

ANALYSIS 7

CINEMA TICKET PRICING VS
BLOATED FILM COSTS

MONEY 8

OVER 2,250 STARTUPS ADDED IN 2021,
RAISED US \$ 24.1 BN

SPORTS 12

SOUTH AFRICA HAND 'OUT OF
SYNC' INDIA SERIES DEFEAT

HYDERABAD, SATURDAY, JANUARY 22, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



**SAM DELETES
DIVORCE
ANNOUNCEMENT
POST**
Page 11

Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate merged with flame at NWM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Amar Jawan Jyoti at the India Gate was merged with the eternal flame at the National War Memorial (NWM) here on Friday. The Amar Jawan Jyoti will be put out and people can now pay their respects at the eternal flame at the NWM, military officials said. After India defeated Pakistan in the 1971 war, the Amar Jawan Jyoti was constructed as a memorial for Indian soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice. It was inaugurated by the then prime minister, Indira Gandhi, on January 26, 1972. In a short ceremony on Friday afternoon, a part of the Amar Jawan Jyoti flame was taken and merged with the flame at the NWM 400 metres away.

- Details inside

Go-ahead for hike in market value of lands in Telangana

ML MELLY MAITREYI ■ HYDERABAD

The State government on Friday issued orders giving the go-ahead for the revision of market value of agricultural and non-agricultural lands across the State. Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, in his orders, gave permission to the Commissioner and Inspector-General of Registration and Stamps, Telangana to take up the exercise for revision of market values in the State as recommended by the Central Valuation Advisory Committee constituted under Rule 4 and 5 of the Telangana Revision of Market Value Guidelines Rules, 1998. The revision comes just after the revision of market value of lands and registration charges carried out in July, 2021. The new rates are expected to come into force from February 1 as part of revenue mobilisation,



- Move to help mobilise additional resources
- Market value of agricultural lands will be enhanced by 50 per cent; open plots by 35 per cent; and apartments by 25 per cent
- Panels headed by RDOs to determine new market values of lands in four to five days

able, the market value of agricultural lands will be enhanced by 50 per cent,

according to sources. According to preliminary details made avail-

Fever survey will be over in a week: CS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The door-to-door fever survey launched across the State on Friday will be completed in a week, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar has said. The Chief Secretary called upon people to cooperate with the government as the survey is aimed at identifying people with Covid symptoms to start early medical intervention using home isolation kits. Somesh examined the ongoing fever survey in the city along with GHMC Commissioner Lokesh Kumar and other officers. The medical kits were being handed over immediately if anyone was found with Covid symptoms during the survey. Although the Omicron variant was spreading fast, symptoms were not visible, he said, and hoped that cases would come down soon. Somesh dismissed the criticism that adequate tests were not being done.

Covid-related data of thousands leaked online

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cyber Security researcher Rajshekhar Rajaharia also tweeted that personally identifiable information (PII) including name and Covid-19 results are made public through a content delivery network (CDN). He said that Google has indexed lakhs of data from the affected system. "PII including Name, MOB, PAN, Address etc of #Covid19 #RTPCR results & #Cowan data getting public through a Govt CDN."

Personal data of thousands of people in India has been leaked from a government server which includes their name, mobile number, address and Covid test result, and these information can be accessed through online search. The leaked data has been put on sale on Raid Forums website where a cyber criminal claims to have personal data of over 20,000 people. The data put on Raid Forums shows name, age, gender, mobile number, address, date and result of Covid-19 report of these people.



More than 10k RT-PCR samples delayed every day

NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD

The reports of RT-PCR (reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction) tests being conducted across Telangana are being delayed for several days both at government and private centers. The test reports, which normally come in 24 hours, are now taking anywhere between three and four days. Reports of more than 10,000 samples on an average are

being eagerly awaited every day. As on Thursday, as per the media bulletin, reports of 10,136 samples were awaited in Telangana. This number was 11,949 on Wednesday, 13,895 on Tuesday and 10,732 on Monday. A citizen M Nishant said, "About a week ago my wife underwent RT-PCR test and the report was dispatched in less than 24 hours at a private lab. I underwent test two days ago and the report is yet to come. I have been isolating since then".



Daily Covid positivity rate shoots up to 30% in AP

AMARAVATI:

The daily infection positivity rate shot up to 30 per cent as 44,516 fresh coronavirus cases and three deaths in 24 hours. Chittoor district registered 1,585 more cases and one death. Anantapuram added 1,235, Srikulam 1,230, Guntur 1,054 and SPS Nellore 1,051 new cases. SPS Nellore also reported one death in a day. Kurnool logged 961, East Godavari 816, Prakasam 772, Vizianagaram 681, Kadapa 649, West Godavari 596 and Krishna 338 fresh positives.

district reported the highest of 2,244 fresh coronavirus cases and three deaths in 24 hours. Chittoor district registered 1,585 more cases and one death. Anantapuram added 1,235, Srikulam 1,230, Guntur 1,054 and SPS Nellore 1,051 new cases. SPS Nellore also reported one death in a day. Kurnool logged 961, East Godavari 816, Prakasam 772, Vizianagaram 681, Kadapa 649, West Godavari 596 and Krishna 338 fresh positives.

PRIYANKA GANDHI'S UP CM TEASER: 'CAN YOU SEE ANY OTHER FACE?'

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra served up a major surprise on Friday morning - that she could be her party's chief ministerial candidate for next month's Uttar Pradesh Assembly election. Gandhi Vadra, who was releasing a manifesto outlining job creation plans for the youth of UP, was asked about speculation over the Congress' chief ministerial candidate for this election, given the BJP will line up behind Yogi Adityanath and the Samajwadi Party is led by Akhilesh Yadav.



GOVT ORDERS BLOCKING OF 35 PAK-BASED YOUTUBE CHANNELS, 2 WEBSITES

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has ordered the blocking of 35 YouTube channels and two websites which were running anti-India propaganda and spreading fake news "in a coordinated manner". These websites and YouTube channels were being operated from Pakistan, I&B Secretary Apurva Chandra told a press conference on Friday. Indian intelligence agencies were closely monitoring these social media accounts and websites and flagged them to the ministry for immediate action, he added.

TAMIL NADU ANNOUNCES LOCKDOWN THIS SUNDAY AMID COVID SURGE

Tamil Nadu has announced a lockdown this Sunday amid a surge in Covid cases, Chief Minister Stalin announced today. Autos and taxis will be allowed to go to airport, bus and rail stations. On Thursday, Tamil Nadu recorded 28,561 new Covid cases to take the state's infection tally to 30,42,796. Recoveries climbed to 28,26,479 with 19,978 people getting discharged in the last 24 hours, leaving 1,79,205 active infections. Minister for Medical and Family Welfare Ma Subramanian said the health department expects to administer 'precautionary booster dose' to 10 lakh people by end of the month.

2ND CHARGESHEET IN LAKHIMPUR CASE, FARMERS NAMED FOR KILLING BJP MEN

A second chargesheet has been filed in the Lakhimpur Kheri case where an SUV -- allegedly driven by the son of a Union Minister -- ploughed into a crowd of protesters last year. While the first chargesheet named Ashish Mishra, son of Union Minister Ajay Mishra, over four farmers and a journalist who got run over, the second one involves the violence that followed, in which two BJP workers and the driver of the SUV were beaten to death. Seven farmers were arrested by the police during their investigations in this case, but it is not clear year if all of them have been charged with murder.

KTR seeks central funds yet again for textile sector

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

IT and Industries Minister K T Rama Rao has written a letter yet again to Union Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman and Piyush Goel seeking the Centre's support for significant works taken up in the state's handloom and textiles sector. The Minister had earlier written letters to the Union government on the same issues at least seven times. Speaking at Siricilla, KTR observed, "Since past seven years, we are asking for funds. This is not the first time. For Kakatiya Mega Textile Park, I have written 7-8 letters. I am shouting like bird (crow) for Mega powerloom cluster. We will see how they will respond in the upcoming budget and act accordingly" (sic).

IAS RULES ROW

States not sending sufficient officers for central deputation: Union govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

States are not sparing sufficient number of IAS officers for deputation which is affecting the functioning of the central government, the Centre said on Friday, defending its proposed changes in the service rules which gives it power to overrule states on such matters. Sources in the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said a trend of decreasing representation of IAS officers, up to the Joint Secretary-level at the Centre, has been noticed as most of the states are not

meeting their Central Deputation Reserve (CDR) obligations and the number of officers, sponsored by them to serve at the Centre are much lesser. The DoPT has recently proposed changes in the IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954, that will take away the power of states to override New Delhi's request for seeking officers on central deputation. The move has evoked sharp criticism from West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to roll back the proposal claiming it will affect the states' administration. According to DoPT sources, the number of IAS officers on CDR has gone down from 309 in 2011 to 223 as on date.



SCR cancels 57 trains till Jan 24

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The SCR on Friday decided to cancel 57 trains till January 24 due to the spurt in Covid-19 and Omicron cases. The SCR made it clear that it is cancelling short-distance train services and clarified that services to other states will not be affected. These trains will continue as usual, it said. Several inter-city, passenger and local trains have been cancelled.

Legislators attending cabinet meeting raises speculation of cabinet rejig

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The much-awaited Cabinet expansion is likely to happen soon. For, some public representatives, though not a part of the Cabinet, took part in the Cabinet meeting conducted by Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao on Monday. It is understood that some MLCs, MLAs, MPs and even a ZP chairperson participated in the Cabinet meeting. The Chief Minister reportedly sought inputs from these leaders on issues concerning Dharani portal as well as the political situation during the meeting. Some of the MLAs who attended the meeting include Peddi Sudarshan Reddy, Gandra Venkat Ramana Reddy and Aroori Ramesh. MLCs Palla Rajeshwar Reddy and Pochampalli Srinivas Reddy also took part in the meeting. Interestingly ZP chairperson Gandra Jyothi attended the meeting.

This is a very rare thing happening. Apparently these leaders from the erstwhile Warangal district were present on the premises of Pragati Bhavan to discuss crop losses. However, they were asked to attend the Cabinet meeting. Talks on Cabinet expansion have been doing the rounds since the ejection of Eatala Rajender from the team. If reports are to be believed, now that the MLC elections are over, and the representatives have assumed office, there is hardly anything to wait for. Moreover, February is filled with auspicious days. Telangana may witness a rejig immediately after the third wave subsides, which is now estimated to happen around February second week. Speculations were rife last year prior to the Huzurabad polls on Cabinet expansion.



Moscow-like bridge likely in Tank Bund: Arvind Kumar

P3

Manohar Parrikar's son, denied ticket, quits BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Utpal Parrikar, the son of three-time Goa Chief Minister and former Union Minister Manohar Parrikar, parted company with the BJP today after the party refused to offer him ticket for the Panaji seat in the coming assembly elections in the seaside state. Announcing that he would contest as an Independent candidate, Utpal Parrikar said the time has come for him to "take some stand for my values... and let the people of Panaji decide my political fate". Manohar Parrikar, the BJP's tallest leader in Goa, had held the Panaji constituency for 25 years before his death in 2019.

Replicating tiger conservation model for other animals: Minister

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Environment Minister Bhopender Yadav on Friday highlighted various aspects of India's successful tiger conservation efforts. Underlining that India has achieved the remarkable feat of doubling the tiger population in 2018 itself, four years ahead of the target, Yadav said this model of success is now being replicated for other animals such as lion, dolphin, leopard and snow leopard and the country is on the threshold of introducing cheetah in its historical range. He was speaking at the 4th Asia Ministerial Conference to review the progress of the Global Tiger Recovery Programme and commit-

ments to tiger conservation. Yadav said the natural resources-dependent community is an important aspect of tiger conservation and the "people agenda" ranks prominently in India's conservation efforts. The minister said the budgetary allocation for tiger conservation has increased from Rs 185 crore in 2014 to Rs 300 crore in 2022 under the Narendra Modi government and that 14 tiger reserves in India have already received international CA[ITS accreditation and efforts are on to bring in more tiger reserves under it. Yadav said the frontline staff constitutes an important pillar of tiger conservation, hence India has extended life cover of Rs 2 lakh to



each contractual/temporary worker under e-Shram, an initiative of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, and Rs 5 lakh health cover under Ayushman Yojana.

"Approximately 4.3 million man-days of employment are being generated by 51 tiger reserves in India and funds from Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham:
Pausa, Krishna Paksha
Tithi : Chaturthi, Jan 21 08:52 AM to Jan 22 09:14 AM
Purnami : Jan 22 09:14 AM to Jan 23 09:12 AM
Nakshatram : Puna Pragni, Jan 21 09:43 AM to Jan 22 10:38 AM
Uttari Pragni, Jan 22 10:38 AM to Jan 23 11:09 AM
Rahukalam : 9:40 AM to 11:04 AM
Yamagandam : 1:51 PM to 3:14 PM
Varjyam : 05:59 PM to 07:37 PM
Gulika : 6:53 AM to 8:16 AM
Amritakalam : 03:48 AM to 05:26 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham : 12:05 PM to 12:49 PM
HYDRABAD WEATHER
Forecast: SUNNY
Temp: 31°
Humidity: 41%
Sunrise: 6:53 AM
Sunset: 6:01 PM
Updated JANUARY 21, 2021 5:00 PM

Is it social media or anti-social media? Let us be fair and clear

Social Media is in many ways a boon to the common man. It has opened new vistas for the common people who, through their hand-held devices, can now express their voice freely.

an individual's freedom of expression? Are these so-called social media channels spinning out stories on news and other issues above basic morals, ethics and principles of journalism? One has to ponder this.

Freedom of speech should be utilised with utmost commitment and dedication. There is no separate freedom of the press in our Constitution. The freedom of expression as enshrined in the Constitution under Article 19 (1) is applicable to freedom of the press also.

Freedom of speech is a treasured right and it carries a very great responsibility too. Journalism should be practiced in line with constitutional obligations so that it does not adversely impact citizens' respect and sentiments.



RAMESH HAZARE

Registrar for Newspapers in India (RNI). One has to obtain permission from the police and submit bank account details; permission from the district collector etc., among other requirements.

Conduct for the press. But social media platforms do not have such regulations presently. They have the option of self-regulation.

stroke on the democratic atmosphere and journalism, and it would lead to political dictatorship. The Supreme Court had recently expressed its anger at the fake news campaign in social media.

has banned Twitter, Google and WhatsApp. There are restrictions on social media platform in Russia and Europe. Freedom of speech is great. The Government should ensure that this is not being misused or abused.

(The author is PRO to Chief Minister of TS)

Covirgins turn rare breed

NAVEENA GHANATE HYDERABAD

The world is witnessing a huge wave of coronavirus infections due to the omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 and so there is hardly any person left who is a Covirgin now.

Covid-19 Yet. In fact, as per a survey by Local Circles, 77 per cent of people surveyed now have one or more people in their close social network, that is, family, friends, neighbours and colleagues who have tested positive in the last 30 days.

or more people in their close social network who had tested Covid positive in the last 30 days. This percentage increased to 50 per cent on January 10 and increased further to 71 per cent on January 17.

the RT-PCR test and going into self-quarantine has also increased in the same period. On the other hand, 41 per cent of the people surveyed say they have one or more individuals in their close social network who despite having Covid symptoms in the last 30 days did not get an RT-PCR test done and went into self-treatment or quarantine.

CPM to take a decision on alliances at state meet

PNS HYDERABAD

Telangana CPM state secretary Thammineni Veerabhadram has severely criticised the BJP and the TRS saying that the BJP and the TRS were dangerous to the country and Telangana.

He said the CPM would work with parties working against the BJP. He alleged that the TRS is not working in line with the aspirations of the people.

TRS steps up campaign to thwart BJP's attempts to woo STs

PNS HYDERABAD

TRS leaders have stepped up their campaign against the BJP after BJP leaders announced that they have launched Mission-12 to capture all ST constituencies in the State.

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao as he is striving for their progress. Adivasis and tribals will not believe the empty words of State BJP President Sanjay as it was the TRS government that implemented many welfare programmes for them, they said.

New Additional Collectors for eight districts

PNS HYDERABAD

The State government on Friday transferred two non-cadre officers and gave new postings to six others.

Revanth demands compensation for farmers who lost crops

PNS HYDERABAD

The State Government should immediately compensate farmers who lost their crops due to unseasonal rains and insect attacks.

Covid cases, hospital admissions up marginally

PNS HYDERABAD

Telangana State on Friday registered a marginal increase in Covid-19 cases, with daily count recorded at 4,416 cases, compared to Thursday when it recorded 4,207 cases.

The daily caseload has been increasing by 200-700 over the past four days in the state and at 50-100 in the GHMC area. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation registered the maximum cases of 1,670, marginally up from Thursday, when it recorded 1,645 cases.

TRS, Cong to lose 1 LS seat each to BJP if are polls held now

PNS HYDERABAD

The TRS and the Congress would lose one Parliament seat each if elections are held now in the State and the gainer is the BJP, says the India Today-C Voter Mood of the Nation survey.

Go-ahead for hike in market value of lands...

Continued from page 1

open plots by 35 per cent, apartments by 25 per cent, besides revision in the areas wherever the open market value of lands was quite high to the extent required.

More than 10k RT-PCR samples delayed every day

Continued from page 1

Representatives of labs state that those who had tested negative on RAT but are symptomatic want RT-PCR. A diagnostic center representative said, "Everyone wants to get an RT-PCR and labs are stressed.

States not sending sufficient officers...

Continued from page 1

The percentage of CDR utilisation has gone down from 25 per cent in 2011 to 18 per cent as on date, they said.

Replicating tiger...

Continued from page 1

India is one of the founding members of the intergovernmental platform of Tiger Range Countries - Global Tiger Forum, and over the years, GTF has expanded its programme on multiple thematic areas, while working closely with the Government of India, tiger states in India and tiger range countries.

Fever survey will be over in a week: CS

Continued from page 1

ICMR guidelines say clearly to conduct tests only if the patient had symptoms. Even then on average, one lakh Covid tests were being done per day and one crore home isolation kits were ready for distribution, he said.

Manohar Parrikar's...

Continued from page 1

But the party's choice was controversial MLA Atanarasi 'Babush' Monserate, the lifelong rival of Manohar Parrikar, over his son. "I tried my best even during last and this election to convince my party that I enjoyed not only the support of all the party members, I also enjoy the support of general people of Panaji."

Manohar Parrikar's...

Continued from page 1

But the party's choice was controversial MLA Atanarasi 'Babush' Monserate, the lifelong rival of Manohar Parrikar, over his son. "I tried my best even during last and this election to convince my party that I enjoyed not only the support of all the party members, I also enjoy the support of general people of Panaji."

Legislators...

Continued from page 1

However, the Chief Minister rubbished them by making Harish Rao the Health Minister. Noticeably, all eyes are now on Kalvakuntla Kavitha who assumed office as MLC this week.

Covid related data of...

Continued from page 1

#Google indexed almost 9 Lac public/private #GovtDocuments in search engines. Patient's data is now listed on #DarkWeb. Need fast deindex, Rajaharia said in his tweet.

States not sending sufficient officers...

Continued from page 1

Hence, the number of officers available under the central deputation is not sufficient to meet the requirement of the Centre, they said.

KTR seeks...

Continued from page 1

KTR sought sanction of Rs. 897.92 cr for taking up infrastructure works at the Kakatiya Mega Textile Park (KMTP) in Warangal. He also requested early approval of the project.

TRV leader Ponguleti's meet with Jagan sparks rumours

PNS HYDERABAD

Senior TRS leader Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy's meeting with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday at Jagan's residence in Thadepalligudem has sparked speculations that he will quit the TRS and join either the BJP or the YSRTP.

NVSS alleges irregularities took place in inviting tenders for Anemia-Mukth Bharath

PNS HYDERABAD

Former BJP MLA NVSS Prabhakar has alleged that irregularities took place in the tender invitation process for implementing the Anaemia Mukth Bharath Scheme. He alleged Medical and Health Minister T. Harish Rao had a hand in the scam.

Manohar Parrikar's...

Continued from page 1

But the party's choice was controversial MLA Atanarasi 'Babush' Monserate, the lifelong rival of Manohar Parrikar, over his son. "I tried my best even during last and this election to convince my party that I enjoyed not only the support of all the party members, I also enjoy the support of general people of Panaji."

Manohar Parrikar's...

Continued from page 1

But the party's choice was controversial MLA Atanarasi 'Babush' Monserate, the lifelong rival of Manohar Parrikar, over his son. "I tried my best even during last and this election to convince my party that I enjoyed not only the support of all the party members, I also enjoy the support of general people of Panaji."

Table with 2 columns: Item, Price. Includes Chicken Rates (₹191, ₹211, ₹102) and Egg Rates (₹100).

Table with 2 columns: Location, Price. Includes Hyderabad (₹415), Vijayawada (₹437), Visakhapatnam (₹435), Retail Price (₹4.15).

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work.

Education dept mulling steps to ease load of school bags

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Taking a major step to ease the burden of the school bag on the young shoulder, the education department has decided to print two text books for each subject - one text book for the first term and another one for the second term - from the academic year 2022-23.

It may be recalled that the state government has printed text books in both Telugu and English media for students of classes 1-7 as the government proposed to introduce English medium education in government schools.

The school bag weight has increased with various types of books, drinking water bottles and other paraphernalia - making it burdensome on young shoulders.

The education department has assessed that publication of English and Telugu medium



books would add to the weight of the school bag, ultimately affecting the children's health.

Currently, summative assessment tests - SA-1 and SA-2 - are conducted for students of classes 1-10. While the syllabus for the SA-1 would be half of the syllabus, while the SA-2 test will be based on the complete syllabus. Therefore, the education department will print SA-1 book and SA-2

book separately. The SCERT has completed the final proof-reading of these books. Once the officials submit the CDs to the government text book printing press, it will go to the press with the printing job.

For students of classes one and two, the subjects of Telugu, English and mathematics would be taught. Besides, these subjects, the students of classes 3-5 will

have additional subjects like observation science. For students of classes 6-7, they will be taught Telugu, Hindi, English, mathematics, general science and social studies. Since English and Hindi are the same for students of all media of instructions, the other text books will be split into two for the first and second terms. Annually, the state government supplies 1.45 cr text books to over 24 lakh students of classes 1-10. Because of dividing subject books into two books for the first and second term, the government would have to print 50 lakh books additionally. The books for the private school students would be printed as per their requirements in the open market and would be sold earlier. Out of the total number of private school students, 97 per cent are studying in English medium schools.

TS sanctions Rs 250 cr for four ROB

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government, on Friday, sanctioned Rs 250 crore for the construction of four rail over bridges (ROBs) in the state. A total of Rs 450 crore will be spent on the four ROB which includes Rs 154.80 crore by Indian railways. The remaining amount will be spent by the state government. The construction of railway over bridges is taken up by roads and buildings department. On the occasion, the roads and buildings Minister V Prashanth Reddy thanked the Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao for providing administrative sanction of Rs 404.82 crore for executing the projects. The four ROB will be constructed at Chatanpally, Shadnagar with a cost of Rs 95 crore, Adilabad Market Yard with Rs 97.20 crore, Peddapalli town with Rs 119.50 crore and Madhavanagar, Nizamabad with Rs 93.12 crore.



Moscow-like bridge likely in Tank Bund: Arvind Kumar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Municipal Administration & Urban Development Special Chief Secretary, Arvind Kumar said in a Twitter post that a Moscow-like 'V-shaped' bridge could be possible in Tank Bund before the

end of this year. In what would be a surprise for the citizens, something similar to the Moscow Bridge is on its way to PVR Marg, jutting into the Hussain Sagar, he said. The v-shaped bridge in Moscow, also known as 'the floating bridge in

Moscow' is a thin air structure in the form of the letter 'V' with an outward extension above water and the structure is about 70 metre long. It's an observation deck and is a part of the Zaryadye urban park in Central Moscow, he added.



Police officials displaying the seized Ganja packets in Hyderabad on Friday

Six inter-state peddlers held, 800 kg of ganja seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Shamshabad Police Special Operations Team, along with the Miyapur police, busted a drug peddling racket operating between Odisha and Maharashtra and arrested six persons here on Friday. Police seized 800 kg of ganja, a car and a truck, all worth Rs.1.80 crore.

The arrested persons are Ashok Kule, Amol Athawale, Rahul Kumar Singh, Vilash Jagannath Phachore, Firoz Momin and Sudam Ghotekar, all residents of Maharashtra and Odisha. Two suspects, Vikas Jadhav, the main receiver and Subhash Kumar, the supplier, were absconding.

According to the police, the gang was smuggling drugs

from Koraput in the agency area of Andhra Pradesh to Maharashtra via Hyderabad for easy money. Rahul and Vilash were drivers transporting the drug with the assistance of Ashok and Amol to various places. Subhash also started cultivating ganja in the agency area and Vikas monitored the illegal business by contacting to supply sources and also sent the load to customers in Maharashtra. Ashok, Amol and Rahul transported the material from Visakhapatnam or Odisha agency areas to Maharashtra besides assisting Vikas Jadhav in selling the drug.

Police said that a week ago, Subhash contacted Vikas and offered to sell 800 kg of mari-

juana, which they bought at Rs.3,000 a kilo and were planning to sell each kg between Rs.20,000 to Rs.30,000.

"Since there is strict surveillance in both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh on drug peddling, they planned to transport the drug from Koraput agency area to Maharashtra," said an official. From Koraput, they loaded the vehicle with the drugs which were concealed beneath a load of ginger. The gang left for Nashik in Maharashtra via Hyderabad with an escort vehicle. Due to vehicle checking in the State, they decided to avoid toll plaza routes and pass through Hyderabad by avoiding police checking on the city outskirts," the official said.

Mental strength vital to fight Covid-19: Mahesh Bhagwat

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGRI

Rachakonda CP Mahesh M Bhagwat held a virtual conference at the Rachakonda Commissionerate, Neredmet on Friday and interacted with the police personnel who are infected with Covid and advised them to take additional precautions besides following medication as prescribed by the doctors. During the interaction, CP stated that Rachakonda Commissionerate is taking all initiatives for the staff suffering from Covid and said that all the required assistance like 7 type of medicines, dry fruits pack etc being delivered to all affected personal within 24 hours at their home and through WhatsApp group as well as zoom call doctors are monitoring their health round the clock through Covid Control Room.

Mahesh Bhagwat said that free medical treatment is available in TMS Gachibowli, Gandhi General Hospital and Koti Government Hospital for the Police personnel and also reminded that staff can claim free treatment up to Rs 1 lakh for them and the family members as per Government G.O. Mahesh Bhagwat opined that Covid has been spreading steadily and people have to understand that they have to live along with the disease. CP directed the staff to receive



Mahesh M Bhagwat

precautionary booster dose vaccination that helps everyone from fatalities and hospitalisation. Speaking in the virtual meeting Addl. CP Sudheer Babu mentioned that Indians have more immune power than western countries and opined that Indians can recover from Covid easily. He reiterated the importance of having psychological strength to get over Covid besides using medicine and advised them to add liquid food and Vitamin-C to their daily diet. C. Narmada, Addl. DCP admin, interacted with the staff and advised them to inform the unit doctors, if anyone notices symptoms of illness. Dr Achyutha Rao, RI Nagaraju Reddy, Estate Officer RI Ravinder also attended the virtual meeting.

Woman dies, husband sustains injuries as truck hits bike

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A woman died and her husband sustained injuries when the motorcycle on which they were traveling was hit by a rashly driven truck at Medchal, on the outskirts of city, on Thursday. The couple was identified as Syed Salim and his wife Reshma Begum, both hail from Medchal.

According to the police, the victims were proceeding on the bike from Gandimaisamma towards Medchal Main Road. When they reached near Suthariguda, the truck which was driven in a rash and negligent manner hit their bike from behind.

25 Inspectors transferred

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGRI

Rachakonda Police Commissioner Mahesh M Bhagwat transferred 25 Inspectors working with the Rachakonda police and gave them new postings on Friday. VR attached SOT Bhongir Venkateswarlu posted to SHO Hayathnagar PS; Surennder from Hayathnagar posted to Cyber crimes; Satyanarayana DI Meerpet PS to SHO Bhongir town PS, Sudhakar Bhongir town to SOT Malkajgiri, SOT Malkajgiri Naveen Kumar who was attached to CI cell attached to AHTU, Racha konda, CI Bhongir Jainaiah rural posted to SB, L.B.nagar, Goverdhana Giri SB L.B.nagar zone posted to SHO Medipally, Anji Reddy SHO Medipally as SOT L.B.nagar, Ravi Kumar SOT L.B.Nagara posted to CI Bhongir Rural, Kushaiguda Traffic - II Ramulu VR attached to SOT Bhongir, Mahesh CCS

L.B.nagar posted to Kushaiguda Traffic - II, Laxminath Reddy Cyber crimes posted Vanasthalipuram Traffic - I, Srinivas Reddy Kushaiguda Traffic - I to CCS L.B.nagar, DI Medipally Maqbool posted to Bhongir traffic - II, Venkataiah CI CELL posted as DI Vanasthalipuram, C.H. Shekar CI cell attach to CCRB Posted to DI Meerpet, Raju Bhongir traffic - II posted to cyber crime, Prakash cyber crimes to Kushaiguda Traffic - I, K.V. Vijay Kumar cyber crimes posted to Choutuppal Traffic - I, Samson Joseph Choutuppal Traffic - II, VR attached to T.T.I. Vanasthalipuram DI Jagannath posted to LB Nagar Traffic - II, Praveen Babu from LB Nagar Traffic - II posted as DI Medipally, and P.Venkates hwaralu CPO Rachakonda posted to CCS L.B.Nagar, A.V. Ranga CCS L.B.nagar Posted to Uppal traffic - II, Uppal traffic CI, Yadaiah Posted to CCS L.B.Nagar.

8 child labourers rescued in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Task Force (South), along with the Falaknuma police and officials of Child Welfare department, raided a bag and automobile seat cover making unit at Fathima Nagar in Falaknuma and rescued eight children from child labour work on Friday. The owner of the manufacturing unit, Shaik Taufeeq (32), a resident of Fathima Nagar in Pala knuma was arrested. According to the police, the children, all natives of Bihar were teen aged and were picked up from poor families by promising them good jobs and offering huge money to their parents.

Applications invited for promoting Govt Jr lecturers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Only candidates who apply will be considered for promotion as per eligibility, says a note Hyderabad The Commissionerate of Collegiate Education (CCE) has invited applications from junior lecturers, librarians and physical directors working in the Government Junior Colleges for filling up vacant lecturer posts in Government Degree Colleges through promotions.

The applicant should have qualified for promotion as of September 1, 2021 (panel year 2021-22) as a lecturer in Government Degree Colleges. They should have a requisite qualification of 55 per cent of



marks or equivalent grade at master's degree obtained from recognised universities in the country along with NET/SLET/PhD in relevant subjects. Junior lecturers who have completed three years of service in the present cadre can apply along with copies of certificates on or before January 31. On the basis of the applications, a seniority list for promotions will be prepared.

Only candidates who apply will be considered for promotion as per eligibility on the basis of seniority/roster, the CCE, said in a circular issued here on Thursday. Candidates who got promotion as a lecturer in Government Degree College earlier and taken reversion as a junior lecturer in Government Junior Colleges are also being given one chance.

UoH enters into co-innovation partnership with TCS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

University of Hyderabad (UoH) has entered into a partnership with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) in research and innovation on next-generation communication technologies, semiconductor engineering, and heterogeneous computing architectures.

The MoU was signed by V Rajanna, Senior Vice President & Global Head of Technology Business Unit, TCS, and P Sardar Singh, Registrar, UoH. The UoH officials said on Friday that the MoU was exchanged in the presence of Prof. BJ Rao, Vice-Chancellor, UoH, and other officials. TCS and UoH entered into



a strategic alliance to propel research and innovation around technologies such as RF Frontend, antenna design for next-generation communication technologies and semiconductor design for the next-generation computing architectures. The MoU enables the

seamless exchange of ideas and collaboration between research teams from both organisations to develop highly performant, secure, intelligent, cognitive, and sustainable next-generation technologies. Such partnerships with industry are a crucial component of our

endeavours to encourage UoH academicians' research and innovation initiatives, which will remain anchored to industry imperatives and play a meaningful role in addressing critical business challenges," Prof. Rao said. "TCS collaboration with the UoH highlights our strategic commitment towards creating and leveraging partner ecosystems for cutting edge research and innovation. The MoU opens up the prospects for TCS and the UoH to collaborate on fundamental research, technology validation and addressing transformational opportunities through the use of NextGen technologies," Rajanna said.

'Delay in faculty recruitment affects education standards'

DURGAM SRINIVAS ■ HYDERABAD

Lack of amenities in universities, inordinate delay in appointing faculty members to various departments for various reasons are affecting the growth and research activities in universities.

The state government apparently turned a blind eye to making appointments to various departments in universities. As such, the academic standards of the century old university like the Osmania University have taken a beating.

In new state of Telangana, the state government constituted an expert committee to introduce new method of recruiting faculty members to varsities, replacing the old system terming it as "prob-

lematic." The committee studied the systems prevalent in varsities of Bihar, UP and other states and submitted a report within six months of constitution of the committee. It recommended making appointments to varsities through the TSPSC or Special Board or entrusting the task to the universities. But, the government is yet to take a decision on it. As a result, thousands of posts in universities remained unfilled.

In 2017, a notification was issued to recruit 1061 professors, associate professors, assistant professors in various varsities. An expert committee has been constituted on how to go about the recruiting process, halting the recruitment. The unemployed feel that the government denied them job opportunities. The



severe shortage of hands in varsities should have been addressed to an extent had the vacancies were filled in the old system. The unemployed lament that the government cancelled the notification without taking up any recruit-

ment for the past five years. In fact, there are 1869 vacancies of the teaching staff. Academicians feel that it would give some reprieve to those who are on the rolls of universities as guest faculty members and will provide a

ray of hope to the unemployed. The shortage of faculty members has been forcing the students to shy away from taking admissions to various universities, leading to fall in educational standards. Hostels in the OU reached dilapidat-

ed conditions. Students have been facing problems for want of doors to the toilets and bath rooms.

As if it is not enough, the state government is tightening its belt to set up new university in the state - upgrading the Koti Women's college into a Mahila University. Several are of the view that there is no use starting a new university sans recruitment and amenities.

The academicians feel that the Chief Minister should focus on filling vacancies in 11 universities. Out of 395 sanctioned posts for professors, 157 are working and 238 are vacant. Out of 1,532 sanctioned posts for associate professors, 682 are working and 950 are vacant. Out of 910 sanctioned posts for assistant professors, 129 are working and 781 are vacant.

UCS invites applications for part-time teaching posts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

University College of Science (UCS), Osmania University (OU), has invited applications from eligible candidates for part-time teaching in the departments of Environmental Science, Geography, Mathematics (Computer Science), and Statistics. According to a notification issued by the UCS, the applicants should have a Master's degree with 55 per cent of marks or equivalent grade in relevant subject from an Indian university or an accredited foreign university. Candidates must have cleared the NET conducted by the UGC/CSIR or similar test accredited by the UGC like

SET/SLET. Candidates who have been awarded a PhD degree in accordance with the UGC (Minimum Standards and Procedure for Award of MPhil/PhD degree) Regulations 2009 or 2016 and their amendments from time to time as the case may be exempted from NET/SLET/SET.

Selection is based on a written test and performance evaluation. The date and time of the written test and interview will be intimated later. Interested candidates can submit their CV along with photocopies of relevant documents in the Office of Principal, UCS, OU by 4 pm on or before January 29. For more details, visit the website www.osmania.ac.in.

Officials look the other way as kilns exploit workers, kin

Large number of kilns are being operated at various places across Mahabubnagar dist

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Though a number of kilns (brick making units) are operated at various places across the district, there is no control from the official machinery on them. For instance, hundreds of kilns are being maintained in Narayanpet and other mandals in Mahabubnagar district. However, officials fail to take action against them, it is alleged.

Besides Narayanpet, a number of kilns are being operated in Mahabubnagar, Madduru Duvvada, Marikal Makthal and Damaragidda mandals. In Mahabubnagar, kilns are mushrooming in Boothpur, Jachchela, Balanagar, Hanvada, Devarakadra and Koilakonda mandals in the district. The operators deploy



For representation purpose only

skilled workers brought from Odisha and Bihar to work at the kilns. These workers are supplied through agents and

payment is also made to the workers through these agents who promise that all facilities will be provided to the work-

ers at the kilns. However, basic amenities are not provided to these workers who work 24-hours in shifts, workers allege.

The organisers of these kilns (brick making units) do not get permission from the labour department of state government to appoint the workers. Education facilities are not provided to the children of these workers at the workplace, it is complained. During nights, several accidents occur to these workers and managers of kilns fail to provide proper protection to them. Revenue or police officials also ignore to initiate steps to protect the lives of workers, it is reported.

No complaints are given to the police in case of accidents at the kilns during nights.

The district officials have to take necessary steps to provide basic amenities to the workers, education to children and to safeguard the lives of workers, it is urged.

No need for panic over Covid-19, says Minister

'Medical treatment for patients is just a phone call away'

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Minister for Excise V Srinivas Goud on Friday assured the people that medical treatment for Covid-19 patients is just a phone call away.

While stating that there is no need for panic over coronavirus, the Minister said the State government has launched door-to-door fever survey as part of the strategy to curb the spread of virus. As part of the survey, Srinivas Goud along with a team interacted with people at their doorstep at Yenugonda village. He sought information from inmates whether anyone in the family is suffering from fever and other ailments. He told reporters that the State government had provided all infrastructures to tackle the Covid-19. As part of it, a number of beds in the Government Hospitals are



Minister for Excise V Srinivas Goud interacting with people during door-to-door fever survey at Yenugonda in Mahabubnagar district on Friday

equipped with oxygen, he said. The teams constituted to conduct fever survey are expected to visit 1,89,319 households in two days. He said there are as many as 40,000 Covid isolation kits in the district right now and if necessary, as many as one

lakh kits would be made available, he promised. Those patients requiring treatment may call 08542 241165, he said.

District S Hanumantha Rao, District Medical and Health officials, Revenue and others were present.



Goldsmiths' Association at a press conference in Siddipet on Friday

Goldsmiths' Assn urges citizens not to buy ornaments in showrooms

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Siddipet Goldsmiths' Association has appealed to citizens not to buy gold ornaments in showrooms.

Association president along with its members, at a press conference here, on Friday, said the people visiting the showrooms may experience health hazards because of mixing of iridium with some gold ornaments. It is no easy mat-

ter to operate a big gold showroom, he said. The businesspersons would issue misleading statement that the ornaments would be sold at a discount, he alleged. The businesspersons would not sell ornaments at a discount by spending money from their pockets, he said. Apart from it, the businesspersons would extract money in the name of GST and other taxes, he claimed.

Collector directs officials to complete fever survey in two days

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

District Collector M Hanumantha Rao on Friday directed the officials to complete the door-to-door fever survey by January 22. He asked the authorities to ensure that the survey is conducted without giving a room for complacency.

The State government has undertaken the door-to-door fever survey to quickly identify the individuals suffering from Covid-19 infection and thus curbing the spread of virus.

Addressing the officials of Medical and Health, Municipal, Panchayat Raj and others through teleconference, the Collector said a number of teams were formed to conduct the survey in every village, every ward and every house. The survey should be completed in two days, he said. A special officer was



appointed in every village to ensure that the reports of the survey are examined and steps are taken to curb the fast-surg-ing Omicron variant of Covid-19. The teams should visit every household to identify those suffering from fever and cough.

If anyone is found with Covid-19 symptoms, an isolation kit should be given to the

patient. The survey teams should also visit the patient every day to find out his or her condition, he said. If the patient is found still suffering from fever and cough even five days after medication, he or she should be admitted to nearest hospital for treatment, he pointed out.

Hanumantha Rao asked the officials to speed up vaccination drive and ensure that the adolescents in the age group of 15-17 are given jabs. There is no shortage of drugs in Government hospitals, he said. Three Covid-19 care centres were set up in the district and the patients would be provided with nutritious food, he said. He assured that the healthcare facilities are provided to treat any number of patients in the district.

Additional District Rajarshi Shah, District Medical and Health Officer Gayatri Devi and others were present.

Nalgonda Collector receives 'Best Electoral Practices' award

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Nalgonda District Collector Prashanth Jeevan Patil has been selected for the 2021 year 'Best Electoral Practices' award. The District Collector was given special recognition for his outstanding performance in the conduct of elections. The District Collector has been selected for an award that recognises and honours officials who have made outstanding contributions in the conduct of elections. Prashanth Jeevan Patil has been selected for the State category award under the category of 'Best Electoral Practices' by the State Election Commission on the occasion of National Voters' Day. State Chief Electoral Officer Shashank Goyal on Friday issued orders to this regard.



German nationals at Kotagullu temples in Jayashankar Bhupalapally district on Friday

German nationals offer prayers at Kotagullu temples

PNS ■ JAYASHANKER BHUPALAPALLY

A group of German nationals offered prayers at Ganapatheswarar temple at Kotagullu in the district. The German nationals came to India along with Cholleti Sai Reddy who went to Germany and settle there some 29 years ago. He married a German national. Sai Reddy hailed from

Narasapur village under Venkaapur Mandal. He along with his family members would visit Kotagullu every year in February and offer prayers. Kota Gullu, the Ghanpur temples were established by King Ganapathi deva during Kakatiya reign. Ghanpur Temples are a group of temples located in Ghanpur of Jayashankar Bhupalapally District in Telangana.



State Food Commission Chairman T Thirumal Reddy at a review meeting in Warangal on Friday

Implement Food Security Act, district officials told

PNS ■ WARANGAL

State Food Commission Chairman T Thirumal Reddy on Friday urged the officials and the people's representatives together to implement the Food Security. Reviewing the functioning of the Act at the Collectorate here, the Chairman stressed the need to ensure that children receive nutritious food. He also reviewed the functioning of fair price shops and Anganwadi centres, besides the mid-day

Reviewing the functioning of the Act at the Collectorate here, the Chairman stressed the need to ensure that children receive nutritious food.

meal programme for students. He said the Commission had created awareness among the

officials on the Act. But malnutrition has continued to stunt the growth of children to large extent. The Act entitles beneficiaries to receive subsidised foodgrains. Any violation of Act would invite punishment, he warned. District Collector B Gopi said the district administration would implement Act and ensure that the beneficiaries would receive subsidised foodgrains and children nutritious food. Additional Collector and other officials were present.

Chilli farmers lay siege to District Horticulture office

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Chilli farmers in Khammam district staged a protest on Friday in support of their demand for crop damage due to invasive pest attack. They urged the government to pay Rs 1 lakh compensation per acre.

A large number of farmers under the leadership of CPI, CPI-M and CPI-ML laid siege to the District Horticulture Officer here. The Left parties' leaders criticised the government for failing to go the rescue of the farmers.

They said the crop suffered damage this year due to invasive pest and also unseasonal rains and hailstorm. The yield per acre may not exceed even a quintal per acre, they said.



Apart from it, they said majority of chilli farmers were tenant farmers and they may be forced to pay tenancy fee of Rs 30,000 an acre.

It may be recalled that a team of Minister visited Warangal district recently and assured the farming community that the government would go to their rescue. The chilli crop in the district suffered extensive damage due to unseasonal rains and hailstorm. Farmers expressed their anguish over the damage to the crop. Meanwhile, the State Congress party estimated that crops spread over 25 lakh acres was lost. It was worth crore of rupees, it said. It alleged that several farmers had committed suicide unable to bear the loss.

Sports persons urged to maintain good manners

R&B Minister Vemula Prashanth Reddy inaugurates mini sports stadium at Kammarapalli

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

The present generation must see that self discipline is maintained to reform ourselves. All sports persons should maintain well natured manners, said Minister for Assembly Affairs and Roads & Buildings Minister Vemula Prashanth Reddy.

Speaking on the inaugural session of a Mini Sports Stadium newly built with an estimated cost of Rs.2.5 crore in the Kammarapally mandal headquarters in the district on Friday, Prashanth Reddy said, 'The government is giving utmost importance for the younger generation to develop discipline. He urged the youth to show interest in sports and games. In the past, youth used to participate in sports voluntarily, but the situation has changed now. Youth are misusing the social media and

He urged the youth to show interest in sports and games. In the past, youth used to participate in sports voluntarily, but the situation has changed now. Youth are misusing the social media and involving in ill-mannered ways, he lamented.

involving in ill-mannered ways, he lamented. 'Sports paved the way to get Government jobs if properly utilised their opportunities by making use of sports quota in the Govt Sector,' he said.

While addressing the massive gathering in the Mini Stadium, Prashanth Reddy said that the TSPSC had provided 40,000 Govt jobs and 13.0 lakh in a private sector. No other state in India had provided jobs through Public Service Commission as that of Telangana. Ever since the TRS

party came to power, we had successfully provided 1,32,000 govt jobs in seven years,' he said. 'The Minister also promised to start an open gym on the premises of Kammarapally stadium.

Armoor RDO Srinivasulu, Volleyball Association General Secretary Hanmanth Reddy, DSDO Muthenna, political leaders, local representatives and officials were present. Later, the Minister felicitated outstanding personalities of sports at national and international fame.

MLA asks NTPC workers to work with black badges

PNS ■ RAMAGUNDAM

Ramagundam legislator Korukanti Chander on Friday called upon the NTPC contract workers to report to duty by wearing black badges to highlight their long-pending problems.

He assured them to launch fast near the NTPC gate, if necessary, to put pressure on the NTPC management.

Addressing the NTPC workers at a gate meeting held here on Friday, he observed that some of the rights of the workers still remained unfulfilled as part of the agreement reached by the JAC of workers with the NTPC management three years ago. He said that he took the matter to the notice of the cen-



MLA Korukanti Chander addressing NTPC workers in Warangal on Friday

tral deputy labour commissioner in Hyderabad and obtained an assurance from him that he would take the pending issues to the notice of the NTPC in the first week of February.

The MLA assured the work-

ers to take the issue of quota to the children of NTPC workers in apprenticeships and jobs in the NTPC.

He got information that the NTPC management has been trying to lay off the workers aged 40 years and above on

health grounds by declaring them unfit to hold the jobs. Moreover, the NTPC is accused of threatening the workers to cancel gate passes of such persons. Threats are being hurled out to the employees to dismiss them from jobs linking the job to the police cases registered against the employee in person or against his family. The NTPC management is hatching a new conspiracy to pressurize the employees to obtain a NOC from the police station. To refute these conspiracies, he appealed to the workers, cutting across their trade union affiliations, should work shoulder to shoulder.

Salaries of the NTPC workers would increase only if the NTPC gets B-grade. But the

ball is the Centre's court, he said. As promised earlier, five acres have been allotted for construction of ESI Hospital in Ramagundam. The construction activity would soon be launched by Labour Minister Malla Reddy. Soon KTR is going to lay the foundation stone to locate a IT Hub in the region. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao has sanctioned medical college to the region as the pollution from SCCL, NTPC, TS Genco, Basant Nagar and RFCL industries has been causing various diseases to the people of the region. The SCCL has allotted Rs 500 crore for the medical college. Works on execution of the college are going on at brisk pace, he said adding that the medical college would provide

employment to 10,000-15,000 persons directly and indirectly. The poor and middle classes will get free medical and health treatment. The NTPC management donated a platelets machine worth Rs 40 lakh to the government hospital at Godavarikhani.

Highlighting various welfare and development schemes of the TRS government, he said that development programmes are being implemented in Ramagundam municipal corporation at a cost of Rs 200 crore. Later, he distributed new year calendars to the workers.

Ramagundam Mayor Dr Bangi Anil Kumar, corporators, NTPC contract workers' unions leaders and others took part in the programme.

Minister distributes assets to Dalit Bandhu beneficiaries

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Minister for Backward Classes Welfare and Civil Supplies Gangula Kamalakar on Friday stressed the need to take forward the Dalit Bandhu scheme. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had introduced the scheme for the development of Dalit communities. Speaking at a meeting, shortly after distributing Rs 2.60 crore worth of assets to beneficiaries under the scheme, the Minister said the Dalits were made owners of the vehicles. They were in the past worked as drivers and cleaners on vehicles owned by others. The scheme would provide Rs 10 lakh to each



Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had introduced the scheme for the development of Dalit communities.

Dalit family. As many as 24 beneficiaries were given harvesters, excavators and a van.

INDIA CORNER

Maha: Six arrested for poaching tiger in Gondia forest

Six persons have been arrested in connection with the poaching of a tiger, who was found dead without two teeth and whiskers in Arjuni-Morgaon forest range of Maharashtra's Gondia district, an official said on Friday. A five-year-old tiger was found dead at Arjuni-Morgaon forest range on January 13, following which the Gondia forest department had announced Rs 25,000 reward for anyone who shared information about the death, the official said. As per the probe, the accused Dhanraj Chachane and Madhukar Waghade had on January 11 stolen electricity from a private farm using electric steel wire and laid it in 1.5 km range in the forest area for poaching herbivorous animals, said Kulraj Singh, deputy conservator of forest of the Gondia Forest Department. A tiger came in contact with the wire on the night of January 11, following which the accused took two teeth and whiskers of the animal, he said.



SC notice to Centre on plea for creating Indian Environment Service

The Supreme Court Friday sought the Centre's reply on a plea for creation of "The Indian Environment Service" on the lines of All India Service for environment safeguards at the ground level. A bench comprising Justices S K Kaul and M M Sundresh, while issuing notice to the Union Environment Ministry, expressed doubt whether it could issue a mandamus for creation of a separate all India service. The apex court said however that an inquiry can be made whether the Centre intended to implement recommendations of the committee headed by a former Cabinet Secretary. The top court was hearing a plea filed by advocate on record Samar Vijay Singh who referred to the report submitted by the High-Level Committee formed by the Ministry of Environment and Forests under the chairmanship of former Cabinet Secretary T S R Subramanian in 2014 which recommended creation of a new All-India service, the "Indian Environment Service".



Karnataka govt opposes TN's water project at Hogenakkal

The Karnataka government on Friday said it will oppose the proposed water project at Hogenakkal along the border with Tamil Nadu stating that the neighbouring state cannot take up the work unilaterally. "It has come to our notice through media reports that the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin has announced finalising a Detailed Project Report worth Rs 4,600 crore to undertake Phase-2 of the Hogenakkal project," state Irrigation Minister Govind Karjol said in a statement. He said the neighbouring state has to undertake projects in Cauvery valley region according to the Cauvery Tribunal and Supreme Court orders related to water distribution. "Karnataka government opposes the project whose details have not been furnished before the tribunal and the apex court. Tamil Nadu cannot take up this project unilaterally," the minister said.



U'khand Polls: BJP shows preference for Congress defectors in first list

The BJP in its first list of 59 candidates has once again shown a preference for Congress defectors rather than its own cadres to field in the state polls on February 14. According to the list released on Thursday, the party has not only chosen to field leaders who revolted against the Harish Rawat government in 2016, but also those who defected to its camp over mere past few days.



Such leaders include former Pradesh Mahila Congress president Sarita Arya and Durgeshwar Lal, who had joined the party on Thursday just a few hours before it announced its first list of candidates. Durgeshwar Lal enters the fray from Puroala while Arya is slated to contest from Nainital - a seat she had lost to BJP's Sanjeev Arya in 2017. Sanjeev, son of Yashpal Arya, a prominent Dalit face of Kumaon, is now in the

Congress. Most of Congress defectors -- several of whom had been made ministers in 2017 -- have been nominated from the seats they represent in the state assembly. These include Satpal Maharaj from Chaubattakhal, Subodh Uniyal from Narendra Nagar, Pradeep Batra from Roorkee, Umesh Sharma Kau from Raipur, and Rekha Arya from Someswar. Khanpur MLA Pranav Singh Champion -- one among the 10 Congress defectors who had joined the BJP in 2016 -- may have been dropped from the list due to his controversial image, but the seat remains in the family with his wife Kunwarani Devyani chosen to fight the contest instead of him. It is not unlikely that a few more Congress defectors find place in the party's second list of 11 candidates, the trend has left a section of workers disappointed within the BJP. Pradesh BJP secretary (organisation) Balbir Ghuniyal said it dents the morale of dedicated party cadres. Ghuniyal, who had sought a ticket for himself from Tharali, said he has been trying for it since 2007 but he was overlooked in favour of Bhopal Ram Tamta, who quit the Congress to join the BJP in 2018.

ED raids: Punjab Cong comes out with 'PunjabChanniDeNaalHai' campaign

Under fire from its political rivals over the ED raids, the Congress in Punjab has launched a campaign on social media stating that the entire state is with Charanjit Singh Channi and blaming the BJP-led Centre for trying to defame Punjab's first chief minister from the scheduled caste community. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday had said it seized cash amounting to over Rs 10 crore, including about Rs 8 crore from a relative of Channi, during raids conducted in connection with an anti-money laundering investigation against illegal sand mining operations in the poll-bound state. It had also said, "incriminating" documents related to "illegal" sand mining and property transactions, mobile phones, gold



worth more than Rs 21 lakh and a Rolex watch worth Rs 12 lakh were also seized during the searches that ended on Wednesday. The Punjab Congress has come out with a social media campaign 'PunjabChanniDeNaalHai' and has posted video clips of several persons coming out in support of Chief Minister Channi on its Facebook page. Channi was appointed as the chief minister of Punjab last September after the Congress made Amarinder Singh resign from the post. Opposition parties in Punjab have asked the Congress to explain the money recovered from the premises of Channi's nephew during the ED raids, with BJP's state unit dubbing the ruling party as 'Ghotale bajCongress' and 'CongressChor'.

Dharma Sansad case: Haridwar courts reject bail pleas of Narsinghanand, Tyagi

Two courts in Haridwar have rejected the bail pleas of Yati Narsinghanand and Jitendra Narayan Tyagi who have been arrested in connection with the controversial Dharma Sansad where alleged hate speeches against Muslims were delivered. On January 16, a Haridwar court had sent Narsinghanand, the organiser of the Dharma Sansad and the head priest of Dasna temple, to 14-day judicial custody. He was arrested on January 15 from Sarvanand Ghat of the Ganga, where he was staging a 'satyagraha' against the arrest of Tyagi two days ago. Tyagi was formerly known as Waseem Rizvi and changed his name after converting to Hinduism. The court of the chief judicial magistrate in



Haridwar rejected the bail application of Narsinghanand, while the court of the additional district and sessions judge dismissed Tyagi's plea after virtual hearings held on Thursday. The Dharma Sansad was held in Haridwar from December 17-19. Two FIRs have been lodged in Haridwar against more than 10 people, including Narsinghanand and Tyagi, in connection with the highly provocative speeches against Muslims delivered at the event.

Maha: Coach of empty passenger train derailed at Pune

A coach of an empty passenger train derailed at Pune railway station in Maharashtra on Friday morning, a railway official said. The incident took place around 9.30 am when the empty train was being moved from the railway yard to the platform, he said. "An empty train was being moved to the platform from the yard, when one of its coaches derailed during the shunting work in the morning," the official said. The work of restoration was underway, he said, adding that the rail traffic remained unaffected.

Officials working overtime to meet Covid vaccination target before UP polls

Facing the daunting task of holding a Covid-safe election in Uttar Pradesh, officials are working overtime to achieve the target of fully vaccinating at least 90 per cent of the eligible population before the first phase polling on February 10. The state election office intends to ensure 100 per cent inoculation of officials and security personnel to be deployed for the seven-phase polls in the state ending on March 7. The results will be declared on March 10 along with their four poll-bound states -- Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur. Entrusted with the big responsibility, Chief Minister



Yogi Adityanath holds a review meeting on the coronavirus situation daily and gives necessary instructions on testing and vaccination. "We are aiming to ensure the eligible population gets at least

one dose by January 25," Additional Chief Secretary Navneet Sehgal told PTI-Bhaskar. So far 63 per cent of the targeted population has received two doses of vaccine and the effort is to scale it up to at least 90 per cent by the time the state witnesses the first round of voting on February 10, said Sehgal, who is also the nodal officer on COVID-19 in the state. The officer said around 97 per cent of the 18-plus population has got their first dose of the vaccine by now. On an average 25 lakh people are administered vaccine daily as part of a speed-up inoculation drive. Adityanath has asked officials to increase it to 30 lakh a day. Uttar Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer Ajay Kumar Shukla told PTI-Bhaskar that more than 7.5 lakh officials would be deployed on poll duty and efforts are on to fully vaccinate them beforehand.

'Danger of Covid has subsided in Delhi, situation under control'

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Friday asserted that the danger of COVID-19 has subsided in the national capital and the situation is "quite under control". He also said that the virus was the primary cause of death in only three of the 43 fatalities recorded the previous day. The national capital is expected to record 10,500 cases on Friday with a positivity rate of 17 to 18 per cent, Jain said. Considering the dip in daily cases and the positivity rate, he said, the government has written to Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal

on withdrawing the weekend curfew, lifting the odd-even rule for opening of shops and allowing private offices to operate at 50 per cent capacity. "Experts had warned that Delhi can record one lakh cases daily during this wave but that danger has been averted. We will take a call on lifting of more restrictions within three-four days," the minister told reporters here. Delhi has passed the peak of the ongoing wave of the pandemic, Jain said. He said that after recording around 28,000 Covid infections last week, Delhi is now reporting a sharp decline in the number of daily cases and the positivity rate.

North-East, once infamous for corruption now uses funds for development: Shah

Union Home Minister Amit Shah today said there was a time when the Northeast was known for corruption but now the funds sent from Delhi are fully utilized for the development in the region. Addressing the fifty years of statehood day of Tripura through video conferencing said, Shah Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been trying hard to reduce the gap between Delhi and Northeast to ensure speedy development in the Northeastern states. The home minister said the



plan for Tripura's development over the next 25 years has been laid out in a vision document 'Lakshya Tripura'. Addressing a gathering here on Tripura's 50th statehood day through video conferencing, Shah said, huge infrastructure for connectivity of the land-locked state through roads, railways were built and initiatives were taken for better connectivity through neighbouring Bangladesh. The 15-km long Agartala - Akhaura rail link which has been built would connect the north eastern railway tracks with Bangladesh railways to reach up to Kolkata, the minister said. Shah said, the last king of Tripura, Maharaja Bir

Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur had decided that Tripura would join the Indian territory after partition. When Muslim infiltrators were entering Tripura after partition, Maharani Kanchan prava Devi, the widow of the Maharaja had contacted the then union Home Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who intervened to facilitate the princely state to the Indian union, he said. "To respect Maharaja's contribution, the Modi government had to change its policy and renamed Agartala Airport after his name", he said.

'Bihar heading for midterm polls with NDA in disarray'

Bihar is tipped for midterm polls as constituents of the ruling NDA are at each other's throat, former ally Chirag Paswan claimed here on Friday. Paswan claimed that likelihood of early polls became evident when Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who does not venture out until faced with elections, recently planned a state-wide tour. He was replying to queries from journalists about recent squabbles between Kumar's JD(U) and the BJP, primarily over

the manner in which liquor prohibition law is being implemented in the state. "Since the day assembly polls results came out, I have been saying that this government is not going to last. The straw in the wind is now for all to see," said Paswan who heads a splinter group of Lok Janshakti Party. An ugly spat ensued after a JD(U) spokesman took potshots at state BJP president Sanjay Jaiswal over his offer of help to family members of those who died in a hooch tragedy in West Champaran district last year.

Amar Jawan Jyoti merged with eternal flame

The Amar Jawan Jyoti at the India Gate was merged with the eternal flame at the National War Memorial (NWM) here on Friday. In a short ceremony, a part of the Amar Jawan Jyoti flame was taken and merged with the flame at the NWM, which is 400 metres away on the other side of India Gate. Chief of Integrated Defence Staff Air Marshal B R Krishna presided over the ceremony. The Amar Jawan Jyoti was constructed as a memorial for Indian soldiers who were killed in action in the 1971 Indo-Pak war, which India won, leading to the creation of Bangladesh.

In a short ceremony, a part of the Amar Jawan Jyoti flame was taken and merged with the flame at the NWM, which is 400 metres away on the other side of India Gate.



It was inaugurated by the then prime minister, Indira Gandhi, on January 26, 1972. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on February 25, 2019, inaugurated the NWM, where names of 25,942 soldiers have been inscribed in golden letters on granite tablets.

Cong didn't respond to Sena's pre-poll alliance plan in Goa; it is to be blamed if BJP wins: Raut

Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Friday said that he agrees to the view expressed by the Trinamool Congress (TMC) that the Congress should be held responsible if the BJP wins the next month's Goa Assembly elections and continues to occupy power in the state. He said that although the Sena had presented a proposal to the Congress to form a pre-poll alliance along with the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Goa Forward Party (GFP), the grand old party did not respond to its plan. Raut was talking to



reporters after announcing the party's first list of nine candidates for the February 14 assembly elections, which it will be jointly contesting with the Sharad Pawar-led NCP. Goa has a total of 40 assembly seats. TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee had on Thursday said that if the Congress fails to dislodge the BJP from power in Goa, the Congress' state in-charge P Chidambaram should take the responsibility and resign. He said the TMC had approached Chidambaram with a formal offer for pre-poll alliance, but nothing happened in that direction. "I agree with the comments of Abhishek Banerjee. We had also tried to hold talks with Congress. We had held a meeting with (Congress leaders) Dinesh Gundu Rao, Digambar Kamat and Girish Chodankar with the proposal that Congress, NCP, GFP and Sena should form an alliance," he said.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

The medium

To teach in English or in mother tongue? A multilingual approach is the answer

The Telangana Government has decided to introduce English as a medium of instruction in Government schools from the next academic year. The State language, Telugu, will be parallelly available as the other medium of instruction. On the face of it, there is a readymade explanation for the change. More and more parents of children in Government schools of Telangana feel the kids, when they reach the college level, fail to catch up with the standards of English-medium students. Secondly, private schools, hitherto limited to the urban centres with their English-medium education, have of late mushroomed across rural Telangana offering education in the English medium. That has led to a near-exodus from Telugu-medium Government schools, many of which have either closed down or merged with bigger schools, or relocated for want of students. The Government in any case runs a few residential schools with English medium and thinks offering English medium across the State would not be much of an issue. The problem the Government faces is finding teachers who can teach in English. They are scarce. The majority of the teachers is proficient in Telugu. The Government has to re-train these teachers — a tough task



— and encourage prospective teachers to take up B Ed courses in English. But by and large, not many eyebrows are being raised as the English medium creeps into the Government school system in Telangana where 'going to America' is a popular cry and Telugu-medium students shell out big money to enrol in private English-language courses.

The issue, however, points to a disturbing fact. Even after 75 years of Independence, we are stuck with basic stuff, like what should be the medium of education in our schools. We are still debating whether children should be taught in English or their mother tongue. We are also not sure whether mother tongue constitutes languages or dialects, too. For instance, millions speak Bhojpuri but it is considered a dialect of Hindi. Only last year, a Minister in Bihar mooted the idea of making the "mother tongue of the region" the medium of teaching. It just shows India never had an exhaustive debate on the subject. Linguists backing cognitive education insist that children learn skills in their mother tongue, a language they grow up with. The aspirational, social-empowering, rights-based argument favours English because it is the language that works in the world. Thus, the medium of instruction carries the baggage of ideology and elitism in the world's largest multi-lingual federation that is India. In contrast to parents' eagerness for their children to be taught in English, the Centre's National Education Policy (NEP) largely prefers the mother tongue. The answer is a bilingual or, preferably, a multilingual approach. Technology makes it possible. In a country where most children live their lives in two or three languages, multilingual teaching methods provide a level playing field for diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds while reconciling the desires of both parents and the NEP.

PICTALK



A troupe of folk singers during a rehearsal on the Red Road for upcoming R-Day function, in Kolkata

Ill at ease

As Kerala grapples with rising COVID cases, its 'immaculate health care' balloon has burst

As the number of daily COVID-19 cases soared to 46,487 on Thursday, Kerala's boast of being a role model for health care came crashing down like a pack of cards. The death toll in the State till Thursday stood at 51,501. Kerala has not been free from the pandemic's onslaught since India's first COVID-19 case was diagnosed in the State in early 2020. However, the State administration-sponsored media blitzkrieg portrayed an "all is well" image. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who is currently recuperating in a US hospital, had addressed the media daily to tell the world that Kerala was the only State taking on the pandemic by the horns. The daily briefings, which were telecast by all satellite news channels, were used by Vijayan to campaign for the 2021 Assembly election. He claimed that Kerala was receiving global acclaim for its health care system and other countries were emulating its example. But after the LDF retained power following the 2021 Assembly election, he discontinued the practice of addressing the media daily; the opportunist in Vijayan the politician chose to ignore people as the next major election is due only in 2024.



When the cases of COVID-19 surged, the Government turned to blaming people for the transmission of the virus. The truth, however, is that no worthwhile efforts were made to study the pattern in the spread of the disease. The State Government continued to tom-tom and live by its past laurels, when some agencies had praised the Kerala model of health care. The health department was complacent throughout this period, and manipulated figures failed to cover up the administration's malpractices. A 600-bed COVID hospital at Kasaragod, built by the Tatas and handed over to the Government in early 2021, is yet to become fully operational. The Government doctors were on a path of agitation for the last one year, demanding restoration of allowances which were cancelled citing financial crunch. The much-touted Kerala model was virtually a red herring spawned by friendly media. EMS Namboodiripad and C Achutha Menon, the Communist Chief Ministers of the State, used to fly to Romania and East Germany for medical treatment while Vijayan and his conscience-keeper Kodiyeri Balakrishnan prefer the "imperialist" US as their medical caretaker. It's time for the Comrades to see the writing on the wall, isn't it already?

Afghan women's rights are still far



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

The Taliban's recent announcements fail to inspire confidence and don't go far enough to impress the international community

Two news items, published in newspapers on January 20, 2022, merit attention. The first by AFP, carried in the Delhi edition of a leading daily, is about Acting Afghan Prime Minister Mohammad Hassan Akhund's appeal on January 19 to Muslim countries "to take the lead and recognise us officially". He was speaking at a conference to address Afghanistan's massive economic problems. The second, by PTI, featured in the Delhi edition of *The Pioneer*. It cited Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Xiaojin Lijian as saying at a media briefing on January 18 that he hoped that the Afghan side would respond further to the international community's expectations that it would "establish an open and inclusive political architecture, adopt moderate and prudent domestic and foreign policies, firmly combat all sorts of terrorist forces" and be "on friendly terms with other countries, especially its neighbours and integrate into [the] international family at an early date".

The statement, made following a mention of the Taliban seeking China's help to get global diplomatic recognition, clearly indicated that the world did not think that they had established an "inclusive" Government or that their policies towards women would not be a repeat of the horribly repressive ones that marked their earlier stint in power from 1996 to 2001. And this, when they had promised that women would enjoy all the rights to education and work available under Sharia law.

In fact, the UN and its bodies have, on several occasions, asked the Taliban to implement their promises and made critical observations about their actions. Its secretary-general, Antonio Guterres, told reporters on October 7 last year, "I am particularly alarmed to see promises made to Afghan women and girls by the Taliban being broken." He added, "I strongly appeal to the Taliban to keep their promises to women and girls and fulfil their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law." Speaking at the Human Rights Council, an inter-govern-



mental body within the UN system responsible for promoting and safeguarding human rights, Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said on September 13, 2021, "My office has received credible allegations of reprisal killings of a number of former ANSF (Afghan National Security Forces) personnel, and reports of officials, who worked for previous administrations, and their family members being arbitrarily detained... In some cases, the officials were released and, in others, they were found dead." Bachelet also highlighted "deeply troubling information" about Taliban raids on offices of some advocacy groups.

The UN bodies have acted. On September 17, the Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution asking the Taliban to establish an inclusive Government that has "the full, equal and meaningful participation of women" and upholds human rights. The Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on October 7 to have, from March 2022, a special rapporteur, supported by UN experts, on the ground to monitor the human rights situation in Afghanistan. There are some indications



THE FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT DOESN'T MENTION THE PRECISE DATE WHEN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES WILL REOPEN, NOR DOES IT MENTION WOMEN'S RIGHT TO WORK. CLEARLY, NEITHER ANNOUNCEMENT MEANS MUCH

that the Taliban are reacting. Abdul Baqi Haqqani, Minister for Higher Education, announced at a press conference in Kabul on January 12 that the Government would soon reopen public universities for male and female students. He also announced that these students would be segregated and cited Afghanistan's economic crisis and the lack of separated classes for male and female students, as reasons for the delay.

Earlier, in a decree on December 3 in the name of the Acting PM, the Taliban had stated that a "woman is not a property, but a noble and free human being; no one can give her to anyone in exchange for peace...or to end animosity". Both women and men, it had added, "should be equal" and that "no one can force women to marry by coercion or pressure". The decree also enabled a widow to re-marry 17 weeks after her husband's death — against the longstanding Afghan tribal custom of her marrying one of her husband's brothers or relatives after his death. Further, the Taliban leadership has reportedly ordered Afghan courts to treat women fairly, especially in cases of widows seeking inheritance as next of kin. The announcement also cites the

Taliban as saying they had asked their Ministers to spread awareness about women's rights across the population.

Significantly, the first announcement does not mention the precise date when public universities will reopen. Nor does it mention women's right to work. The third *sura* of the *Koran* (ayats 193 and 194) forbids the wasting of anyone's — whether a man or woman's — labour. The fourth *sura* (ayats 36 and 37) says, "To the men a share of what they have earned, and to the women a share of what they have earned..." (translation from *The Koran Interpreted* by Arthur J Arberry). The second announcement says nothing about women's right to education and work, which are crucial issues with the international community. Also, the rights the decree announces regarding marriage have all been enshrined in Islamic jurisprudence since the time of Prophet Mohammad. Clearly, neither announcement means much and is unlikely to impress the international community sufficiently for the purse strings to be loosened generously or recognition to be forthcoming soon.

(The author is Consulting Editor, *The Pioneer*. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MAJOR MIDAIR COLLISION AVERTED

Sir — A major midair collision was averted earlier this month in Bengaluru's skies as two aircraft of the same airline, which had taken off almost simultaneously from the city's Kempegowda International Airport, almost brushed against each other. While one of the planes was headed for Kolkata, the other aircraft was flying passengers to Bhubaneswar. It was a really shocking incident as to how the two aircraft were allowed to take off at the same time. It is a matter of grave concern as to how the planes were in this dangerous situation; besides, the air traffic control (ATC) didn't even report this incident nor made a record of it in the log book.

Luckily, an alert radar controller spotted the potentially grave error and immediately alerted both the pilots, thus saving hundreds of lives. In recognition of his presence of mind, both the radar controller and his swift action should be applauded and he should be suitably rewarded, too. The Government should order a thorough probe into this matter and ask the DGCA to conduct an in-depth investigation, which should be followed by taking necessary action in what could easily have been one of the biggest air safety lapses at the Bengaluru airport and in the country in recent history.

Ramesh G Jethwani | Bengaluru

ANOTHER BLOW TO SPIRIT OF FEDERALISM

Sir — It appears that the BJP Government at the Centre is determined to curtail the powers of the States by introducing controversial Acts and amendments to the Constitution and other existing regulations, despite protests from the States concerned. Before the din on the undemocratic denial of the participation of the tableaux from non-BJP ruled States like Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal in the upcoming Republic Day parade on flimsy grounds could die down, the Centre has now proposed changes to the IAS cadre rules which, when implemented, would remove power from the States and their rights as far as transfer/deputation of the

Respect history, and monuments



I'm not at all surprised to hear that after burning for five decades, the Amar Jawan Jyoti will be put out at India Gate, and merged with the National War Memorial 400 metres away. The Jyoti has a cenotaph and a monument to honour our fallen soldiers, on a marble pedestal, with a rifle and a soldier's helmet on it. The flame, lit to pay tributes to the soldiers martyred in the 1971 war, was inaugurated by then Prime Minister

Indira Gandhi on the Republic Day of 1972. Actually, one can learn from PM Narendra Modi how to kill two birds with one stone. Just as the nation commemorated 50 years of the 1971 war, the Defence Ministry announced that the Jyoti will be put out.

Similarly, in August 2021, Modi suddenly renamed the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna as Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna. All this is nothing but an attempt at "freeing" India of the Gandhi-Nehru name and legacy while, at the same time, rewriting history in favour of Modi by decisions such as building the Central Vista. Sadly, the Modi Government seems to have forgotten that respecting history involves conservation of the old while building new institutions. Hence, instead of extinguishing one memorial after the other, the Government will do better to make sincere and concrete attempts to spark the fire of patriotism among all countrymen.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

IAS cadres to the Centre are concerned. This amendment would entail the Union Government to transfer IAS officers without the consent of the States, which is clearly against the spirit of cooperative federalism. Though many Chief Ministers have raised their voice against this amendment and termed it draconian, it is alleged that the BJP Government, as usual, is going to implement the amendment unmindful of the objections. This amendment, if implemented, will be another blow to the democratic norms and cooperative federalism the country has been cherishing all these years.

Tharcus S Fernando | Chennai

OBC QUOTA IN NEET UPHELD

Sir — The Supreme Court has upheld the constitutional validity of reservation for OBC candidates and it is a right step in the right direction. While upholding the constitutional validity of reservation for OBCs in AIQ seats, the court elaborated on the concept of merit and

observed that it is not of one's own making. It noted that "reservation is not at odds with merit" in open competitive exams. While open examinations present equal opportunity to candidates, reservation ensures distribution of such opportunities, the court said.

It added that privileges of forward classes include not just having access to quality schooling and good coaching centres but also social networks and cultural communication, including good speaking skills, accent and academic accomplishments. All these ensure that children from forward classes take up jobs commensurate with the family's standing whereas first-generation learners from Other Backward Classes, who lack these, are placed at a disadvantage. Marks alone are not an indicator of merit, but also the resilience required to uplift oneself from the conditions of deprivation.

MR Jayanthi | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

An agreement on extending a \$190 mn Line of Credit from India to Mauritius will be exchanged.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi

I think Vladimir Putin will move in on Ukraine but (he) does not want a full-blown war.



US President — Joe Biden

I am doing bigger and better projects right now. I have a Sooraj Barjatya film and Sandeep Vanga's next with Ranbir Kapoor.



Actor — Parineeti Chopra

Only the captain has the answer as to why Venkatesh wasn't bowled even once.



Former India captain — Sunil Gavaskar

The EC should intervene and direct the Finance Ministry and ED to stop politically motivated raids (on Punjab CM's relatives).



Congress leader — Randeep Surjewala



FIRST COLUMN

QUICK COMMERCE: A NEW RETAIL MANTRA

Essentially large warehouses, dark stores enable fast delivery of goods in localities



MICHAEL CHANDA



UTTAM CHAKRABORTY

A wise person can create 'The Advantage of Adversity'. And you can very much learn this from retail marketers at this crucial juncture. Coping with the crucial situations of COVID-19, retail marketing is scaling newer heights. Business climate for retail marketing is getting conducive as there is a win-win situation for both the marketers and the clients. Today, retail industries are resorting to varied strategies to meet up consumers' demands. Moreover, the modus operandi of delivering the goods and services is becoming digitalized and even fast-paced. Consequently, understanding and innovating the retail has become a new business mantra. So much so Amazon, Flipkart, Ola, Uber, Zepto, Blinkit, Swiggy, Dunzo, Bigbasket and other business units are surprisingly found to be engaged with quick commerce companies. Owing to fasten the business, dark stores have been founded in the local area for trading



purposes. Essentially, dark stores are large warehouses that are the central points of retail distribution. They cater exclusively to local needs through online shopping. Quick commerce is indeed the next generation of e-commerce. It is an international business process that caters to the wishes of the consumers to bring instant delivery of goods. It provides instant support to the modern communities which are in dire need. Groceries, stationaries hygiene products etc., are coming under the ambit of quick commerce activities. Quick commerce websites are used to provide an online platform for various trading in the country. However, this business method helps the online shoppers to make safe purchases for their stores. Such a business model wants to be the biggest kirana store in the urban colony. It should be expressed that a dark store hits a frequency of more than 200 orders per day. The unit economics depends on the fact that there is a mixture of perishable and non-perishable in transaction. Tellingly, quick commerce remains a new and evolving business management with the effective inclusion of information technology. Many e-commerce companies are turning to social media channels such as Facebook and Instagram to showcase their vast array of products. Customization is the key of this trade. It will facilitate speed and efficiency. Quick commerce addresses are meaningful. The customers can use their mobile devices for shopping. However, quick commerce can invite online fraudulent activities. Credit card frauds are persistent in online businesses. It is apparent that quick commerce or electronic commerce is above all a commercial transaction over the Internet. It is a space mainly to watch out for logistics and e-commerce players. The expectations are likely to settle in at a sweet spot of thirty minutes' delivery or so. According to industry players, ten minutes' delivery model will see rationalization over time. Subscription-based e-commerce is another new venue that is being explored. It customers to subscribe to a product on a recurring basis depending on their need. However, the local kirana stores in the local area lose business due to the rise of dark stores that modernises the trading process. The local businessmen cannot afford to make big capital for having dark stores. These stores are losing customers due to the higher discount offerings of the companies. The companies have appointed a number of bikers and cyclists to deliver the commodities to the customers from dark stores. The corporate giants should pay minimum heed to the interest and survival of owners of kirana stores.

(Chanda is an author-activist and works as an advocate at High Court, Calcutta. Chakraborty teaches at Jaipuria Institute of Management, Lucknow. The views expressed are personal.)

Cinema ticket pricing vs bloated film costs



RAMACHANDRA MURTHY KONDUBHATLA

The Andhra Govt has issued an order fixing slabs for tickets in cinema halls in municipal corporations, municipalities, *nagar panchayats* and village *panchayats*

Two controversial Government Orders issued by the Andhra Pradesh Government related to entertainment and culture have created a lot of heat. The first GO issued in April 2021 was aimed at regulating film industry. The second one was recently issued banning a popular and message-oriented stage play 'Chintamani'. Both the issues could have been dealt with skilfully had the Government consulted the stakeholders before taking the decisions.

The Government of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy which has been dabbling in controversies of all kinds has added two more, involving the film industry and stage plays.

About 170 of the 950-odd theatres in Andhra Pradesh have been closed since the GO was issued. The exhibitors say they lost hugely due to Covid during 2021 when the theatres were completely shut. They were reopened with 50 per cent occupancy on July 31, 2021. Even before that, the State Government issued GO 35 fixing slabs for tickets in cinema halls in municipal corporations, municipalities, nagar panchayats and village panchayats under economy, deluxe and premium classes for multiplex, AC theatres and non-AC theatres.

Filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma met AP Information, public relations and cinematography minister Purni Venkataramaiah (Nani) and told him that the Government has no business to intervene in this issue. It is for the exhibitors and audience to decide the price of tickets. Pawan Kalyan, film hero-cum-politician (president of Jan Sena which has alliance with the BJP) was rather aggressive in his criticism. He said since the Government has no money, it is indulging in online ticketing and fixing ticket prices. Minister Nani asked the actor why would the government which has no money would reduce the ticket price instead of increasing. Senior actor, Pawan Kalyan's elder brother and former union minister Chiranjeevi tried to break the ice when he travelled to Amaravati to meet Jagan Mohan Reddy over lunch on last Thursday. Some news channels and newspaper said Chiranjeevi was offered a Rajya Sabha seat by the YSRCP chief which was promptly and curtly denied by the mega star. He said the problem would be resolved soon.

What is the problem? Is it peculiar to Tollywood? So, it appears. The problems in the industry started with stardom. At least six stars today charge a fee of ₹45 crore each for a movie. Heroines also are paid in crores, though their remuneration is nowhere near the actors'. Directors don't take all the remuneration by cheque or cash but ask for share in the revenue area wise. Together they eat away three-fourth of the budget.

Persons working in 24 crafts in films get a pittance. The presence of Chiranjeevi, Prabhas, Mahesh, Pawan Kalyan, NTR (Jr) and Ram Charan Teja makes the budget



THE PRESENCE OF CHIRANJEEVI, PRABHAS, MAHESH, PAWAN KALYAN, NTR (JR) AND RAM CHARAN TEJA MAKES THE BUDGET OF ANY FILM CROSS ₹100 CRORE. IN ORDER TO EARN THAT KIND OF MONEY, THE EXHIBITORS ORGANISE BENEFIT SHOWS AND EXTRA SHOWS TO COLLECT MORE. FOR BENEFIT SHOWS, THE PRICE OF THE TICKET WOULD BE ABOVE ₹1,000 FOR BIG-TICKET MOVIES

(The writer is Editor, Primepost, the news website based out of Hyderabad. The views expressed are personal.)



of any film cross ₹100 crore. Each actor acts in one movie in one or two years.

In order to earn that kind of huge money the exhibitors organize benefit shows and extra shows to collect more. For benefit shows, the price of the ticket would be above ₹1000 for big-ticket movies in which one of these stars acts.

If you have two stars like NTR (Jr) and Ram Charan Teja and a star director such as Rajamouli of Bahubali fame, as in RRR (Raudram, Ranam and Rudhiram), the budget would be around ₹300 crore. The film RRR was supposed to be released on January 7 after three postponements. Some other films slated to be released on Sankranti postponed their dates thinking that RRR would be released by then. The release of SarkaruvariPaata (featuring Mahesh Babu) was put off till April 1 and Bhimlanayak (Pawan Kalyan, Rana) till February 25. It happened because when a big budget film, such as RRR, is released, it is exhibited in most of the theatres for one week with special shows and higher ticket prices to earn back the huge investment. The poor and the middleclass among the audience are made to pay through their noses to pay to the stars. During that week no theatres would be available for other films.

Small cinema which used to flourish earlier has been thoroughly discouraged. Small producers have to depend on OTT platforms or sale of the cyber rights. The remuneration for artists is far less in Kannada, Malayalam and

Marathi movies.

Once late Raj Kumar, the Kannada Kanteerava, invited all Kannada producers, directors and exhibitors to his residence, gave them sumptuous dinner and politely asked them permission to raise his remuneration by ₹25,000 since he has a number of children. The guests were stunned and told him he could enhance his fee by lakhs.

The late NTR acted for twenty years for less than a lakh of rupees for a film. The days of NTR, ANR, Sobhan Babu and Krishna were golden for Tollywood. Beside the heroes, actors, directors, technicians and other craftsmen used to live happily. If the prices of tickets are low, small movies can get theatres and reasonable revenue. Some exhibitors went to AP High Court which asked the government to appoint a committee to study the issue. In the absence of compliance, the HC has stayed the operation of the GO. Then the government organized raids on theatres which were running without proper license and selling refreshments at higher prices. The result is bad blood between the government and the industry.

Meanwhile, the Telangana Government has agreed to the demand of the film industry and allowed fixing of ticket prices by the producers and exhibitors. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao did not want any trouble on this count. The ideal solution would be for both the chief ministers of Telugu States to sit with the important persons from Tollywood to sort out the matter once for all. The remuneration of the stars, the stranglehold of four families on hundreds of theatres in both the States (Families headed by Dil Raj, Allu Aravind, Daggubati Suresh and Sunil Narang) and the unethical exploitation of the film lovers, scope for small budget film producers to survive and the welfare of technicians and others (estimated to be more than 50 thousand) have to be discussed threadbare to arrive at a comprehensive and amicable solution. Sooner it is done the better for both government and film industry.

The ban on Chintamani, the popular stage play, imposed by Rajat Bhargava, the Principal Secretary through a GO, was not warranted although the complaint of a community is genuine. The original play written by social reformer, writer and poet Kallakuri Narayana Rao, exactly one hundred years ago, was sophisticated and enlightening. It was a critique of the Devadasi system. Subbi Shetty, a character in the play, is a vaisya (bania), who loses his wealth to Chintamani and his character is used to engage the audience through his teasing chat with Chintamani's mother Srihari and sister Chitra. It is true that some actors introduced vulgarity and obscene dialogues between Subbi Shetty, Chitra and Srihari, hurting the sentiments of a community.

The Andhra government should have allowed the play to run with a condition that vulgar characters and dialogues are removed. Even today, the play has great relevance. The AP Government's decision needs to be revised.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THE DOUBLE-ENGINE GOVT PEOPLE ARE DISMANTLING EACH OTHER'S WHEELS. THE DELHI CAMP HAS SHUNTED THE CM TO GORAKHPUR. —SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF AKHILESH YADAV



THOSE NOT GETTING TICKETS TO RIDE THE DOUBLE ENGINE ARE BUYING TICKETS IN BLACK TO RIDE THE BICYCLE. —UP BJP CHIEF SWATANTRA DEV SINGH

Will Russia play the 'Cuban card'?

But Russia stopped being Communist 30 years ago

After a week of intense discussions about 'security' between Russia and the NATO countries, this is the week when the Western allies will send their written replies to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Various pundits, some of whom have actually been to Russia, warn us that there will be 'War in Europe' if Putin's demands are not met.

(You there, at the back. Stop giggling! This is no laughing matter! Peace is hanging by a thread!)

Historians keen for a moment in the limelight are being wheeled out to draw parallels with past diplomatic disasters like the Munich conference of 1938 (appeasement of Hitler) and Yalta in 1945 (carving up Europe and giving Stalin the eastern half in 1945).



GWYNNE DYER

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

And this just in! Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, just back in Moscow from the talks, told Russian television that if the talks failed, he could "neither confirm nor exclude" that Russia would send "military assets" to Cuba and Venezuela.

Wow! A dagger - no, two daggers - pointed at the heart of America (although they'll have to work on the length of the Venezuelan dagger, since it's 2,000 km. from Caracas to Miami). If that does not force the Americans to give in, what will? I'm sorry. That's enough sarcasm. It's just that all this prancing around and mugging for the camera gets tiresome. This is a minor diplomatic spat that has been deliberately inflated far beyond its merit, and it is being taken much too seriously. Let's start with Russia play-



ing the 'Cuban card'. Cuba is still a Communist country, and Maduro's regime in Venezuela also has aspirations in that direction - but Russia, in case you've forgotten, stopped being Communist thirty years ago.

Putin's regime in Moscow is nationalist-populist, and Cuba has absolutely no motive to host Russian troops and risk triggering a confrontation with the United States. In any case

Russian troops in Cuba would pose no military threat to the United States. What are they going to do? Invade Florida?

Ryabkov's intention was obviously to do a "How would you like it if...?" on American diplomats. How would like it if there were Russian troops '90 miles from Florida' (as people used to say during the Cuban crisis of 1962), and not NATO troops 450 km. from Moscow

(which is where they are now).

The grown-up American answer to that would be "Who cares?" In real life, there are a number of troglodytes in the US Congress who would work themselves up into a lather about Russian troops in Cuba - but since the Cubans would not agree to it in the first place, it's really quite irrelevant.

Well, then, what about the alleged historical precedents: Munich and Yalta? They were both about granting a 'sphere of influence' in Europe to a great power (Germany in 1938, the Soviet Union in 1945) that could easily enforce its wishes on the ground.

Russia is effectively demanding a comparable sphere of influence in its old 'satellite' countries, which would not be allowed to have friendly foreign troops on

their soil even though they are NATO members, but it's a complete non-starter. Russia lacks the military capacity to enforce its will on the ground.

So will there be 'War in Europe', as the feverish headlines suggest? Not in the sense they imply: massive armoured forces rolling across whole countries, with the threat of nuclear war looming in the background. But there might be some shooting on or just inside Ukraine's border with Russia.

Of course, there's already a little bit of shooting along that border, in the Russian-backed breakaway provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk. As Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said on Friday, Putin may now be planning to cause a little more.

Kirby warned that Russia "has pre-positioned a group of

operatives to conduct what we call a false-flag operation, an operation designed to look like an attack on them or on Russian-speaking people in Ukraine, as an excuse to go in." He may be right - and he may be wrong. The satellites can see their location, but not their intentions.

Something has got into Putin, and he's seeking concessions that he should know he cannot extract, with threats that he cannot enforce.

It is possible that he could blunder into a local clash that would bring harsh sanctions down on Russia.

It is extremely unlikely that he would try to conquer all or even half of Ukraine.

It is almost inconceivable that this will end up with Second World War-style battles between large armoured forces.

'Hyd will always be known for its hospitable nature'

SHIKHA DUGGAL

In this new day and age, people are paying a lot of attention to health and fitness. Hyderabad body builder Shafi Sami have more specifically blurred the lines between traditions and made a name for himself in the bodybuilding world. Did you know? This 34-year-old has his ancestral roots dating back to the Armed forces and the family has well inscribed their names in golden letters. Taking the legacy ahead, he joined the body building arena and there's not even a singular accolade that he hasn't been able to accomplish! When we insisted upon his association with the Hyderabad city, he was all bonkers about the the crux of Hyderabad and that's the Old City. He says, "The Old City is still so alive, foreigners come and like to visit the Old City first instead exploring the trade town at the other corner of Hyderabad. Till today, it has managed to remain the royal seat! I am born and brought up here, I take so much pride in its possession. There is a magnificent antiquated structure like Charminar, our domical mosque Mecca Masjid and palaces around. It's all a landmark."

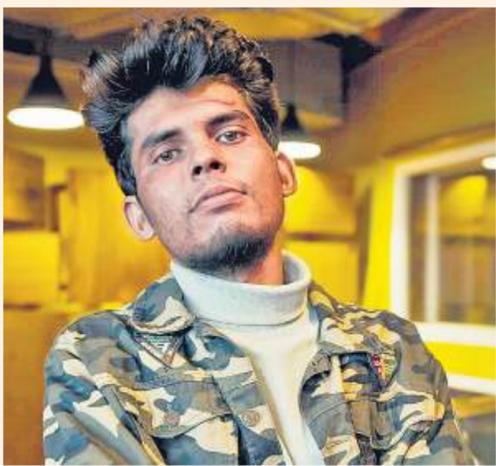
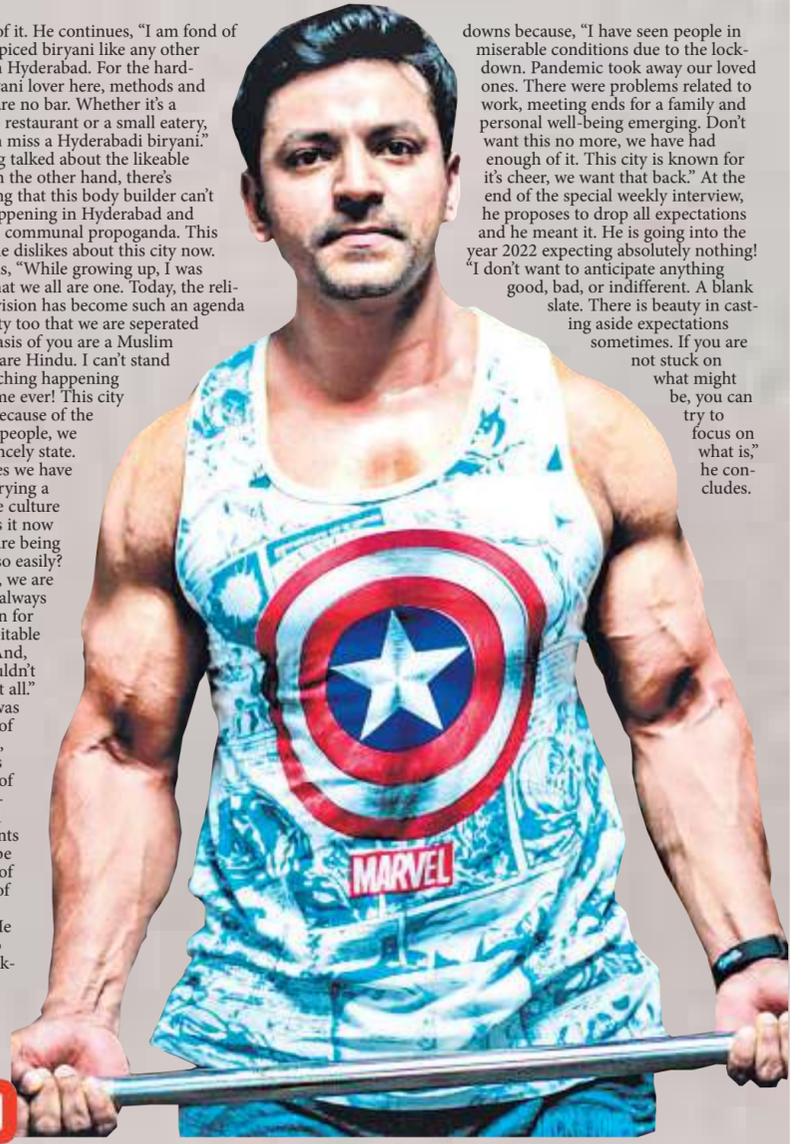
He always had the dream to become a successful body builder of this state. Today, when he is in his early 30's, he is a competent man in this field. He intends to go a long way in this domain and despite achieving so much in this field, he calls himself a novice only and tells us how has the city been supporting him throughout. He mentions, "Various initiatives are taken by the state government to promote sports in the state. They assured us to provide necessary help for the promotion of the sport and they are doing it too. Bodybuilding is becoming increasingly popular. There has been change in the outlook towards various techniques, but a majority of traditions have still remained intact. I took it up for my passion but there are some in the city who have the urge to develop oneself both mentally and physically and Hyderabad has been the best city in that manner! I have never seen such support coming my way from any other city, inspite of venturing in multiple cities around." Nothing came easy to this man, times had been really tough on him. He never knew he would lose his parents at such an early age, but it's his willpower that didn't let him give up and thereafter he just progressed immersively in his life. He turned his tragedy into an asset to work even more harder in life! One thing that always strikes his mind whenever anyone call out Hyderabad is obviously the Biryani. He is

so fond of it. He continues, "I am fond of heavily spiced biryani like any other guy from Hyderabad. For the hardcore biryani lover here, methods and regions are no bar. Whether it's a fine dine restaurant or a small eatery, none can miss a Hyderabad biryani."

Having talked about the likeable factor, on the other hand, there's something that this body builder can't stand happening in Hyderabad and that's the communal hyperpropaganda. This is what he dislikes about this city now. He recalls, "While growing up, I was taught that we all are one. Today, the religious division has become such an agenda in our city too that we are separated on the basis of you are a Muslim and you are Hindu. I can't stand mob lynching happening around me ever! This city is alive because of the Deccani people, we are a princely state. Since ages we have been carrying a collective culture so why is it now that we are being divided so easily? We were, we are and will always be known for our hospitable nature. And, that shouldn't change at all."

2020 was the year of the virus, 2021 was the year of the fight-back and Shafi wants 2022 to be the year of the end of the pandemic! He wants no more lock-

downs because, "I have seen people in miserable conditions due to the lockdown. Pandemic took away our loved ones. There were problems related to work, meeting ends for a family and personal well-being emerging. Don't want this no more, we have had enough of it. This city is known for its cheer, we want that back." At the end of the special weekly interview, he proposes to drop all expectations and he meant it. He is going into the year 2022 expecting absolutely nothing! "I don't want to anticipate anything good, bad, or indifferent. A blank slate. There is beauty in casting aside expectations sometimes. If you are not stuck on what might be, you can try to focus on what is," he concludes.



100RBH's new single Zanjeer dedicated to Babasaheb Ambedkar legacy

Courageous and cognizant, the rise of India's underground hip-hop scene has given birth to a fierce movement of expression. Regional rap artists now use their art to raise their voices, reflecting on social constructs and socio-political discord.

Honouring this multi-dimensional perspective, DIVINE's Gully Gang Entertainment has freshly signed sought-after rapper from the regional hip-hop scene 100RBH aka Saurabh Abhyankar whose pedigree is socially-conscious rap music. On the heels of this exciting association, the 23-year-old announces his brand-new Marathi single Zanjeer, which releases on Gully Gang Records on 21st January 2022.

Featuring the hard-hitting voice of the Amravati bred rapper, the single produced by Karan Kanchan, showcases the artist's penchant for razor-sharp lyrics, socio-political critique and witty humor.

Releasing across all major streaming platforms, the single with its hyper-intensive bass-heavy rhythms and poetic speech laser focusses on societal discrimination and government apathy. The music video directed by Joel D'Souza was shot in the busy streets of

Amravati as a mark of respect to the artist's cultural roots.

Talking about the single 100RBH states, "Society at large is taking giant leaps when it comes better forms of food, housing technology, education but we continue to undermine that progress by our discriminatory practises on the basis of race, gender and caste. I hope that Zanjeer serves as a catalyst as we usher in a new year after a long haul with a pandemic and helps listeners to break free from socio-psychological conditioning while we make tangible progress in other materialistic areas of life. This single is inspired and dedicated to the progressive movement spear-headed by my role model, Babasaheb Ambedkar."

Reinforcing his commitment to making music that is a torchbearer of change he adds, "I write revolutionary songs to spotlight attention on critical issues that have social relevance. My art is a representation of social inequalities and the brushed-under-the-carpet truths. The themes and languages that I explore are what the common man can relate to as I'm desirous of spearheading a nationwide movement. Rap has grown in India since the 2000s, embracing activism in the recent past."

Tech transforming healthcare

In this unprecedented health care crisis caused by Covid-19, hospitals across India faced multiple challenges of access, safety, supply chain logistics and financial stress. All this resulted in huge patient loads and fatalities, heavy financial losses and a sharp decline in revenues. Elective procedures were cancelled or postponed to prioritise hospital capacity, while patients limited hospital visits because of concerns about potential exposure to infections. Many of them died from the lack of care for non-Covid diseases. There were layoffs, furloughs and salary cuts to contain costs and maintain financial viability. The second wave led to an even bigger, people have learnt their lessons from the pandemic and have started implementing policies which could redefine the way health care is managed and patients are cared for.

Similarly Navia Life Care, a health startup aims to address a major issue of information imbalance, i.e. lack of complex and perceptible information made available to different players in the healthcare ecosystem. This includes lack of availability of electronic medical records for easy access by patients and doctors, or view on prescription patterns for pharma, or even smaller scale issues such as unavailability of waiting times in OPDs for patients or information about drug availabilities at their nearest drugstore, especially after seeing the covid crisis.

Gaurav Gupta, Co-Founder of Navia Life Care - a health tech startup, started the company with Kunal Kishore Dhawan five years ago because of a shared passion in healthcare and life sciences. Coming from families with chronic disease patients, and having studied and worked in the field, starting a company in the healthcare industry was a natural decision while making

a difference to the ecosystem was a collective passion. Recently, Nupur Khandelwal joined Navia as a co-founder and has been an integral part of the functioning of the company since.

In conversation with us, Gupta talks about the company and what sets them apart. "The simplicity of our products is our key differentiator. The main reason for the failure of products in this industry is the complexity of the product, the expectation of behavior change, and the timing. We have worked on two



of the three factors and we believe the time is just right currently. Our products are very simple for the doctors to use, there is no change of behavior required by the doctor or other stakeholders. Our voice assistant for doctors is so simple to use that doctors can create prescriptions easily. The second key differentiator is our innovative business model — we keep ourselves lean with a focus on exponential growth keeping unit economics as the focus. To do this, we are increasingly looking at expansion through partnerships, instead of being feet-on-street heavy."

Healthcare in India has always been an industry with ample opportunities, and this covid times this sector has witnessed massive growth, he says, "Technology can

help in education, better care delivery, improved outcomes, and making patients and doctors aware of better lifestyle choices. In more ways than one, technology has proved to be the most effective way to transform the healthcare industry in India."

India has a large patient population to cater to and an equally large number of healthcare workers, each having a role to play in the implementation of technology to improve access to quality healthcare. Also, with the increasing penetration of health insurance, both government and private organisations are bringing the need for technology to the forefront, which entrepreneurs are always keen to leverage. "The scope is huge and the impact we can make using technology in people's lives is also very huge," he states.

Initially when the pandemic began to take effect, Navia was very quick in understanding the changing needs of the doctors and patients due to the lockdown and other restrictions. It emerged as a leading telemedicine and EMR company which helped, and received a stellar response from both doctors and patients who actively took up the use of its products which helped them in continued medical care during these difficult times.

He speaks about his vision for the future, saying, "We have an ambitious vision for ourselves to achieve by 2025, we wish to enable more than 250 thousand doctors and over 200 million patients in over 10 countries by our digital health platforms. We envision an ecosystem where patient care and patient outcomes are the primary objectives and information is available to all the stakeholders to achieve these objectives. We see us playing a central role in this ecosystem by enabling data generation and data sharing among these stakeholders."

People experience health issues pertaining to the vascular system i.e. arteries, veins and lymphatic vessels due to lifestyle

or hereditary factors. Vascular diseases can also be triggered by lifestyle choices of people with uncontrolled diabetes or smoking addiction, and in the long run, can only be corrected with vascular surgery.

Dr. C. Chandra Sekhar, Vascular and Endovascular Surgeon, DNB, FIVS, MCH (Vascular), Apollo Spectra Hospitals, says, Vascular disorders can be treated using both open surgery and endovascular methods. Vascular surgery deals with all the blood and lymph vessels of the body except that of the heart and the brain.

Vascular surgeons undertake a wide range of operations. The doc lists out some of the procedures followed in vascular surgery:

- Carotid endarterectomy: This operation is done to open a carotid artery in order to prevent strokes.
- Dialysis access: Patients who require dialysis treatment for failing kidneys have many options for gaining access to a blood artery.
- Repair and treatment of bulges and tears: Bulges and tears in blood vessels are treated using both classic "open" surgery and less invasive endovascular (within the blood vessel) techniques.
- Angioplasty: Angioplasty is a minimally invasive technique that involves the use of a device such as a balloon or a stent to unblock a blocked artery and restore blood flow.
- Stenting: Stents are tiny devices inserted in the afflicted artery by a vascular surgeon utilising a minimally invasive method to expand and hold open blocked arteries.
- Vascular bypass surgery: Vascular bypass surgery involves surgically rerouting blood vessels to allow blood to flow freely around an obstruction.

Symptoms of vascular diseases are not severe until the late stages of the condition and hence, it is essential to be aware of its existence. One can also have a professional opinion in case of a family history of vascular disorders. Consult a vascular surgeon to get a clear understanding of treatment options if one is suffering from pelvic congestion syndrome, uterine fibroids, venous diseases like venous insufficiency, and arterial diseases.

Vascular surgery may be required for a variety of reasons, including the following:

- Aneurysm: An aneurysm is a vascular swelling produced by a weakening in the arterial wall. Depending on the extent of the

aneurysm, endovascular therapy or watchful waiting may be an option. In some cases, significant surgery is required.

- Blood clots: Deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism may require surgery if medical treatment fails to clear the blockage or if the situation is life threatening.
- Atherosclerosis: Plaque builds up inside one's arteries and causes atherosclerosis. Plaque is an unwanted material found in the blood that is made up of fat, cholesterol, calcium, and other chemicals. The accumulation of plaque hardens and narrows the arteries over time. This reduces the amount of oxygen-rich blood that reaches your organs and other body components. Because this illness is a leading cause of stroke, the surgical procedure is usually the most effective treatment choice for the severe disease.
- Peripheral artery disease: It is a condition that affects the arteries in the legs and arms. Depending on the severity of the ailment, open vascular major surgery may be required.

Allergic reactions of the body to anesthetics, bleeding, blood clot, irregular heart rhythm, heart attack, injuries during the operation are potential complications of vascular surgery. "Post-surgery care is an essential component of the recovery process. In case of fever or chills, bleeding, and increased pain in the affected area, one must immediately alert the doctor to avoid further complications. After open vascular surgery, patients should anticipate spending five to ten days in the hospital and three months at home for complete recovery. For a period, sponge baths can be used instead of frequent showers to keep the surgical region clean and dry. One can ask the doctor for medications to relieve pain. For a week or two, one may also require assistance with domestic work and other daily activities. It is not advisable to drive until doctor's approval is obtained," concludes the doc.



what's brewing?

Vikrant Massey returns to TV to host historical docu-series

Actor Vikrant Massey is set to return to television after eight years with documentary series *Kahani Navbharat Ki*, which will chronicle key moments that shaped the country's history and its evolution.

The show is set to be launched by Times Now Navbharat with a special curtain-raiser episode on January 26.

Massey said he was drawn to host the series as it is a timely reminder of India's history.

"What prompted my return with the show is the simple fact that there is a dearth of informative content on TV today. When we recognised that we are celebrating 75 proud years of our independence, this felt like just the right show for me to come back and interact with my audience. It is a highly researched non-fiction show, which I am doing for the first time in my life," Massey told PTL.

Directed by Aparna Sanyal, the 10-part series will commence from January 30 and air every Sunday.

The 34-year-old actor, who was last seen on the TV show *Ajab Gajab Ghar Jamai*, said *Kahani Navbharat Ki* has an inspiring quality attached to it which will reach out to the audience, especially the younger generation. "The kind of historical anecdotes, stories, and



inspiring personalities I came across — especially the ones I was not really aware of — that inspired me a lot. I thought, if I could feel this way there is a huge possibility for the audience, especially the younger generation, to feel the pride.

The actor said the series aims to unearth forgotten historical incidents and present them to the viewers with utmost "authenticity". Massey said the show's research team worked on it for more than two years in an attempt to bridge "the information disparity" between the younger generation and what transpired 75 years ago when the country attained independence. "Due to the advent of

social media, we have a lot of chitter chatter going around. But we don't really have an in-depth understanding of what really happened. We want to go back to those archival materials, those incidents or anecdotes which have been far forgotten. We want to revive them and share them with people. These stories chronicle pivotal moments in the founding of the country," he added.

According to the makers, the show will use a hybrid form of storytelling for its narration, employing elements, like sketches, animations, stylized graphics, full-frame illustrations, contemporary footage and interviews in addition to rare archival footage.

Those looking for a quick and hassle-free break must pack their bags and head to Novotel Hyderabad Airport for a liberating and safe staycation. It's a perfect time to enjoy a mini getaway at Novotel Hyderabad Airport while capturing great moments and witnessing spectacular attractions. Come and discover Novotel Hyderabad

Airport between 24th till 28th January 2022 with an exclusive 25% discount and enjoy an array of activities ranging from peaceful poolside relaxation to full on action-adventure at the sports arena.

Venue: Novotel Hyderabad Airport
Date: January 24 to January 28
For reservations, please call: +91 7650010554



● Dr. Lakshmi



● Sushmita



● Bolgum Nagesh Goud



● Annapurna



● Arpitha



● Lakshmi and Bindu



● Aashritha



● Laxma Goud



● Swapna



● Jagadesh



● Saraspathi



● Rajasekhar



● Ramu

ART ATTACK

Beautifully painted sculptures were up on display at State Art Gallery in Madhapur. Art by 15 eminent artists from India was enjoyed by visitors, such as Kurma by Bolgum Nagesh Goud which places an emphasis on the protection of tortoises.

PHOTOS BY SV CHARY

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



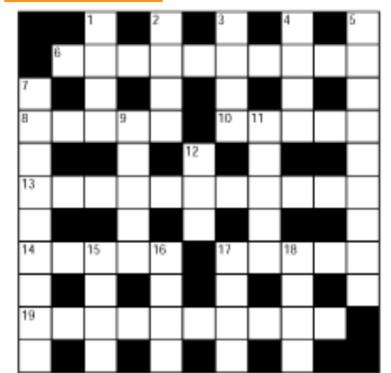
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 6 A machine in a kitchen
 - 8 Frequently
 - 10 A room just under the roof
 - 13 A country famous for making watches
 - 14 Imagine things while you are asleep
 - 17 Normal
 - 19 A large African animal with a horn on its nose
- DOWN**
- 1 Fog
 - 2 Skinny
 - 3 Molten stuff from a volcano
 - 4 Closed
 - 5 A large reptile with a long body and sharp teeth



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

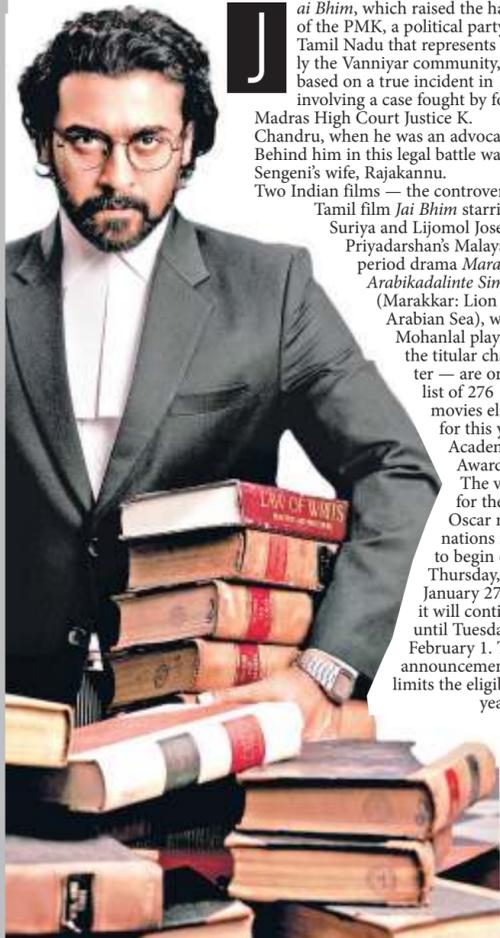
Rules

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

GINGER MEGGS



Jai Bhim, Marakkar make it to Oscars 'submission list'



Jai Bhim, which raised the hackles of the PMK, a political party in Tamil Nadu that represents mainly the Vanniyar community, is based on a true incident in 1993, involving a case fought by former Madras High Court Justice K. Chandru, when he was an advocate. Behind him in this legal battle was Sengeni's wife, Rajakannu. Two Indian films — the controversial Tamil film *Jai Bhim* starring Suriya and Lijomol Jose and Priyadarshan's Malayalam period drama *Marakkar: Arabikadalinte Simham* (Marakkar: Lion of the Arabian Sea), with Mohanlal playing the titular character — are on the list of 276 movies eligible for this year's Academy Awards. The voting for the Oscar nominations is set to begin on Thursday, January 27, and it will continue until Tuesday, February 1. The announcement limits the eligibility year to 10

months. Last year, the Academy had extended it until February 28, 2021, because of the pandemic.

All of the presumed Oscar contenders, reports *Variety*, are on the list. These include *Being the Ricardos* (Amazon Studios), *Belfast* (Focus Features), *CODA* (Apple Original Films), *Dune* (Warner Bros), *Encanto* (Walt Disney Pictures), *House of Gucci* (MGM/United Artists), *The Power of the Dog* (Netflix), *A Quiet Place Part II* (Paramount Pictures), *Spencer* (Neon/Topic Studios), *Spider-Man: No Way Home* (Sony Pictures) and *West Side Story* (20th Century Studios).

Some of the international features from the Oscar shortlist are also eligible for best picture, in addition to the best international feature category, such as Japan's much-awarded *Drive My Car*, Italy's *The Hand of God*, Iran's *A Hero* and Norway's *The Worst Person in the World*. Directed by Priyadarshan, *Marakkar* is one of the most expensive films in the history of Malayalam cinema. It narrates the epic tale of Kunjali Marakkar IV, a Malabar sea lord and his epic battles against the Portuguese. The movie had won three National Awards — Best Feature Film, Best Special Effects and Best Costume Design.

Jai Bhim, which raised the hackles of the PMK, a political party in Tamil Nadu that represents mainly the Vanniyar community, is based on a true incident in 1993, involving a case fought by former Madras High Court Justice K. Chandru, when he was an advocate. Behind him in



this legal battle was Sengeni's wife, Rajakannu.

The only other film to make the cut from South Asia is Bhutan's *Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom*, a 2019 film directed by Pawo Choyning Dorji. It had its world premiere at the BFI London Film Festival. The film was selected as the Bhutanese entry for the Best International Feature Film at the 93rd Academy Awards, but later disqualified. It was resubmitted as Bhutan's entry for the 2022 Oscars and was shortlisted for the awards. Nominations for the 94th Academy Awards, according to *Variety*, will be announced on Tuesday, February 8. The ceremony is scheduled to be held on Sunday, March 27, at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood and will be televised on the American network ABC and in more than 200 territories worldwide.



Keerthy Suresh's *Good Luck Sakhi* releasing on Jan 28

National award-winning actress Keerthy Suresh will next be seen in a woman-centric sports rom-com film *Good Luck Sakhi*, where she played the role of a shooter. Aadhi Pinesetty will be seen as male lead, while Jagapathi Babu essayed a crucial role in the film boasts proudly of a female dominated crew lead by co-producer Shravya Varma.

The makers on Friday announced the release date of the movie. *Good Luck Sakhi* will be releasing on January 28, two days after the Republic Day. The film will most probably have no competition, as no

noted film will be arriving on the week. The makers will strengthen the promotions, as there is only one week left for the release.

Directed by Nagesh Kukunoor, *Good Luck Sakhi* is a multi-lingual film made simultaneously in Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam languages. Popular producer Dil Raju is presenting the film while Sudheer Chandra Padiri is producing it on Worth A Shot Motion Arts banner. Rock star Devi Sri Prasad has scored music, while Chirantan Das has cranked the camera. Teaser and other promotional content of the film got good response from all the corners.

After the big success of *Bangaraju*, Akkineni Nagarjuna along with his wife Amala visited Tirumala on Friday and had the darshan of Lord Venkateswara. After the darshan, the actor interacting with the media, expressed his happiness on visiting Tirumala after two years.



Sam deletes divorce announcement post

Many hearts were broken when actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu announced her divorce with Akkineni Naga Chaitanya a few months back. Both the actors took to their social media handles to announce their divorce. However, we found that Samantha has deleted her divorce statement post from Instagram account. While the post

remains on Chay's account, Sam's action kept netizens wondering as to why she deleted the post. On the work front, Chay has *Laal Singh Chaddha*, *Thank You* in pipeline, while Samantha has signed a list of movies for this year. She is also making her Hollywood debut with *Arrangements of Love*.



Dulquer Salmaan tests positive for Covid

After his superstar father Mammooty announced he is Covid positive, his actor son Dulquer Salmaan has also shared that he has caught the virus. Dulquer took to Instagram, where he shared that he has mild flu symptoms and is currently in isolation. He wrote: "I have just tested positive for Covid-19. I'm isolating at home and have mild flu symptoms but am otherwise ok. People who were in close contact with me during the shoots over the last few days, please isolate and test if you notice symptoms." The actor urged everyone to mask up and stay safe.

"This pandemic is not over and we must stay vigilant. Please mask up and stay safe," he added.

Five days ago, Mammooty tested Covid-19 positive. In view of this development, the shooting of his movie franchise 'CBI 5' directed by K. Madhu has been suspended. Dulquer will next be seen in 'Hey Sinamika'.



Puneeth Rajkumar's last three films to get OTT releases



of his most memorable movies — *Law*, *French Biryani*, *Kavaludaari*, *Mayabazaar* and *Yuvarathnaa*, available to watch for free, even for non-Prime members, for 1-month starting February 1. Not just limiting to Prime members and making these five movies free-to-stream worldwide on the service for anyone who has an Amazon account is a modest attempt to allow wider audiences and fans to pay their love and respect to the legend.

Honouring the creative prowess of late Puneeth Rajkumar, Prime Video on Friday announced a slate of three new Kannada movies with PRK Productions which includes *Man of the Match*, *One Cut Two Cut* and *Family Pack*, to be available exclusively for Prime Members worldwide.

Paying a humble tribute to the legend, Prime Video will also make five

Talking about the association with PRK Productions, Manish Menghani, Head, Content Licensing, Amazon Prime Video said, "Over the last few years, we have had a successful association with PRK Productions. This collaboration, is our effort to pay a humble tribute to the

Puneeth Rajkumar, Producer, PRK Productions said "Puneeth Rajkumar's distinct vision for cinema fascinated audiences for years, earning him the massive fan following and honour he so rightly deserved. It now remains our endeavour to carry that legacy forward. We are happy to continue our successful association with Prime Video and take our films to viewers world over.

The three-film announcement is an ode to the craft and legacy of the late actor and filmmaker whose contribution to cinema stands unmatched. Featuring popular faces from the Kannada film industry, this repertoire of films will premiere on Prime Video in India and across 240 countries and territories worldwide. While *Man of the Match* is a modern-day reflection of human emotions and social challenges starring some of the finest upcoming actors like Atharva Prakash K Jayaram, Dharmanna Kadur and Nataraj, *One Cut Two Cut* brings the story of a day when everything went haywire in a mad-cap comedy featuring Danish Sait, Prakash Belavadi and Samyukta Hornad. *Family Pack* is a romantic comedy starring Likith Shetty and Amrutha Iyengar in lead roles. With these three movies, Prime Video aims to carry forward Puneeth Rajkumar's legacy.

creative excellence of Late Puneeth Rajkumar and his unique vision of storytelling. His contribution to cinema is immense and we are sure, these films will offer an immersive experience to his fans and admirers in India and beyond. We are happy to present some fun, relatable and highly engaging stories through this association in the loving memory of the legend Late Puneeth Rajkumar. At Prime Video, we're always endeavoring to take the most authentic homegrown stories to a global audience." Ashwini

SOUTH AFRICA HAND 'OUT OF SYNC' INDIA SERIES DEFEAT



PTI ■ PAARL

A young South Africa punished a jaded Indian team for its outdated approach, handing it one of the most comprehensive series defeats in recent times with an easy seven-wicket victory in the second ODI here on Friday.

A target of 288 was below-par on a flat track and the seasoned Quinton de Kock (78 off 66 balls) in the company of rising sensation Janneman Malan (91 off 108 balls) added 132 for a match-deciding opening stand.

The home team eventually reached the target in 48.1 overs to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-game series.

KL Rahul's captaincy ambitions and head coach Rahul Dravid's wish to see him being anointed in the long run, however, suffered a rude jolt following back-to-back defeats in 50-over games on a track, which was more Indian than South African in nature.

India's archaic approach, a very '90s safety first mind-set, hurt the team as has been the case for a while now in the white-ball format.

INDIA'S ARCHAIC APPROACH, A VERY '90S SAFETY FIRST MIND-SET, HURT THE TEAM AS HAS BEEN THE CASE FOR A WHILE NOW IN THE WHITE-BALL FORMAT.

A tour that started with a great Test win at the Centurion is now in tatters and the Indian contingent would be looking to board the charter flight back home on Monday after the inconsequential third ODI at the Newlands, which would be a spicier track compared to the one at Boland Park.

The batting, save Rishabh Pant's cavalier style, was too defensive starting with skipper Rahul, whose 55 off 79 balls was an innings of bygone era, which cannot align with the fearless cricket that teams want to associate with now.

The match slipped away from India's grip during their innings once Pant was gone as the others simply failed to get going when the ball didn't come on to the bat and it was not a track that offered firm and even bounce.

It's not a new malaise to plague Indian cricket but what should be worrying is that nothing has been done to address the issues.

A veteran like Bhuvneshwar Kumar (8-0-67-0) was swept as well as pulled for sixes by De Kock while Malan would come down the track to hit him through the covers signalling that his early 130 kmph speed, with lack of variations, was simply not working.

For Shardul Thakur (40 not out and 5.1-0-36-0), the quality batting show won't save him if he doesn't curtail the number of bad balls that he is bowling per spell.

And Ravichandran Ashwin (10-1-68-0)'s second coming in white ball cricket might end in a whimper even before it gathers enough wind to sail through.

Yuzvendra Chahal (10-

0-47-1) tried his best but his confidence, after being unceremoniously dumped from the T20 World cup final squad, has been in tatters.

Venkatesh Iyer (22 off 33 balls and 5-0-28-0) is still a work in progress and his fast-tracking in the limited overs set-up is less of pragmatism and more desperation to find a fresh version of injury-plagued Hardik Pandya.

Iyer might develop into a good cricketer but he is a far from finished product and may be some time away from being a success at the international level in all conditions.

As of now, he is not a natural No.6, who can be a finisher like Pandya was in his best days before injury.

Had Pant not played the role of an enforcer to perfection, even a target of 288 wouldn't have been possible. And this was after it seemed India would score close to 315 when he was having a steady stand of 115 with his skipper.

But these dismissals in quick succession saw Proteas make a comeback on a Boland Park strip where stroke-making wasn't an easy proposition for a new batter.



Not surprised at Kohli's decision to quit captaincy: Pietersen

PTI ■ MUSCAT

Former England skipper Kevin Pietersen has suggested that the "harsh" bio-bubble life could be one of the reasons for Virat Kohli's stunning decision to quit Test captaincy and backed Rohit Sharma to lead India in all formats of the game going forward.

Kohli stunned the cricketing world by stepping down from the Test captaincy following India's 1-2 series loss to South Africa. He had relinquished T20 captaincy after the World Cup last year, and was subsequently removed from ODI leadership, leading to a war of words with the BCCI on the sequence of events leading to these developments.

"People who are critical of the modern day sportsmen I think are foolish because these bio-bubbles are very hard to play in," the former England star batsman told PTI in a group interaction on the sidelines of the Legends League Cricket here.

"It will be very unfair to be too harsh, to be critical. Because you have not looked at Virat Kohli.



Kohli needs crowds, he gets going (from it), he is an entertainer.

"I think it's very difficult for his personality to perform to the best of his (Kohli's) abilities (in the bubble)," he reasoned as he reflected on sportspersons' life in a COVID-scared world.

The 33-year-old Kohli held the record for most Test wins by an Indian captain (40) with only Graeme Smith, Ricky Ponting, and Steve Waugh having won more

matches than him.

Pietersen said he was not surprised when Kohli quit captaincy from all formats.

"A lot of players have suffered. It is the greatest job in the world. But when you put them in a bubble, it's certainly not the greatest job because there is no fun," the 41-year-old said.

"I'm actually not surprised that Virat wants just a little bit of a break from that extra pressure because it's

damn difficult playing in these bubbles," he said.

"It's very difficult to judge all International sportsmen, be it premier league footballers or any sportsman around the world, playing in a pandemic," Pietersen said from his perspective, he would not have performed well for two years without any crowd in the stadiums.

"As a batter, I feed on the energy of fans, and there are a lot of these players, be it in football, rugby or tennis."

Vice-captain KL Rahul is leading India in the ongoing ODI series in South Africa with Rohit Sharma injured. Pietersen backed Rohit to captain India across all formats once he regains fitness. The big-hitting batter is expected to be back for the home limited-overs series against the West Indies next month.

"I've always loved 'Hitman' Rohit Sharma. He's a fabulous player, every time he's batting I've got to watch. His captaincy is great for the Mumbai Indians too. So he's probably next in line," Pietersen said.

West Indies U-19 get two COVID-19 replacements



PTI ■ PORT OF SPAIN

The ICC's Event Technical Committee of the U-19 World Cup has approved Kevin Wickham and Nathan Edward as replacements for Onaje Amory and Jaden Carmichael in the West Indies squad.

Wickham and Edward are temporary replacements for Amory and Carmichael who have tested positive for COVID-19 and are undergoing isolation.

"A COVID replacement can be temporary, in that once the player has recovered he would be eligible to return to the squad in position of the player that replaced him," said the ICC in a statement.

The replacement of a player requires the approval of the Event Technical Committee.

Devoid of options, Covid-hit India to take on Uganda

PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

Rattled by a COVID-19 outbreak but through to the last-eight stage, India will have just 12 players to choose from in their final Under-19 World Cup group B clash against Uganda on Saturday as five of their six isolated squad members returned positive for COVID-19 in RT-PCR tests, here.

Only Vasu Vats came out negative but it is likely that the team management will field the same playing XI that thumped Ireland by 174 runs on Wednesday and secured a place in the quarterfinals. Skipper Yash Dhull, his deputy Shaik Rasheed, and Aaradhya Yadav, all of who tested positive in the Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT), have been confirmed positive in the latest RT-PCR reports along with Manav Parakh, who had tested negative in RAT.

Sidharth Yadav had already tested positive in the RT-PCR test before the Ireland game. Fortunately, India already had two victories in pocket and an easy opponent to tackle in the final Group game on Saturday.

Considering that Uganda is not a strong team, India, despite limited options, is expected to steamroll the minnows from the African region and finish on top of Group B. If the team does that, all the infected players, including the worst-affected Dhull, are expected to be back in the reckoning for selection for the January 29 quarterfinal.

National Cricket Academy Head VVS Laxman had lauded the players for the way they responded to the situation ahead of the Ireland game.

"Tremendous show of character and maturity from the U-19 team. With just 11 players available, to go out and express themselves the way they did was phenomenal. Can't say how proud I am of them! The Ireland match is one they will cherish for life," Laxman had tweeted.

The game against Uganda is inconsequential mathematically for India but it would have been ideal if the affected players got some time in the middle to be ready for the knockout stage.

The team would have obviously preferred to have all its best players on the park as it eyes a fifth trophy.

So far, openers Harnoor Singh and Angriksh Raghuvanshi have shown terrific form and are likely to continue in the same vein but the following middle-order batters need to score at better pace.

Stupid to blame IPL for England's Ashes debacle

PTI ■ MUSCAT

Former captain and batting star Kevin Pietersen has said that it's "stupid" to blame the Indian Premier League for England's embarrassing 0-4 loss to Australia in the recently-concluded Ashes series.

England great David Gower was "annoyed" after their Ashes defeat and said current skipper Joe Root had players who were "unavailable" because of the IPL.

Pietersen, an Ashes winner in 2005, 2009, 2010-11 and 2013, laughed at the remark.

"It is stupid. You can't blame the IPL for the demise of Test cricket in England. It's crazy. I've commented on it quite a lot. It's the system, it's the county cricket system, which is poor. So there's no blame," Pietersen, who is representing World Giants in the Legends League Cricket here, said during an interaction here on Thursday.

"It's crazy to blame the Indian Premier League because if you have a look at the Test team, there's only maybe (Ben) Stokes (Jonny) Bairstow and (Jos) Buttler who play the IPL..."

"Hardly any of the Test team players play the IPL... So how can you blame the IPL? You can't blame the IPL. It's crazy," a former captain of the IPL's Delhi franchise added. Off-



the-field, the English cricketers were also mired in a controversy after a report claimed that there was a "drinking culture" in the team with the players and coaches drinking late into the night before police broke up the session. Pietersen said there was no harm in it as the players are affected by the strict bio-bubble restrictions.

"It's stressful. It's incredibly stressful. I've never played in a bubble. I can't imagine but I think it must be very lonely.

"You're not allowed to go to coffee shops. You're not allowed to go down to the restaurants, you're not allowed to do anything. And what else do you do?"

India to open T20 WC campaign against Pakistan

PTI ■ DUBAI

In a blockbuster T20 World Cup opener for India, the team was on Friday drawn to clash with arch-rivals Pakistan on October 23 at the iconic MCG as the International Cricket Council (ICC) released the fixtures.

India had lost to Pakistan for the first time in an ICC tournament when the teams clashed in last year's T20 World Cup in Dubai.

India's second Super 12 match in Group 2 will be on October 27 in Sydney against a qualifier (runner up of Group A) and will be followed by matches against South Africa (October 30 in Perth) and Bangladesh



(Adelaide Oval on November 2). The Men in Blue's last Super 12 match is scheduled for November 6 against the winners of Group B at the MCG. The Super 12s -- round two of the tournament, with two groups -- will begin on October 22 with hosts and defending champions Australia playing New Zealand at the SCG on October 22 in a re-match

of last year's men's T20 World Cup final. The Black Caps will also face England at The Gabba on November 1 in a re-match of their epic semi-final encounter at the 2021 event. In Super 12s, Australia are in Group 1 with world number one England, New Zealand, Afghanistan plus the winner of Group A and the runner-up in Group

B from the first round. The semi-finals will be played at the SCG and Adelaide Oval on November 9 and 10, respectively. It will be the first time the Adelaide Oval will host a World Cup semi-final.

The MCG will host the final, which will be contested under lights on November 13.

In the first round, 2014 champions Sri Lanka and Namibia will play the opening match at Kardinia Park, Geelong on October 16. They'll be joined by two qualifiers in Group A.

Two-time champions West Indies will also start in the first round, joined in Group B.

U19 World Cup Updates

England, Pakistan cruise to quarterfinals, Bangladesh bounce back with win

PTI ■ BASSETTERRE (ST KITTS)

Skipper Tom Prest smashed an unbeaten 154 as former champions England cruised to the Super League quarterfinals of the ICC U-19 World Cup with a thumping 189-run win over the UAE here.

Continuing his incredible run of form, Prest powered England to a mammoth 362 for six after electing to bat.

The English bowlers, led by leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed (4/30), then

put up a disciplined effort to bowl out UAE for 173 in 38.2 overs.

Prest blasted 13 fours and four sixes in his scintillating 119-ball innings, while Jacob Bethell (62), William Luxton (47) and George Thomas (41) also chipped in as the 1998 edition winners England put up an imposing total.

Bethell and Thomas gave England a blistering start, adding 69 runs in 11.5 overs.

The Young Lions' total always looked like it would be a big ask to overhaul and the UAE were reeling



when they were reduced to 61 for five in the 15th over.

Ali Naseer's counter-attacking 54 off 44 balls helped reverse some of the momentum as he put on 59 with Nilansh Keswani for the sixth wicket. But when Nilansh departed, the last four wickets fell for 53 runs as leg-spinner Rehan excelled in his first outing in the West Indies with four for 30 from his allotted ten overs. Pakistan qualify for quarterfinals with win against Afghanistan.

Pakistan too booked their place in the Super League quarterfinals with a 24-run victory over Afghanistan.

Afghanistan did well to restrict Pakistan to a modest 239 for nine in the group C match at Brian Lara stadium in Tarouba, Trinidad.

However, the Afghans got the pace of their innings all wrong in

reply, managing 215 in the designated 50 overs.

The top three soaked up far too many balls in pursuit of the target.

It took them 170 balls to bring up 100 runs with Bilal Sayedi (42 off 81), Nangeyalia Kharote (12 off 32), and Allah Noor (28 off 49) managing strike rates under 58.

Despite the slow start, Afghanistan took the contest deep although their innings was characterised by some wild running between the wickets, with three run outs as well as a number of near misses. Noor Ahmad blasted three sixes to leave his side in with a chance of a shock victory, needing 28 off the last two overs with two wickets in hand.

Reigning champions Bangladesh bounce back against Canada

Bangladesh bounced back from defeat with a dominant eight-wicket triumph over Canada.

Off-spinner SM Meherob and pacer Ripon Mondol snapped four wickets each as Bangladesh bowled out Canada for a lowly 136 in a group A match at Conare Sports Club in Basseterre.

Bangladesh then galloped to the target in 30.1 overs to register their first win of the tournament.

Iftakher Hossain anchored the chase for the defending champions with a well-made 61 off 89 balls while Prantik Nawrose Nabil (33) and Aich Mollah (20 not out) also chipped in.

Earlier, opener Anoop Chima stood amid the ruins with a 117-ball 63 as Canada's decision to bat backfired with only four of their batters reaching double digit figures.