday to assess the loss of crops due to untimely rains Rythu Swarajya Vedika representatives said that this is the first time KCR was visiting farmers who suffered loss of crops.

"However, the loss of crops is not the problem of only the farmers of Narsampeta constituency. The problems of farmers cannot be solved with a one-off visit by the Chief Minister, " said Vissa Kiran Kumar, the Rythu Swarajya Vedika representative, who along with Kanneganti Ravi and Ashalatha filed a PIL in the HC in 2020 seeking compensation for farmers who suffered huge losses due to rains in 2020 and 2021.

The RSV representatives demanded that the government should implement the historic judgement given by the High Court on the PIL on September 28, 2021, and implement a comprehensive crop insurance scheme in the State.

The High Court in its judgement said that it was the responsibility of the Government under the National Disaster Management Act to provide compensation to farmers who suffered losses due to natural calamities.

It also asked the government to prepare a list of farmers who incurred losses within three months and pay compensation to them within a month.

The HC had also said that the government should also compensate the loss due to non-implementation of crop insurance and give additional compensation to affected farmers.

Although the four-month time given by the court was nearing its end, the government has not done anything so far. There was no response so far although RSV representatives gave representations to State and district officials, they said.

Kiran Kumar said that in October, 2020, crops on 15 lakh acres were damaged and there was also a list available giving details of district-wise crop loss that was sent to the Centre.

The Centre had released Rs 185 crore as compensation for farmers but the money did not reach farmers, he said.

In 2021 too, crops on lakhs of acres were damaged by heavy rains. The Chief Minister should do justice to them too, he demanded.

The RSV members said that crores of farmers suffered huge losses due to non-implementation of the crop insurance scheme in the State in the last two years.

States like Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu were implementing special State-level crop insurance schemes. But the Telangana government abolished the Centre's Faisal Bhima Yojana and did not implement even a State level crop insurance scheme.

The farmers who suffered crop losses were caught in debt traps and are committing suicide.

Many families of dead farmers said that crop loss due to natural calamities was the reason for the suicides.

RSV State Committee member B. Kondal said that the state government should take the responsibility for implementing a systematic plan to extend compensation regularly to farmers who suffered crop losses without delay.

Harish Rao lays stone for 30-bed Community Health Centre

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Health Minister T Harish Rao has said that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao will lay the foundation stone for the 900-bed hospital in Mahabubnagar soon. A trauma centre will be provided to the community health centre at Balanagar will strive to enhance the status of Nawabpet PHC.

He was addressing a gathering after laying the foundation stone for the Rs 4.75 crore and 30-bed community health centre at Balanagar in Jadcharla constituency of Mahabubnagar district on Tuesday.

In the new state of Telangana, the Government set up over 40 dialysis centres and provided government hospitals at Taluk level with ICU beds. All three medical colleges have been sanctioned to the undivided Medak district. TheCM will soon lay the foundation stone for the 900-bed hospital in Mahabubnagar.

He asked people to wear masks without fail and receive two doses of vaccines against Covid. He suggested teenagers in the age group of 15 to 17 to undergo vaccination. People who have already received two doses of the vaccine should be prepared to receive the booster dose. In all, over two-crore Corona testing kits have been keptready in the state and there are one-crore Covid isolation kits available in the state. Also, there are stocks of 2.50 lakh Remedisivir injections, ICU beds, and ventilators. Elected people's representatives should take precautions and at the same time sensitise people on the precautions. He asked the people to remain careful as the new variant cases are likely to increase in the next 15 days. Special Covid-19 wards have been set up in all hospitals to treat expectant mothers.Pending irrigation projects – including the Palamuru-Rangareddy LI Scheme --have

Minister for Finance addressing a meeting in Mahabubnagar on Tuesday. Minister Srinivas Goud is also present

been taken by the government under the leadership of the CM. The works are being executed on a war-footing, he said.Efforts are underway to take the state to the top position in medical and health realms, he said pointing out that the state government earmarked Rs 7289 Crore to introduce English medium education in government schools-from the Anganwadi level under the Manavooru-Manabad programme. Corporate level school education would beprovided in government schools offering all amenities to students. The per capita power utilisation in Telangana is very high as such the state occupied number one position. Similarly, the state occupied number one position in the per capita income too.

Excise Minister Dr. V Srinivas Goud and Jadcharla MLA Dr C Lakshma Reddy spoke. Devarakadra MLA A Venkateswar Reddy, district SP R Venkateswarlu, local bodies collector Tejasnandlal Pawar, director of Medical Education Ramesh Reddy, state warehousing corporation Saichand, state Sangeet- Natak Academy president Badmi Siva Kumar, ZP vice-chairman Yadaiah, DMHO Dr. Krishna, local elected people's representatives and others took part in the event.

Officials told to provide amenities to tribal schools, hostels in Nagarkurnool

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

District Collector P Uday Kumar has directed engineering officials to complete the execution of the infrastructural amenities in SC and ST Residential Schools and hostels as early as possible.

He was reviewing the progress of the infrastructural amenities at a meeting held at Mannanur Tribal Welfare Department's office with headmasters of SC and ST residential schools, hostel wardens, and engineering officials.

He asked them to benefit the SC and ST students by effectively executing various welfare and development schemes meant for them in the residential schools and hostels. There are over 5006 students in 29 residential schools and hostels for tribals, he said asking the offi-

District Collector Uday Kumar at a review meeting in Nagarkurnool on Tuesday

cials to ensure that no inconvenience is caused to them. The residential schools and hostels should have power supply, drinking water, toilets facility and so on. Under Mission Bhagiradha scheme, all residential schools should be covered to provide drinking water. Top priority should be given to provide basic amenities in the institutions meant for tribal girls. All 92 construction projects taken up by the Tribal Welfare Engineerng Department, at a cost of Rs 30.34 crore, should be completed as early as possible.The DC asked the Divisional Engineer to furnish him particulars of Tribal Welfare Department's budget.He called upon the participants to implement school-wise action plan to conduct special classes, classes-wise and subject-wise action plnas to provide quality education to students. He asked them to furnish details of Girijana Darsini Workbook assessment. He also asked them to upload images of break-fast and other Menu items to him through the online link. All Chenchu habitats should be provided drinking water facility under the Mission Bhagiradha, the DC told the EE.

INDIA CORNER

BJP protests in Thane Palghar against Patole's 'beat up, badmouth Modi' video

The BJP on Tuesday held protests in Thane and Palghar districts against Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole in connection with a video in which he is purportedly heard saying he will beat up and badmouth "Modi". The video was widely circulated on Monday after a television channel aired it and Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis tweeted about it, though Patole had clarified that the Modi referred to in his conversation with villagers of Bhandara district was not the prime minister but a local goon. Protests were held in Thane, Kalyan, Nalasopara, Dahanu and other places in the two districts. Among those who took part were local BYJM unit vice president Manoj Barot, KDMC unit president Srikant Kamble, Palghar unit chief Nandakumar Patil and Thane BYJM president Sarang Medhekar. BJP group leader in the Thane Municipal Corporation Manohar Dhumbre submitted a complaint at Kapurbawdi police station against Patole.

PM interacts with BJP workers in Varanasi through NaMo app

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday held an audio interaction with BJP workers of his Varanasi parliamentary constituency and reaffirmed the BJP's commitment towards development. Restoration of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, women empowerment, infrastructure and healthcare development were among the topics that came up for discussion during the interaction. Interacting with one of the 'karyakartas' (party workers), Prime Minister Modi asked him to expand the reach of the government's welfare schemes to farmers and said they should make farmers aware of the use of chemical-free fertilisers. Modi also talked about several central schemes which are benefitting the people of Varanasi at large. He urged people to contribute to a section -- 'Kamal Pushp' -- on his NaMo app that features some "inspiring" party members.

K'taka govt warns medical professionals of action for spreading misinformation

The Karnataka government has warned certain medical practitioners of action for allegedly spreading misinformation pertaining to the COVID-19. In a statement on Tuesday, the Commissionerate of Health and Family Services said some medical practitioners were allegedly giving incomplete, inaccurate and unsubstantiated information about COVID-19. "Such misinformation leads to confusion in public at large on the prevailing COVID scenario in the State and encourages them to deviate from well laid out guidelines issued by the health and revenue authorities," the statement said. Asking the medical professionals to exercise utmost care and caution while communicating with public on COVID-19, the Commissionerate asked them to refer to the government guidelines, circulars and orders thoroughly before appearing on any media or social platform.

ED raids Punjab CM's relative, others in probe against 'illegal' sand mining

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday raided multiple locations in poll-bound Punjab, including those linked to a relative of Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, as part of a money laundering probe against the 'sand mafia' and companies linked to alleged illegal sand mining in the border state, officials said.

They said at least a dozen locations in the state including in Chandigarh, Mohali, Ludhiana and Pathankot are being covered by the officials of the federal agency. They are being assisted by armed personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The action is being undertaen under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Reacting to the raids, Chnni told reporters that relatives of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee were raided during the assembly polls in that state and the "same pattern" is being followed by the ED in Punjab to "pressure" him, his ministers and Congress party members.

"We are ready to handle the pressure...," he said, adding he had no links with the case.

Premises linked to a person identified as Bhupinder Singh alias Honey, a nephew of Channi, are also being covered.

Sources said Honey's links with a person identified as Kudratdeep Singh are being investigated by the agency.

Opposition parties have earlier linked Channi with the dealings of Honey which the former had denied. The ED action, sources said, has been initiated after taking cognisance of a 2018 FIR of the Nawanshahr (Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar district) Police and some other such police complaints against some companies and individuals alleged to be involved in the business of illegal sand mining in the state. A number of truck drivers and other operatives involved in the extraction and transportation of sand were named as accused in these police FIRs. Voting for 117 assembly seats in Punjab is slated on February 20.

Court rejects Anil Deshmukh's bail plea in money

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A special court here on Tuesday rejected a plea filed by former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh seeking default bail in an alleged money laundering case.

Deshmukh, an NCP leader, was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on November 2, 2021, and is currently in judicial custody. In his application, Deshmukh contended that the special court for Prevention of Money Laundering Act cases did not take cognizance of the charge sheet filed by the ED before remanding him in further judicial custody. Therefore, he was entitled to bail by `default'

(on technical grounds), he said. The ED opposed the plea saying the charge sheet had been filed within stipulated time. Special Judge R N Rokade rejected the NCP leader's plea.

Army rescues civilians stuck in avalanche

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

The Army on Tuesday rescued over a dozen civilians after their vehicle came under an avalanche triggered by recent snowfall in border district of Kupwara in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. The vehicle got stuck on the Tangdhar- Chowkibal axis, following which the nearest Army unit was alerted and a rescue operation launched, they said. "The civilians, which included a child, were evacuated to safety by the Army rescue team," the officials said. One of the civilians told the rescuers that they had a narrow escape as they managed to jump out of the vehicle before it was buried under snow, the officials said.

Cong, SP in competition over who can target Hindus more: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP alleged on Tuesday that its rivals Samajwadi Party and the Congress appeared to be in a competition over who can spew more venom against Hindus and protect those who do so. BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra cited Islamic cleric Maulana Tauqeer Raza Khan's support to the Congress in Uttar Pradesh assembly polls and the SP nominating several Muslims allegedly accused of involvement in riots and making communal remarks to attack these parties.

Khan had recently made a speech targeting Hindus, Patra said and noted the Congress had allied in the past with parties

which draw its support from Muslims in states like Kerala, Karnataka and West Bengal and were accused of making communal remarks aimed at the majority community. The SP has also given tickets to people like Nahid Hasan, an MLA currently in jail, and Muharram Ali, accused of stoking riots, Patra said.

Karnataka invites Elon Musk to set up Tesla plant

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Joining the growing list of Indian states wooing Tesla's billionaire founder and CEO Elon Musk to start a manufacturing unit, Karnataka on Tuesday projected itself as the "Electric Vehicle (EV) hub" of India and an ideal destination to set up a plant.

Several Indian states like Telangana, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu have already invited Musk to set up shop.

"With over 400 R&D centres, 45+ EV startups & an EV cluster near Bengaluru, Karnataka has emerged as EV hub of India. Mr @elonmusk, Karnataka would be an ideal destination to set up @Tesla plant. Bengaluru is

already Tesla's maiden address in India," Karnataka Minister for Large and Medium-scale Industries Murugesh R Nirani tweeted. Musk had recently tweeted that the US-based firm is working through a lot of challenges with the government to launch its products in India. "Still working through a lot of challenges with the government," Musk tweeted in reply to a Twitter user, who asked: "Yo @elonmusk any further update as to when Tesla's will launch in India? They're pretty awesome and deserve to be in every corner of the world!"

In January 2021, Tesla registered its Indian arm amid indications that the company is set to enter the country's automobile market. According to a regulatory filing, the firm registered Tesla India Motors and Energy Pvt Ltd with RoC (Registrar Of Companies) Bengaluru. The company has been registered as an unlisted private entity with a paid-up capital of Rs 1 lakh.

In February 2021, the then Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa too had said that "American firm Tesla will set up the car-manufacturing unit in Karnataka." Last year, Tesla had sought a reduction in import duties on electric vehicles (EVs) in India.

BSF seizes fake driving licences from truckers at Bangladesh front

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Border Security Force (BSF) has seized 82 fake driving licences from truck drivers this week at the India-Bangladesh border check post at Petrapole in West Bengal stating these illegal acts could "compromise" national security. The south Bengal frontier of the force and its officials headquartered in Kolkata said in a statement on Monday that while they do not want to create any "disruption" in cross-border trade between the two neighbours, rules in this regard will have to be followed. The border guarding force said its troops launched an intensive search on January 16 and 17 at the Petrapole integrated check post (ICP) in the North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal after it got "inputs that few drivers (of heavy vehicles like trucks) are involved in carrying out trans-border crimes such as smuggling of gold, silver, phensedyl syrup (a cough syrup abused as narcotics drug in Bangladesh), drugs etc. while engaged in export and import of goods between India and Bangladesh."The Bangladeshi side opposite this border post is called Benapole and everyday hundreds of trucks with goods cross over to the either side.

No revision of decision on exclusion of TN, WB and Kerala tableaux on R-Day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The decision to not include the tableaux of Kerala, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu at the Republic Day parade will not be revised, senior officials of the Defence Ministry said on Tuesday and noted that a total of 12 states have been selected to display their models.

The remarks by the defence ministry officials came amidst ongoing controversy over the tableaux exclusion, prompting West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin to seek Prime Minister Narendra Modi's immediate intervention.

Some leaders of the non-BJP ruled states also alleged that the exclusion was an "insult" by the Centre.

Reacting to the controversy, a senior defence ministry official said, "it is not possible to accept requests from these three states' and polite responses have been sent to their

CMs explaining the long process of selection of tableaux." "It is not possible to revise or reconsider the decision as Tableau making process is a very long process and an expert committee takes these decisions sufficiently in advance," the official added.

Officials said tableaux of Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand will be shown at this year's parade.

Moreover, tableaux of nine ministries and departments of the Central government will be shown at this year's parade, they stated. These nine tableaux would be Education and Skill Development, Civil Aviation, Communications and Posts, Home Affairs, Housing, Textiles, Law and Justice, Jal Shakti and Culture, they added. Therefore, a total of 21 tableaux would be shown at this year's parade, they added. Overall, there were 56 proposals to show tableaux this year, they said.

R-Day: Delhi-NCR under high-security cover

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of Republic Day, the Delhi-National Capital Region has been put under a "very high-security" cover after police received inputs from Intelligence agencies about a possible terror attack, officials said on Tuesday. Operation of sub-conventional aerial platforms, including UAVs, paragliders and hot air balloons, over the national capital has been prohibited in the city from January 20 in view of Republic Day celebrations, according to a Delhi Police order issued on Tuesday.

The order shall come into force from January 20 and remain in effect till February 15. The order has been issued by Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana in the wake of reports of the possibility of certain criminal or anti-social elements or terrorists posing a threat to the safety of the general public, dignitaries and vital installations, it said.

Centre flags decline in Covid testing, asks states to enhance it

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Flagging a decline in the number of COVID-19 tests in many states and union territories, the Centre on Monday asked them to enhance testing so that an effective track of the spread of the pandemic can be kept and immediate citizen-centric action can be initiated.

In a letter to states and UTs, Additional Secretary in the Union Health Ministry Arti Ahuja advised them to pay attention to this aspect immediately and increase the testing in a strategic manner keeping in view the trend of case positivity in specific areas.

She highlighted that Omicron, which has been designated by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a variant of concern, is currently spreading across the

country. Referring to the ministry's earlier letters and the Home Ministry advisory of December 27 last year laying out the broad framework of pandemic management in the context of Omicron, Ahuja said testing remains a key and crucial component.

"However, it is seen from the data available on the ICMR portal that testing has declined in many states and union territories," she wrote. She said in all advisories on testing issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), including the latest on January 10, the basic objective remains early detection of cases for quick isolation and care.

In addition, testing remains a key strategy for pandemic management as it helps in identification of new clusters and new hotspots of infection which can in turn facilitate immediate action for containment such as setting up of containment zones, contact tracing, quarantining, isolation and follow-up.

Minorities sidelined in Congress leadership, says CPI (M) leader

PNS ■ KANNUR (KERALA)

CPI(M) Kerala State secretary and senior politburo member Kodiyeri Balakrishnan on Tuesday alleged that leaders belonging to minority communities were neglected and sidelined in the Congress in line with the party scion Rahul Gandhi's speech in Jaipur calling for establishing what he called as a rule of Hindus in the country after ousting the "Hindutva" government at the Centre.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
REVENUE (LA) DEPARTMENT
DISTRICT COLLECTOR, JANGAON
FORM-VII
DECLARATION
(See Sub-rule (1) of rule - 25 and Section -19(1) of the Act-30/2013)

Rc.No.A/36/2021 Date: -12-2021
Dist.Coll.r.File No.G2/172/2017-2 Date: 29-12-2021
Gazette No.JN/LA/47/2021 Date : 29-12-2021

Where as it appears to the Government of Telangana/District Collector, Jangaon that a total land of an extent of **Ac.2.23** gts land is required in the limits of Zaffergadh village of Zaffergadh Mandal in Jangaon District for public purpose, namely acquisition of Excavation Nashkal Main Canal under JCR DLIP for providing water to Agriculture lands under the Government o Telangana, Collector, Jangaon District, as per L.A. Act: 30/2013.

Therefore the "DECLARATION" is hereby made that a piece of Land measuring more or less **Ac.2.23** gts under acquisition for the above said project in the limits of Zaffergadh Village of Zaffergadh Mandal in Jangaon District whose detailed description is as following under acquisition.

SCHEDULE
Nashkal Main Canal

Village: Zaffergadh Mandal: Zaffergadh District: Jangaon

S. No.	Sy. No.	Nature of land	Classification	Extent	Name of the Enjoyer	Remarks
1	1487	Patta	Dry	1.08	Valupadasu Devi Priya W/o Chandra Shekar	
			Total	1.08		
2	1575	Patta	Dry	1.15	Valupadasu Devi Priya W/o Chandra Shekar	
			Total	1.15		
		Grand Total		2.23		

Trees / Structures

Sy.No	Extent	Trees	Structures	Remarks
–	–	–	–	–

This declaration is made after hearing of objections of persons interested u/s 15 of the L.A Act No.30/2013 after verification of objections this declaration is issued. The number of families likely to be resettled due to Land Acquisition is NIL.

Mines of Coal, Iron-Stone, slate or other minerals lying under the said land or any particulars portain of the said land, except such parts of the mines and minerals which may be required to be dug or removed or used during the creduction phase of the project for the purpose of which the land is being acquired, or not needed.

A plan of the land may be inspected in the office of the Land Acquisition Officer & Special Deputy Collector, LA, R&R, Unit-II, Irrigation Project, Jangaon on any working day.

Sd/-Special Deputy Collector, LA, R&R Unit-II, Irrigation Projects, Jangaon
Sd/-Addl. Collector, Jangaon
Sd/-District Collector, Jangaon

DIPR Ro.No: 1051/LA-PP/Advt/Pub/2021-22

UP polls: Political parties locked in musical war

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In the battle for the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, a musical war has broken out between political parties which are resorting to catchy campaign songs to promote their policies and ideologies. The Election Commission has imposed restrictions on poll rallies till January 22 in the wake of rising COVID-19 cases in the five poll-going states. After the BJP, Congress and Samajwadi Party, the Aam Aadmi Party too has

released its theme song for the elections. Although, the custom of resorting to songs during elections is old, with the campaign going virtual due to the Covid pandemic, the competition among parties to grab the attention of voters has only intensified. While the ruling BJP refers to the party's "Hindutva pride" and the "development" done under the Yogi Adityanath government, the opposition Samajwadi Party echoes the socialist sentiments and the achievements of the previous government led by Akhilesh Yadav. BJP MPs and Bhojpuri actors Ravi Kishan and Manoj Tiwari have come out with various songs and some more are in the pipeline. Among these, 'damru jab bajega to dekhna nazara kya hoga' -- apparently referring to the damru of lord Shiva – is quite popular while similar songs like 'jo Ram ko laye haye, hum unko layenge' (those who have brought lord Ram, we will bring them to power) and 'mandir banne laga hai, bhagwa rang chadhne laga hai' (construction of temple has begun, saffron colour is on the rise) are testament to BJP leveraging on the upcoming Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Beating Retreat ceremony to have 1000 drones

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The annual Beating the Retreat ceremony, which takes place in the national capital on January 29, will have a show of nearly 1,000 drones by a IIT-Delhi-based start-up to commemorate 75 years of the country's independence, senior officials of the defence ministry said on Tuesday. Moreover, for the first time, on the parapet of the north block and the south block, there will be a laser projection mapping show to commemorate 75 years of independence, they added.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Mockery

Political goodwill reaches to Dalits only when the elections are around

The Election Commission has postponed the date of voting for the election to the Punjab Assembly from February 14 to 20. By itself the change is not noteworthy; a mere administrative exercise. Politically, however, the significance is not lost on anyone in the country. It is a curious display of unity amid diversity by all political parties to set aside their electoral differences to ensure that the election date does not come in the way of a section of Punjab's electorate conducting an important religious ritual. The deferred election date allows a particular Dalit community to visit Varanasi on the occasion of Guru Ravidas Jayanti on February 16. The 'Ravidassias', as the followers of the mystic poet-saint are called, mostly inhabit Punjab's Doaba region and their numbers have a say in 23 Assembly constituencies. Dalits comprise 32 per cent of the State's population. Over a third of them are concentrated in the Doaba. And over 60 per cent of Doaba's Dalits are Ravidassias. This is the political context to the 'humanitarian' gesture by the political parties. After the deferment, the parties are in a race to take credit for it. The prize is such. In a multi-cornered election, anybody bagging the maximum support of the Dalits can dream of an edge in the 117-member Assembly.

Would not the Dalits be wondering why the goodwill of the political parties does not reach out to them when elections are not around? The Dalits, for whom the election date was changed because their votes count, otherwise complain of indifference from these very parties. They are certainly on the path to emancipation because of affirmative actions like reservation, but are as vulnerable today as before to casteist attacks in terms of a ban on entry into temples, sporting a moustache, riding a horse, using cremation grounds and the like. The National Crime Records Bureau tells us that a Dalit in India was the victim of a crime every 10 minutes in 2020 and the situation was no different in 2021. Dalits are attacked for the silliest of excuses — beaten up for wearing leather shoes in Gujarat, paraded naked for swimming in a well in Maharashtra, even killed for sitting cross-legged during a temple ritual in Tamil Nadu. They are subjected to gross and inhuman insults like being urinated upon. In a case from Bihar a month ago, a person who lost a village election blamed the Dalits for his defeat and forced a Dalit to lick spit as punishment. Dalit women and girls are molested, raped and killed at whim. Dalit politics takes centre stage whenever elections are around and sympathy to their cause replaces the usual indifference. If the deferment of the Punjab election date is not to be construed as merely a gesture with a selfish motive, political parties must proactively address discrimination and violence against Dalits and not dismiss them as an embarrassing relic of the past.

PICTALK

Tourists visit the Taj Mahal on a cold winter day PTI

Due diligence

The CPI(M) is better advised to be responsible and speak in cohesion and unity

Political discourse in Kerala touched the nadir of decency as leaders shout at each other using the choicest of abuses. Though there is no election round the corner in Kerala, political one-upmanship continues to rule the roost. KP Anil Kumar, a Congress leader who defected to the CPI(M) for not getting his share in the reorganisation of the party, was seen threatening K Sudhakaran, the Pradesh Congress chief of dire consequences. "We will lynch Sudhakaran like a mad dog in the streets of Kerala," shouted Kumar while addressing a public meeting. The recent murder of an activist of the SFI owing allegiance to the CPI(M) is the root cause of the outbursts by Anil Kumar. The CPI(M), which returned to power in the 2021 Assembly election much against the precedence of the party in power biting the dust in the subsequent election, should have shown maturity and restraint on the murder of its own activist. Though the police has arrested three Congress workers in connection with the murder, the CPI(M) leaders allege Sudhakaran to be the master brain behind the killing. The media in Kerala known for its pro-CPI(M) stance parroted the allegation and blacked out the version of Sudhakaran from the narrative. This led to a verbal duel between the PCC chief and journalists at the Press Club in the Capital.

Media is entrusted with the responsibility of reporting facts and they should never misinterpret words. Let it be done by political observers or commentators to suit their line of thinking. If the media has strong evidence linking Sudhakaran to the murder, it could ask him for clarification and not accuse him of a crime about which he was in the dark. Sudhakaran, who is known for his boldness and uprightness has always been an eyesore for the Marxists because of his ability to take the comrades head on in northern Kerala's party villages where only the writ of the Marxists run whoever is in power in Thiruvananthapuram. The CPI(M) is better advised to speak in cohesion and unity. Polit Bureau member SR Pillai was heard alleging that India is tormenting China. Party's State secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan is on record declaring that India got independence because of the CPI(M), a political outfit that was formed in 1964. Re-education is a must for leaders and cadres alike because of the information technology era in which we live.

National integrity, cohesive people

PRAFULL **GORADIA**

Despite the Partition on religious lines, we are still religious factions whose ultimate loyalties are similar to those of Indians in the UK

The anniversary of Capitol Insurrection — when an incumbent President Donald Trump gestured through an apparent revolt that he was not accepting the electoral verdict in favour of Democrat Joe Biden — was all over the media last fortnight. Some writers seem to suggest that the Red States in the USA (Republican majority) could be prepared to separate from the Blue ones (Democratic majority). That might be a split between the Liberal and the Conservatives Americans, but by no means is wide enough to justify the breakup of the country. Lest one forgets, a bitter Civil War was fought for four years from 1861 to 1865 between the northern Yanks and the southern Confederates. Abraham Lincoln led the former with a missionary zeal, winning the war and preserving the Union, gaining recognition as the greatest President of the USA.

It is, however, true that being a creation of random immigration from the 15th century onwards, the USA does not have an integrated ethos. There are people of European, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Indian, Hispanic, Arab and other Islamic origins. Most Indians do not raise their political heads. The others have a political muscle which they could use to further their cause. Indian-origin citizens, when they show up at cricket grounds in the UK, cheer the ethnic team, i.e., India, despite themselves holding British passports. Nevertheless, this is not a desirable symptom because it reflects that the nation does not have a single ethos and holds out a threat of a breakup which we are discussing.

But why go far? India has one single ethos plus several other political sentiments. Despite the partition on entirely religious lines in 1947, we are still religious factions whose ultimate loyalties are similar to those of Indians in the UK. Unlike the USA and the UK, India has not undergone random immigrations. India's is a unique tale, which can be told by a historian who cannot justify its lack of an integrated ethos that can ensure national unity for all times and under all circumstances.

There are times when circumstances override national interests. In fact, until the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, there was little by way of a national awakening. If there was an ideology, it was either religion or language.

More than circumstances, the fault lay with the leadership at points of time of the countries concerned. Take France, for example. As a gesture of civilisation, Paris declared its overseas empire to be metropolitan France. This made it easily possible for people from French colonies like Algeria, Morocco, etc., to emigrate to the cities and towns of France. Today, this European country has two huge segments of people, European and African. Being culturally and religiously very different, they find it difficult to coexist. Germany and Turkey were allies during the two world wars. There were many Turks who did not have sufficient employment whereas Germany wanted cheaper labour. The former, therefore, arrived in droves to make Deutschland their home but Berlin insisted that they could settle only as guest workers, not as citizens. But what happens to children born to such guest workers? To add further to the population of Asians in the country, when refugees recently came rushing in from the civil war-ravaged Syria, Chancellor (now former) Angela Merkel welcomed many of them.

> THERE ARE TIMES WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES OVERRIDE NATIONAL INTERESTS. IN FACT, UNTIL THE END OF THE 18TH CENTURY, THERE WAS LITTLE BY WAY OF A NATIONAL AWAKENING. IF THERE WAS AN IDEOLOGY, IT WAS EITHER RELIGION OR LANGUAGE

Britain made the same mistake after World War II when it needed cheaper labour. There were ready arrivals from the West Indies, India and Pakistan. Now there are problems with civic living in this multi-racial national life. In the 17th and the 18th centuries, the USA imported slaves from West Africa on a large scale. As we have noted, there was a four-year civil war between the northern States who wanted to abolish slavery and the southern ones, who saw this evil and inhuman institution as their legitimate way of life. But the American leadership did not learn their lesson and freely allowed in more and more settlers. The Democratic Party supports them whereas the Republicans wish to largely retain the white (European) character of the USA. Hence the Blue versus Red States divergence referred to above.

Who is India to give advice to these countries? It has also blundered. At Partition time and throughout 1946-47, the Muslim League insisted on an exchange of population as the homeland called Pakistan was for all the Islamic people of the subcontinent. Dr Rajendra Prasad, Independent India's first President, wrote a book on the subject called India Divided, offering an answer for those who could not move out. They could stay on, but not as citizens. Instead, they would be treated as aliens with residence visas, sans political rights. Pakistan's founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah endorsed Dr Prasad's views. But Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru not only opposed this practical solution, but were unjust to millions of people. The distinguished Pakistani scholar Ayesha Jalal in her book The Sole Spokesman has raised the question: why Partition then? The Muslim-majority provinces like Punjab and Bengal did not need nor want the break; it were mainly the Muslim-minority provinces like UP and Bombay Presidency which pressed for it. Eventually, their minorities largely got left behind in India. What a fiasco it has turned out to be?

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DIRTY POLITICS OVER TABLEAUX

Sir —The exclusion of tableaux proposed by Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal from this year's Republic Day Parade has no rational explanation or justification; it constitutes a politically motivated and biased move to exclude what is not in conformity with Hindu Right's exclusive Hindutva or Hindu nationalist narrative and agenda and a response to the electoral defeats inflicted on the BJP in the aforesaid States. India is a federal Republic for the ruling dispensation to be so summarily dismissive of 'regional pride'. We are totally justified in saying that the Republic Day pageantry should showcase India's diversity. We are not so naive as to believe that the Union Government had no role in nixing the tableaux of the three Opposition-ruled States and the 'apolitical subject experts' found them without merit 'after due process and deliberations' and took the decision.

By dropping the tableau of West Bengal featuring Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda, Nazrul Islam and Birsa Munda and the tableau of Tamil Nadu portraying Mahakavi Subramania Bharathiyar, VO Chidambaranar, Rani Velu Nachiyar and Maruthu Brothers, the Modi Government has betrayed the kind of patriotism it practises. As a descendant of those political forces that took no part in the freedom struggle, the BJP does not seem to be quite interested in celebrating India's valiant freedom fighters on the occasion of the Republic Day.

G David Milton | *Maruthancode*

BANK SERVICES NEED IMPROVEMENT

Sir — It has been reported that the State Bank of India (SBI) has hiked the interest on fixed deposits. The hike is nothing but a pittance. What was 4.9 per cent is now 5.1 per cent. It means an increase of 20 paise over the previous rate. Does this require publicity? The publicity given indicates as though we are living in the 1950s when a rupee was able to fetch 20 seers (not kgs) of rice.

The quality of service in banks has been deteriorating. Bank customers have been given the responsibility of making pass book entries by themselves in the machine kept outside. Installation of ATM machines has further reduced the work burden of bank employees in the case of withdrawal of deposit amount. When a bank account holder shifts to another place, a single request letter to transfer his account to the bank branch of his choice does not draw the attention of the concerned to consider the request. Fixed Deposits account is also not being transferred easily on request. Because of this, aged persons in particular are facing an ordeal of traveling to the bank where the account was held earlier. The difficulty is more pronounced at a time when the corona is at its peak.

KV Seetharamaiah | *Bengaluru*

RAJAPPA'S DEMISE IS A BIG LOSS

Sir — The passing away of veteran journalist Sam Rajappa, whose name is synonymous with the Kolkata based daily The Statesman, is a huge loss to Indian print journalism. His rich experience in the profession, deep knowledge in politics, and absolute command over the English language, have all made him one of the finest ever Indian journalists. A fact well known by contemporary journalists that Sam Rajappa strongly favoured and followed "Queen's English" throughout his journalistic career and never compromised on the language, both in style and grammar.

Years ago, I was working with a leading publication office in Chennai, located close to The Statesman's office, and I had the opportunity to interact with Mr Rajappa a few times. Not only was he affable and down-to-earth, but I also found him to be an encyclopedia, who could reel out information on any subject at the drop of a hat.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | *Chennai*

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Kohli will only emerge stronger

In the majority of team sports, a captain is as good as his team. A win, and the captain takes most of the credit. A loss, and the captain is panned more than anybody else. There is no denying that there were, and there will be, exceptional captains. Great captains are born leaders who marshal their team members with a deep sense of instinct. Their gut feelings almost always fall in place when they carry their teams to glory. These leaders are respected and loved — generally these don't go together. In recent times, Saurav Ganguly and MS Dhoni were two Indian cricket captains who commanded awe and affection in equal measure. The former was flamboyant while the latter kept to himself. But the end result was the same. Players who played under Ganguly and Dhoni recall their association with the two with admiration and fondness.

Everything was not hunky-dory in the Indian dressing room, and Kohli's reported rift with Rohit Sharma and Ravichandran Ashwin will rankle. But nothing can beat his repeated display of tantrums on the ground that prompted experts to call him "immature". The Cape Town Test against South Africa saw Kohli in full blast on the field; not as a batsman but as a captain. That said, free from the captaincy burden, master batsman Virat Kohli should regain his pristine touch, and carry India to more victories with his batting exploits.

Ganapathi Bhat | *Akola*

SOUNDBITE

All-out war between Mamata Banerjee and her nephew Abhishek. Mamata's pictures missing from posters in Diamond Harbour.

BJP leader
—Amit Malviya

I don't regret it (my arrest) for a second. This is our country and we have no other.

Kremlin's critic
—Alexei Navalny

I have no interest in *netagiri* .... but I think Congress will turn me into a leader.

Film director
— Kangana Ranaut

Saleem Malik had this smug look on his face, like, 'You should have taken the cash'.

Australia ex-bowler
—Shane Warne

Hi Mr Elon @elonmusk. I'm from Tamil Nadu. Welcome to India's EV capital. #tnforpartnership

TN Industries Minister
—Thangam Thenarasu

FIRST COLUMN

NEET AND THE POLITICS OF TAMIL NADU

That the test is against social justice is a fallacy

S **KALYANASUNDARAM**

Tension is brewing between Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK and state Governor over the latter not forwarding the Tamil Nadu Admission Undergraduate Medical Degree Courses Bill 2021, passed by the Legislative Assembly, for consideration of the President. The bill seeks to bypass the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for medical students in Tamil Nadu by allowing admissions to be made based on marks obtained by students in Class XII or Plus Two. All parties, except the BJP, support the Bill. As it attempts to bypass a Central law, the Bill needs Presidential assent to come into force. Now as the state governor has not acted on the legislation sent to him, the state government has put pressure on him. Various DMK MPs tried to meet the President of India but in vain. They had to satisfy themselves by submitting a memorandum to the President's office. Their meeting with the Union Home Minister also did not materialise. A meeting of all the legislature parties chaired by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister was conducted on January 8 to take necessary legal steps to abolish NEET. The meeting decided to take other state governments into confidence and put up a collective fight against NEET. Senior BJP leader and MLA Vanathi Srinivasan righty denied the contention of the Dravidian parties that NEET for medical admissions was against the principles of social justice and the reservation policy followed in Tamil Nadu. When all the reservations applicable for Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Backward Class, etc., are intact even after NEET system, how is it against any social justice? Hence, the contention that NEET affects social justice is a blatant lie.

The Constitution backs the governor who"shall declare either that he assents to the Bill or that he withholds assent therefrom or that he reserves the Bill for the consideration of the President." When it is not a Money bill there is no compulsion for him to return the bill immediately. Even if the said bill is sent to the President, the Central Government in all likelihood may not agree for giving consent for the legislation of the Tamil Nadu Government due to the following factors. First, the TN legislation is against the Central Government Act and any tinkering will amount to violation of aSupreme Court ruling. Secondly, among all the states in India, only Tamil Nadu is against NEET and there is no political compulsion for Centre to side with the TN government. Thirdly, the ruling dispensation in TN is politically against BJP at the Centre and there is no need for BJP to help DMK to fulfil its election promise. Fourthly, even when BJP's alliance partner AIADMK was in power in TN, the BJP government was not inclined to remove NEET. When the GO issued by the TN Government for admission to academic year 2017-18, it was contested by the students from CBSE stream. While delivering the judgement the following comments were made by the judge: "The case as projected by the Government by treating the students from the CBSE Board undoubtedly indicates the mind of the State Government that they want to look at those students as though they do not belong to this State." It seems still the present state government has not learnt any lesson from the above observation. More number of students from Tamil Nadu have cleared NEET this year. Among the top 50,000 national rank holders, the number of TN students has increased to 2874 this year, as against 2747 last year. Hence there is no truth in the statement that TN students cannot pursue medical education due to introduction of NEET.

(The writer is a retired banker. The views expressed are personal.)

Caste coalition in UP at crossroads

BISWAJEET **BANERJEE**

OBCs may have been satisfied with the call of Mandirs and mutts, but what they want is true empowerment where they have an equal share of power

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party got a major setback when a tall OBC leader representing the numerically dominant Kushwaha, quit Yogi's cabinet and later joined Samajwadi Party with a vow to finish the BJP from the State. The day he joined SP, Swamy Prasad Maurya claimed that "it is a history that the party I leave is finished with the passage of time". It could be a boastful assertion which he made when probably he got swayed by the massive crowd that assembled at the Samajwadi Party office to welcome him. But this switch is an indication that the rainbow coalition of upper caste, backward, and *Dalit*s which the BJP had stitched assiduously in the last seven years has started crumbling.

The importance of Swami Prasad Maurya could be gauged from the fact that after him quitting the Government, two more ministers and around a dozen BJP lawmakers, all non-Yadav OBC leaders, resigned from the party. They have shown their loyalty to Maurya and claimed that they will swim with him. The indications are more desertions may follow. Incidentally, the majority of them were originally with BSP and had joined BJP along with Maurya after deserting Mayawati.

The revolt by these OBCs leaders against the BJP leadership ahead of the crucial UP assembly elections has come as a shot in the arm for the opposition Samajwadi party. Akhilesh Yadav tweeted a picture of himself with Maurya and wrote: "*Saamajik nyay kaa inqalabhoga*, baaes me badlavhoga (There will be a revolution in the field or social justice and there will be change in UP)."

The sudden political development caught the BJP leadership, which appears to have grown complacent after three back-to-back electoral successes in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections and the 2017 UP assembly elections, unawares. This victory centered around the support of backward communities, which account for 54 percent of the population. This support base was built brick by brick by Amit Shah in 2016 when he was the national president of the party. He was the one who picked up Swamy Prasad Maurya and persuaded him to join BJP along with his supporters. The BJP needs to introspect as to why and how this support group disintegrated putting the party in a soup.

The resentment among backward against the Chief Minister Yogi is not new. The anger was simmering for the last couple of years. There is an impression that the BJP Government is pro-Thakur because Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath belongs to that caste. Word started spreading that the members of the backward community were being ignored.

Even the Deputy Chief Minister in the Yogi cabinet, Keshav Prasad Maurya, himself an OBC who belongs to the same caste as Swamy Prasad Maurya, showed his annoyance at the way the members of the backward community were ignored. The RSS leadership placated him and early last year when Yogi along with senior BJP leaders had a luncheon meeting with Maurya at his residence. The indications were that "everything has been sorted out" but the meeting failed to douse the anger of the backwards.

> IN THE BUDGET FOR 2021-22, THE FINANCE MINISTER ANNOUNC

(The writer is Political Editor, Lucknow Edition. The views expressed are personal.)

Political analysts, however, point out that the BJP in the last eight years with its social engineering politics along with the benefits through 'Direct benefit transfer' (DBT) believed that it has upstaged the caste-based identity politics. The BJP leadership believed that the members from the SC and the OBCs are no longer attracted to caste lines. It is believed that the economic needs of this section have been fulfilled by the Narendra Modi and Yogi Adtyanath governments in the last five years through the free distribution of food grains.

In fact, BJP mis-read the trend. Free distribution of food grains does not lead to empowerment of any caste. It is a feelgood factor for shorter period of time but at a longer run, it proved detrimental for the party. There is a belief among the villagers that the freebie scheme which has started, will not be withdrawn by the next government.

The way OBC leaders are leaving BJP is not a good sign for the ruling party particularly when an election bugle has been sounded because leaders like Swami Prasad Maurya and his colleagues still command clout in their respective communities and enjoy ideological weightage.

The voters from the OBCs and SCs will face the dilemma on the day of voting whether to respond to the traditional optics of caste appeal or go with the politics of economic and social empowerment. The Yadavs are already with Samajwadi Party and after leaders like Swami Prasad Maurya, Lalji Verma, and Ram Achal Rajbhar joined SP, now Akhilesh has become the focal point around whom the backward politics will revolve now.

What has happened last week is a clear indication that caste-based politics is threatening to upstage *Hindutva* politics, despite the saffron-clad Yogi Adityanath is the *Hindutva* icon for the BJP and the party's campaign is revolving around Ram Janmabhoomi and Kashi Vishwanath Dham. There were rumours that Yogi would contest assembly elections from Ayodhya but later it was communicated he would contest from Gorakhpur.

BJP continued to play around the arrogance of Yogi by projecting him as the staunch *Hindutva* icon. Slogans like "*Raj tilak ki karo tayari, aa rahen hai bhagwadhari* (Get ready for coronation as a saffron-clad is coming)" were shared widely during the digital campaign kicked off two days back.

The party added further doses of *Hindutva* by propagating the construction of Ram Mandir and the inauguration of Kashi Vishwanath Dham as its achievements. A new twist was added to this *Hindutva* story when BJP leaders started talking about Mathura.

In contrast, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav who had contested the 2017 election on the development plank with the tagline of "*Kaam bolta hai*", chose realpolitik as he shed all inhibitions and joined the caste bandwagon. He started his crusade by first asking for the caste-based census and even gave a slogan of "85 vs15" indicating that the OBCs were 85 percent of the population while the upper casteswere a minuscule minority of 15 percent.

He followed it up by scouting for new caste-based parties as allies. He even made it clear that Samajwadi Party will never have any trucks with big parties. He patched up with his estranged uncle Shivpal Yadav to consolidate the backward caste vote bank. The creation of a large coalition of the neglected, excluded and undocumented backward castes and *Dalit*s could be a game-changer for the Samajwadi Party.

On the other hand, BJP's social engineering tactics meant regrouping of the non-Yadav, non-Jatav OBC, and *Dalit* sub-castes in its favour. But what had happened in last two days is a clear indication that the members of the backward community are now asking for their pound of flesh. They are satisfied with the call of Mandirs or mutts but they want empowerment in the true sense — where they have an equal share of power. This has crumbled the cookie of *Hindutva*.

In short, the ghost of Mandal is out of Kamandal and it is set to turn the UP election on its head.

POINT COUNTER POINT

MY ASSESSMENT THAT THE AAP WILL ONLY FRACTURE THE NON-BJP VOTE HAS BEEN CONFIRMED BY ARVIND KEJRIWAL.
—CONGRESS LEADER
P CHIDAMBARAM

GOANS WILL VOTE WHERE THEY SEE HOPE AND THE CONGRESS IS HOPE FOR THE BJP, NOT GOANS.
—DELHI CHIEF MINISTER
ARVIND KEJRIWAL

OBC is the new catchphrase in poll-bound Uttar Pradesh

Akhilesh has astutely moved away from his father's trusted Muslim-Yadav formula to a new kind of social engineering for a larger social coalition

KALYANI **SHANKAR**

Former Uttar Pradesh chief minister and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav has emerged as the primary challenger to the BJP in the February Assembly polls now that the poll scene is explicit.

The massive turnout at the young Yadav chieftain's election rallies is testimony to Akhilesh's growing popularity. Most psephologists say that the polls have become a bi-polar contest between the Samajwadi Party and BJP. Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also remarked about the growing support base saying '*Lal topi*' (red cap) is a 'Lal batti' (red light) for UP.

Yadav Junior came out of the shadows of his father and former chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav a long time ago, and today he is the only leader for his party. Akhilesh has gone through many ups and downs in his two decades of political life. Leading the election campaign for the coalition, he is a much more mature politician today.

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

SP's political strategy is well calibrated. Akhilesh has strengthened himself within the party and sorted out his family fights with his uncle Shivpal Yadav who is now back in the fold.

Single-handedly he stitched up alliances, particularly with Jayant Chaudhary-led Rashtriya Lok Dal. What is working to the benefit of the SP is the support from the farmers community in western Uttar Pradesh. They have been upset with the BJP for almost one year, as the Centre did not heed their protests against the three farm laws passed in Parliament in 2019. The Jats hold the key in Western UP and they back RLD.

The junior Yadav has astutely moved away from his father's trusted Muslim-Yadav formula to a new kind of social engineering for a larger social coalition. Akhilesh has learned lessons the hard way. He had experimented with several combinations. As joining hands with Congress in the 2017 Assembly elections and with the BSP in 2019 polls failed to yield the desired results, he is now depending on smaller caste-based regional parties, particularly those with a non-Yadav OBC base. He has roped in smaller parties like Rashtriya Lok Dal, Mahan Dal, Sanjay Singh Chouhan's Democratic (Socialist) Party, Krishna Patel's Apna Dal (Communist), Rajesh Siddhartha's Political Justice, and Ram Raj Singh Patel's Akhil Bhartiya Kisan Sena.

Interestingly, the SP chief has promised a caste census if elected to power. Though backward classes parties have been in power in Uttar Pradesh since the early 1990s, his predecessors did not take any risk.

His calculations are based on the Samajwadi Party's internal surveywhich revealed that in the 2017 elections, over 50 per cent of OBCs voted for BJP while around 15 per cent supported SP. Akhilesh has given an open invitation to all parties and sections to join him in throwing out the BJP.

He successfully poached on several OBC leaders from the BJP, including Swami Prasad Maurya, in his efforts to broaden his party's social base. Two influential ministers and some MLAs quit BJP and joined SP days before the poll announcement. Swami Prasad Maurya, a powerful OBC leader and five-time MLA, joined BJP in 2016 after quitting Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party. Many from BSP like Yogesh Verma, Mithai Lal Bharti have already switched to SP.

As for countering Kamandal politics, Akhilesh has embraced the "me too" line to counter BJP's politics. He has also promised to establish Vishnu Nagar and a massive statue of Parashuram on the Purvanchal expressway.

He raises other issues like Covid handling, development, law, and order, poor health infrastructure, reservation, and inflation. He also presents the controversial incidents in Gorakhpur, Hathras, and Unnao.

BJP is counting on Brand Narendra Modi to get votes. Yogi is contesting for the Assembly for the first time. The BJP seems to be banking on the polarisation of Jat votes like in the 2017 polls to maintain its dominance.

To counter the SP caste strategy, BJP has given tickets to 44 OBC names, including 16 Jats, followed by 43 upper castes and 19 from Scheduled Castes. The list indicates that the BJP is hopeful of getting the Jat votes in western UP, where the rural community is concentrated.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who leads the Congress in UP is banking on women's votes and has promised all kinds of freebies. The BSP chief Mayawati is lying low but working quietly after her party's miserable performance in 2017 and 2019.

UP is known for casting votes on a caste basis. Whether Akhilesh's Mandal politics or BJP's Kamandal politics works in these polls is a million-dollar question.

Bidding for CBM blocks to start on Feb 15, end on March 15: DGH

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bidding for 15 blocks offered in the first coal-bed methane (CBM) round in more than a decade will start on February 15 and end on March 15, the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH) said on Tuesday.

Bids under the Special CBM Bid Round-2021, which was launched in September last year, were originally due on February 20, 2022, but the deadline was postponed.

"Bid submission for Special CBM Bid Round-2021 will start on 15th February, 2022 and end on 15th March, 2022," DGH said in a notice.

The government has offered 15 blocks in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh for extracting gas from coal seams (CBM).

This is the first CBM bid round in more than a decade. The last round was held in 2010.

CBM is gas or methane found below coal seams in coal fields. It is similar to natural gas and can be used as fuel to fire power plants, run fertiliser units, or be used as CNG in automobiles.

The maximum number of five coal-bed methane (CBM) blocks have been offered in Madhya Pradesh, and two blocks each in Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Odisha. Three blocks are on offer in Chhattisgarh and one in West Bengal.

The government has awarded 29 CBM blocks in the previous four rounds of bidding.

"Companies are invited to bid for exploration, development and monetisation of 15 CBM blocks likely to contain both conventional and/or unconventional hydrocarbon resources, distributed in the sedimentary basins of India," DGH had said in the notice inviting offers in September last year.

All the 15 blocks are in Category-III basins that hold prospective resources to be explored and discovered.

India's sedimentary basins are divided into three categories -- Category-I are basins with reserves being produced and exploited, and Category-II are ones with contingent resources to be developed and monetised.

The government has offered 15 blocks in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh for extracting gas from coal seams (CBM).

Under the current CBM round, bidders offering to do maximum exploration work will be awarded the block, DGH had said.

The bid round is part of the government's attempt to raise domestic oil and gas production to cut reliance on imports. India imports roughly 85 per cent of its oil needs and about half of the gas requirement.

Prior to the CBM launch, the government offered 21 conventional oil and gas blocks for bidding in the sixth round under the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP). Last date for bidding for these blocks is February 15, 2022.

In parallel, the government has offered 32 small and marginal discovered fields. These were discovered by state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL) but the companies could not develop them for a variety of reasons, including uneconomical size.

Now, 32 such areas have been offered under the third Discovered Small Field (DSF) round."Bid submission for DSF Bid Round-III will start on 01st February, 2022 and end on 15th March, 2022," DGH said.

These are part of government efforts to more than double the share of natural gas in the country's energy mix to 15 per cent by 2030 from the current 6 per cent.

State gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd is adding around 15,000 kilometres of gas pipelines in east India to an existing network of around 17,000 km to form a national grid that will tie into city gas networks.

Coal India committed to meet 'elevated' demand of power sector

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Mining major Coal India Ltd is committed to meet the "elevated" demand of the dry fuel from the power sector, including coastal plants dependent on imports, a company official said on Tuesday.

The miner had hoped the demand would ease by December last year, but that did not happen, he said.

"We are committed to catering to the coal needs of the power sector, be it domestic or those dependent on imports, despite CIL being stretched," a senior company official told PTI when asked whether it was capable of plugging the gaps arising out of Indonesian supply disruptions. "We have already started supplying some amount of coal to the coastal plants to cut down on imports," he added.

Indonesia had banned coal exports since January 1 due to domestic shortages and the impasse still prevails. This has led to a surge in prices in the international market.

India imports 5-9 million tonnes of coal per month from Indonesia, officials said.

The world's largest miner is trying to keep up to the demand by dispatching over 1.75 million tonnes of coal per day to the power sector, they said.India's power consumption grew by 4.5 per cent in December 2021 to 110.34 billion units (BU) over the same period a year ago, according to power ministry data.In the first 16 days, Coal India's average daily production stood at 2.35 million tonnes. It is targeting 670 million tonnes of production in the 2021-22 fiscal. Till January 16, the total ouput was at 445 million tonnes.

MONEY MATTERS

Tata Motors to hike passenger vehicle prices

Tata Motors on Tuesday said it will increase prices of its passenger vehicles by an average of 0.9 per cent with effect from January 19, in order to partially offset the impact of rise in input costs.The Mumbai-based automaker sells various models like Tiago, Punch and Harrier, in the domestic market.Effective January 19, 2022, an average increase of 0.9 per cent will be implemented, depending on the variant and model, the automaker said in a statement.At the same time, the company has also taken a reduction of up to Rs 10,000 on specific variants, in response to feedback from customers, it added."While the company is absorbing a significant portion of the increased costs, the steep rise in overall input costs has compelled it to pass on some proportion through this minimal price hike," Tata Motors noted.It noted that in line with the company's customer-first approach, it has again decided to offer price protection to all its customers who have reposed faith and confidence in the Tata Motors' passenger vehicles range.There would be no impact of the price increase on the cars booked on or before January 18, 2022, Tata Motors stated.Last week, Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) raised prices of its models by up to 4.3 per cent with immediate effect. The company has enhanced prices across its models from 0.1 per cent to 4.3 per cent owing to rinse in various input costs.

Oil price tops $87/bbl but petrol, diesel prices stay unchanged

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

International oil prices jumped to the highest level since 2014, topping USD 87 a barrel but domestic petrol and diesel prices remained unchanged for the 74th day in a row - a freeze that may be linked to ensuing assembly elections in states like Uttar Pradesh and Punjab.

Brent - the key global oil benchmark - soared to USD 87.7 per barrel mostly due to rising geopolitical tensions and supply-side disturbances due to Yemen's Houthi group's attack on oil facilities in the United Arab Emirates. Also, global inventories are waning.

The attack, some analysts believe, may lead to more hostile behaviour between the two power centres in the Middle East - Iran and Saudi Arabia.

But domestic fuel prices - which are directly linked to international oil prices - have not been revised for over two months now.

Petrol costs Rs 95.41 a litre in Delhi and diesel is priced at Rs 86.67. This price is after accounting for the excise duty cut and a reduction in VAT rate by the state government.

Prior to these tax reductions, petrol price had touched an all-time high of Rs 110.04 a litre and diesel came for Rs 98.42. These rates corresponded to Brent soaring to a peak of USD 86.40 per barrel on October 26, 2021. Brent was USD 82.74 on November 5, 2021, before it started to fall and touched USD 68.87 a barrel in December.

Prices, however, started to rise thereafter and on Tuesday soared to USD 87.7 per barrel - the highest since 2014.

Petrol and diesel prices have been in the past frozen before crucial elections.

There was a 19-day price freeze on petrol and diesel ahead of Karnataka polls in May 2018, despite international fuel prices going up by nearly USD 5 per barrel. However, no sooner were the elections over, oil companies rapidly passed on to customers the desired increase — over 16-straight days post-May 14, 2018. Petrol price climbed by Rs 3.8 per litre and diesel by Rs 3.38 per litre after the hike.

Similarly, they had stopped revising fuel prices for almost 14 days ahead of the assembly elections in Gujarat in December 2017.

Reliance Retail buys 54 pc stake in Addverb Tech

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mukesh Ambani led Reliance Retail has acquired a 54 per cent stake in domestic robotics company Addverb for USD 132 million (about Rs 983 crore), a senior official of the robotic firm said Tuesday.

Addverb Technologies co-founder and CEO Sangeet Kumar told PTI that the company will continue to operate independently and will use the funds received from Reliance to expand business overseas as well as set up one of the biggest robotic manufacturing facilities in Noida. The company already has a manufacturing plant in Noida where it produces around 10,000 robots per annum. "With this investment, Reliance will hold around 54 per cent stake in Addverb. They become the largest shareholder in the company. Reliance was already one of our esteemed clients, with whom we had co-created and delivered highly automated warehouses for their Jio-Mart grocery business.

The comfort level and the trust factor were already in place, which led to this association," Kumar said.The strategic partnership with Reliance Retail will help us leverage 5G, battery technology through new energy initiatives, advances in material sciences (carbon fibre) to deliver more advanced and affordable robots, he added.

"We are a profitable company. We will use the funds for overseas expansion and expanding manufacturing facilities.

Sensex tanks 550 pts; Nifty slumps below 18,150

PNS ■ MUMBAI,

Equity benchmark Sensex plunged by 554.05 points on Tuesday, tracking deep losses in realty, auto and metal stocks amid widespread selling pressure in global markets.

The 30-share index slumped by 554.05 points or 0.90 per cent to end at 60,754.86. The broader NSE Nifty fell by 195.05 points or 1.07 per cent to 18,113.05.

Maruti was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding over 4 per cent, followed by Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech, Tata Steel, IndusInd Bank and L&T.

Sectorally, Basic Materials, Telecom, Auto, Realty and Metal indices fell up to 2.76 per cent.

On the other hand, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Kotak Bank Dr Reddy's, Titan and Nestle India were the gainers.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul ended with losses, while Shanghai was positive. Stock exchanges in Europe were witnessing heavy selling pressure in mid-session deals.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

NIT No.: 30/EE-7/(4B)/CRZ/GHMC/2021-22 'e' Procurement Notice

Name of the Work : Sl No 1 to 36. **Estt.Cost (Rs in Lakhs) :** Rs. 341.65 Lakhs. **Start Date/Last Date & Time for Receipts of Bids :** Download Start Date : 19.01.2022 at 04.00 P.M. Last Date Receipt of Bids : 24.01.2022 at 04.00 P.M. **Name & Address Officer, Cell No:** Sri B Ramulu EE, Santosh Nagar Circle-7, Charminar Zone, Masqati Ground, Darab Jung Colony, Santosh Nagar, Hyderabad. Ph.No. 9381673271. For further details can be seen at e-procurement @ www.tender.telangana.gov.in

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Santosh Nagar Circle-7, Charminar Zone, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation

DIPR.No.20260-PP/CL/Advt/1/2021-22

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
e-Procurement Tender Notice

Engineer-in-Chief (R&B) State Roads, CRN: NIT No.41/DCE1/R/EE-R/DEE-1/AEE/2022 Dt:13.01.2022

1. Online tenders are invited under e-procurement platform for **Two (02) works** under Non-Plan in Rangareddy District.
2. Tenderers can download the tender schedules from e-market place i.e., http://www.eprocurement.telangana.gov.in from 19-01-2022 at 4.00 PM onwards. The last date of receipt of tenders is on or before **27-01-2022** upto **4.00 PM**.

Further details can be seen at e-procurement market place i.e. http://www.eprocurement.telangana.gov.in

RO No: 937-DP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2021-22

Sd/- Engineer-in-Chief (R&B), State Roads & CRN

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
DISTRICT COLLECTOR, JANGAON
(Preliminary Notification)
FORM-VI
(See Sub-rule (1) of rule - 19 and Section -11(1) of the Act-30(2013)

Dist. Collector File No. G3/26002/2017 Date: 29-12-2021
District Collector Gazette No: JN/LA/46/2021, Date: 29-12-2021
R.D.O & L.A.O. File No.C/1953/2017 Date : -12-2021

Whereas it appears to the Government of Telangana/ District Collector, Jangaon that a total of **Ac.4-04¾ gts** of land is required in Jangaon Village & Mandal in Jangaon District for public purpose, namely for excavation of J.Chokkarao Godavari Lift irrigation project **1L of 1L of 3L of 6L** of Chetakodur Right Main Canal.

As per the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act No.30 of 2013 the District Collector (Appropriate Government) declares that the proposed acquisition is comes under exempted category as defined under 6(2) & 10(4) of the said act and as such the provisions of Chapter-II and chapter-III of the Act shall not apply to this case.

Total (Nil) families are likely to be displaced due to the land acquisition. The joint Collector & Additional District Magistrate, Janagaon is appointed as Administrator for the purpose of Rehabilitation and Resettlement of the affected families as ordered by Government vide G.O.Ms.No 19 Revenue (JA&LA), dated : 11-02-2015.

Therefore it is noticed that for the above said project in the apiece of land measuring, more or less **Ac.4-04¾ gts** of standard measurement, whose detail description is as following is under acquisition:

SCHEDULE

1L of 1L of 3L of 6L of Chetakodur Right Main Canal from Kms. 0.000 to 0.608

Village: Jangaon Mandal:Jangaon District: Jangaon

S. No.	Sy. No.	Type of Title	Type of land	Area under acquisition (in acer)	Name & Address of Person interested	Remarks
1	296	Patta	Dry	1-02	Ravula Rakesh S/o Muthaiah (1-02)	
2	217	Patta	Dry	0-17	Mote Srishailam S/o Narsaiah (0-17)	
3	218	Patta	Dry	0-02¼	Mote Srishailam S/o Narsaiah (0-02¼)	
4	220	Patta	Dry	1-30½	Mote Srishailam S/o Narsaiah (0-35)	
					Beddhey Yadagiri S/o Gouraiah (0-14¼)	
					Komurelly Yellaiah S/o Ramaswamy (0-14)	
					Nanda Yellamma (0-07¼)	
5	221	Patta	Dry	0-21	Nanda Yellamma (0-10)	
					Nanda Yadamma (0-03)	
					Nanda Ramulu (0-02)	
					Nanda Vasantha W/o Venkatesh (0-02)	
					Kothuru Srdhar S/o Sathyanarayana(0-04)	
6	222	Patta	Dry	0-12	Balde Narsaiah S/o Lachaiah (0-10)	
					Bata (0-02)	
Total				4-04¾		

Village: Jangaon Mandal:Jangaon District: Jangaon

Trees			Structures	
Sy No.	Variety	Number	Type	Plinty area
Nil			Nil	

The Notification is made under the provisions of Section-11(1) of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation & Resettlement Act, 2013 (Act No.30(2013), to all whom it may concern.

A plan of the land may be inspected in the office of the District Collector Jangaon & Revenue Divisional Officer, & LAO Jangaon on any working day during the working hours. The Government of Telangana/Collector-cum-Appropriate Government is pleased to authorize Officer Revenue Divisional Officer, & LAO Jangaon and his staff to enter upon and survey land, take levels of any land, dig or bore into the sub-soil & do all other acts required for the proper execution o their work as provided and specified in section-12 o the said Act.

Under section 11(4) of the Act, no person shall make any transaction or cause any transaction of land i.e sale/purchase, etc., or create any encumbrances on such land from the date of publication of such notification without prior approval of the Collector.

Objection to the acquisition, if any, may be filed by the person interested with in 60 (sixty days) from the date of publication of this notification as provided under section 15 of the Act before District Collector, Jangaon/Revenue Divisional Officer, & LAO Jangaon.

Sd/- Land Acquisition Officer & Revenue Divisional Officer Jangaon Division | Sd/- Additional Collector, Jangaon | Sd/- District Collector, Jangaon

DIPR Ro.No: 1055/LA-PP/Advt/Pubr/2021-22

Rupee slumps 33 paise to close at 74.58 against US dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Continuing its fall for the third consecutive session, the rupee on Tuesday slumped 33 paise to close at 74.58 (provisional) against the US dollar as strong American currency and elevated crude oil prices continue to weigh on investor sentiments.

Sri Lanka averts major default; repays USD 500 million international sovereign bonds

PNS ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka has repaid USD 500 million international sovereign bond (ISB) that was due for settlement, the Central Bank said on Tuesday, averting a major default amidst deepening forex crisis and spiralling external debt in the island nation.

The development came days after India earlier this month announced a USD 900 million loan to Lanka to build up its depleted foreign reserves and for food imports.

"Sri Lanka has paid the USD 500 million sovereign bond that matured today (Jan 18)," Central Bank Ajith Cabraal tweeted. The international rating agencies had expressed doubts over the island nation's ability to meet its international sovereign bond payments of USD 1.5 billion, including the first USD 500 million which matured on Tuesday.

Nazara acquires majority stake in Datawrkz for Rs 124 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gaming and sports media company Nazara Technologies on Tuesday said it will acquire a 55 per cent stake in programmatic advertising and monetisation company Datawrkz for about Rs 124 crore.

The transaction values the Bengaluru-based company at Rs 225 crore (approximately USD 30 million), linked to CY 22 EBITDA performance, a filing said.The Board has approved the strategic investment by the acquisition of 37,498 equity shares - representing 55 per cent of the equity share capital, on a fully diluted basis -- of Datawrkz Business Solutions Private Limited along with its wholly-owned subsidiaries at a total consideration not exceeding Rs 124 crores in two tranches, it added.

The shares will be bought from existing shareholders Senthil Govindan, Karthigha Dhanabalan, K Arunprabu, Mayank Khirwadkar and Vishal Tukaranm Garale, it said. In the first tranche, Nazara will acquire a 33 per cent share for Rs 60 crore during the first quarter of FY2022-23 and it reserves an option to acquire an additional 22 per cent share in the second tranche that is expected to close in the fourth quarter of FY2022-23, the filing added.

In a statement, Nazara said of the Rs 60 crore payable, Rs 35 crores are partly payable in

cash and the balance consideration of Rs 25 crore will be paid either in cash or swap of shares in the first tranche by April 2022.

Datawrkz tech offerings will enhance the in-house capabilities of Nazara for optimising its customer acquisition spends as well as enhance yields on ad monetisation of its large consumer base. This ad revenue monetisation is expected to assist many of the companies in the 'Friends of Nazara' network.

With this transaction, Datawrkz also aims to establish itself as a key player in gaming, covering both demand and supply side offerings for the gaming ecosystem in the US and India.

Cyberattacks surge amid accelerating pace of COVID-driven digitalisation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The accelerating pace of digitalisation, fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to a record-breaking year for cybercrime with ransomware attacks rising 151 per cent in 2021, and an average of 270 cyberattacks per organisation being faced, a new study showed on Tuesday.

The World Economic Forum's 'Global Cybersecurity Outlook 2022', released during its online Davos Agenda summit, further said that each successful cyber breach cost a company USD 3.6 million (nearly Rs 27 crore) last year, while the average share price of the hacked company underperformed NASDAQ by nearly 3 per cent even six months after the event in case of the breach becoming public.

The WEF said the global digital economy surged on the back of the COVID-19 pandemic, but so has cybercrime and nearly 80 per cent of cyber leaders now consider ransomware a 'danger' and 'threat' to public safety.

At the same time, there is a large perception gap between business executives who think their companies are secure

and security leaders who disagree.Some 92 per cent of business executives surveyed agree that cyber resilience is integrated into enterprise risk-management strategies, but only 55 per cent of cyber leaders surveyed agreed. This gap between leaders can leave firms vulnerable to attacks as a direct result of incongruous security priorities and policies, the report said. Even after a threat is detected, the WEF survey conducted in collaboration with Accenture, found that nearly two-thirds would find it challenging to respond to a cybersecurity incident due to the shortage of skills within their team.Even more troubling is the growing trend that companies need 280 days on average to identify and respond to a cyberattack.

the pioneer
Hyderabad

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Wednesday
January 19, 2022

Rohit Shetty lives the life of a commando for a day!

SHIKHA DUGGAL

New series of *Mission Frontline* is being launched on Discovery+ and who better than the action director Rohit Shetty to be a part of it! The king of action didn't know at all what he was getting into — he was in there for a lot of unexpected surprises. It was his knack to push himself into places that are undiscovered and difficult to dodge on the planet Earth that he came on board for an interesting series like this. As serious as he looks in his BTS scenes, we saw a very new side of the proprietor of the *Singham* franchise — immensely sarcastic and a giggling director sitting right in front of us in a virtual press conference. It was a pleasurable sight to watch weighty and disciplined Rohit Shetty indulging in a lot of laughter with us. The enormous collection of awards behind him was a pointer towards his massive success that he's reached all by himself. Asking him about spending a day in action with the Armed forces and the kind of feelings he was going through, he reflects, "I felt like a police personnel for that day but debarring the fact that I am not a commando, rest everything was definitely so real. From ammunition, vehicles to the commandos — nothing was pretense. I realised their struggle, especially serving in a state like J&K looking at the unexpected situations reported everyday. My association with the cops is so unbreakable that I couldn't have turned this concept down ever. Singham, cops and Rohit Shetty should always be taken in one sentence."

The series wasn't a fictitious one, Rohit Shetty was actually living the life of a police officer for a day and as a director himself he could understand the uphill tasks the Discovery team must have gone through. He reveals to us, "Doing a recce at a place like Srinagar isn't an easy task. My photographs are ready to be disclosed on the day of the big launch! Whatever I had seen in a Hollywood film, the kind of interceptor rooms and bullets to catch hold of terrorists is actually a reality. Our country has it too! I was given adequate information about those shells, I was taught how to use them — it was a lifetime experience. I again felt proud to be an Indian."

All this while, the only thought that was pondering in the director's mind was that is he getting trained all over again? Because, the guns he was firing were real! He adds, "The stories of commandos are even more heart-wrenching. I wasn't with the khakee cops; it's a special task force. They are the first guys to react in a dangerous situation before the Army steps in and what surprised me was they live like any other locals there. They aren't deployed, they are trained under NSG. It's not even close to operating a police station — such is the difference. The kids are born there and then join the forces, what better way of showing patriotism?."

For a change, Shetty was ruling in front of the camera and not instructing from behind and that's what caught our attention too! He was going through a pot of mixed feelings, he responds, "I am a constantly evolving part of the *Fear Factor* show, dedicated a long time to it and that was in front of the camera. For me, it was like going for a shoot but with real projectiles! I was highly cautious of how I was behaving, what am I saying, am I following all of their protocols, etc. The temperature was freezing there, Dal Lake was frozen and there was fog everywhere. I'll call our commandos superheroes. In spite of being known for a cop franchise, mission frontline was the one which disclosed the real world of a commando before me."

When ***The Pioneer*** exclusively asked him to narrate one of his fondest memories that he spent with any of the commandos, Golmaal director states, "There was a story at every turn, not just a story but an emotional saga unfolding before me. The senior most commando turned to a cop in 90s only because his father was killed by a terrorist — the moment I heard this it shook me. While patrolling, I heard many of the commandos telling me how they lost one of their fellow commandos, it's sad to hear. There was no fear in their eyes, not any of them and I was stunned. Despite knowing the circumstances, no one ever backed out. For a matter of fact, an engineer turned to a commando because his father was killed by a terrorist — this will be so inspirational for the youngsters because it will lead them to know how one must channelize their anger. Today, the same person is a highly decorated cop in his department."

Clarifying further how *Singham 3* will always stay as Ajay Devgn's brand, yet episodes like this in life upgrade him as a director to showcase more perspectives towards the world through his movies. Even during *Mission Frontline,* the director in him was popping out during suitable intervals to which he laughed his heart out. After serving as a host and mentor for a reality television show based on fear itself for such a long time, it was only natural for the press to ask fears of Rohit Shetty and he asserts, "I don't fear anything, pressurising situations do arise. Anything can go wrong at any given point of time. I have gotten upset too but I never overthink. I don't have that time to consume myself, every year I have a film or show to do."

The episodes will see him spend a day with J&K Police's Special Operations Group in Srinagar and we can't wait to watch him come to blows with it!

Focus, Find, Filter, Fit, and Flex

Innovation is centred on technology and use of technology is revamping the economy doubtlessly. The technology skill market has the most evident mismatch vis-à-vis available talent to fit the needs of an employer, yet the major players are contingenting on the automation of process efficiencies. In an interview with ***The Pioneer,*** Yogita Tulsiani, MD CO-Founder at iXceed Solutions, discusses the same. As the race to hire top talent in IT heats up, Yogita tells their mission is to enable organisations to match their growth with business demand and clients to modernise and adapt new technologies for staying ahead of the curve, by improving employee-employer relations via trust-based-hiring, seamlessly merging the practises of contractual staffing, solutions delivery and recruitment into a custom-fit solution.

"The start of the pandemic, as well as the introduction of technology has hastened the pace of distant work. The employment contracts were floating around the market and qualified people with many offers were still looking for better chances, amidst a lot of time in the interim. As a result, a whole new post-covid world scenario has emerged with enterprises attempting to build and maintain a solid IT infrastructure in order to deploy hybrid work models at the workplace which led to increased flexibility of IT developers and businesses towards remote working. — iXceed seized the opportunity, and developed a specific 5F strategy structure with aspects such as Focus, Find, Filter, Fit, and Flex that allow employers and workers to make quick and informed decisions about cooperating. As an organisation we believed that 'when you share risk, the collective risk goes down.' Buckling delivery methods led to fastening adoption and expansion. Concomitantly they assisted companies in appropriating the applicants on one side, on the other side afforded assistance to the potential employees in making the proper decision about their future employer with respect to their growth opportunities and cultural fit," tells Yogita on the challenges the firm faced during the pandemic and how it overcame with grace.

The firm has become so successful that they now plan to expand in new geographies – specially US. They also plan to enhance the growth of new service lines — technology solutions and enterprise services. "We also focusing on creating a better ecosystem for employees to boost their growth and add value to themselves.We plan to increase our revenue growth by 40% YOY and become the employer of choice across Europe and India. We intend to grow our global customer base. We're also planning to create valuable relationships for businesses and people by providing efficient talent solutions. Connect talent with global opportunities. Expand footprints in Americas and expand more in Asia Pacific. We recently started working in South-East Asian and Middle East markets as well. Not just this we're also planning proliferation across varied industries beyond IT. Expanding workforce in India, Poland, ME and other parts of world," concludes Yogita.

Manscaping: A gentleman's guide to grooming

The face of men grooming rituals has undergone a sea change, and it is having a moment lately. With the pandemic imposing closures of salons and barbershops, there is a boom in demand for men's grooming products and services. Notably, men's grooming is incomplete without manscaping. However, most of us are unaware of this term and wonder what exactly manscaping is? To put it plainly, manscaping is a routine of removing or trimming men's body hair to enhance their appearances.

With the prominence of manscaping, its ways have transformed with time. Today, in the age of body positivity, men are no longer shamed if they sport a neatly trimmed chest, arms and legs. It is widely accepted today if men choose to remove unwanted body hair like their women counterparts. For your ease of building up a routine, here's a list of 4 ways to master the art of manscaping with perfection.

Choosing the ideal trimmer & blade

There are four manscaping options for men (trimming, waxing, shaving, and applying depilatory creams), and they have to decide which one suits them the best. Among all, trimming is considered the safest and hassle-free. This is because shaving has a high chance of causing nicks and cuts. Besides, men do not use separate blades for shaving specific body parts, owing to their careless and lethargic nature. They hardly keep a separate razor for shaving their sensitive-prone private parts. Although shaving is a fast process, it causes cuts, and the razors are usually designed for removing facial hair.

On the other hand, neither waxing provides the much-needed trimmed sophisticated look, nor do depilatory creams suit the skin type of everyone. This indicates the importance of choosing a body trimmer specially designed for body trimming over an ordinary beard trimmer meant for facial hair to keep your chest groomed every time.

The Ballistic Body Trimmer by Zlade is an exceptionally curated body hair trimmer that seamlessly trims the intimate parts of your body. It is equipped with ceramic blades and safe-edge technology, which phenomenally protects the skin from nicks and cuts.

Not forgetting the aftercare

Whatever method of body hair removal you choose (waxing, shaving, or trimming), your body skin will thank you for slathering it with some post-manscape love. Aftercare is incredibly essential as your skin tends to become vulnerable to sensitivity, irritation, and infections after manscaping. Aftershave balms help keep your skin on your chest, legs, and crown area soothing and reduce any kind of skin irritation or razor bumps. Therefore, avoiding an aftershave routine is a lousy skincare move.

Manscaping under shower

It is always advisable to conduct a manscaping routine when the water is running or after a shower. You can smoothly clean the delicate parts of your body through friction and minimize the risk of cuts and razor burns by manscaping under the shower. Shaving under the shower also ensures that all the mess goes right down the drain, making the process more accessible and convenient. Keeping your skin wet or moisturized while manscaping prevents skin itchiness and makes your work done smoothly.

Trimming the neck hair

Skipping the neck hair trimming routine is a major mistake, as it can ruin a good hairstyle by making your hairline look truly messy and ugly. With the right neck hair trimmer, you can shape, line up, and cut a clean neckline by trimming your neck hair anytime to get the perfect well-groomed look. Besides, at-home trimming also eradicates your frequent visits to salons and barbershops.

Summing up

Manscaping has indeed emerged to be an art of manliness over the years. It has helped men to scale up their presentability and boost their self-confidence. So, incorporating a manscaping regimen into your personal grooming routine is a boon that will undoubtedly help you look more hygienic and polished.

(The writer, Suraj Chaudhari, is the Co-founder and CEO of Zlade)

the pioneer
Hyderabad | Wednesday January 19, 2022

PARTY

Sarah

Mohammad Mahmood Ali

Shabeer Ali

Zakir Osman and Md Zeeshan Osmani

Khaiq ur Rehman and Kabeer Khan

Hafsa

Natiq Osmani and Khan Ather

FOR THE RING

The ring ceremony of Mohammed Zeeshan Osmani saw the attendance of all the bigwigs of the city. Home Minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali, MLAs, many political leaders and officers gathered at the event to bless the new couple.

Shazia

Photos by SV Chary

Sony

Bhumika

Pinky and Sanjana

Anuritha

Sashi Nahata

SHAPE AND COLOUR

At the Akriti exhibition, renowned fashion designers and best artisans from across the country are presenting all the newest apparel and home decor from Kolkata, Bombay, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and Hyderabad. The three-day gala comes to an end on January 20 at the Taj Deccan.

Kanchan

Tusshar Kapoor on debut book *Bachelor Dad*

Actor-producer Tusshar Kapoor, who is turning author with *Bachelor Dad*, says his debut book offers a deep dive into his journey to fatherhood and will touch upon several aspects of being a single parent.

Tusshar opted for surrogacy and became a father to son Laksshya Kapoor through surrogacy in June 2016.

The 45-year-old actor said people would often ask him to write down his experience of raising a child as a single parent in the form of a book but he thought it was a "far-fetched idea".

Two years ago, however, when publishing house Penguin India approached him with the idea, Tusshar said he thought it was an opportunity to set the record straight on questions he was asked privately.

"The questions were mostly about 'Why did I do it? How is it possible? Is it the right thing to do?' and 'Will I be able to do it?' After I became a father, the questions were about how I am managing it. The initial surprise was because I was one of the very first people in the fraternity to become a single parent in this manner.

"A lot of people were curious about the medical aspects, even going into the idea of whether I should have adopted or just got married. People had their own notions," the actor, son of veteran actor Jeetendra and producer Shobha Kapoor, told *PTI* in an interview.

Tusshar, known for films like the *Golmaal* series, *Shootout at Wadala* and *The Dirty Picture*, said, though people around him were "curious" about his fatherhood, the response was not negative.

In fact, the actor said, his bigger challenge before becoming a father was to first navigate his own doubts and introspect.

"Nobody really reacted negatively. There was a lot of positivity, they were all supportive, but there were questions about how my journey will be. Which is why I have written this book, to give an honest account of my journey. I was nervous before taking the step of becoming a father. There were lots of questions that came to my mind as well. (For example) if people will accept it positively? Will there be too much of a shock? Will there be a backlash in the media because I was breaking cultural norms? The book sheds light on all these queries and also chronicles how I decided to take the plunge and eventually found my true inner calling," he added.

Through the course of 10 chapters spread across 224 pages, the book chronicles the last decade of Tusshar's life.

As a first-time writer, he said he was initially bogged down by the idea of writing a book but slowly got comfortable as he began writing, every day.

Initially, I wondered how I would be able to pull this off and write all these chapters. It has been a journey, so the apprehension was if I would be able to remember it all. Another challenge was time. I was busy working during the lockdown, the day time was spent in my son's online schooling. So I allotted night time to write the book. When I started writing, I started enjoying it. My writing speed increased, and I was able to finish the book in 11 months. I took it up as a challenge but the process in the end became quite fun and enjoyable," he added.

Bachelor Dad is expected to hit the shelves in the first week of February.

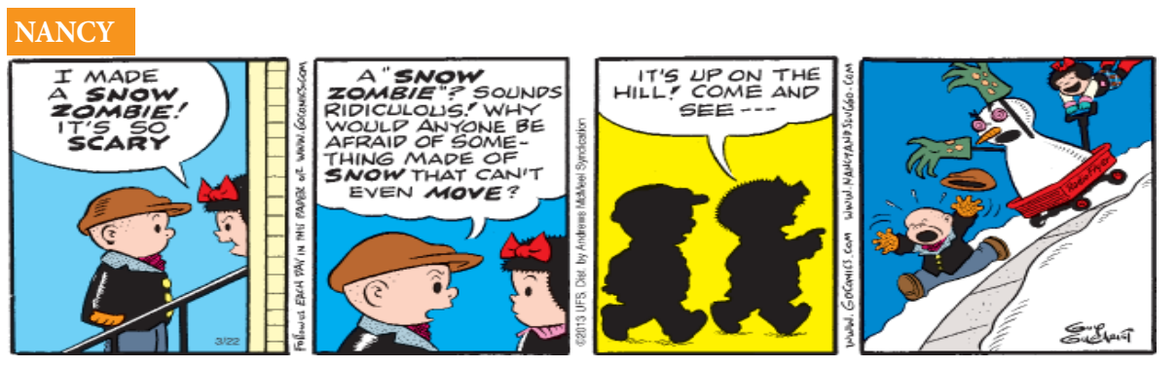
FUN

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBES

GARFIELD

NANCY



GINGER MEGGS

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

SUDOKU

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

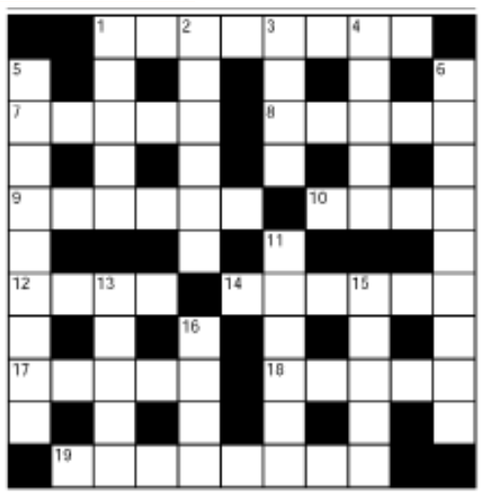
Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Beard
7 Movements of the sea caused by the moon's pull on the Earth
8 A sour oily fruit from a tree
9 One of the continents
10 An alcoholic drink
12 Look at something for a long time
14 Me
17 A type of small bird
18 A clothing size
19 A chart of months and days

DOWN

1 Broader
2 A six-legged creature
3 Round handle
4 Lift up
5 People not known to you
6 Extremely frightened
11 An eye's cover
13 A striped animal
15 Mistake
16 A joint in the leg

SOLUTION

Meet *Allam Gaari Pellikuthuru* Rukshar Dhillon

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Rukshar Dhillon is going to be that one gorgeous young face to watch out for in Tollywood now! Having made her mark with her big-screen debut with *Akatayi* in which she looked sizzling, the beautiful Rukshar has been on the radar of Tollywood directors that see a huge potential for her in the near future.

Sprinkling some good cheer for our readers, the London returned actress has now been roped in by director Vidya Sagar Chinta to star in his new movie *Ashoka Vanam Lo Arjuna Kalyanam.* After giving a blockbuster hit with actor Nani, this is her another big pocket film that she has signed in a remarkably quick time. Quickly getting in touch with her amid a busy schedule, Rukshar paints a very clear picture about her upcoming romantic entertainer in which she'll be seen romancing actor Vishwak Sen! She enlightened us, "In no time I seized this project because of the variety it was offering to me as an upcoming actress one can root for. As compared to my earlier Telugu films, this seemed like a distinct role to me. I was busy wrapping up my OTT project and besides that I couldn't stop myself from coming on board with the *Falaknuma Das* director."

Talking a little more about the variation she mentioned before, she gives details saying, "Having talked about the multifariousness in the character that I am playing in the movie written by Ravi Kiran Kola, it's true that it's demanding but the kind of demands that I would love to fulfill. The role is all about doing less talking and depicting it all through emotions. *Ashoka Vanam Lo Arjuna Kalyanam* team infused me with unbreakable confidence that I was able to execute my character so well opposite Vishwak."

When talking about films with any of the actors, it's mandatory for us to touch upon the fondest set memories while they are busy doing precarious shoots and Rukshar had her optimistic memories too, especially with a lovely co-star like Vishwak Sen. She highlights, "While in conversation with Vishwak, I realised that what we share in common is that the thought of appreciating valuable opportunities coming our way. Neither of us belong to a film background, and the kind of discussions we indulged on set was something to cherish. I noticed Vishwak never tried to gain control over me while performing a scene, he knew exactly what sharing screen space meant. Our end goal was to make the scene look better and not one of us in the movie! Moreover, he's extremely talkative on sets and that's the kind of vibe that I appreciate too."

Back-to-back Telugu films are being churned out in the theatres but the romantic entertainers will continue to ruminate on our screens and as for that reason we were eager to know what romance for the actress is like too! She snickers a bit and reflects, "I am a hardcore romantic girl. Love and care are the two facets I endear in any relationship. I have a deep affection for love stories and probably that's why *Ashoka Vanam Lo Arjuna Kalyanam* seems like the right fit for me to move ahead in my Telugu career." Further in conversation with the star to watch out for, we learnt it wasn't the language that pushed her to do movies but the whole concept of 'cinematic values' that made her go for it! She continues, "I have grown up watching Hindi and English movies, but I always ensured that I also watch the dubbed versions of other regional movies too. That's the kind of engrossment I have with movies despite not knowing Telugu. The one thing I really liked about Tollywood is the way Tolly fans worship these movies and their actors! Regardless of doing very few films in T-town, I have never faced a thumbs down from Telugu audiences."

Elaborating more about the character that we'll see Rukshar playing on screen when this SVCC banner movie goes on floors, she says, "It boiled down to the rearing and raising my character Madhavi has in the movie. She comes from a space where she fears taking uncompromising decisions she's brought up in a very protective environment. And, when we compare Rukshar to Madhavi, the combat changes! I have always been asked to embrace individuality in real life and Madhavi is closely knit to her family. She never reacts impulsively in the movie, she's observant and sensitive. This feature made me go back to the times while I was growing through this phase of life."

Relentlessly going ahead with this fun conversation, she didn't shy away from sharing her association with actor Nani too and she recollects, "I had just stepped into this industry while I got the chance to star opposite Nani. Initially, I was this highly strung girl coming to the sets but it was actor Nani who taught me how to be your windless self before the shot takes place. He knew I wasn't affluent in Telugu language, but he educated me on how to deliver the scene not with the correct word but the correct emotion. That has stayed with me all this while. It gives me a much better closure now."

Concluding the swift interview on a jolly note, Rukshar who is working nonstop in this industry has been getting plenty of requests from her Punjabi descendants to make her grand debut in a full-fledged Punjabi movie too. If she does it, she confirms it's going to be for her grand-parents! "Regional tag has been pushed aside, its pan-India movies now. I would love to be part of the movie that hugs me with my own culture. But *Ashoka Vanam Lo Arjuna Kalyanam* should be the talk of town. Through my Telugu ventures I would love to change perceptions, create a broader point of view towards societal pressures. It's as pretty as a picture to see actresses helming big-ticket movies on their shoulders!," she signs off.

Dhanush-Aishwarya end their 18 years of marriage

Choosing to end their 18-year-long marriage, actor Dhanush and director Aishwaryaa Dhanush, who also happens to be the daughter of superstar Rajinikanth, have announced that they have decided to part ways.

Late on Monday night, both the actor and the director put out a letter, which looked similar for the most part, on their respective social media handles. Dhanush, who was most recently seen with Sara Ali Khan in *Atrangi Re,* shared his letter on Twitter, Aishwarya chose Instagram.

In the letter posted on his timeline, Dhanush said, "18 years of togetherness as friends, couple, as parents and well-wishers to each other. The journey has been of growth, understanding, adjusting and adapting. Today, we stand at a place where our paths separate. Aishwaryaa and I have decided to part ways as a couple and take time to understand us as individuals for the better. Please do respect our decision and give us the needed privacy to deal with this. Om Namah Shivaaya! Spread love!"
Aishwaryaa's letter read pretty much the same except for the last line in which she said: "Much love always to you all! Godspeed."

On Instagram, while posting the letter, Aishwaryaa added: "No caption needed. Only your understanding and your love are necessary!"
The decision of the couple, who have two sons, Yatra and Linga, comes as a bolt from the blue to the film industry.

Rumours rife as Sreeja drops husband's name

Mega Star Chiranjeevi's youngest daughter Sreeja has dropped her actor-husband Kalyaan Dhev's name from her social media handles amid rumours that their marriage is on the rocks. Her unilateral action has triggered speculation about the couple's impending separation. Sreeja changed her Instagram handle name to Sreeja Konidela from Sreeja Kalyan. Ever since Sreeja started using Instagram, her display name has been Sreeja Kalyan up until a couple of days ago. Samantha Ruth Prabhu, who got separated from Telugu actor Naga Chaitanya, also had taken down her then surname — Akkineni — much before their divorce announcement. Industry watchers believe that Sreeja's action could be an indication that her divorce formalities have been initiated.

For a while now, there have been rumours that all is not well between Sreeja and her husband Kalyaan Dhev. No one from Chiranjeevi's family was seen promoting Kalyaan Dhev's recent movie *Super Machi,* which only added fuel to the fire of the speculation surrounding the couple's marriage. There has been no official confirmation regarding the split. Sreeja and Kalyaan Dhev were married in March 2016. The couple was blessed with a daughter in 2018. Before Kalyaan Dhev, Sreeja was married to Sirish Bharadwaj, through whom she had her elder daughter. Their relationship ended in 2011 after Sreeja filed a harassment case against him.

K.V. Vijayendra Prasad to pen story, screenplay for Sri Vaari Films

Legendary screen writer K.V. Vijayendra Prasad, who is also the father of ace director S.S. Rajamouli, is to pen the story and screenplay for the third production venture of Sri Vaari Films. Disclosing this, producer P. Ranganathan of Sri Vaari Films said that work on the project would commence soon.

Vijayendra Prasad has written the screenplay for more than 25 superhit pan-Indian films in Telugu, Tamil and Hindi, including the *Baahubali* films, *Bajrangi Bhaijaan, Manikarnika* and the highly-anticipated *RRR* that has been directed by Rajamouli.

Ranganathan said leading actors would be a part of the project and the official announcement about the cast and crew wuld be made in the coming days. Sri Vaari Films has already bankrolled two successful films — *Dharmaprabhu* and *Anandham Vilayadum Veedu. Dharmaprabhu* was a fantasy flick which had Yogi Babu in the lead role while *Anandham Vilayadum Veedu* was an emotional family drama featuring Cheran and Gautham Karthik in prominent roles.

Ravi Teja's *Ravanasura* shoot begins

Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja and creative director Sudheer Varma's unique action thriller *Ravanasura* was launched grandly on Sankranthi with megastar Chiranjeevi attending it as a chief guest. The Ravanasura rule begins, as the team begun its regular shoot. Night sequences are currently being shot. *Ravanasura* is being mounted on a massive scale by Abhishek Nama under Abhishek Pictures and RT Teamworks. The makers recently announced to release *Ravanasura* on September 30, 2022. Ravi Teja plays a lawyer, while Sushanth will be seen a crucial role as Ram in the film. Ravanasura will star a total of five heroines- Anu Emmanuel, Megha Akash, Faria Abdullah, Daksha Nagarkar and Poojitha Ponnada. All the heroines will have equal importance in the movie. Srikanth Vissa who's associated with few exciting projects as a writer has penned a powerful and a first of its kind story for the movie. Known for his stylish and exceptional taking expertise, Sudheer Varma will be presenting Ravi Teja in a never seen before role in the movie. Some prominent actors and noted craftsmen are part of the project. Harshavardhan Rameswar and Bheems together provide music for the film, while Vijay Kartik Kannan handles the cinematography and Srikanth is the editor.

Abhirami Suresh spills the beans on her all new *avatar* in *Aanandham Aarambha*

Actor Abhirami Suresh is all set to take us on a romantic ride this cozy winter with the micro-series, *Aanandham Aarambham,* now streaming on Disney+ Hotstar. Over the years, Abhirami Suresh has impressed us with her exquisite style and stupendous performances across movies and reality shows. She will be joined by co-actor Santosh Prathap to take the audience on a heart-warming tale of love in the modern age.

In a candid conversation, Abhirami Suresh opened up on what excited her about the series. "The characterization of Ranjini in the series is exactly what I am in my real life. The character very well resonates with the real me. When Jagan narrated the character to me in his own funny way, I was instantly convinced. The very moment I heard the script narration, I decided that I wanted to do this. Another thing that excited me was the story's concept. The romantic quotient is happening for me for the very first time. I have essayed all types of characters and been part of stories of different genres- be it emotional, suspense, thrilling but never been a part of a romantic drama. It is the very first time when I will be a part of a romantic series and hence it is a whole new experience for me. The excitement of doing the on-screen romance series thrilled me," she said.

Diving deep into the insight of a simple cup of coffee bringing two individuals together, the eight-episode micro-series traces the heart-warming relationship of two coffee lovers, Ranjani and Ramcharan, starting from their proposal to their first wedding anniversary. Each four-minute episode displays how coffee becomes an integral part of their everyday life to build an equal relationship. For Ramcharan and Ranjani, filling bitter-gaps becomes easier over coffee and eventually becomes a back-in-love tactic.

ALL EYES ON VIRAT KOHLI THE BATTER AS INDIA TAKE ON SA

PTI ■ PAARL (SOUTH AFRICA)

The mighty Virat Kohli's presence in the Indian playing eleven as a mere player for the first time in seven years will be keenly followed while his potential successor in red-ball cricket, K L Rahul, will be judged for his captaincy in the three-match ODI series against South Africa beginning here on Wednesday.

Whether he is batting in the middle or fielding at the boundary line, Kohli's every move is tracked but some of that attention will now have to be shared by Rahul.

More importantly, will he be at his usual animated best on the field or will the cricketing world see a rather subdued Kohli after his stunning resignation from Test captaincy brought an end to his innings as official leader of the team across formats?

He did not want to leave ODI captaincy after relinquishing the role in the shortest format and it led to a war of words with the BCCI on how the entire matter was handled.

His supporters and Indian cricket in general will be hoping that Kohli has put his differences with the BCCI firmly behind him and come Wednesday, he starts a new innings with his willow doing most of the talking. A highly desired century after two years would be cherry on top.

Rahul, who is leading the side in the absence of an injured Rohit Sharma, is expected to turn to Kohli for advice during the series.

Not only Kohli has a major role to play as a batter, but as vice-captain Jasprit Bumrah said on the eve of the series, the star "will always be a leader" in the team.

With the new leadership and support staff, India will look to win the series with one eye on preparations for the 2023 World Cup and also make up for the disappointment of unexpectedly going down in the Tests last week.

The last time a full strength India played an ODI series was at home against England in March before a second string squad travelled to Sri Lanka in July.

Rahul batted in the middle-order against England but it remains to be seen if he moves back to the top alongside Shikhar Dhawan. Ruturaj Gaikwad, who made the squad following an exceptional domestic season, might have to wait longer for his ODI debut.

It will be crucial three games for the seasoned Dhawan, who has already lost his place in the T20 side. The southpaw has thrived under pressure in the past and will be looking to solidify his position as the first-choice opener alongside Rohit when the latter returns from injury. Kohli will bat at his usual number three spot while there will be a toss-up between Suryakumar Yadav and Shreyas Iyer for the number four position.

Rishabh Pant is expected to come at number five while Venkatesh Iyer is likely to make his 50-over debut as the all-rounder at six, having shown promise in the T20s against New Zealand.

The two spinners likely to play are Yuzvendra Chahal and R Ashwin, who has made a comeback after more than four years.

K L Rahul set to lead Lucknow IPL franchise

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

KL Rahul will captain the yet-to-be-named Lucknow franchise in the upcoming IPL, a league source told PTI on Tuesday.

It is learnt that Rahul is one of the players Lucknow has picked from the draft ahead of the mega auction on February 12 and 13 in Bengaluru.

The other two are likely to be Australian all-rounder Marcus Stoinis and uncapped leg spinner Ravi Bishnoi.

"Rahul will captain Lucknow. The team is deciding on the other two draft picks," an IPL source told PTI. Rahul led Punjab Kings for the past two seasons but did not want to stay at the franchise. Bishnoi was also with Punjab while Stoinis represented Delhi Capitals. RPSG Group had shelled out Rs 7090 crore to buy the Lucknow franchise.

Rahul is currently the stand-in captain of the Indian ODI team in South Africa in the absence of an injured Rohit Sharma.

India eye improved batting performance against Ireland

PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO)

In-form batter and captain Yash Dhull will be expecting a much improved batting effort from his team when record four-time champions India take on Ireland in their second Group B match of the ICC U-19 World Cup here on Wednesday.

Having started their campaign with a 45-run win over South Africa, the Indians are brimming with confidence and are expected to steamroll Ireland at the Brian Lara Stadium.

Both India and Ireland have registered wins in their openers. While India beat South Africa, Ireland defeated Uganda by 39 runs.

Dhull single-handedly anchored the Indian innings against the Junior Proteas as they lost both their openers — Harnoor Singh and Angkrish Raghuvanshi early after being put into bat. Dhull added vital 71 runs with Shaikh Rasheed (31) for the third to resurrect the Indian innings first and then stitched valuable contributions with Nishant Sidhu (27), Raj Bawa (13) and Kushal Tambe (35) to give his bowlers a decent target to defend. But come Wednesday, Dhull would be looking for more support from his openers to ease the pressure on middle and lower-order going into the knockout stages of the tournament. If Indian batters were not upto the mark against South Africa, it was completely contrasting performance from the bowling unit. Left-arm spinner Vicky Ostwal (5/28) turned out to be the star performer with the ball while right-arm fast bowler Raj Bawa (4/47) gave the perfect support from the other end as India bowled out South Africa for 187 runs.

Jalandhar-born left-handed opener Harnoor, who was India's leading run-getter in the Asia Cup with 251 runs in five games and struck an unbeaten 100 against Australia in the team's final warm-up game on January 11, is expected to score a bagful of runs in the tournament but managed only 1 in the opener. Right-arm pacer Rajvardhan Hangargekar (1/38), who has played senior cricket for Maharashtra and impressed with his raw pace in the Asia Cup, and left-arm fast bowler Ravi Kumar both had ordinary outings against South Africa. Meanwhile in the other match of the day, Australia will take on Scotland in a Group D game in Basseterre.

India vs Ireland
Live from 6:30pm IST
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

Squads (from):

India: Yash Dhull (c), Harnoor Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, SK Rasheed (vc), Nishant Sindhu, Siddarth Yadav, Aneeshwar Gautam, Dinesh Bana, Aaradhya Yadav, Raj Angad Bawa, Manav Parakh, Kaushal Tambe, Rajvardhan Hangargekar, Vasu Vats, Vicky Ostwal, Ravi Kumar, Garv Sangwan.

Ireland: Tim Tector (c), Diarmuid Burke, Joshua Cox, Jack Dickson, Liam Doherty, Jamie Forbes, Daniel Forkin, Matthew Humphreys, Philippus le Roux, Scott MacBeth, Nathan McGuire, Muzamil Sherzad, David Vincent, Luke Whelan, Reuben Wilson.

Former IPL cricketer R Sathish claims "fixing approach"

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former first-class and IPL cricketer Rajagopal Sathish was allegedly offered Rs 40 lakh to fix matches during the Tamil Nadu Premier League 41-year-old Sathish was part of Chepauk Super Gillies squad that won the TNPL last season. The former Tamil Nadu player has also been part of Mumbai Indians, Punjab Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL. A person named Bunny Anand made the offer to Sathish via Instagram.

"He informed us as well as the International Cricket Council earlier this month that he was offered money through social media. Since we are only facilitators in such cases, we advised him to lodge a police complaint. He has done that and now police will investigate and do the needful," BCCI ACU chief Shabir Khandwawala told PTI.

The complaint has been filed with Bengaluru Police.

The TNPL was played from July 19 to August 15 last year.

Asked why Sathish chose to approach the BCCI only now, the ACU chief said: "Whatever the circumstances were, it needs to be seen by the police.

"We don't want to discourage him. If he has decided to come out, our duty is to show him the way," Khandwawala, who is a former Gujarat DGP, added.

Skipper Wellalage's all-round show hands SL 4-wicket victory

PTI ■ BASSETERRE ST KITTS & NEVIS

Dunith Wellalage led from the front with an all-round show as Sri Lanka defeated Australia by four wickets to register their second consecutive win in Group D of the ICC U-19 World Cup here.

Wellalage (5/28) first spun the web around Australia batsmen with his slow left-arm tweakers to bundle out the opposition for 175 runs after opting to bowl at the Conaree Sports Club on Monday.

Opener Campbell Kellaway was the top-scorer for Australia with a 77-ball 54-run knock as Sri Lankan bowlers picked up wickets at regular intervals to make life difficult for their opponents.

Besides, Wellalage, Treveen Mathew (2/32) and Matheesha Pathirana (2/34) picked up two wickets apiece for Sri Lanka.

Chasing a modest target, Sri Lanka suffered early jolts and were reduced to 49 for four at one stage before Wellalage steadied the ship with a 71-ball 52 and stitched two crucial partnerships with wicketkeeper Anjala Bandara (33) and Ranuda Somarathne (32 not out) to take Islanders home in 37 overs.

Sri Lanka are leading Group D with four points from two games, while Australia are placed third with a win.

West Indies beat Scotland in a Group D match in Basseterre

In another Group D match in Basseterre, West Indies thrashed minnows Scotland by seven wickets to register their first win of the tournament.

Electing to field, West Indies first bundled out Scotland for 95 in 35.4 overs and then chased down the target in 19.4 overs by losing just three wickets. Right-arm pacer Shiva Sankar (3/17) was the star performer for West Indies with the ball, while off-break bowler Onaje Amory (2/26) and left-arm spinner Anderson Mahase (2/16) also chipped in with wickets.

Pakistan register easy win over Zimbabwe in Group C in Trinidad

Opener Haseebullah Khan smashed a brilliant century as Pakistan showed their batting prowess to start their campaign on a positive note, beating Zimbabwe by 115 runs in Group C at the Diego Martin ground.

Wicketkeeper Haseebullah scored 135 off 155 balls, the highest score of the tournament so far, while Irfan Khan made 75 off 73 deliveries to propel Pakistan to 315 for nine after being sent into bat.

Haseebullah and Irfan shared 192 runs for the third wicket to set the platform for the total.

For Zimbabwe, pacer Alex Felao (5/58) picked up a fifer.

Brian Bennett (83) played a lone hand for Zimbabwe but they were never really in the hunt after early dismissals and were all out for 200 in 42.4 overs.

Prannoy enters second round of Syed Modi badminton

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

India's HS Prannoy entered the second round of the men's singles competition at the Syed Modi International badminton tournament after registering a straight-game win over Ukraine's Danylo Bosniuk but seventh seed Sourabh Verma was stunned by Azerbaijan's Ade Resky Dwicahyo here on Tuesday.

On a comeback trail, the fifth seeded Prannoy took just 36 minutes to get the better of Bosniuk 21-14 21-18 in his opening match.

A former top-10 player, Prannoy, who gave a good account of himself before being stopped by 20-year-old Lakshya Sen in the quarterfinals of the India Open last week, will next meet compatriot Priyanshu Rajawat, who got a first round walkover from Rahul Yadav Chittaboina.

However, the tournament was over for fourth seed Sameer Verma after he retired hurt against Ireland's Nhat Nguyen.

Sameer was trailing 2-7 in the first game before he decided to concede the match due to a calf muscle injury, which he had sustained in October last year.

Subhankar Dey also conceded his match against compatriot Kartikey Gulshan Kumar due to an injury when he was trailing 2-9 in the opening game. Later in the day, Sourabh suffered a 15-21 21-19 21-18 first-round defeat to Dwicahyo in a match that lasted one hour and seven minutes.

Among women, Ashmita Chaliha gave a first round walkover to Malvika Bansod, while Aakarshi Kashyap defeated Mugdha Agrey 21-13 21-14 and Anupama Upadhyaya eased past Rituparna Das.

Lakshya reaches career-high 13th

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Young Lakshya Sen reached a career-high 13th in the latest badminton world rankings after winning the men's singles crown in the India Open, a title triumph in which also lifted the men's doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty to eighth place.

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu and former world number one Kidambi Srikanth remained static at seventh and 10th spots, respectively, even as Satwiksairaj and Chirag moved up two places.

Sen made a jump of four places, moving up from the 17th position with 66470 points to close in on reigning world champion Loh Kean Yew at 12th spot. Sen defeated Yew in the final of the India Open.

Last year, Sen reached the BWF World Championships semifinal where he lost to Srikanth in a hard fought match 21–17, 14–21, 17–21 and settled for a bronze medal.

We hope to break down Iran defence to start with a win: Dennerby

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India head coach Thomas Dennerby on Tuesday said the hosts would aim to break down a strong Iranian defence with an attacking game to eke out a win in their women's AFC Asian Cup opener here on Thursday.

The match against Iran would be crucial for India in their bid to qualify for the quarterfinals. Iran are the lowest ranked team in Group A which also has China and Chinese Taipei. They are ranked at 70th in the world as against India's 55th.

"Our first target is to get to quarter-finals, we think we have a realistic chance to do that. Iran is going to be a real tough game.

We have followed them through videos and they are really a fighting (team)," Dennerby said in a virtual media interaction.

"They (Iran) have strong defence, they defend very well around their box. It is going to be a challenge for us to score. It is not going to be an easy game. We are hoping that with some creative and good passing game, we can break down their defence," he added.

"We have a lot of players that can create chances and score goals.

We have to be good all through the match."

A win against Iran will give India a big chance to make it to the knock-out stage -- the quarterfinals. A quarterfinal berth will virtually ensure at least an Intercontinental Play-offs berth for the 2023 FIFA World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

Five teams from the tournament will directly qualify for the 2023 women's FIFA World Cup while another two will make it to the Intercontinental Play-offs. Australia, which finished runners-up in the last edition of the AFC Asian Cup, have already qualified for the 2023 FIFA World Cup as co-hosts.

"It is a big challenge obviously for us, but it is also a very big opportunity. If we qualify for the quarterfinals, we have a chance for qualifying for the FIFA World Cup next year and that will be huge for Indian football," said captain Ashalata Devi.

"We are hoping that the Asian Cup being hosted in India will give a big boost to women's football in our country. Everyone in the team now wants to play the first match right away," said the pivot of Indian defence with 64 caps under her belt.

Since taking charge of the Indian team in August last year, Dennerby has been trying to change the playing style from a predominantly long ball game to short passing one.

Andy Murray wins in Australia for 1st time

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Five years and five long sets later, five-time Australian Open runner-up Andy Murray finally has won another match at the season-opening Grand Slam tournament.

The former No 1-ranked Murray, playing thanks to a wild-card invitation as he continues his career comeback from hip operations and thoughts of retirement, beat 21st-seeded Nikoloz Basilashvili 6-1 3-6 6-4 6-7(5) 6-4 on Tuesday to reach the second round at Melbourne Park.

He lost a five-setter in the first round in 2019 — a match he, and everyone else, thought might have been his last in Australia — after missing the 2018 edition with an injury. He missed the 2020 tournament with a pelvic injury and last year's event because of COVID-19.

"It's been a tough three, four years. Put in a lot of work to get back here," Murray said in his post-match TV interview at John Cain Arena, which was formerly known as Hisense and is parochially referred to as the People's Court.

"I've played on this court many times, the atmosphere is incredible.

This is the one where I thought I'd played my last.

"Amazing to be back, winning a five-set battle like that. Couldn't ask for more." Murray beat Basilashvili in a three-hour three-setter last week in Sydney, where he reached the final of the tuneup tournament.

This one went almost four hours.

When the 34-year-old Murray clinched it on his third match point, he turned to the back of the court, closed his eyes and pumped his fists to celebrate.

After walking over to his court-side chair and dropping his racket, he returned to the court, punched the air and yelled "Let's go!"

It was Murray's 49th win in an Australian Open singles match, moving him ahead of Andre Agassi and Ivan Lendl into fifth-place all-time. Match win No 50 is the immediate priority.

"I think there's things in my game I can do better," said Murray, who lost the 2010 final to Roger Federer and four others to Novak Djokovic.

"Would love to have a deep run here, if possible.

"It's something I've not had in one of the Slams since I've come back from the injury, and it's something that's motivating me."

Murray's wasn't the only dramatic five-setter that finished in the early evening on Day 2.

Ninth-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime fended off Emil Ruusuvuori 6-4 0-6 3-6 6-3 6-4, and Maxime Cressy overcame 20 double-faults to upset fellow American and No 22-seeded John Isner 7-6(2) 7-5 6-7(4) 6-7(4) 6-4.

Second-seeded Daniil Medvedev, one of the biggest potential beneficiaries of Djokovic's deportation, had a much more routine first round.

Nine-time champion Djokovic was already back in Serbia — two days after losing his legal challenge to stay in Australia despite being unvaccinated against COVID-19 — when Medvedev went into Rod Laver Arena for a 6-1 6-4 7-6(3) win over Henri Laaksonen.