

ANALYSIS 7
FERTILISER DBT STYMIED
BY LOBBIES FOR YEARS**MONEY 8**
RBI TO CONDUCT OVERNIGHT VRR
AUCTION OF RS 75,000 CR**SPORTS 12**
BIG DENT TO KL RAHUL'S LONG-
TERM CAPTAINCY AMBITIONS

HYDERABAD, TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

LAKSHMI MANCHU
VENTURES INTO
METAVERSE, BUYS
'AZUKI' NFT

Page 11

**INDIA'S OMICRON WAVE MAY INTENSIFY
IN COMING WEEKS: EXPERTS**

India's COVID-19 infections, led by the Omicron variant, may see a sharp rise in the coming weeks, some top experts said, noting that the variant was already in community transmission and hospitals were seeing more patients despite a decline in cases in major cities. The country reported 3,06,064 new infections over the last 24 hours, the health ministry said, about an 8% decline from the average daily cases reported in the last four days. Deaths were 439, the lowest in five days. But weekly positivity rates have risen to 17.03% in the week to Jan. 24, from about 0.63% Dec. 27, led by the highly-transmissible Omicron variant.

**WORLD AT 'CRITICAL JUNCTURE' IN
COVID PANDEMIC: WHO**

Geneva: The head of the World Health Organization on Monday urged countries to work together to bring the acute phase of the pandemic to an end, saying that they now have all the tools available to do so. "The COVID-19 pandemic is now entering its third year and we are at a critical juncture," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus at a press conference alongside Germany's development minister Svenja Schulze. "We must work together to bring the acute phase of this pandemic to an end. We cannot let it continue to drag on, lurking between panic and neglect."

**AFTER APARNA YADAV, ANOTHER
SAMAJWADI PARTY LEADER JOINS BJP**

Samajwadi Party MLA Subhash Rai, who represents Jalalpur constituency in the Uttar Pradesh assembly, joined the BJP today. Subhash Rai's move to join the BJP comes days after the high-profile induction of Aparna Yadav, the wife of Akhilesh Yadav's brother. Mr Rai was welcomed into the party by deputy chief ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Dinesh Sharma, and state BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh. Noting that Mr Rai was in the BJP earlier, Mr Singh said his return to the party was "ghar wapsi" which will strengthen it in the region. "There is rule of law in the state."

**BJP TO CONTEST 65 SEATS IN PUNJAB,
ALLY AMARINDER SINGH'S PARTY 37**

The BJP will contest 65 seats in next month's Punjab elections while former Chief Minister Amarinder Singh's new party Punjab Lok Congress has got 37 and their third alliance partner Shiromani Akali Dal (Samyukt) getting 15. Captain Singh on Sunday had announced his party's first list of candidates from 22 constituencies for the February 20 state elections to the 117-member assembly, with ex-captain of Indian hockey team Ajit Pal Singh among the prominent names. We have given a good set of candidates with a clear focus on winnability while ensuring due representation across regions' said Captain Singh.

SENSEX CRASHES 1,545 POINTS
**Investors poorer by
over Rs 19.50 lakh cr**

This is the steepest single-day drop for the indices in about two months. Over the last five sessions, the 30-share SENSEX has tumbled 3,817.4 points or 6.22 per cent. As a result of hectic selling over the five days, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies have eroded by a whopping Rs 19,50,288.05 crore to Rs 2,60,52,149.66 crore.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors have become poorer by a massive Rs 19,50,288.05 crore as equity market sell-offs continued for the fifth day in a row on Monday. The BSE SENSEX plunged 1,545.67 points or 2.62 per cent to settle at 57,491.51 on Monday, while, the NSE Nifty slumped 468.05 points or 2.66 per cent to

settle at 17,149.10. This is the steepest single-day drop for the indices in about two months. Over the last five sessions, the 30-share SENSEX has tumbled 3,817.4 points or 6.22 per cent. As a result of hectic selling over the five days, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies have eroded by a whopping Rs 19,50,288.05 crore to Rs

2,60,52,149.66 crore. On Monday alone, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms tanked by Rs 9,13,651.88 crore. Interestingly on January 17 this year, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies had reached a record high of Rs 280 lakh crore.

2

**Republic Day
celebrations shifted
to Raj Bhavan**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The venue of Republic Day celebrations in Telangana is being changed due to the covid-19 pandemic. The celebrations will now be held at the Raj Bhavan and will be low-key. On Monday, Governor Tamilisai Sounderrajan held a preparatory meeting with Raj Bhavan officials. Considering the pandemic, she asked officials to ensure that precautionary measures are taken during the celebrations. The Hyderabad traffic police have clamped traffic restrictions on Republic Day. Traffic will be allowed on Raj Bhavan Road from Monappa Island (Rajiv Gandhi Statue) to VV Statue Junction on January 26 from 7:30 am. Traffic congestion is expected here from 6 am to 9 am. Traffic will be diverted or stopped at Monappa Island and VV Statue Junction based on the situation. The Panjagutta-Raj Bhavan Quarters Road (Metro Residency) will be closed to traffic from both sides during this period.

**KCR writes to PM opposing
move to modify AIS Rules**

Proposed amendment to AIS Rules will reduce State govts to insignificant entities, Centre's move tantamount to interfering in the functioning of State govts, says CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TS Chief Minister K Chandra sekhar Rao has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi opposing the Centre's move to make amendments to the All India Services (Cadre) Rules, 1954. This is dangerous move which is against the Constitutional framework and the spirit of cooperative federalism. If the proposed amendments are effected by the Government of India, the State governments will be reduced to insignificant entities, he said. "On the face of it, the proposed amendments militate against the federal structure of our Constitution, both in letter and spirit. Further the proposed amendments will also seriously erode the All India Service character of the IAS, IPS and IFS. Therefore, the Telangana govern-



ment strongly opposes the proposed amendments," KCR wrote to the Prime Minister.

Making a case for not altering the Rules, KCR said considering the criticality of functions discharged by AIS officers in the States, the present rule position and practice provided for concurrence of State governments in

matter of deputation of officers to the Central government. The proposed amendments would seek to unilaterally disturb the above position with the Central government assuming powers to take officers on deputation without the concurrence of the officers or the State government concerned. The Chief Minister further said that the proposal was clearly a move to exercise indirect control by the Central government on officers working in the States. It amounts to interfering in the functioning of the State governments, targeted harassment of officers and their demoralization, besides impacting accountability of officers to the State governments. It would also render State governments as helpless entities in matters of AIS Officers.

2

**Hyd won't face water
shortage for 30 years: KTR**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Municipal Administration & Urban Development Minister KTR has laid the foundation stone of the Outer Ring Road Phase-2 Project, which will provide drinking water to Hyderabad's suburbs and gated communities near the Outer Ring Road. Speaking after the function on Monday, KTR said that the KCR government is taking all steps to solve the drinking water problem in the city. In the first phase, GHMC has set up an improved water supply system at a cost of Rs 2,000 crore. He said the government considers Hyderabad as a single entity and that it is giv-

ing priority to solving the drinking water problem in areas coming under ORR. Using the first instalment of Rs 775 crore a drinking water supply system has been set up in the ORR area. In Phase-2, a massive Rs 1,200 crore programme has been launched to provide drinking water to the entire ORR area, he added. He said that in addition to meeting current needs, work is underway to meet water needs till 2051. It is currently supplying about 600 MLD of water to ORR, including the city, and estimates that 1,000 MLD will be required by 2051.

2

Hackers steal Rs 12 cr from Mahesh Bank

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Cybercriminals are on the prowl and this time, in what is regarded as the one of the biggest e-frauds in the city, they have hacked into systems of bank, leave alone an individual's account.

The server of Mahesh Bank Co-operative Bank (Hyderabad) in Hyderabad has been hacked and a lumpsum of Rs. 12 crore reportedly looted. Much before the bank staff could smell it, the swindled money was transferred to about 100 different accounts. The management

of Mahesh Bank has lodged a complaint with the Hyderabad Cybercrime police.

The Police, having registered a case, are investigating how the cybercriminals hacked the bank server. Similarly, the details of the accounts to which the stolen money was transferred are being examined. The technical prowess of the cybercriminals, who normally attack personal bank accounts and make money, in hacking a highly secure bank server has become a cause of concern to investigating authorities.

**Strong demand for classroom teaching**DURGAM SRINIVAS
■ HYDERABAD

Despite rising cases of Covid-19 driven by the Delta and Omicron variants, there is strong demand from various quarters for reopening schools in Telangana and resuming classroom instruction, with several academicians disinclined towards online classes in the larger interests of students.

Besides, with several other state governments keen to reopen schools, pressure is mounting on Telangana to follow suit. The Government of Andhra Pradesh did not shut schools, but classes are being conducted with Covid-related precautions in place. The Maharashtra government reopened schools from Monday amidst Omicron threat. The Karnataka and Delhi governments are also ready to reopen schools.



The Telangana government has extended Sankranti vacation till January 30 in view of the spread of the virus. There has been no clear announcement from the state government, though students' unions and management associations of several schools have been appealing to the government for reopening of education-

**TS to host 19th BioAsia
on Feb 24 virtually**

KTR seeks active participation from stakeholders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The 19th edition of BioAsia, Asia's largest Life-sciences and Health Tech forum and annual flagship event of the Government of Telangana, will be held during February 24th and 25th, 2022 in a virtual format. The theme of this year's edition is 'Future Ready' with focus on exploring the industry's current position and future poten-

tial, new approaches and capabilities required to be ready as the life sciences industry develops its future growth strategy. The future growth will be driven by shift from "volume focus" to "volume + value focus". So, the industry needs to continue building on its strength and at the same time make a giant leap towards innovation.

2

**Be wary of
extortion calls:
Customs officials**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi customs officers have asked people to be aware of instances of cheating by unscrupulous elements in the name of customs officers and report any such matter to authorities concerned. It said instances have come to the notice that general public is being cheated by unscrupulous elements, by first becoming friendly through social media i.e., face book/matrimonial sites/messenger or through some other channel and subsequently promising them to send parcels of various articles to India against payment in the name of customs duties.

2

**TS opposes Medigedda barrage,
Kannepalli pumphouse under GRMB**M L MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has objected to the proposal of the Godavari River Management Board to bring the Medigedda barrage and the Kannepalli pumphouse under its jurisdiction. At the GRMB Sub Committee meeting held here on Monday, Telangana also rejected the suggestion of the AP government's representatives that all components of Telangana irrigation projects be brought under the jurisdiction of GRMB.

The video conference of the GRMB Sub Committee was attended by GRMB Member Secretary B P Pandya, member Kutiyal as well as representatives of both Telugu States. In the previous meeting, Telangana had agreed to bring Peddavagu, common project in Khammam district, under the jurisdiction of GRMB, and submitted all information related to the project to the Board, recalled Telangana Subcommittee member Sridhar Rao Deshpande.

2

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Pausa, Krishna Paksha

Tithi : Saptami, Jan 24 09:44 AM to Jan 25 07:46 AM

Ashtami, Jan 25 07:46 AM to Jan 25 06:25 AM

Nakshatram : Chitra, Jan 24 11:15 AM to Jan 25 10:54 AM

Sreel, Jan 25 10:54 AM to Jan 26 10:05 AM

Rahukalam : 3:16 PM to 4:40 PM

Yamagandam : 9:40 AM to 11:04 AM

Varjyam : 04:19 PM to 05:52 PM

Gulika : 12:28 PM to 1:52 PM

Amritakalam : 01:36 AM to 03:09 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham : 12:06 PM to 12:50 PM

HYDRABAD
WEATHER

Forecast: SUNNY

Temp: 31°

Humidity: 41%

Sunrise: 6:54 AM

Sunset: 6:03 PM

Updated JANUARY 24, 2021 5:00 PM

Hike in guidance values will
hit real estate biz: Experts

3

Bid to sell 14-year-old girl for Rs 3 lakh

City family started negotiation from Rs 5 lakh, police rescued the minor girl

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

On Monday, when the nation celebrated the National Girl Child Day, the police busted a gang of traffickers and rescued a 14-year-old girl from being sold for Rs 3 lakh with the connivance of her family members.

The Rachakonda SHE Team & Balapur Police personnel arrested nine members of a gang of traf-

fickers and rescued the minor girl from their clutches.

Akhil Ahmed (A2) and seven others, all residents of Balapur Mandal in Ranga Reddy District, were mediating the sale of the girl to the prime accused who is from Mumbai. Six years back the prime accused, Syed Altaf Ali, got divorced from his wife and subsequently wanted to get another woman.

Later Akhil Ahmed,

along with the other mediators, contacted Ashira Begum, mother of the victim, and Chand Sulthana, grandmother of the victim, and convinced them to sell the minor girl for Rs 5 lakh.

As per the police, about 3 months back accused Syed Altaf Ali came to Hyderabad to purchase the victim, but the atrocious deal fell through due to differences over the sale consideration.

After a few weeks, the

victim's uncle (her mother's brother) met with an accident. The family was in need of huge money. The girl's mother, due to her poor financial problems, decided to sell her daughter for a lesser price.

Accordingly, the accused persons were negotiating the deal for Rs 3 lakhs. Acting on reliable information, the Balapur Police, along with SHE Team Rachakonda, conducted a raid and caught them in the

act. On 23 January, at 4:30 pm, B.Srikanth, Sub-Inspector of Police, PS Balapur, Rachakonda, received credible information about human trafficking near H.No. 17-182, Bilal Colony, Beside Habeeb Function Hall, Errakunta, Balapur Mandal, Ranga Reddy District. As per the cops, a case has been registered under IPC & Sec. 17 of POCSO & Sec. 3&5 of Immoral Traffic Act.

Kishan Reddy blames State for delay in railway projects

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy has sent a letter to Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao on Monday saying that some railway projects being implemented in Telangana are getting delayed due to lack of cooperation from the State.

Reminding that TRS representatives have been repeatedly accusing the Centre of not doing justice while allocating funds to Telangana for railway projects, Kishan urged the Chief Minister to speed up the State's allocation of funds for the projects and acquire lands before criticising the Centre.

Kishan said that the allocation of funds to Telangana for railway projects has increased nine-fold in the last seven years after Modi took over as Prime Minister.

He said the funds allocated for Telangana in the 2014-15



budget was only Rs 250 crore. But seven years later, the funds increased to Rs 2,420 crore in 2021-22.

The rail network in Telangana has increased by 194 route km, (356 track km) in the last seven years. In fact, the expansion of railways in TS would have been much greater if the State had disbursed its

share of funds in time and completed the acquisition of lands.

There are also some important railway projects on some routes in which the State has not deposited its share of funds. They are the Manoharabad-Kothapalli New Rail Line (151 km), the Akkannapet-Medak New Railway Line (17.20 km), the MMTS Phase-II Project, the Extension to MMTS Phase-II Yadadri (33 km), and the Bhadrachalam Road-Sattupalli New Route (53.2 km).

Kishan said that some railway projects in Telangana which are being fully funded by the Centre faced problems during implementation due to the lack of initiative by the State in resolving land issues.

They are the Kazipet-Balharshah Third Line Project (201 km), and the Kazipet-Vijayawada Third Line Project (219.64 km).

Delivery race among grocery start-ups brings road safety risks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

(Reuters) - Indian grocery start-ups are luring tech-savvy customers promising deliveries within 10 minutes, sparking a boom in "quick commerce," but raising concerns about road safety as bike riders scramble to meet tight delivery deadlines.

Competition is already intense in India's USD 600-billion grocery retailing industry, with players like Amazon, Walmart, Flipkart and Mukesh Ambani's Reliance.

Now SoftBank-backed Blinkit and its rival Zepto are racing to hire staff and open stores in their bid to grab a share of the market by offering delivery in 10 minutes, far lower than the hours, or days competitors take.

Their modus operandi: pack

- Ten-minute delivery times wow online shoppers
- Growth of quick commerce pressures rivals
- Road safety concerns rise in race for faster deliveries
- Experts say businesses could struggle for profits

groceries kept in small warehouses in neighbourhood buildings within a few minutes, and send them by bikers to nearby locations with about seven minutes to spare.

"It's a threat to the big players," says Ashwin Mehta, an IT analyst at India's Ambit Capital. "If people get used to delivery in 10 minutes, companies offering 24-hour deliveries will be forced to reduce their timings."

As competition grows, research firm RedSeer says India's quick commerce sector, worth USD 300 million last

year, will swell 10 to 15 times to touch USD 5 billion by 2025. Blinkit and Zepto, started by two 19-year-old Stanford dropouts, have caught consumers' fancy, satisfying their cravings for food and impulsive shopping, as well as urgent needs for daily goods.

"This is very convenient, it has made a lifestyle change," said Sharmistha Lahiri, who now turns to Blinkit for all things from tomatoes for soup to chocolate icing for a cake.

The 75-year-old, who lives in Gurugram was a keen user of Amazon and Indian conglomerate

Tata's online grocer BigBasket, but appreciates Blinkit's rapid response.

The unbeatable convenience of rapid deliveries is evident in Europe and the United States, where companies such as Turkey's Getir and Germany's Gorillas are expanding fast, but India's accident-prone roads make quick commerce dangerous.

"Ten minutes is very less," said former Road Secretary Vijay Chhibber. "If there was a (road safety) regulator, it would have said this can't be a company's unique selling point."

Blinkit and Zepto did not respond to queries from Reuters.

RISKY ROADS, DRIVERS' WOES

Even in cities, most roads are riddled with potholes, while cattle or other animals straying

into traffic present a frequent challenge for motorists, who often violate basic rules.

Last year, the World Bank said India had a death every four minutes on its roads. Crashes kill about 1,50,000 people every year.

All the 13 drivers of Blinkit and Zepto whom Reuters interviewed in Mumbai, New Delhi and Gurugram said they faced pressure to meet delivery deadlines, which often led to speeding as they fear being rebuked by store managers.

"We get five to six minutes and I fear for my life," said one Blinkit driver, who sought anonymity. In August, Blinkit's chief executive said on Twitter that riders were not penalised and could deliver "at their own pace and rhythm," as godowns are always near destination sites.

Amazon faces flak on social media for allegedly insulting Indian flag

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amazon on Monday faced the ire of a section of Indian social media users over merchandising some products, including apparel and food items, that feature images of the Indian flag, with some saying that using the tricolour in such a way was an insult and a violation of the country's flag code.

Netizens shared pictures of items like apparel, cups, keychains and chocolates that feature images or imprint of the tricolour on Amazon.in website, and sought a ban on these items. Hashtags like #AmazonInsultsNationalFlag were trending on Twitter. Amazon did not respond to emailed queries seeking comments. Some social media

users noted that using the tricolour on products is against the Flag Code Of India, 2002.

A section of the social media users said such usage is an insult to the national flag while others pointed out that it was a cheap method of increasing sales and that this will not increase the patriotism of Indian citizens.

"The flag shall not be used as a portion of costume or uniform of any description. It shall not be embroidered or printed upon cushions, handkerchiefs, napkins or boxes," as per the Code. "This is not the first time that Amazon is facing such a backlash. In 2017, Amazon was forced to remove doormats depicting Indian flag that were listed on its Canadian website after a strong protest by India.

Sanjay asks Govt to issue notifications to hire teachers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TS government must fill the 44,000 vacant posts of teachers immediately, BJP's Telangana chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar said here on Monday.

He alleged that the State's education system is getting weakened due to the non-filling of teacher posts and that it has been proved by the 18th rank Telangana got in the field of education in national ranking. He alleged that there were seven lakh unemployed people having BEd, DEEd, Pandit training, and PET degrees and are desperately waiting for teaching jobs.

He demanded that the government should release job notifications for teachers and protect the State's education



sector on a war footing.

In a statement, Sanjay alleged that the government has not conducted TET examinations for five years. Sanjay, who had darshan at the Vemulawada Rajanna Temple, said the devotees were facing problems at the

temple. He told the media that he was concerned that Telangana was becoming an atheists' state.

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao had assured that he will release Rs 200 crore for development of the Vemulawada Rajanna Temple. Does KCR have the time to review the development of Vemulawada Temple?

Sanjay said that KCR was offending the deity Vemulawada Rajanna and that he will face its consequences.

Sanjay asked KCR to explain why he hadn't made arrangements although the Medaram Jatara was approaching. He said that on Sunday itself around a lakh people visited Medaram Sammakka Saralamma.

Congress asks Govt to stop hiding Covid deaths, hike ex gratia

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress has demanded that the Telangana government should pay an ex-gratia of Rs 50,000 to families who lost their loved ones to Covid-19 as per directions of the Supreme Court.

Hyderabad City Congress Committee (HCCC) Minorities Department Chairman Sameer Waliullah reiterated the allegation that the TS Government was hiding the actual number of covid-19 deaths to avoid paying compensation.

Referring to the data filed by the TS government in Supreme Court, he said the covid compensation claims received by the State were almost seven times higher than the official death count.

"As against 3,993 deaths reported by the government it received claims from 28,969 families. There is a huge gap of 24,976 deaths. Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao must

seek an explanation from the Health Department for this," he demanded in a statement.

Sameer said that of the 28,969 claims, compensation has been paid only to 12,148 families. This information was furnished by the Government in Supreme Court and therefore it cannot be denied.

The government must furnish reasons for rejecting the claims of the remaining 16,821 families, he said. "Telangana has an annual budget of nearly Rs 2 lakh crore. The government will need just Rs 84.10 crore to approve all the claims received so far. In fact, it should increase the ex-gratia to Rs one lakh per family by allocating Rs 500 crore in the budget," he said.

Sameer also demanded that the Government should update its daily media bulletin with correct death figures which shows the toll as 4,072 (as on January 23).

"The government informed the Supreme Court that it

received 28,969 claims for compensation for covid deaths. It has already paid compensation to 12,148 families. It should update the death figure by matching it at least with the figure of families to whom compensation has been paid," he said.

The Congress leader said the TRS government has been mismanaging the Covid-19 pandemic right from the beginning.

"KCR first denied the severity of coronavirus and later imposed an unplanned lockdown. It miserably failed to implement the Test, Trace and Treatment strategy during all three waves. Even now, it has adopted a casual approach in tackling the Omicron wave by trying to manage it through fever surveys. Experts have warned of an increase in covid-19 cases in the next two weeks. Therefore, the government should take concrete steps to prevent virus transmission," he said.

KCR writes to PM...

Continued from page 1

The Parliament enacted the All India Services Act, 1951 under the provisions of Article 312 of the Constitution and the Government of India has made various Rules under the said Act. But the Telangana State would oppose the coloured exercise of powers vested with the Government of India to amend IAS/IPS/IFS Cadre Rules 1954 to the detriment of the interest of the State and watering down the federal polity of the country, he said.

The proposed amendment

to the All India Services Cadre Rules would tantamount to amending the Constitution of India relating to the Centre-State relations. Instead of such backdoor method of amending the AIS Rules, the Government of India should muster courage to get the provisions amended by Parliament.

The Constitution makers had the foresight to ensure that the views of the States be taken if any Constitutional amendment was proposed, which would affect the interests of the States (Article 368(2)). "But by this proposed amendment, GoI is

violating the spirit of the Constitution, which is highly objectionable," he said.

The proposal showed scant regard to the administrative exigencies and requirements of the States. The proposed amendments would threaten the spirit of mutual adjustment and accommodation between States and Central governments in the matter of shared All India Services and will further strain the Centre-State relationship, he said.

The present provisions of AIS Cadre Rules were adequate to ensure harmonious and balanced deployment of officers, he emphasised.

'Observe Damodaram birth centenary'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress leaders have demanded that the governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh should observe the centenary birth anniversary of the former united AP chief minister, the late Damodaram Sanjeevaiah. They said that they will organise celebrations in case the governments failed to do so. Damodaram Sanjeevaiah Memorial Trust members and Congress leaders V. Hanumantha Rao, Ponnala Laxmaiah, SA Sampath Kumar, D. Sridhar Babu, Shambani Chandrasekhar, Gaddam Vinod, Harsha Kumar, M. Kodanda Reddy, Kamalakar Rao, Sanjeev

Rao, and senior journalist K. Ramachandra Murthy held a meeting on Monday. Speaking on the occasion, Hanumantha Rao alleged that today people are entering politics only to make money. He urged people not to enter politics to earn money but to serve the people. He said that Sanjeevaiah was a sincere politician and hence both state governments must observe his birth centenary. He asked politicians to take Sanjeevaiah as their role model. Sanjeevaiah did not have even a house. He asked KCR to observe Sanjeevaiah's birth centenary as he had failed to make a Dalit the chief minister of the State.

Strong demand for classroom...

Continued from page 1

Teachers are also finding it difficult to complete even the reduced syllabus in the two-month window. They say that students also would find it difficult to follow compacted lessons. Therefore, the state government has been urged to stretch the academic year. To bridge the loss caused due to online classes, classroom teaching is essential, say academicians. Studies suggest that online classes have resulted in several health complications among students like headaches, eye pain and so on. In the backdrop of all these developments, it is concluded that it would be better to run classes by putting in place restrictions related to Covid in schools.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
Dressed/With Skin	₹191
Without Skin	₹211
Broiler at Farm	₹102
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	415
VIJAYAWADA	437
VISAKHAPATNAM	435
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.15

Investors poorer by over Rs 19.50 lakh cr...

Continued from page 1

"Fears of higher-than-expected rate tightening by the Fed and the heightened tensions on the Russia-Ukraine border had created the perfect storm that spooked the markets. FPIs have been stepping up their sales during the last several day's," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

In Monday's trade, Tata Steel was the biggest drag among the 30-share frontline companies pack, falling 5.98

per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, Titan, Reliance Industries and HCL Tech.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap index declined by 4.43 per cent and midcap index tanked 3.82 per cent.

"Markets have been correcting in the last few days on the back of fears of interest rate hikes across the developed economies plus the ongoing tapering of stimulus. Though the Covid numbers are still something to ponder on, but Omicron variant not being as severe has made market

believe that the days of easy liquidity seem to be nearing an end," Devang Mehta, Head - Equity Advisory, Centrum Wealth, said.

Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said, "Markets plunged sharply lower and lost nearly 3 per cent pressurised by weak global cues. We expect volatility to remain high as investors await the Fed meet outcome. Moreover, pre-budget jitters, earnings announcements and upcoming monthly expiry would further add to the choppiness."

Komatireddy too joins...

Continued from page 1

Recently, Uttam Kumar Reddy too said that early elections would certainly come in the State. Uttam has been saying again and again that there would be early elections in the State.

Uttam was busy with the digital membership drive since it was launched. He has been asking cadres to get ready for early elections by participating in the digital membership seriously.

Reacting to Uttam's statement, Power Minister G. Jagdeesh Reddy said that there

would be no early elections in the State. He said Congress leaders were daydreaming about early elections. But Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said on Monday that early elections may take place in the State. "Party workers have to be ready for early elections. I will make the high command give tickets to locals who work for the party. There is no chance for non-locals," he said. He also made it clear that there is no chance for group politics in Nakrekal. He asked party leaders to speed up the Congress digital membership drive.

TS opposes Medigedda barrage, Kannepalli...

Continued from page 1

However, when the Board discussed the handing over notes related to the Medigedda barrage, Kannepalli pump house to bring them under the GRMB, Deshpande said there was no need to bring other projects under the GRMB jurisdiction. Telangana State has already written to the GRMB and the Jal Shakti Ministry requesting them to remove the five projects mentioned in Schedule II of the gazette notification and also to move the components of some projects

from Schedule II to Schedule III. However, there was no response so far, he said. Thus, under the present circumstances, there was no need to discuss about Medigedda and Kannepalli pumphouse projects' inclusion under GRMB, Telangana members said. Telangana officials also said the Board should first discuss the proposals for inclusion of irrigation projects under GRMB in the meeting. The visit to the projects and preparation of handing over notes should be taken up only after the Board gave its permission. The Sub

Committee also discussed inclusion of Venkatanagaram pumping house in Andhra Pradesh under the GRMB. The AP representatives said during the discussion that components of all Telangana projects be brought under the GRMB. However, Telangana rejected the suggestion as they were all taken up by the combined state of Andhra Pradesh and they would supply water only to ayacut in Telangana State. As per the Godavari Award Clause IV, States have the right to transfer their share of Godavari water anywhere.

Hyd won't face water shortage...

Continued from page 1

He said that a new line is being constructed at a cost of Rs 1,400 crore to take water from the Krishna River at Sunkisala and supply it to the city. He said the Telangana government is spending Rs 6,000 crore on Hyderabad's drinking water projects after the TRS came to power. Never before has there been such a huge allocation of funds, he added. KTR recalled that he used to stay in Erramanzil during his school days and on his way to school in Abids via Khairatabad, he often held dharmas with empty bins at the water board office. He said the situation is similar every summer. He said that when the KCR government came it started providing abundant drinking water to the city. The minister said that it was KCR's idea that Hyderabad should not have drinking water problems in

future and that we should not have a water crisis like Chennai. He said the Kaleswaram lift irrigation project would also provide drinking water to the city.

He said the idea was to supply water to the city from Kondapochamma Sagar and Mallannasagar and make sure that there is no water shortage in the city by diverting water to Gandipet. He said the long-pending Alkapur water problem would now be resolved and works would be completed within a year. Education Minister Sabita Indrareddy said that KCR thinks that development should meet the needs of current as well as future populations. She said that in the past it was difficult to transport water from the GHMC area to the suburbs of Hyderabad, but now the government has set up a special system to provide water to areas in the ORR area.



SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION

COMPANY OF T.S. LTD

TENDER NOTICE NO. 06/2021-22

Tender Specification No : W22/2021-22. Extension of supply to 773No.s 3-Ph of each 90W Domestic loads to M/s Vasan Developers LLP in Channarayana under capital works. W23/2021-22, interlinking of 11KV V- Guard feeder in Saravali Division under T&C works. W24/2021-22, Shifting of OTTs and 11KV LT line along with poles for execution of road widening works from India postala colony to B H Reddy Nagar Bus stop in Channarayana Division (Reserved for SC), and W25/2021-22, Shifting of 1 Nos. 1MVA Tower on Double circuit line (JRVY Arripetpet and Nallamangudi feeder) at near 3311HV Nagar S/S as per the request of M/s Indian Oil Corporation under capital contribution works in Saravali Division of Saravali Nagar Circle. Please visit www.sasidharspower.co.in, Contact Ph.No : 961030846. Sd/- Superintending Engineer/Elect, Op/Saravali Nagar Circle, Hyd.



'Timing of my reentry will be decided by Cong high command'

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

The entry of TRS MP D Srinivas into the Congress has once again been postponed.

The Congress high command had decided to readmit Srinivas on January 24 in the presence of AICC President Sonia Gandhi.

But due to the sudden illness of Telangana Congress affairs in-charge Manickam Tagore, the admission of Srinivas into the Congress was put off.

Speaking to 'The Pioneer', Srinivas said the Congress high command has to decide when he should join the party. He said the Congress high command may decide the date of his readmission into the party during the next Parliament session.

Srinivas said he had decided to join the Congress as he



D Srinivas

The Rajya Sabha term of Srinivas will end in June this year. Even though Srinivas is a TRS MP he has kept away from the party meetings.

wanted peace in the last leg of his political career. Srinivas clarified that he did not want any post in the Congress.

The Rajya Sabha term of Srinivas will end in June this year. Even though Srinivas is a TRS MP he had kept away from the party meetings and party programmes.

AICC President Sonia

Gandhi has great regard for Srinivas as it was under his leadership, the Congress came to power twice in united Andhra Pradesh, and both times Y S Rajasekhara Reddy became the Chief Minister.

In fact, Sonia Gandhi wanted to make Srinivas the Chief Minister when the Congress retained power in the 2009

Assembly elections. But due to unavoidable circumstances, the Congress high command had decided to continue Rajasekhara Reddy as the Chief Minister. At that time, Sonia herself had said that injustice was done to Srinivas. Meanwhile, there are strong speculations that the Congress high command may make Srinivas the TPCC president to set right things. According to sources, Sonia Gandhi believes that if Srinivas is made the TPCC President, Congress will come to power in Telangana State again. There are differences among senior Telangana Congress leaders about TPCC President Revanth Reddy. The high command is of the opinion that once Srinivas is made the TPCC president, all party leaders will fight unitedly against the TRS.

Politician sentenced to life for murder

PNS ■ ADILABAD

Special Fast Track Court judge T Sriniva Rao on Monday sentenced a politician, named Farooq Ahmed, to undergo life imprisonment for killing a person and injuring two others. He killed Syed Zameer and injured two others following a dispute with them. The court also sentenced him to seven years rigorous imprisonment for injuring two persons under relevant IPC sections. According to prosecution, Farooq Ahmed on December 18, 2020 opened fire with his revolver following a dispute with some persons over playing cricket. Three persons were injured in the incident. Syed Zameer (62) died later while undergoing treatment.

Minister asks women in trouble to approach Sakhi Bhavan

Minister Sathyavathi Rathode inaugurates Sakhi Bhavan built at a cost of Rs 49 lakh

PNS ■ MULUGU

Tribal, Women & Child Welfare Minister Sathyavathi Rathode inaugurated a new building for Sakhi in Mulugu on Monday. The Sakhi building was constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 49 lakh.

Addressing a meeting on the occasion, the Minister said that the building has rooms for emergency rehabilitation of women who are in trouble. The women in trouble will also be provided protection from police, free legal and medical services and other facilities, she said. The Minister also distributed 10 transport vehicles to the beneficiaries among tribals under the Rural Transportation Scheme being implemented by the Tribal Welfare Department of the state government. The 10 transport vehicles are valued at Rs 1 crore. On the occasion, she



Minister for Woman and Child Welfare Sathyavathi Rathode opening Sakhi Bhavan in Mulugu on Monday

inaugurated a special poster brought out to mark the Girl Child Protection Day. In this connection, she also launched helpline 181 for women. The Minister also distributed sarees to Anganwadi workers and inspected R & B GuestHouse works progressing there. Later, the Minister laid the foundation stone for a road connecting Chhalwai

Cross Road to Laknavaram. The road will be laid at a cost of Rs 1.5 crore. MP Maloth Kavitha, Collector S Krishna Aditya, ZP Chairperson Kusuma Jagadeeswar, APO Vasantha Rao, EE Hemalatha, District Social Welfare Officer Premalatha, ZP CEO Prasuna, ZPTCs, MPP, MPTC, and officials were present.



Karimnagar Additional Collector Garima Agrwal unveiling posters on rights of girl child on National Girl Child Day in Karimnagar

Posters unveiled on National Girl Child Day

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Garima Agrwal on Monday unveiled posters brought out by the ChildLine India, Karimnagar unit, on the rights of the girl child on the occasion of National Girl Child Day. Speaking on the occasion, the Additional Collector urged the organisers to paste the posters in all schools, police stations and

Anganwadi centres to create awareness on the rights of the girl child. She sought information on the function of the ChildLine 1098 and the calls it was receiving daily. She stressed the need to give a wide publicity to the ChildLine. She also urged the officials to take forward the Operation Smile programme. The officials told the Additional Collector that a total 45 persons were rescued

so far under the Operation Smile programme. They also said cases were booked against 10 kiln owners. District Child Protection Commission Chairperson Dhanalakshmi, District Welfare officer Padmavathi, ChildLine district coordinator Sampath, District Child Protection Committee members R Kalinga Sekhar and Vijay and others were present.

Korukanti Chander warns Centre against privatisation of SCCL

PNS ■ RAMAGUNDAM

Ramagundam MLA Korukanti Chander has accused the BJP Government at the Centre of hatching a conspiracy to dispose of the SCCL and threatened to launch an agitation to expose the conspiracy of the Centre. Addressing media at Telangana Bhavan here on Monday, Korukanti Chander, who earlier had a meeting with Minister Koppula Eswar

and MLAs from the Coal Belt region alleged that the Centre is out to auction four coal blocks of the profit-making

SCCL claims that it has been sustaining losses. He said that the SCCL achieved progress under the leadership of CM K Chandrasekhara Rao. Therefore, he threatened to launch an agitation with the help of the SCCL workers against the move to privatise the SCCL.



Ramagundam MLA Korukanti Chander at a media conference in Ramagundam on Monday

Dropping of hymn from parade decried

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Telangana Christian Editors Association vice-president M R Sunder Paul on Monday criticised the Union government's decision to drop "Abide With Me" hymns from this year's Beating Retreat ceremony. He, in a statement, came down heavily on the BJP government for its decision to drop the hymn and it showed the mean mindedness. "Abide With Me" is Mahatma Gandhi's favourite hymn. It continued to be part of the ceremony since 1950, he said.

Collector extends greetings on National Girl Child Day

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

District Collector N Venkat Rao on Monday extended wishes on the National Girl Child Day. In a message on the occasion, the Collector said the girl children should not be considered as a burden on the family. He inaugurated the signature campaign launched

by the District Welfare Department. He appealed to parents and people to help progress of girl child in all aspects, such as education and others. The girls are very much part of the society. 'Our culture gives importance to women, he said. He said the women have same abilities as men in all fields.



Mahabubnagar District Collector N Venkat Rao at the National Girl Child Day celebrations in Mahabubnagar on Monday

Six tractors seized for illegal transportation of sand

PNS ■ NAGAR KURNOOL

The forest officials conducted raids and seized six tractors from Chintapally Vagu in Kollapur forest range. The tractors were transporting sand illegally. On receiving information that sand was being transported illegally, the forest officials laid a trap and were waiting at Molachintapally and seized the tractors. The sand was being transported to Kollapur. The tractors were seized and cases were registered for illegal transportation of sand, said Forest official Sarath Chandra. Action will be taken as per law against those who try to smuggle sand or forest products, he said.

KCR went back on promise to adopt Nalgonda: MP

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Congress Lok Sabha member Komatireddy Venkat Reddy on Monday expressed unhappiness over the government failing to launch developmental activities in the Nalgonda district. Speaking to reporters here, Venkat Reddy regretted that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao went back on his promise to adopt Nalgonda. The people in Nalgonda Assembly constituency had believed that KCR would keep his promise and voted for the TRS.

If the government allotted Rs 50 crores, the Brahmanavillemla project would be completed. It would irrigate 60,000 acres when the project was completed, he said. He demanded that com-



Lok Sabha member Komatireddy Venkat Reddy along with Congress leaders at the District Collectorate in Nalgonda on Monday

pensation be given to oustees on a par with the one given to oustees in Siddipet. He said the government had allotted funds for NG College only after he pledged financial aid for constructing a building. The MP criticised the govern-

ment for bringing a retired municipal commissioner to Nalgonda. He said the government had failed to inform the local MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy what was happening in his constituency.

Speed up land acquisition for Kalwakurthi project

Credit amount to the farmers' accounts Collector UdayKumar

PNS ■ NAGAR KURNOOL

The Revenue officials have been directed to collect information of bank accounts of farmers, who are willing to surrender their lands for Kalwakurthi lift irrigation scheme. It is intended to credit the compensation for the land to be surrendered to the farmers' bank accounts, said District Collector P Uday Kumar here on Monday.

While reviewing the progress of land acquisition for the lift irrigation project and Dharani portal with the Revenue Divisional officers (RDOs) here, the Collector asked the officials to speed up land acquisition to complete the pending works on the project. He also directed the RDOs to upload the bills relating to Dindi balancing reservoir. The people in the villages



Nagarkurnool District Collector at a review meeting in Nagarkurnool on Monday

which are likely to be submerged should be evacuated to places of rehabilitation, he said.

Uday Kumar suggested to the RDOs that they discuss with the Tahsildars and ensure that the complaints regard-

ing the succession and court cases are solved speedily. He said the administration would hold a review meeting on the functioning of the Dharani portal and the complaints received should be solved within one week. Additional

District Collector Manu Chowdary, RDOs Nagalakshmi, Hanuma Nayak, Pandu Nayak and Rajesh Kumar, AO Srinivasulu and Land Acquisition Superintendent Krishnamachary were present.

Cops greet CP S Chandrasekhar Reddy on his promotion as IG

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLY

Police officials under Ramagundam Police Commissionerate congratulated Police Commissioner S Chandrasekhar Reddy has been promoted to Inspector General. On the occasion, they presented a flower bouquet to the new IG. AR-ACP Sunder Rao, Traffic ACP Balaraj, Special Branch Inspectors Vidyasagar, Satyanarayana, SI Rajamouli, Traffic Inspector Praveen Kumar, Godavarikhani One Town Inspectors Ramesh Babu and Rajkumar, Task Force Inspector Mahender, RI Madhukar, Sridhar,



Police officers greeting CP Chandrasekhar Reddy on being promoted as IGP, in Peddapally on Monday

Superintendent Sandeep, CC Sravan Kumar, Manoj, Ramagundam Police officials Association president Borlakunta Pochalingam and others who congratulated CP S Chandrasekhar Reddy on his promotion as IGP.

TELANGANA SOCIAL WELFARE RESIDENTIAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
SOCIETY, HYDERABAD Damodaram Sanjeeviah Samikshana Bhavan
Complex, Masab Tank, Hyderabad — 500028.
Phone Nos. 23391996, Fax No.23311319

Rc.No. Gen/Tenders/2110/2021

Dated:21.01.2022

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed Tenders are invited from the Manufacturers / Distributors / Authorized dealers for the following items for Procurement of AMC (Annual maintenance contract) for CC-Cameras of all 269 TSWR Institutions, through open tender method.

Sl. No.	Name of the tender	Closing date and time	Opening of sealed tenders date and time
1	Procurement of AMC (Annual maintenance contract) for CC-Cameras of all 269 TSWR Institutions	5-3-2022, 3.00 P.M.	5-3-2022, 4.00 P.M.

Tender schedules along with the Terms and Conditions can be obtained from the Office of the Secretary, TSWRE Society, D88 13thaven, Masab Tank, Hyderabad — 500028 on all working days between 11.00 a.m. to 5.00 P.M. from 27-2-2022 onwards on payment of Rs. 5,000/- (Rupees Five thousand only) by way of Demand Draft obtained in favour of the Secretary, TSWRE Society, Hyderabad.

DPR RD No: 2552/PP/CL/AG/CM/NOV/17/0021-22, Dtd: 24-01-2022

Sd/- D. Ronald rose, Secretary

Exercise to revise land guidance values over, new rates from Feb 1

MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

The Stamps and Registration Department has completed the exercise to revise the market values of agricultural and non-agricultural lands in the State.

The exercise held under the supervision of Stamps and Registration Inspector General Seshadri, senior officials and district Registrars during the last four days was completed on Sunday.

The new market values of lands, apartments and open plots to be enforced in areas coming under the 141 Sub Registrar offices in the 33 districts of the State were finalised.

The new values would be examined by the Chief Minister, Ministers and the Chief Secretary. After that they will send the hiked market values to District Committees which will give approvals in two or three days.

The approval of the revised values by the District Committees is expected to be just a formality as the hiked market values were decided at

The new values would be examined by the Chief Minister, Ministers and the Chief Secretary. After that they will send the hiked market values to District Committees which will give approvals in two or three days.

the State office.

The next step will be to make changes in the CARD software in line with the new market values.

The department may stop registrations for one or two days to facilitate software updating.

Sources said that registrations may be stopped on January 31.

It is expected that people

may be keen to complete registration before the new market values take effect from February 1.

It is believed that the market values of agricultural lands were hiked by 50 per cent, open plots by 35 to 40 per cent, and apartments by 25 to 40 per cent. In Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy and Medchal-Malkajigiri districts the values of all categories of lands, plots and apartments have been increased by 40 to 50 per cent.

A similar hike has been made in Sangareddy, Bhongir, Shadnagar and in the areas coming under the jurisdictions of Sub Registrar offices close to Hyderabad city.

The hike in the market values of real estate in Karimnagar, Khammam and Nizamabad Municipal Corporations and in new areas like Mancherial, Nalgonda, Miryalaguda, Mahbubnagar, and Suryapeta and in other areas where the real estate business is booming was especially considered.

The authorities have also taken into account agricultural lands that were being converted into real estate and have fixed new market values.

'State govt takes all measures to tackle Covid-19'

PNS ■ WARANGAL

The State government has taken all measures to tackle Covid-19 in the State, said Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao on Monday.

Reviewing the progress of door-to-door fever survey and the progress of survey on crop loss due to unseasonal rains and hailstorm at the Jangaon District Collectorate, the Minister appreciated the measures taken by the administrations in erstwhile Warangal and Jangaon districts in meeting challenge posed by coronavirus. He said there was no need for panic over the Covid-19. Though the Omicron was fast-surging one, the variant was less severe, he said. In Jangaon district, just three persons were admitted to government hospitals with Covid-19 symptoms. It showed that there was no need for panic over the virus.

The district recorded 1,166 active cases so far, he said. There are 100 isolation beds, 154 oxygen beds and 15 ICU beds in the district.

Minister stresses on Covid prevention in Medaram works

PNS ■ MULUGU

Woman and Child Welfare Minister Satyavathi Rathod has said that the footfalls of pilgrims visiting Medaram – venue of the biggest tribal festival to be held in the state from Feb 16 to 19 – has been increasing for the past two weeks.

As the festival is drawing nearer, implementation of development works with a heavy emphasis on prevention of the Covid-19 is going on at jet speed. In view of the Covid-19, the administrative machinery has paid special attention to sanitation, public health. More and more health staff would be deployed, masks and sanitisers will be kept ready at vantage places, vaccination centres and isolation rooms are being set up at the venue. Fogging operations will be undertaken daily at least twice.

She inspected several works for the festival inspected roads being laid and participated in a string of development works. She laid the foundation stone for some of the works and inaugurated some other works at the

venue here on Monday.

Later speaking to the media, she said that permanent construction activity would be taken up at a cost of Rs 2 crore for holding other minor festivals in the undivided Warangal district. Similarly, development works would be implemented on a permanent basis at the venue with Rs 75 crore released by Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao for holding the Medaram festival. The development works are going on at a brisk pace. All along 2.5 km-long Jampanna Vagu, dressing changing rooms, bathrooms, and showers are being provided. All roads leading to the Sammakka and Sarakka temple will be made CC roads at a cost of Rs 13 crore, she said adding that the works would be through by Jan 31. She said that the endowments department would build a permanent guest house at a cost of Rs 10 crore. Sulabh Complex works taken up at a cost of Rs 6 crore by the tribal welfare department have been completed. The Panchayat Raj department was given Rs 4 crore for the execution of various works.

INDIA CORNER

ED attaches assets of businessman in Tamil Nadu cheating case

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday said it has attached assets worth Rs 69.14 crore of a Tamil Nadu-based businessman as part of a money laundering probe linked to an alleged cheating case against him and his family. A provisional order for attachment of properties of Dhanraj Kochar and his family has been issued under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The ED case was filed on the basis of a scheduled offence registered earlier by the Chennai Police against the businessman on charges of cheating and criminal conspiracy involving more than Rs 100 crore. The federal agency had conducted raids at the premises of the businessman in September last year. The case pertains to one M S Hameed, Abdul Rawoof and Kochar who were the directors of a real estate company called D R Foundations & Estates Private Limited.



MP: Indore lab detects 21 Covid cases caused by Omicron sub-lineage BA.2

Twenty-one COVID-19 cases caused by the Omicron variant's sub-lineage known as BA.2 have been found in tests conducted over the past 18 days in the laboratory of a private medical institute in Madhya Pradesh's Indore. Those infected with this sub-lineage of Omicron variant include six children, an official from the private facility said on Monday. "Since January 6, a total of 21 cases of BA.2 sub-lineage of the Omicron variant have been found during tests conducted in our Molecular Virology Diagnostic and Research Lab, which is recognized by the Centre," Vinod Bhandari, founder chairman of Sri Aurobindo Institute of Medical Sciences (SAIMS) here told PTI. "Lung involvement ranging from 1 per cent to 50 per cent was observed in six out of 21 patients of this Omicron sub-lineage. Three patients are still hospitalized, while 18 have been discharged.



'Immense priority accorded to empowering girl child in development initiatives of Govt'

On the occasion of National Girl Child Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said immense priority is accorded to empowering the girl child in every development initiative undertaken by his government, and asserted that the focus is on ensuring dignity as well as opportunities to her. India celebrates the National Girl Child Day, an initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, every year on January 24 "National Girl Child Day is an occasion to reiterate our commitment and further strengthen ongoing efforts to empower the girl child," Prime Minister Modi said. "It is also a day to celebrate the exemplary accomplishments of the girl child in different fields," he said in a tweet. "In every development initiative undertaken by our Government, we accord immense priority to empowering the girl child and strengthening our Nari Shakti," Modi said.



About 135 militants waiting to infiltrate into Kashmir: IG BSF

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

About 135 militants are present at launch pads across the border and are waiting to infiltrate into India, BSF Inspector General, Kashmir, Raja Babu Singh said on Monday.

However, he asserted that the overall situation at the Line of Control (LoC) is "peaceful" and said the number of infiltration bids was lesser in 2021 in comparison to previous years. "The overall scenario along the LoC is peaceful. Since the signing of the ceasefire agreement, there has been a general



peace all along the LoC in the Kashmir frontier," the Border Security Force (BSF) officer said while speaking to reporters here.

Giving details on infiltration bids, he said in 2021, 58 attempts were made, in which five terror-

ists were killed, 21 returned and one surrendered.

"There have been reports that 31 infiltrated in 2021, 130 in 2019, and 36 in 2020," the inspector general (IG) said.

During 2021, the BSF successfully recovered or seized three AK-47 rifles, six nine-mm pistols, 1,071 ammunitions, 20 hand grenades, two IEDs and 17.3 kg of heroin -- worth Rs 88 crore -- in different operational incidents, he said.

The IG BSF said there are reports that "104 to 135 terrorists" are present at different launch pads across the LoC and

waiting to infiltrate.

"There are also reports that some guides have gone from here and crossed the LoC to that side. So, we need to monitor them as and when they return. Their families need to be monitored," he said. Singh said there is a lot of synergy between the army and the BSF.

"The more we conduct area dominations, keep watch and surveillance, the more difficult it will be for them to infiltrate. We are putting in all-out efforts so that no infiltration is allowed, that zero infiltration happens," he said.



Under-bridge in Gujarat's Rajkot named after Gen Bipin

PNS ■ RAJKOT

The Gujarat government on Monday named an under-bridge in Rajkot after General Bipin Rawat to honour the country's first Chief of Defence Staff who died in a chopper crash in December. Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel inaugurated the under-bridge located in Laxmi Nagar area virtually.

"In recent times, the head of all three wings of the armed forces, CDS General Bipin Rawat, lost his life in a tragedy. This bridge should be named CDS General Bipin Rawat Bridge," Patel said. Earlier, Rajkot Mayor Pradeep Dav had asked the CM to suggest a name for the structure, which was built at a cost of Rs 48 crore.

Patel said his government was committed to spending money to build infrastructure in the state, and listed various development work undertaken in Rajkot. General Rawat died on December 8 when his military helicopter crashed near Coonoor in Nilgiris district in Tamil Nadu. All 14 on board, including the general's wife, perished in the incident.



BSF on high alert along IB following inputs of threat

PNS ■ JAMMU

BSF troops deployed on the India-Pakistan border in Jammu and Kashmir have been put on high alert following a threat of anti-social elements creating trouble on Republic Day, the force's Inspector General for Jammu DK Bora said on Monday. He also said that the Border Security Force (BSF) has launched a number of operations along the International Border, including anti-drone exercises and those related to detecting tunnels. The BSF is also conducting joint patrolling with the army, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and police to thwart nefarious attempts of terrorists, Bora said. "There is input that anti-national elements are likely to create trouble (in connection with Republic Day) but we are very, very alert on and along the border, including the Line of Control (LoC)," he said. "We have heightened our vigil on the border extensively," the inspector general (IG) told reporters here. Bora said intelligence inputs clearly point towards the possibility of some activities from across the border.

Rai urges PM Modi to set up martyrs' memorial

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Cabinet Minister Gopal Rai on Monday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to set up a memorial for the martyrs of the country's freedom movement in front of Rashtrapati Bhawan to pay tributes to them. Rai posted a video message on his Twitter account and said that there is no dedicated memorial for the freedom fighters who laid their lives for the independence of the country.

He said that India Gate was built by the Britishers in the memory of soldiers martyred during First World War and name of not even a single martyr of country's freedom move-



ment is there on India Gate. "The country is celebrating 75th year of Independence but in all these years we could not make even a memorial dedicated to our martyrs of

freedom struggle. I request you (Narendra Modi) to build a national memorial for martyred freedom fighters.

"I hope that you will construct a memorial for martyred freedom fighters in front of Rashtrapati Bhawan and start a new tradition of paying tributes to our lakhs of martyred freedom fighters at there on August 15 (Independence Day) and January 26 (Republic Day)," Rai said in his video message.

He added that it is unfortunate that instead of paying homage to the freedom fighters, for last 75 years our governments had been paying tributes at India Gate on occasions of Independence Day and Republic Day.

Ex PM Gowda welcomes move to install Bose's statue at India Gate

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda on Monday welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to install the statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at India Gate in New Delhi.

The JD(S) patriarch also recalled that he was Prime Minister during Bose's birth centenary year.

"I welcome @PMOIndia decision to install the statue of #SubhasChandraBose at India Gate. To rename Ross Island after him in 2018 was a fine decision too," Gowda said in a tweet. Stating that many streams of thoughts and actions contributed to India's freedom, he further said.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA Revenue (Land Acquisition) Department				
FORM-C				
The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Telangana Amendment) 2016 (Act 21/2017) as amended Central Act-2013 (Act 30/2013), Section 11 (1) and where 10A exemption is given (See rule 612)				
NOTIFICATION				
G1/93/2002 File No: F/24/2021		Date: 12-01-2022 Date: -01-2022		
Whereas it appears to the Government of Telangana/ Nalgonda District, that a total of A 67.13 Guntas of land is required in the Sivannagudem, Rammeddyapalli, Cherlagu hamlet of Majra Indurthy village in Manjupalem mandal for public purpose i.e. for construction of Sivannagudem Balancing Reservoir as part of Dindi LIFT-Irrigation Scheme.				
The notification has been issued under the Section 11 (1) of RFCT/LARR Act 20/2013 to acquire lands mentioned from 0.000 to 5.875 in the schedule below is required for construction of Sivannagudem reservoir.				
The GO M.S. No. 39 of Irrigation and Catchment Area Development Department (LARR&RAZ) issued on 30-06-2017 exempts Section 10-A of Act 21/2017 and Chapter-11 and III of the Land Acquisition Act 21/2017.				
Therefore, a preliminary notification has been issued to acquire Acres 67.13 Guntas in Sivanna gudem, Rammeddyapalli, Cherlagudem hamlet of Majra Indurthy village in Manjupalem mandal as shown in the schedule below.				
SCHEDULE				
Village: Sivannagudem Majra Indurthy Mandal: Manjupalem District: Nalgonda				
Sl No	Survey No/Name of land/Area (Ac.gts)	Area of land to be acquired (Ac.gts)	Name of pattadar/person enjoying the land	Trees/ structures in the land
1	2	3	4	5
1	189 Khushi/ Patla 0.0112	0.0112	Itagani Sottalah S/o Ramulu	--
2	190 Khushi/ Patla 0.05	0.05	Itagani Krishniah S/o Narasimha	Bore Pipeline
3	217 Khushi/ Patla 0.01	0.01	Thoddu Bharathamm W/o Jangiah	--
4	222 Khushi/ Patla 0.02	0.01	Polegani Narasimha S/o Pulishah	--
5	0.02	0.01	Polegani Sottalah S/o Anthiah	--
6	238 Khushi/ Patla 0.0112	0.0112	Giri ravi S/o Rama Chandru	--
7	246 Khushi/ Patla 0.17	0.17	Sil pagada Mahender Rao S/o Yelagiri Rao	--
8	247 Khushi/ Patla 0.11	0.11	Silpagada Ramender Rao S/o Yelagiri Rao	--
9	255 Khushi/ Patla 0.06	0.06	Itagani Sujatha W/o Narasimha	--
10	257 Khushi/ Patla 0.01	0.01	Takumalla Sundha W/o Narasimha Rao	--
11	269 Khushi/ Patla 0.01	0.01	Perumalla Saloni S/o Lajulu	--
12	269 Khushi/ Patla 0.06	0.06	Bandi Ramulu S/o Mabbili	--
13	Celling Patla 0.06	0.06	Bandi Lakshminah S/o Mabbili	--
14	438 Khushi/ Patla 0.02	0.02	Guruboina Yash & Chandra S/o Narasimha	--
15	460 Khushi/ Patla 0.02	0.02	Kondapuri Ramachandram S/o Palliah	--
16	461 Khushi/ Patla 0.02	0.02	Itagani Deviah S/o Narasimha	3 Bore/L
17	468 Khushi/ Patla 0.02	0.02	Desai Lingiah S/o Soniah	1 Bore/L
18	490 Khushi/ Patla 0.07	0.07	Abbonaboina Andalu S/o Narasimha	--
Total		1.87		
Village: Rammeddyapalli Majra Indurthy Mandal: Manjupalem District: Nalgonda				
Sl No	Survey No/Name of land/Area (Ac.gts)	Area of land to be acquired (Ac.gts)	Name of pattadar/person enjoying the land	Trees/ structures in the land
1	2	3	4	5
19	460 Khushi/ Patla 0.15	0.15	Kalluri Akshayamma W/o Ashok Reddy	--
20	463 Khushi/ Patla 0.01	0.01	Kotha Sahyanarayana S/o Ramulu	--
21	473 Khushi/ Patla 0.02	0.01	Sankabuddi John S/o Pedda Jangiah	--
22	483 Khushi/ Patla 0.02	0.01	Sankabuddi John S/o Narasimha	--
23	483 Khushi/ Patla 0.01	0.01	Kunchapu Meliah S/o Ramiah	--
24	499 Khushi/ Patla 1.00	1.00	Lagani Shiviah S/o Narasimha	--
25	507 Khushi/ Patla 0.06	0.06	Vadde Chinamiah S/o Mubashir	--
26	510 Khushi/ Patla 1.10	1.00	Pagilla Korahiah S/o Narasimha	--
27	732 Khushi/ Patla 4.29	0.10	Pole Shanthamma W/o Ramulu	--
28	732 Khushi/ Patla 4.29	0.10	Itagani Gopal S/o Pedda Narasimha	--
29		0.10	Itagani Ramulu	--
Grand Total		47.13		

30	S/o Peda Narasimha	0.10	---	---
31	Itagani Yadiah S/o Peda Narasimha	1.28	---	7% Thal Chetulu
32	Betha Yadamma W/o Yadiah	0.05	---	---
33	Gangula Lakshminamma W/o Late Meliah	1.00	---	---
34	Manugoti Meliah S/o Yadiah	1.06	---	---
35	Jala Chandiah S/o Jangiah	0.01	---	---
36	Gangula Sottalah S/o Narasimha	0.10	---	---
37	Manupala Anusamma W/o Jaggi Reddy Vs Manupala Manjula W/o Yedgiri Reddy	1.09	---	---
38	762 Khushi/ Patla 3.33	1.00	---	---
39	Itagani Parvathamma W/o Krishnah	0.20	---	---
40	Siddagani Yadamma W/o Chandiah	0.31	---	---
41	Kannu Sambayah S/o Chandiah	0.11	---	---
42	Kannu Parvathi W/o Sini	0.10	---	---
43	Kannu Narasimha W/o Yeliah	1.01	---	---
44	Itagani Venkataiah S/o Shiviah	0.35	---	---
45	Koppula Sottalah S/o Venkataiah	0.35	---	---
46	Koppula Srinivas S/o Venkataiah	1.30	---	---
47	Koppula Narasimha S/o Venkataiah	2.24	---	---
48	Govt Land	2.29	---	---
49	Govt Land	5.12	---	---
50	Govt Land	7.09	---	---
51	Govt Land	5.22	---	---
52	Govt Land	7.11	---	---
53	Govt Land	15.31	---	---
54	Govt Land	0.01	---	---
55	Govt Land	0.03	---	---
56	Govt Land	0.03	---	---
57	Govt Land	0.03	---	---
58	Govt Land	0.29	---	---
59	Govt Land	1.19	---	---
60	Govt Land	1.00	---	---
61	Govt Land	0.01	---	---
62	Govt Land	0.01	---	---
Grand Total		65.26		

Anti-CAA protest: Delhi court frames sedition charge against Sharjeel Imam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Monday framed charges under sedition against JNU student Sharjeel Imam in a case related to alleged inflammatory speeches made by him during the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) in 2019.

"Charges are being framed under sections 124 (sedition), 153A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion), 153B (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national integration), 505 (Statements conducing to public mischief) of Indian Penal Code, and Section 13 (punish-



ment for unlawful activities) of UAPA," Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat ordered. As per the prosecution, Imam had allegedly made speeches at Jamia Millia Islamia on December 13, 2019, and at Aligarh Muslim University on December 16, 2019, where he threatened to "cut off" Assam

and the rest of the Northeast from India.

In his defense, Imam had earlier told the court that he is not a terrorist and his prosecution is a "whip of a monarch rather than a government established by law". Whereas, the prosecution claimed that violent riots took place pursuant to Imam's speech.

He is in judicial custody since January 2020.

Delhi Police had filed a charge sheet against Imam in the case, in which it alleged that he allegedly gave speeches inciting hatred, contempt, and disaffection towards the Central Government and instigated the people which led to the violence in December 2019.

FCRA registration: SC to hear plea against Centre's decision

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Monday said it would hear on Tuesday a petition which has sought quashing of the Centre's alleged decision by which 5,789 entities lost their Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) registration.

The FCRA registration is mandatory for any association and NGO to receive foreign funding.

The plea, filed by US-based NGO 'Global Peace Initiative', came up for hearing before a bench comprising Justices A M Khanwilkar and C T Ravikumar.

The bench said the matter would be heard on Tuesday. There were 22,762 FCRA-registered organisations till December 31, 2021.

On January 1, the number came down to 16,829. These are considered "live" organisations.

The officials had said the FCRA licences of 18,778 organisations were expiring between September 29, 2020 and December 31, 2021.

Out of them, as many as 12,989 organisations have applied for renewal of the FCRA licence between September 30, 2020 and December 31, 2021.



Cover-up

A few Karnataka colleges are debating whether girl students should be allowed to wear hijab

The New Year is all about hijabs and saffron scarves in some parts of Karnataka. On January 1, a pre-university college in Udipi barred a few girls from attending classes for wearing the hijab in contravention to college rules. The management says the girls can wear the hijab on campus but not in class. The reasoning is the teacher should have an unobstructed view of the students' faces while teaching. The girls, unconvinced, raised a protest. They say that they need to wear the hijab to cover their hair in front of men. One argument is why object to the hijab if it only covers the hair, like a scarf. If so, why fasten it with a pin to cover the face as well, runs the other argument. Things turned political when Campus Front of India (CFI), the student wing of the radical Islamic group, Popular Front of India, intervened, claiming religious freedom was being interfered with. The situation is unresolved. In another Karnataka village, Balagadi in Koppa district, some college students wore saffron scarves to protest the management allowing Muslim girls to wear the hijab in the classroom. In the third incident in Kolar district, a Hindu group staged a protest at a Government school, claiming the principal had permitted Muslim students to offer prayers in the classroom on Fridays. The district collector is probing the matter. Slowly but surely, these incidents are not just becoming controversial but triggering a debate on whether a hijab is part of the uniform.



In India, where public display of religion is quite common, these incidents should not have received publicity at all. But what's worrisome is that such sentiments are flaring up when Karnataka is readying for two major rounds of election. Elections to the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike may be held along with or close to the Zilla Panchayat and Taluk Panchayat polls. That will involve a joint electorate of nearly four crore voters. And the State Assembly elections are slated for early next year. These issues are fodder for religious groups to vitiate the secular atmosphere already burdened by the politics of polarisation. The higher judiciary has to step in to settle the issue once and for all. India is not France, where the display of religious symbols in public is disallowed. In India, everybody wears religion on one's sleeve, whether the *bindi* and bangles or the hijab, the holy cross or the Sikh *patka*. The question of discrimination should not arise at all. The Constitution allows the freedom to practice religion, but the law limits the protection to practices found essential and integral to religion. In a 2016 judgment, the Kerala High Court said that a hijab and a long-sleeved dress are an "essential part of the Islamic religion". Then the only question the judiciary should sort out is whether the "essential practice" of wearing hijab offends the social order in a classroom and hampers the teacher's duties.

PICTALK



The snow-covered path to the shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi, near Katra in Reasi district

PTI

Wet town

The Delhi Govt has reduced the number of dry days from the earlier 21 to just three

In a bit of good news that is certain to cheer up the Capital's Bacchus devotees, the AAP-led Delhi Government has announced its decision to curtail the number of 'dry days' this year from the earlier 21 to just three — the Republic Day, Independence Day and Gandhi Jayanti. The 21 'dry days' was one of the highest number as compared to other States and UTs in India. The official order, which was notified on Monday, is part of the city Government's new excise policy and ensures that the shutters of licensed liquor shops, bars, pubs and opium vends across the city can remain open and these can legally do business except for these three days. While the Government's decision to curtail the number of 'dry days' is welcome in the sense that it would remove the taint of 'buying liquor illegally' and instances of bootlegging in a major way, there is hardly any change in the situation expected on the ground. Just as it is a fact that the state of prohibition is a malady both for the taxpayer and for the Government's coffers, it's an open secret for decades that regular drinkers stock up their 'supply' in the days preceding 'dry days'.

Even otherwise, alcohol is available at the drop of a hat on 'dry days' if one knows his way around the city. However, the positive difference the Government's decision would make is that a buyer won't be caught unawares if he fails to take into account in advance the closure of liquor vends to mark one leader's or another's birth anniversary. Also, in the days preceding the 'dry day/s', it's become the tendency of the salespersons to often 'push' certain brands over the counter owing to the handsome 'commission' they pocket from the distributor/manufacturer. Since the supplies run short and the queues get longer each passing minute on such evenings, the experienced buyers know that it is futile to argue with the salesperson or go hunting for his favourite tippie elsewhere. Adding another dimension to the consumer's "choice" would mean that the latter is harassed less; other such steps such as privatising the liquor vends and opening one in each ward of the Capital have already started showing results since one now does business with a courteous salesperson in a clean and not-so-shady outlet, which was invariably the case earlier.

FSSAI GM regulation puts health in a soup

The Authority has a new scheme to mix genetically modified organisms in our foods even though the EU doesn't allow GM food on its plate



INDRA SHEKHAR SINGH

Careful of what you eat in 2022 as the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has a new scheme to mix genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in our foods. The white and black bureaucratic-looking draft notification on GM food regulation has locked India's food fate with Big Ag. It's only a matter of time before a tsunami of GM food products floods the Indian market as the gates of our fortress have been opened from the inside.

But first, what are GM foods? These are foods that are derived from genetically modified crops. Companies like Monsanto/Bayer have developed patented crops varieties which have genes from two different life forms. For example India's only GM crop, Bt Cotton, uses a toxin producing gene from a ground bacteria, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, and combines it with a cotton plant. Some of the other popular GMOs are soybean, corn, sugar beets and canola. While some of these crops are owned by European companies, EU doesn't allow GM food on its plate. GM foods are also used for animal feed and biofuels. Apart from the EU, independent scientists have raised serious biomedical concerns, linking the consumption of GM foods leading to a plethora of health defects.

So what does the notification say? Firstly, it allows for "1 per cent and below GM content foods" to go unlabelled. But why have this 1 per cent at all? Can't India have truthful labels, where the consumers know what they eat? Perhaps aware of the risks of GM food, FSSAI regulators have clearly stated that GMOs are "not permitted in infant foods". So why the obfuscation on labelling standards and then, in the same breath, the stance on infant foods? Is there something FSSAI knows and not telling Indians?

Let's take a second and look at our past. In the late 90s, India was flooded with cheap GM soybean oil imports that not only killed small mustard farmers but also destroyed the local oilseed markets. But now, also consider, GMOs are already trickling into our *thalis* with the rampant

blending of Bt cottonseed oil in our foods. Both FSSAI and GEAC were aware about it for years; in fact, Dr Vandana Shiva and I sent RTIs to both organisations and found out, FSSAI and GEAC both treated GMO cottonseed and natural cottonseed to be the same. This was an unscientific position, conveniently forgetting the genetic modifications on Monsanto/Bayer's Bt cottonseed. On further investigation, I found that biosafety documents submitted to GEAC came from Monsanto labs. No independent biosafety data was found at GEAC for Monsanto/Bayer's Bt Cotton. Currently, those pages are dead links on GEAC's website. In the draft notification too, FSSAI adhered to similar biosafety standards and, in some cases, allowed for the documents to be submitted by the applicant and not necessarily the regulatory authority-approved dossiers.

Now the next major confusion occurs when the notification calls for "(11) Once GMOs or Genetically Engineered Organisms or Living Modified Organisms having unique identification code provided by Biosafety Clearing House, Organisation for Economic Cooperation



INSTEAD OF DEREGULATING GM FOODS, FSSAI NEEDS TO FIRST DO HOUSE CLEANING AND TAKE COGNISANCE OF THE ILLEGAL GM FOODS THAT ARE BEING FED TO INDIANS. IF GM FOOD IS NOT SAFE FOR EUROPEAN CHILDREN TO EAT, THEN INDIAN CHILDREN OUGHT NOT HAVE IT

and Development etc, is approved by FSSAI, approval for the same will not be required for any other Food Business Operator. Approval will also not be required if it is used as an ingredient in any product."

On plain reading, this point appears innocuous. But the devil is always in the details. Given that EU doesn't allow for GM food, half of the influential countries are out. What does FSSAI mean as it wrote this point? Is it perhaps referring to the corporate food hegemony on GM standards? The US, along with many others in the Americas, is deeply entrenched in GM crops cultivation and freely allows for GM foods, labelled or unlabelled, to enter markets.

It is no surprise that US citizens along with their Latin American counterparts suffer from food-style related diseases. French scientist Eric Seralini, using peer review scientific journals, demonstrated how GM foods are harmful not only to cows but their toxicity including the pesticide/herbicide used to grow third-generations GMOs like RRF Cotton and hamper human health as well.

Monsanto/Bayer has already lost billions of dollars

to victims of Round-Up poisoning. Round-Up is a patented herbicide used to grow GM crops, and is known carcinogenic.

The parliamentary standing committee on GM crops, chaired by Renuka Chowdhary, has already pulled up FSSAI on GM food and a court order of August 2017 empowers petitioners to approach the court again in case the FSSAI rules are unsatisfactory.

GM or not GM? It is obvious that the FSSAI notification is doing someone else's bidding — corporates or Uncle Sam? Who knows? But as a concerned citizen, I urge them to reconsider. Instead of deregulating GM foods, FSSAI needs to first do house cleaning and take cognisance of the illegal GM foods that are being fed to Indians. We must aspire to have the most progressive GM laws on a par with EU, and not below them. For, if GM food is not safe for European children to eat, then Indian children ought not have it.

(The author writes on agriculture and environment, and is a former Director — Policy & Outreach, National Seed Association of India. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A DESPICABLE ACT

Sir — We have been routinely witnessing how the rightwing Hindutva brigade has been belittling, denigrating and tarnishing the image of Mahatma Gandhi at the fall of a hat through their manifestations, particularly by praising Nathuram Godse in tune with the ideology of their parent organisation. While the nation has been saddened by their tirade against Mahatma Gandhi, the Government for its part has now dropped the traditional Christian hymn, 'Abide with me', believed to have been a favourite of the Mahatma, from the list of songs to be played at this year's Beating Retreat ceremony. The tune has been played at the annual ceremony every year since 1950.

By doing this, the saffron outfits may be happy that they have hit both, the Mahatma and the Christian community, with their intolerant act but the entire world that has great reverence and respect for the Mahatma would have formed a poor opinion about the Government and its unpalatable act against the Father of the Nation. At this rate, one will not be surprised if the Government's next move will be to remove the title "Father of the Nation" from Gandhi's name and confer it on one of their own ideologues.

Tharcus S Fernando | Chennai

POISONING TURTLES HURTS US, TOO

Sir — In an unfortunate incident, dozens of turtles were found dead in a lake in Kalyan, Maharashtra. Wildlife conservationists feel that poisoning is the cause, probably by people who found that these creatures were consuming fish which they had been illegally breeding there. As freshwater turtle species are protected under India's 1972 Wildlife Protection Act, causing them harm can result in heavy penalty and punishment. The locals could have sought permission to breed fish from the authority concerned.

It is sad that most people are unaware about the usefulness of turtles in our ecosystem. They regulate the energy flow

Honour Bose's idea of India



The nation is celebrating the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose as Parakram Diwas to acknowledge his monumental contribution. Whenever one remembers Netaji, one is reminded of his valour, courage, patriotism, extraordinary leadership skills and unflinching devotion to the motherland. In India, however, statues and streets are often named after political leaders, religious personalities, scholars, business tycoons,

of a given environment and consume and deposit seeds, which later germinate into vegetation needed for the maintenance of an area's ecosystem. No wonder they are called 'environmental engineers' and play an important role in the earth's food web. They are also vital for the health of seas, rivers, ponds and other water bodies. More campaigns must be launched to make people aware regarding the protection of such creatures.

M Pradyu | Kannur

THIRD TIME UNLUCKY

Sir — Each cricket match is like a game of chess and, therefore, every move counts in the shortest form of the game. Having lost the Test series in a one-day fashion, we could have chalked out a strategy to erase the mistakes committed in the longest form of the game. The major shortcoming is that the so-called "strong batting" failed to live up to the

eminent sporting personalities or kings, while our soldiers are rarely mentioned. In this context, the decision to instal Netaji's statue at India Gate must be lauded. His larger-than-life legacy is enough to prove that he played a stellar role in arousing the consciousness of society.

In fact, going by the Kautilyan adage "my enemy's enemy is my friend", Bose showed solidarity with the axis powers of Germany, Italy and Japan which, he believed, could act as a counterpoise to the British imperialistic designs. Bose had a firm belief that if the loyalty of soldiers to the British Indian Army be turned around, the British would be left with no option but to leave. His militant agitation precipitated Britain's hasty withdrawal from India. Apart from being a great patriot and nationalist, it was his unwavering commitment to secularism that was destined to become the cornerstone of the Indian Republic. It was his idea of a united and inclusive India that is even more relevant in today's fractured society.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

expectations and the bowlers were put to test. In the event of a small total to defend, our strategy should be to dismiss the opposition within a low score. But to add salt to the wound, we lost both the ODIs and the T-20 World Cup chances through sheer lack of shrewd captaincy.

We had a team with the number one bowler in the world but we made him toil hard for a place in the side in England and in the T20 World Cup. The ODI and Test captain flattered to deceive. As a matter of fact, Ashwin accounted for the left-handers' wickets maximum in his international career and the captain made a mess of his role and proved unlucky for the third time and lost five out of the six games and finished the tour on a losing note.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

The amendment proposal strikes at the very root of our federal polity and State autonomy.

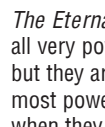


Tamil Nadu Chief Minister —MK Stalin



My wedding will not be going ahead (as the nation imposes new restrictions to slow Omicron's spread).

New Zealand Prime Minister —Jacinda Arden



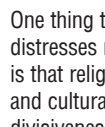
The *Eternals* are all very powerful, but they are the most powerful when they come together.

Actor —Salma Hayek



The desire to win the World Cup still gives me the motivation to be the best version of myself.

Women's team ODI captain — Mithali Raj




One thing that distresses me is that religious and cultural divisiveness take too strong a position.

Netaji Subhas' daughter — Dr Anita Bose-Pfaff

FIRST COLUMN


TRIBALS AND THEIR RELIGION

The Sanatana Dharma has ingredients of tribal worship



VK BAHUGUNA

Let us examine the theory of naming a few people as tribals by sociologists and others. The western media under the influence of Christianity has been for decades trying to declare tribals as indigenous people. The connotation of 'indigenous' in terms of the great Indian civilization, which grew with great saints who lived in syl-van surroundings in thick forests, is a travesty of truth. It is an insult to ancient Indian culture to call the tribals as indigenous or, for that matter, calling them tribal at all. For, the tribal traditions have great history of language, music, art, paintings, medicine and of course worship of nature in its different form which enriched the Sanatana Dharma and traditions. In fact, all Indians must have been once part of some tribe or the other and it is the lop-sided modern develop-ment which now differentiates between tribal and non-tribal people. Unfortunately, our constitution is also trapped in the tribal and non-



tribal verbosity. The raging debate that tribals have no set pattern of religion is basically a politically motivated and foreign-supported propa-ganda being launched in India by different churches that believe in proselytization. The Sanatana Dharma which is now known as Hinduism has all the ingredients of tribal worship. In tribal areas most of the divinity is dominated by nature worships and many tenets and festivities of Hinduism are drawn from them. The argument by a few politicians that tribal people never had an organized religion does not hold water if we see the history of the country. The first organised census was held in 1871 - the first synchronized census was held in 1881 — in which the 95 percent tribal people have entered their religion as Hinduism. Only two percent people from the North-East declared a tribal religion because of the interpretational bias during census. In 1891 only three percent were shown as following tribal religion and rest as Hindu.

In 1991 census information on sects of Christianity was also collected. In the first census after independence in 1951, 97-98 percent tribals had shown Hinduism as their religion. It only after several decades later when the Christian missionaries started convert-ing the tribals in central and eastern India that nature worship was systematically sought to be separated from Hinduism. In Tripura the Tripuri, Jamatias and other Tribes have been worshipping Shiva as depicted in the rock carvings. Similarly, Sarna method of divinity is focused on the worship of nature and spirits and holds all natural objects to be sacred. This belief system is followed by several trib-al groups in Jharkhand and neighbouring states, and it is fully reflect-ed in their social and cultural life. The 'other' category for religion in the census after independence had created this confusion because of the census staff relegating such tribal beliefs as the 'other'. There is a well-orchestrated propaganda launched by a few political lead-ers for supremacy in the tribal belt aided and abetted by Christian missionaries and the naxalites to disconnect the tribal population from the larger part of Sanatana dharma. This writer during February 2021 has visited a tribal area in Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh. In a corner of the fair, a person who spoke fluent English was sell-ing books deriding Hinduism and recommending a book, 'Tribals are not Hindu'. I had to admonish the organizer, a foreign-funded NGO, for creating such a situation in the tribal belt. The issue today is not to interfere with religious beliefs and cultural lives of tribal people. The focus should be to bringing them to the mainstream by providing them best health, educational and livelihood and preserve their art, language, culture, and music.

(The writer is Chairman of Centre for Resource Management and Environment. The views expressed are personal.)

Fertiliser DBT stymied by lobbies for years



UTTAM GUPTA

When a subsidised product is not available in the marketplace, the dubious characters will have nothing to prey upon



It is budget time. After two years of splurge, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has alluded to a return to fiscal consolidation. A major area mer-iting attention is fertilizer subsidy which jumped from ₹80,000 crore during 2019-20 to ₹134,000 crore during 2020-21 and is likely to be ₹140,000 crore dur-ing 2021-22.

Fertilizer subsidy arises because the Union Government wants manufacturers/importers to sell fertilizers to farmers at a low maximum retail price, unrelated to the cost of production and import and distribution, which is much higher. In case of urea, it exercises manda-tory control on MRP and reimburses the manufacturers for the excess of cost over it as subsidy on a 'unit-specific' basis under the new pricing scheme. In case of phos-phatic and potassic (P&K) fertilizers, it fixes 'uniform' subsidy on per nutrient basis for all manufacturers and importers under Nutrient Based Scheme.

Subsidy per ton being the difference between cost and MRP, if the cost increas-es, MRP remaining unchanged, on each ton of fertilizer sold, subsidy will increase. On the other hand, if MRP decreases, cost remaining unchanged, then also subsidy will increase. Thirdly, for any given level of subsidy per ton, increase in the quantity of fertilizer sale results in higher total subsidy payment.

The factors impinging on the cost of urea are: cost of natural gas - feedstock/fuel used in its production and price of import-ed urea (it accounts for 1/3rd of consump-tion). In case of P&K fertilizers, the factors are cost of raw materials, viz. phosphoric acid, ammonia and price of imports in fin-ished form viz. di-ammonium phosphate (these account for nearly 50 percent of DAP consumption) and price of muriate of potash - entirely imported.

Given the preponderance of imports in making urea and non-urea fertilizers avail-able (even for producing domestic urea, 1/3rd of the gas requirement is met from imports), there is little that the Government can do to rein in these costs.

However, there are plant specific inef-ficiencies (besides inter-state variation in VAT on gas) that result in widely varying costs. Of around 35 million ton annual urea supply, there are tonnages supplied at ₹20,000 per ton, ₹25,000 per ton, ₹30,000 per ton and so on. The cost of import is even higher. During the current year, some supplies have even come at US\$ 900 per ton which works out to around ₹70,000 per ton at the farm gate.

A ridiculously low MRP of urea (cur-rently at ₹5360 per ton, it is almost the same as two decades ago) in the face of increas-ing costlies at the root of increase in sub-sidy per ton. Add to this, the quantity boost that comes from (i) excessive use: low price prompts farmers to use more than what is required by the soil; (ii) large/rich unde-serving farmers also getting access to sub-sidized urea; (iii) large-scale diversion

such as smuggling to neighboring countries, industrial use and so on - inevitable when the market price is 4-5 times higher. The outcome is ballooning total subsidy bill.

Excessive use is undesirable as it leads to imbalance in fertilizer use, erosion in soil health (this in turn, undermines the sustainability of agriculture in the medium to long-run) and adverse impact on the environment besides human health. Giving cheap urea to those (read: rich farmers) who can afford to pay more is also patently unfair. But, diversion or misuse of subsidized (albeit heavily) urea will shake the conscience of any right-thinking person. Yet, it has been going on for decades and could be as high as 30 percent. Look at the dynamics of how it is happening.

During the initial years of the subsisting scheme (it is in vogue since 1977), bulk of the subsidy amount was released to manufactur-ers on 'dispatch' of the material from the factory. Even as they were required to ensure that fertilizer was actually sold to farmers, there was no fool proof institutional mecha-nism to check it. Disappearance of the product at various levels in sup-ply chain viz. rail-head, stocking point in district and retailer was rampant.

Ein the early 2000s, the arrange-ment was changed to provide for payment of 95 percent of the urea subsidy on receipt of material in the district (for non-urea fertilizers, the share was 85 percent) and bal-ance 5 percent on confirmation by the state government (15 percent in case of P&K fertilizers). Under this

mechanism also, the field was wide open for dubious players to prey on the subsidized stuff - beyond stock-ing point in the district.

From April 2018, the Modi government linked subsidy pay-ment to manufacturers to sale of fer-tilizers to farmers by retailers. Under the new scheme, manufactur-ers receive 100% of the subsidy after fertilizer is delivered to the farmer and his identity viz. Aadhaar is captured on electronic PoS machine at dealer's shop. Though a significant improvement, even this is prone to diversion albeit at retail level. This is all the more because anyone (including non-farmers) with Aadhaar unique identity num-ber can buy the subsidized product.

The government has also tried other measures. These include (i) mandatorily requiring all manufactur-ers/importers to neem-coat all of urea supplies (2015); (ii) restricting purchase by each purchaser to 100 bags per transaction (down from 999 bags earlier) and capping num-ber of transactions per month (August 2020) and (iii) tracking top 20 urea purchasers in each district and initiating action against those violating purchase norms etc. These too have not delivered.

Now, the government is work-ing on a plan to cap the number of subsidized fertilizer bags that indi-vidual farmers can buy in any cropping season. But, this won't help either.

In fact, so long as the core of the scheme, i.e., 'routing subsidy through the manufacturers' remains intact, there is no way it can make any dent on the scourge of diversion.

The way forward is direct ben-e-fit transfer (DBT) of subsidy. The Government should give subsidy 'directly' to the farmers and allow manufacturers to sell at market determined price. This will com-pletely eliminate diversion; when a subsidized product is not available in the marketplace, dubious char-acters will have nothing to prey upon. It will also curb excessive use; when, the product carries the right price tag, farmers will use it judiciously. It will also be possible to target subsidy to poor farmers only.

The contraction in demand from all three sources will yield huge saving in subsidy (quantity effect). There will be an indirect gain as well. India being a major importer of fertilizers, a significant demand-induced cut in import will reduce the international price and in turn, reduce the cost of imports. As a result, subsidy per ton will also decline.

To conclude, DBT will help fiscal consolidation, reduce trade deficit, reduce imbalance in fertil-izer use, improve soil health, pro-mote sustainable agriculture and environment friendly. There will be losers too: inefficient/high cost pro-ducers who will have to close their shop; dubious traders and corrupt politicians/bureaucrats who make big money from leakage/diversion; rich farmers who are major benefi-ciaries of extant scheme.

DBT of fertilizer subsidy has been on government's radar since 2012-13. So far, its launch has been stymied due to the clout of these lobbies. Can the Prime Minister sur-mount it?

THE CONTRACTION IN DEMAND FROM ALL THREE SOURCES WILL YIELD HUGE SAVINGS IN SUBSIDY (QUANTITY EFFECT). THERE WILL BE AN INDIRECT GAIN AS WELL. INDIA BEING A MAJOR IMPORTER OF FERTILISERS, A SIGNIFICANT DEMAND-INDUCED CUT IN IMPORT WILL REDUCE THE INTERNATIONAL PRICE AND, IN TURN, REDUCE THE COST OF IMPORTS

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

POINT COUNTERPOINT

I AM NOT SAYING THAT I AM THE CHIEF MINISTER FACE OF THE CONGRESS IN UTTAR PRADESH ELECTIONS. —CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY PRIYANKA GANDHI



THE CONGRESS IS SO MISERABLE THAT ITS CM CANDIDATE FOR UP ELECTIONS CHANGED HER STAND WITHIN A FEW HOURS. —BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY CHIEF MAYAWATI

No breakthrough in military-level Indo-China talks

The stalemate will continue and about 75,000 Indian troops will continue to occupy the positions along the LAC facing the PLA

There was no break-through in the marathon military-level talks between India and China on January 13 with Beijing showing reluctance to complete troop disengagement at a fric-tion point in eastern Ladakh and refusing to discuss steps to diffuse the bigger problems of Depsang and Damchok.

The joint statement stated that "representatives from the defence and foreign affairs establishments of the two sides were present at the meeting" and they had "a frank and in-depth exchange of views for the resolution of the relevant issues" along the LAC in the Western Sector. Both sides "also agreed to consolidate on the previous outcomes and take effective efforts to maintain the security and stability on the



PK VASUDEVA

(The writer is former Senior Professor, International Trade and Member, Vivekananda International Foundation. The views expressed are personal.)

ground in the Western Sector including during winter" and to "stay in close contact and main-tain dialogue via military and diplomatic channels and work out a mutually acceptable resolu-tion of the remaining issues at the earliest" the statement said.

However, China on January 14 said that it hopes "certain individuals" in India will refrain from making "unconstructive remarks" fol-lowing Indian army chief General M M Naravane's remarks that the threat in east-ern Ladakh has "by no means reduced" and Indian Army will continue to deal with the Chinese military in a "firm and resolute manner".

China is unpredictable and is now building a bridge across the Pangong Tso as well as new



roads and helipads within its territory in the region for faster troop mobility, as part of its continuing consolidation of military positions facing India amid the 20-month-long con-frontation in eastern Ladakh.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is further strengthening its military infra-structure with additional troop shelters, gun positions, helipads and jetties in the area between 'Finger-8' and its military bases to the east at Sirijap-I and II on the north bank of the Pangong Lake. The new bridge, in turn, is coming up in the Khurnak Fort area further to the east. The bridge is being construct-ed, with prefabricated struc-tures, well within Chinese ter-ritory. But it will help the PLA move troops and weaponry much faster from the north to the south banks of Pangong Tso and vice versa. China obvious-ly wants to counter India's quick-reaction capability that saw our soldiers take the Kailash Range heights on the south bank towards end-August 2020.

The LAC runs north to south at Finger-8 in the moun-tainous spurs region of the brackish 134-km long Pangong Tso, two-thirds of which is con-trolled by China as it extends from Tibet to India at an alti-tude of 13,900-feet.

The PLA's Sirijap complex is around six km east from the LAC at Finger-8, with the Khurnak area being another 20-km beyond it, as per officers who have served in the area. The PLA had captured the Khurnak area in the late-1950s, and then expanded its control westwards to the Sirijap area during the 1962 war.

With India having better connectivity between the two banks of Pangong Tso, China now wants to address the gap. Khurnak is one of the narrow-est points of the lake around mid-way during its length. Once the bridge is ready, the PLA can avoid the long loop through Rudok to reach the south bank. It will provide the PLA with an alternate route.

The subsequent troop dis-engagement in February last year saw Indian soldiers pull back westwards to their Dhan Singh Thapa post between Finger-2 and Finger-3 and vacate the Kailash range heights. PLA troops, in turn, withdrew to their old positions east of Finger-8 to establish a buffer or no-patrol zone in-between.

China had refused to com-plete the stalled troop disen-gagement at Patrolling Point-15 in the Hot Springs-Gogra-Kongka La area during the 13th round. The standoff at ChardingNinglung Nallah (CNN) track junction at Demchok and the Depsang Plains is considered even more intractable, as was reported earlier. Consequently, the two armies continue to forward deploy around 50,000 troops

each, along with tanks, how-itzers and surface-to-air missile systems, for the second consec-utive winter along the frontier in the forbidding high-alti-tude area.

Consequently, after the 14th round of military level talks between the two giants, the stalemate will continue and about 75,000 Indian troops will continue to occupy the positions along the LAC facing the PLA. India has started constructing two-lane roads, bridges and permanent struc-tures all along the LAC so that troops movement, tanks, how-itzers and other heavy equip-ment can move smoothly to thwart any adventure of PLA and also for the sustenance of Indian troops in the extreme cold weather conditions.



RBI to conduct overnight VRR auction of Rs 75,000 cr

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India on Monday said it will be conducting an overnight variable rate repo auction under liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) for an amount of Rs 75,000 crore today.

The date of reversal is on January 25, 2022, the central bank said in a release.

On January 20, the RBI had conducted an overnight variable rate repo (VRR) auction of Rs 50,000 crore.

The central bank had said it will continue to rebalance



liquidity conditions in a non-disruptive manner while maintaining adequate liquid-

ity to meet the needs of the productive sectors of the economy.

Tata Technologies plans to hire 3,000 innovators in next 12 months

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Global engineering and product development digital services firm Tata Technologies on Monday said it will hire over 3,000 innovators over the next 12 months under its expanded talent acqui-

sition programme. The company plans to ramp up its workforce in all major markets globally and India, which includes Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, among others, Tata Technologies said in a statement. The move to add talent comes

at a time when the firm has been growing rapidly on the back of the move to autonomous, connected, electrification and shared (ACES) mobility and accelerated investment in digital, as manufacturing companies adapt to meet new and evolving customer needs, it added.

SEBI asks PFS to address CG issues before holding board meet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has asked PTC India Financial Services (PFS) to address corporate governance and other issues raised by its former Chairman and outgoing Independent Directors, before holding its board meeting.

The capital markets regulator has also asked PFS to file an Action Taken Report on these issues within four weeks, the company said in a regulatory filing.

A meeting of the Board of Directors was scheduled to be held on January 22, 2022, however, as the company did not have quorum in compliance of SEBI (LODR) Regulations, 2015, therefore, the same could not be held, the filing said.

On January 22, PFS could not hold its board meeting in the absence of its three independent directors -- Kamlesh Shivji Vikamsey, Santosh B Nayar and Thomas Mathew -- who resigned en masse from the board of PFS citing corporate governance and other issues on January 19.

"The company has received a communication dated 22nd January, 2022 from the SEBI informing that the company is directed to address the CG (corporate governance) issues and all other issues raised by the resigning IDs (independent directors) and ex-Chairperson first, before holding any Board meeting and to file an action taken report in the regard to SEBI within 4 weeks," the company said in the regulatory filing.



Air India likely to be handed over to Tata group by weekend

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India is likely to be handed over to the Tata group by the end of this week, senior government officials said on Monday. After a competitive bidding process, the government had on October 8 last year sold Air India to Talace Private Limited -- a subsidiary of the Tata group's holding company -- for Rs 18,000 crore.

Positive sentiment score in real estate

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The sentiment index score for India's real estate sector remained positive and touched an all-time high during October-December quarter, while stakeholders showed "prudent optimism" in their outlook for the next six months amid rising cases of coronavirus, according to a survey report.

As per the Knight Frank-FICCI-NAREDCO Real Estate Sentiment Index report, the 'Current Sentiment Index' touched an all-time high of 65

in October-December 2021.

The previous high was a sentiment index score of 63 in Q3 2021.

The score of above 50 indicates 'Optimism' in sentiments, a score of 50 means the sentiment is 'Same' or 'Neutral', while a score below 50 indicates 'Pessimism'. The report attributed the improvement in the index to reduced uncertainty on the economic front leading to stability in demand in the real estate sector.

The 'Future Sentiment Index' which measures the outlook for the next six

Electronics production in India to reach US\$ 300 bn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Electronics production in the country is expected to reach USD 300 billion by 2026, industry body ICEA said in a report on Monday.

The National Policy on Electronics (NPE) 2019 had set a target of achieving a turnover of USD 400 billion by 2025.

However, the industry will be unable to achieve the target set by NPE 2019, due to the adverse impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the sector, the report said, adding that "the COVID-19 pandemic brought with it unforeseen and unprecedented challenges."

"The NPE 2019 targets for electronics production in 2025-26 at USD 300 billion appears to be more realistic considering the disruption on account of COVID-19 in the past 18 months which has been aggravated with the new variants of the COVID-19 virus such as Omicron," the report said.

The India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) Chairman Pankaj



Mohindroo while sharing the details of the report said that the reduced target still aims for a 400 per cent increase from the current level, which will require significant and persistent policy initiatives and efforts to create a conducive electronics manufacturing ecosystem.

He said that the government should not make any changes in the tax tariff without consultation with the industry.

Mohindroo said that there is a need to encourage domestic champions.

The report estimates demand for electronic products in India may stand at approximately USD 180 billion by 2025-26.

Swiggy raises US\$ 700 mn from Invesco, other investors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Food delivery platform Swiggy on Monday said it has raised USD 700 million (nearly Rs 5,225 crore) in new funding led by investment firm Invesco.

Other new investors in the round include Baron Capital Group, Sumeru Venture, IIFL AMC Late Stage Tech Fund, Kotak, Axis Growth Avenues AIF- I, Sixteenth Street Capital, Ghisallo, Smile Group and Segantii Capital, Swiggy said in a statement. Six months after raising USD 1.25 billion, the new fundraise also sees increased participation of institutional investors both in India and globally, it added. Swiggy's existing investors Alpha Wave Global (formerly Falcon Edge Capital), Qatar Investment Authority, and ARK Impact, along with its long-term investor Prosus also participated in the round. "This investment comes at a time when the adoption of food and online grocery is accelerating and the consumer demand for Swiggy's many services continue to grow," the company said.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA Revenue (LA) Department FORM - VII (PRELIMINARY DECLARATION)										43	43	763	Patla Nhi	0.07	Migula Bhoomi (P) Kuma Yellash S/o Ester/Bondaya W/o Yellash (E)	784	755	754	782
(In accordance with section 19(1) and Rule 25 Sub Rule(1) of Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act - 2013, (Central Act 30/2013)).										44	44	763	Patla Nhi	0.11	Kuma Mallash S/o Ester	784	755	754	782
Collector File No. G/10562/2020																			

Exporters seek support measures in Budget to boost

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Exporters have demanded support measures, including enhanced allocations for RoDTEP scheme, high import duty on plastic finished goods, setting up of an Indian shipping line and reinstating exemption for duty free import of critical inputs for leather products, in the forthcoming Budget to promote growth of the country's out-bound shipments.

They have also suggested fiscal incentives to address logistics challenges, and reduction of income tax on partnerships and LLP's to support MSME players.

The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) said that there is a need to encourage large Indian entities to build an Indian shipping line of global repute as it would help reduce dependence on foreign shipping lines.

It said that the export sector is facing major issues due

to rising freight cost and its dependence on global shipping companies.

"Overseas marketing is a big challenge for exporters, more so for MSMEs, as it entails a very high cost. We need to bring the Double Tax Deduction Scheme for Internationalizations to allow exporters to deduct against their taxable income...A ceiling of USD 5 lakh may be put under the scheme so that the investment and tax deduction are limited," FIEO Director General Ajay Sahai said.

Mumbai-based exporter and Chairman Technocrat Industries Sharda Kumar Saraf said that Reimbursement of Duties & Taxes on Export production (RoDTEP) is one of the most important tools to support export marketing, but its present budget of about Rs 40,000 crore, is inadequate.

"We hope the finance minister will take cognizance of this fact and provide a suitable budget for RoDTEP," Saraf



said. Plastics Export Promotion Council of India (Plexconcil) Chairman Arvind Goenka suggested that the import duty on plastic finished goods should be at least 5 per cent higher than polymer raw materials.

"For instance, import duty on PVC Resin is 10 per cent and that on value added PVC goods is also 10 per cent thereby there is no incentive to boost domestic production," Goenka said.

Council for Leather

months, remained optimistic, but dipped from 72 in Q3 2021 to 60 in Q4 2021, reflecting a prudent optimism as the Omicron-inflicted risk on the Indian economy is yet to be

discerned. The Real Estate Sentiment Index is based on a quarterly survey of key supply-side stakeholders which include developers and financial institutions.

He has also recommended reinstatement of basic customs duty on import of wet blue, crust and finished leathers as the exemption was removed last year.

Sharing a similar view, Chairman of Farida Group Rafeeq Ahmed said that steps for the labour intensive sector - leather in the budget will help in creating more jobs and pushing exports.

"The government should consider removing import duty on finished leather. Measures should be announced for setting up micro parks for the sector," Ahmed said. Hand Tools Association President S C Ralhan said that the government should announce some provisions to promote container manufacturing in India. "Budget should also consider extending income tax concessions for MSME exporters," Ralhan said. During April-December 2021-22, exports rose 49.66 per cent to USD 301.38 billion.



Dil se dil tak with Poonam Dhillon

SHIKHA DUGGAL

This actress, who has worked in the film industry for decades, has witnessed how dramatically the industry has changed over time. Veteran, old hand, expert, and connoisseur are all words that fall short of describing the profusion of films she has contributed to Indian cinema. Who do you

think we're talking about? *The Pioneer* reached out to Noorie actress Poonam Dhillon, who has recently entered the OTT space. This UP woman has done it all: she's been a part of *Miss Young India*, *Femina Miss India*, a controversial reality show called *Bigg Boss*, doing some television shows and venturing into the make-up van business, and acting in renowned films opposite many legendary actors. Now it's time for her to raid the OTT trade.

Since she has been in the industry for many years, Poonam is not in favour of screen tests, the reason she cites is one of her unpleasant experiences. Poonam who doesn't like rushing offers shares with us, "Last year I had a release, on and off I have been working for the movies with utmost devotion. I don't like the practice of rushing offers; I want the right project to come my way. I believe in quality work and acting. I am never randomly opting for the role of a mother, it is tedious. I also get annoyed when asked to do screen tests. I am fine with look tests but not screen tests. I had one experience which I didn't find pleasant. I asked if they wanted to do a look test, and they said no. So I said that the way you are putting it is a little you know what I mean. I also added that many people want to do auditions. But when they tell you they want to do your screen test, I said that go and see the screen. I have done like 120 films now, and if you want to see the recent one then see that too. After 40 years of working, one must understand that at least we as actresses know the basics of acting. A director wanting it is acceptable."

If you are running to be number one, you are in a way asking for anxiety and you are in a way not enjoying what you are doing, feels the actress. "When I started acting, I felt I knew nothing about the craft at that time, so I was busy learning. Whatever I have achieved in life, I got it quite smoothly and I was appreciated for my good work. I always wanted to do better and polish my craft, but not in terms of numbers. I had good luck working with super actors like Sanjeev Kumar, Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Hassan, and Rishi Kapoor. They were all actors who inspired me," adds the actress who played the central character in *Dil Bekarar*, which made her grab the deal too.

Elaborating further on what made her take up this OTT project, Poonam shares, "My character is a mother to five daughters which was another fascinating reason for me to say a yes to an OTT project. Habib Faisal added more to its element! This OTT project wasn't compromised at all in any manner, there wasn't any point where the producer must have butt in and said 'array, yehnahi karte kyon ki bahut mehnga hora hai'. She is a friend; instead, I was wor-

ried that we were going over budget or something. I have even come across some producers who make commitments and then centric issues start arising; thankfully we had none for *Dil Bekarar*. It was so refreshing to see these youngsters acting alongside! All in all, it was a happy unit. For all the actors of the 80s, shooting the film together was a kind of reunion. We were all catching up after a long time. And, it was so much fun creating the 80s era because the web show is kind of place in the 80s."

Like many people, even Poonam feels that OTT will stay 'pukka' although it cannot replace theatres! "Directors have bifurcated into this mode of streaming without compromising on theatrical releases. Television and OTT have a vast difference! I have worked for TV and I had strict deadlines to meet. OTT in its place has a conscious style of working. The stress of television was too much to take back in those days, frankly. Episodes kept changing based on who was more popular that week whereas OTT is crisp. I tend to express myself more for OTT than TV. OTT subtly gives way to escapade."

Speaking about ageism in movies, Poonam feels it depends on what you are looking for. "If you are still looking at doing romantic roles, like what I did thirty-five years ago, then I would be disappointed. But, if you compare this scenario with Hollywood when it comes to getting meaty roles for women who are forty plus, then options are lesser. With OTT, things are opening up especially for women and men above forties," concludes Poonam Dhillon.

One step at a time

An excited teenager who played third or even fourth fiddle to Kareena Kapoor's Geet in *Jab We Met*, Wamiqa Gabbi has slowly but steadily started charting her course in celebdom.

Appearances in Punjabi films followed and she got recognition for *Tu Mera 22 Main Tera 22*, *Ishq Brandy*, *Nikka Zaildar*, *Parahuna*, *Dil Diyan Gaalan* and *Grahan*, the web series on 1984 riots.

The actress has appeared in many notable Bollywood movies and many other regional films too.

Recently, Gabbi played cricketer Madan Lal's wife in the film, *83*. She shares, "I'm grateful to get the chance to be a part of this movie. You know when the film is made on such a historical moment, it's a different kind of happiness. So when Chhabra Ji's (Mukesh Chhabra) office called, nothing came to my mind regarding how that part is and what it is I just wanted to be part of this film and I'm so glad that people loved the film," she giggled.

Talking about the reason she took up the role, she shares, "A film on the 1983 World Cup was a good enough reason for me to be its part. And then, Kabir Khan was directing it! I knew that I wanted to work with him and I was excited to be part of a project like this. Deepika Padukone, who was the producer, played Romi Dev while I was Anu Lal. The two were like best friends and there were several scenes with her. When all this became clear, I was like, I'm quickly doing this."

Gabbi has primarily worked in Punjabi cinema and has done films in other languages too. She says, "I have worked in Punjabi films. And Telugu, Tamil as well as two Malayalam films. So there were no challenges. When you are working with good people, everything works out. Challenges arise when you are working with difficult people and when you feel that it's getting too difficult. But this was very pleasant, you know, the

atmosphere was such that it was good working in this. So, I'm really happy that I was part of *83*."

Further, while talking about *Grahan*, where Gabbi played the role of Manu, she elaborates, "Grahan was the first show, the first project I did after the pandemic. At our meeting, director Ranjan Chandel read paragraphs from the book Chaurasi/84 which touched my heart. He read out Manu and Rishi's love story which gave me goosebumps. While listening, Manu started seeming to be very beautiful and I got so excited that I would get to play this character. And Ranjan, Anshuman, all of us started preparing for our characters and Ranjan sir helped all of us in getting in the skin and bringing out the minute details."

Galwadi, another Punjabi film released last month. She said, "We shot in London for a month and it was quite a ride. My co-star, Tarsem (Jassar) ji, is a very calm and patient person. I enjoyed working with him." On the challenges that she faced in the film, she expressed, "An accident takes place. I had never done that before so that seemed very difficult to me... but I'm glad that it looks good on screen."

About Galwadi, to her fans, Gabbi says, "The film is not just a love story or it's not just about two people falling in love. It talks about life, its way and balance." In addition, while talking about choosing roles, she says, "Anything that touches my heart. Anything that I feel, that I should be part of *Yeh mere begair nahi banna chahiye*, *to uss cheez ko mai haan kar deti hun* (Wherever I feel that this should not be made without me, I say, yes)."

Her favourite actor is Irrfan Khan. "Unfortunately I'll never be able to work with him, that was one dream. I'll always remember him, he'll always inspire me as an actor. The kind of rawness that he brought to his character, *vo bohut kam dekhne ko milti hai* (It is not seen often) that rawness, simplicity and the small things that he brought. I would love to work with Ranbir Kapoor. He is one of the finest actors we have in our industry. I'm always excited to see what he has to offer, the kind of films he is doing, the characters that he is playing and what he is doing in those characters, so maybe in future in the next five-six years will get a chance to work with him."

While sharing about her current and forthcoming projects, she says, "Mai is also there of Clean Slate Filmz. It's for Netflix and also stars Sakshi Tanwar. Then *Khufiya* with Vishal (Bhardwaj) sir and Tabu. Working with Vishal sir, one of the best directors, along with Tabu is like a dream come true."

Super foods for the year

Eating seasonal food is the key to a healthy life. Not only does it allow us to benefit from the higher life force energy in such foods, but also adds variety to our meals. Seasonal fruits and vegetables are loaded with nutrients that help boost our immunity and prevent us from the infections that might occur in that season.

However, with technological advancement, preservation of food has become easy and all foods are available throughout the year. The modern generation hardly understands the concept of eating in sync with natural rhythms and its significance towards leading a healthy life.

January: Til

Til keeps the body warm in peak winters. It is loaded with calcium, zinc, omega-3, vitamin E, fiber and antioxidants. It is the go-to food not just for good hair and skin, but also for stronger bones, healthy heart, smoother digestion and balanced blood sugar.

February: Beir

Beir is filled with minerals like potassium, phosphorus, manganese, iron, and zinc which are essential for maintaining a good

heart health. Iron boosts haemoglobin production, which helps ward off anaemia. Beir is easily digestible as it contains dietary fiber, and is great for those who tend to suffer from constipation.

March: Kanji

This seasonal probiotic drink is a tasty health tonic. It improves gut health and boosts immunity as the season changes from winters to summer. Loaded with antioxidants and various vitamins and minerals like vitamin K and C, potassium and manganese, it offers protection against a variety of chronic lifestyle diseases like fatty liver, diabetes, and even cancer.

April: Amaranth

Amaranth is a gluten-free option to wheat. It has peptides and oils with anti-inflammatory properties which relieve pain and inflammation. Amaranth is also a good source of lysine which helps calcium absorption and increases muscle mass.

May: Phalse

With a natural cooling effect, phalse is a hyper-fruit that helps regulate electrolyte imbalance. The unripe portion of the berry helps in cleansing blood and helps heal respiratory problems like sore throat, cold and bronchitis.

June: Shehtoot (Indian Mulberry)

Mulberries boost liver health and purify the blood. They contain iron that is useful to maintain liver health. Also, they are high in vitamin K and calcium, which along with iron help build stronger bone tissues and bones.

July: Bhutta (Indian Corn)

Corn is rich in vitamin A and antioxidants, which helps in maintaining good eye health. Corn is rich in fiber, which is good from the perspective of



weight-loss too. Fiber helps in digestion which facilitates weight-loss. The fiber in corn also helps in reducing cholesterol levels.

August: Apricot

Apricots, with high amounts of vitamins, flavonoids, and potassium, have significant health benefits. Flavonoids are good for your blood vessels and reduce chances of inflammation. Potassium promotes nerve and muscle functioning and supports heart health.

September: Singhaada

Singhaada contains several antioxidants, vitamins and minerals. It has been known to promote hormonal balance in the body and also improve fertility. They are high in potassium and help regulate blood pressure, and boost cardiac health too.

October: Custard Apple

These tasty treats heal ulcers and prevent acidity. The micronutrients in these give skin a smooth tone. Vitamin C and riboflavin, which are plentiful in custard

apple, are good for your eyes, while flavonoids in them are believed to prevent certain types of cancers and tumours.

November: Amla (Indian Gooseberry)

Amla is known for its immunity boosting properties. Diabetics can include this fruit in their diet as it helps in improving insulin sensitivity and also regulates blood sugar levels. It also helps in regulating production of cholesterol and has cardio-protective abilities.

December: Jimikand (Elephant foot Yam)

Jimikand has a hot digestive effect on the body and is ideal for winters. Due to its thermal effect, it decreases mucus while increasing bile and thus aiding digestion. It also helps in improving bone health, electrolyte balance and anaemia.

(The writer, Madhavi Sharma, is Nutritionist and Certified Diabetes Educator, Founder, Informed Health)



Major postponed again!



Actor Adivi Sesh's first pan-India film *Major*, which was scheduled for a theatrical release on February 11, has been postponed owing to the aggravation of the covid situation and curfew/limitations in most parts of the country. The makers have announced the news officially.

"Owing to the aggravation of the covid situation and curfew/limitations in most parts of the country, the release of *Major* stands postponed. We would announce a new release date soon. Please adhere to all covid protocols and stay safe. Our nation isn't safe, till each one of us is safe," reads the official statement," said the makers.

Directed by Sashi Kiran Tikka, the film was shot simultaneously in Telugu, Hindi and it will also be released in Malayalam. The film's musical promotions kick-started recently with first single *Hrudayama* was unveiled recently. The song became a sensation. The visually stunning teaser shared earlier by the team struck a chord with the audience generating anticipation for the film. However, it stands postponed now.

Bringing to screen the untold story of Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan, the multilingual film *Major* traces the journey of Major Sandeep from childhood, teenage, glorious years in the army to the tragic events of the Mumbai attack where he martyred, touching upon the different aspects of his being. Sobhita Dhulipala, Saiee Manjrekar, Prakash Raj, Revathi and Murli Sharma are the other prominent cast of the film produced by Sony Pictures Films India in association with Mahesh Babu's GMB Entertainment and A+S Movies.

Natural Star Nani's rom-com entertainer *Ante Sundaraniki* being directed

by Vivek Athreya under the prestigious Mythri Movie banner is gearing up for its theatrical release in summer. The film's entire shooting has been wrapped up on Monday.

"It's a wrap for the roller coaster movie of the year. *#AnteSundaraniki*," announced Nani who has also shared a small video from the last day of the sets.

The first look of *Ante Sundaraniki* was released on New Year and Nani surprised with his atypical and funny look. Kasthuri Poorna Venkata Sesha Sai Pawana Rama Sundara Prasad is his character's name in the movie. *Ante Sundaraniki* marks launch pad of Nazriya Nazim Fahadh in Telugu. Niketh Bommi cranks the camera, while Raviteja Girijala is the editor for the film.

Nani wraps up *Ante Sundaraniki* shoot



Vikram's next heads to OTT



Mahaan, will see Vikram and his son Dhruv sharing screen space. While they had plans to release it in theatres, owing to the increasing Covid cases, the makers of the film have decided to release it on Amazon Prime Videos in three languages — Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam. It will be released on February 10. Karthik Subbaraju, known for films like *Jagame Thandhiram*, *Petta*, *Pizza*, and others, directed this action thriller.

Under the umbrella

of Seven Screen Studio, Lalit Kumar financed the film. Vikram and Dhruv Vikram star in the film, which also has Vani Bhojan, Bobby Simha, Simran Sananth, and Deepak Paramesh in supporting roles. The cinematography was done by Shreyas Krishna, the editing was done by Vivek Harshan, and the musical songs were sung by Santhosh Narayanan.

Despite the failure of his last films, *Jagame Thandhiram*, on Netflix and *Arjun Reddy*, at the box office, filmmaker Subbaraju is on the edge to gain fame through his next film *Mahaan*.

Lakshmi Manchu ventures into metaverse, buys 'Azuki' NFT



Telugu actress Lakshmi Manchu has taken her opening step into metaverse, with the purchase of her first non-fungible token (NFT). *Azuki*, an iconic manga character, is her first NFT purchase.

"The ownership of the *Azuki* NFT will allow me exclusive rights to content that can be opened up later for audiences who own *Azukis*. This content could be in the form of games, short stories and other digital assets," informed Lakshmi.

NFTs are a class of digital assets that can be transacted via blockchain technology on special platforms. They are non-interchangeable, unlike crypto currency, which are fungible or interchangeable.

Lakshmi said she had been wanting to explore the new meta world for some time. "I was very nervous as this is my first NFT and I can't say I know what this new meta world is, but it sure is exciting and I'm in love with my character," she added.

My daughters are far more superior than any man: Khushbu Sundar

Stating that she took immense pride in her daughters, actress and politician Khushbu Sundar on Monday said that they are "far more superior than any man, intellectually as well as emotionally".

The actress, who took to Twitter to express her thoughts on the occasion of the 'Girl Child Day', wrote, "As we celebrate *#girlchild-day* today, we take immense pride to say we have two daughters. They are far more superior than any man, intellectually as well as emotionally."

"Celebrate your girl child. Welcome her with open arms and heart. Remember she is part of you just as your son." Union Minister for Women & Child Development Smriti Z. Irani too tweeted about encouraging and empowering girls. She said, "Educate, Encourage, Empower! Today is the day to renew our commitment towards providing equal opportunities to our girls. On National Girl Child Day, as we celebrate accomplishments of our daughters, we pledge to bridge the gender divide to build an inclusive & equal society."



Panja Vaishnav Tej's next titled *Ranga Ranga Vaibhavanga*



Panja Vaishnav Tej is captivating the attention of everyone by proving his prowess in a variety of films. According to the latest reports, his new entertainer's film has been titled *Ranga Ranga Vaibhavanga*. The film is directed by Gireesaaya, who

also directed *Arjun Reddy* in Tamil. In the film, Vaishnav Tej is romancing Ketika Sharma. With Vaishnav Tej and Ketika Sharma enticing all in a romantic manner with a butterfly kiss, the teaser piqued attention. The film is produced by BVSN Prasad and is presented by

Bapineedu under Sri Venkateswara Cine Chitra banner on a big budget. The film has music by Devi Sri Prasad, and Shamdat Sainuddin is the cinematographer. Vaishnav Tej made a dream start with Buchchi Babu Sana's rustic love storey *Uppena*, in which he romanced Kriti Shetty.

Big dent to KL Rahul's long-term captaincy ambitions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A stand-in captain, who seemed stunningly short of ideas, few seniors at the business end of their careers and a dated approach in white-ball cricket -- India's woes during the tour of South Africa were many, turning what started memorably into an eminently forgettable outing.

The signs were ominous even before they departed with now former Test skipper Virat Kohli's much publicised acrimony with top BCCI officials.

The entire episode didn't leave the team in good stead and once there it all went haywire after the opening Test win.

Stand-in ODI captain KL Rahul was then left to do a lot with too little at his disposal against an opposition, which had gained invaluable confidence.

In the end, it turned out to be a nightmare with dark clouds hovering over the future of this Indian team and no sign of 'VIBGYOR' in the Rainbow Nation.

Kohli might not admit but the former captain is going through the toughest phase as a cricketer after having given up captaincy in two out of three formats and being sacked in another.

But Because he is Kohli and in a dif-



ferent class, he managed a fine 79 in the lost third Test, where he looked the best.

He also got two half centuries in ODIs with minimum fuss where he looked more like an accumulator rather than an enforcer that one associates with 'King Kohli'. The meltdown at Cape

Town with his misdirected anger at broadcasters for a DRS gone wrong also tarnished his reputation and letting the game drift away with mindless antics wasn't his finest hour when it came to judging his temperament.

But if one is very blunt, KL Rahul

perhaps blew his chance towards being a long-term option across formats once Kohli relinquished Test captaincy after losing the Test series.

"Did KL Rahul by any stretch look like a captain to you?" a senior BCCI official counter-questioned PTI when asked if he would be considered for the Test captaincy factoring in Rohit Sharma's track record of injuries.

It is understood that coach Rahul Dravid wants to see his namesake as a long-term option and it was evident that he didn't want to put a lot of blame on his captaincy.

"He did more than a decent job and a lot about captaincy is how your players execute the skills. We were short on the ODI side. He will grow constantly and get better as he leads more," Dravid's observation drifted towards the old adage of a captain being as good as his team.

But what would hurt Rahul more is his approach in batting which was more about self preservation. The 55 off 79 balls in the second ODI deserves more criticism for the balls wasted and strike not rotated rather than the runs accumulated by him.

It is for sure that Rahul, if he has to be in the white-ball scheme of things,

will have to bat in the middle-order and be a finisher.

His bowling changes didn't work in the middle overs and after watching Temba Bavuma make some inspired moves like starting the attack with Aiden Markram, he introduced Ravichandran Ashwin early in one game but that was more of a reactive move rather than a pro-active one.

What stuck out like a sore thumb is the fact that even the biggest of Proteas fans couldn't have imagined that a team facing huge transitional problems and a coach due to face a commission inquiring into his racial misconduct, would turn the heat on and win five out of six international matches and that too at a canter.

The South Africans played good cricket but were liberally helped by an Indian team that didn't walk the talk on its proclaimed cricketing philosophies.

There wasn't any fearlessness for better part of the tour, no innovative, out of box thinking and at times, they seemed short on execution of skills.

Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane showed some spark in the second innings of the second Test but for the better part, they were not playing their positive game.



Balance of ODI side an issue, accepts head coach Dravid

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

India's head coach Rahul Dravid had no hesitation in admitting that the ODI squad lacked balance with the likes of Hardik Pandya and Ravindra Jadeja unavailable to execute their all-round skills at numbers six and seven respectively.

India lost the three-match ODI series 0-3 and Dravid answered a range of questions covering the poor show in middle-overs both in batting and bowling, KL Rahul's nascent captaincy career and how Venkatesh Iyer is not being thought of as a top-order batter.

"Yeah, we understand the template. Obviously, a large part of the template is also dependant on the balance of your squad," Dravid replied when asked if the Indian team needs to revisit its template in 50-over cricket.

"I think if you are a little bit honest, some of the guys who help us balance the squad out and give us those all-round options at Nos 6, 7 and 8 are probably not here, and available for selection," Dravid said, clearly talking about the absence of Pandya, who is trying to get his bowling fitness back and Jadeja, who is recuperating from a knee injury.

"Hopefully, when they (Hardik and Jadeja) come back, it will give us lot more depth, it allows us then to probably play in a slightly different style," Dravid made it clear as to what he missed in the series.

Dravid's assessment of his namesake's leadership skills was pretty lavish as he wanted people to factor in that he could only do as much with the kind of squad he had at his disposal. "I thought he did a good job. Not easy to be on wrong side of the result. He is just starting out as captain," he said.

".....And he will learn and a large part of captaincy is execution of skills by your players and quality of side you have got. We were a little bit short on the ODI side of things and I thought he did a very decent job, someone who is growing and will constantly be improving and get better as a captain."

There was no denying that India's batting lacked momentum in all three games especially between overs 20 to 40. "We certainly could do better with batting in middle overs," Dravid said.

"But having said that, even South Africa who batted first on two occasions scored 290 as well and if I think back and look at the 30th over in both those games, we should have chased them down."

"We didn't because we played some poor shots and we didn't play some smart cricket at critical situations," he said without naming anyone.

Dravid isn't someone who believes in taking names but when he spoke about demanding performances in lieu of security and extended run given to some middle-order batters, he obviously meant Shreyas Iyer and Rishabh Pant.

Smriti Mandhana named ICC women's Cricketer of Year

IANIS ■ DUBAI

India opener Smriti Mandhana on Monday was named ICC women's Cricketer of the Year for 2021. After being named in the ICC's women's T20I team of the year, Smriti has now won the Rachael Heyhoe-Flint Trophy awarded to the ICC women's cricketer of the year for the second time after 2018.

The left-handed opener beat competition from Tammy Beaumont of England, Lizelle Lee of South Africa and Gabby Lewis of Ireland to clinch the honour. Smriti has also become the second women's cricketer after Australia's Ellyse Perry to win the honour more than once.

"I am truly honoured for receiving the prestigious Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for the ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year 2021. I am grateful to my teammates, my coaches, my family, friends and fans who believed in my potential and supported me in this journey," said Smriti in her acceptance of the award.

Despite India enduring a difficult 2021, Smriti stock continued to rise this year, scoring 855 runs in 22 international matches at an average of 38.86 with one century and five half-centuries.

In the limited-overs series against South Africa where India won just two of the eight matches at home, Smriti played a major role in both wins. She made 80 not out as India chased down 158 in the second ODI that helped them level the series and scored 48 not out to win the final T20I.



Smriti then played a sublime knock of 78 in the first innings of the one-off Test against England at Bristol that ended in a draw. She played an important knock of 49 in India's only win in the ODI series. Her 15-ball 29 and fifty in the T20I series went in vain though as India fell short in both the matches and lost the series 2-1.

"A recognition of such high class from the global governing body of cricket in an exceptional and difficult year will motivate me to continue to better my game and contribute to Team India's success going forward. I look forward to 2022 with a clear focus on winning the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2022 in New Zealand as we continue to prepare as a team and unit," added Smriti. Smriti was in good touch in the multi-format series against Australia, starting with the ODI series where she scored 86 in the second match. She compiled a brilliant century in the only Test (the first of her career), and was awarded the Player of the Match for the same.

Lucknow IPL team to be called Lucknow Super Giants

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

The Lucknow franchise of the Indian Premier League will be called Lucknow Super Giants after its owners announced the name chosen by its fans.

The official IPL team of Lucknow, owned by RPGS Group, decided to take public opinions from its fans and the name was shared by owner Sanjiv Goenka in a video message on Monday.

"Thank you so much for your overwhelming response to the 'Naam banao naam kamao' contest. Lakhs and lakhs of people responded, based on that we are very happy to choose the name for the Lucknow IPL team," Goenka said in his message, while revealing the team name.

"And the name that we have chosen based on your recommendations is Lucknow Super Giants. Thank you so much for your response and love and continue to give us your blessings in the future as well."

The franchise owners had launched a consumer engagement campaign on social media on January 3 to decide the name of the new IPL side.

Lucknow and Ahmedabad will be the two new teams in the IPL from this year as the lucrative T20 tournament expanded its wings to become a 10-team contest.



India fined for slow over-rate after losing third ODI

IANIS ■ CAPE TOWN

India have been fined 40 per cent of their match fees for maintaining a slow over-rate against South Africa in the third and final ODI of the series in Cape Town on Sunday. In the match, India were bowled out for 283 in 49.2 overs while chasing 288 at the Newlands Cricket Ground, which meant South Africa won the series 3-0.

"Andy Pycroft of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees imposed the sanction after KL Rahul's side was ruled to be two overs short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration," said the International Cricket Council (ICC) in a statement.

In accordance with Article 2.22 of

the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to minimum over-rate offences, players are fined 20 per cent of their match fee for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time.

Rahul pleaded guilty to the offence and accepted the proposed sanction, so there was no need for a formal hearing. On-field umpires Marais Erasmus and Bongani Jele, third umpire Allahudien Palekar and fourth umpire Adrien Holdstock levelled the charge. After Quinton de Kock's 124 propelled South Africa to 287 in 49.5 overs, Shikhar Dhawan and Virat Kohli made 61 and 65 respectively while Deepak Chahar made a quick-fire 54 off just 34 balls. But the Indian trio's efforts went in vain as they fell short of getting over the line by four runs.

World Cup dreams over for Indian women football players

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

For a bunch of Indian women football players hailing from humble back-grounds, life in the last one year has revolved around playing in the AFC Asian Cup and with that taking a shot at the elusive FIFA World Cup but that dream lay shattered after COVID-19 knocked them out of the tournament.

From captain Ashalata Devi to the youngest in the squad, Hemam Shilky Devi, the Asian Cup was a once in a lifetime opportunity and all of them were looking forward to qualify for the quarterfinals, which would have also taken them to the 2023 World Cup, before they were left "heartbroken". If not a World Cup berth, they would have made it to the intercontinental play-offs which would have been historic



in Indian football.

But it is now in the realm of 'ifs' and 'buts' after 12 players tested positive for the virus and the match against Chinese Taipei was called off. The Asian Football Confederation on Monday confirmed that India are deemed to have withdrawn

from the continental showpiece. "Absolutely devastated," said senior player and goalkeeper Aditi Chauhan aptly capturing the sentiment within the squad right now.

"In the last one year, our lives have revolved around the Asian Cup. Our sole aim was to

qualify for quarterfinals and take a shot at the World Cup," said another player.

"We are extremely sad and disappointed at the moment. But it is not the end of the world and the hope that we will get chances to achieve this in future if we keep on doing well is giving us solace."

Many of the players have fought tremendous odds to reach at this level.

Some took up to the sport as it was "cheaper" to pursue while others had to go against the will of their parents and community. Skipper Ashalata faced opposition from her family. Ditto was the case of Shilky, who is all of 16 and had the distinction of being the tournament's youngest player.

The journey wasn't easy for any of them and this setback is definitely going to cause turmoil in their minds.

National Poker Series returns with its 2nd edition

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's most notable poker series - National Poker Series India is back with its 2nd edition in 2022. PokerBaazi.com, which is India's biggest poker platform, will continue as the hosting partner for the NPS. The series, scheduled to begin from March 6, has announced a prize pool of 18.5 crores for 84 tournaments across 15 days. With 252 medals on the line to be awarded to podium finishers in all 84 tournaments, and three NPS Podium medals for the three finishers with highest medal tallies, this year's National Poker Series will yet again have Golden Rush as one of its marquee events. Additionally, NPS Podium finishers will get to play the world's biggest international poker event in Las Vegas, USA. The qualifier tournaments, also known as satellite tournaments, have already commenced from January 15.

Babar Azam, Joe Root, Shaheen Afridi bag top honours

PTI ■ DUBAI

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam was on Monday named ICC ODI Cricketer of the Year while England Test captain Joe Root took home the top honours in the red-ball category, beating competition from, among others, Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin. Babar's team-mate and left-arm pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi won the Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year. He was bestowed the honour for taking 78 wickets across formats in 36 internationals at an average of 22.20 in 2021.

The 27-year-old Babar scored 405 runs in six games at an average of 67.50 in 2021. He was the second-



highest run-scorer with 228 runs and was the Player of the Match in both of Pakistan's wins in the 2-1 series victory against South Africa.

The architect of Pakistan's chase of 274 in the first ODI, Babar made a century and laid the foundation with an 82-ball 94 in the final

ODI where the visitors posted 320 batting first.

He was the lone warrior for Pakistan when they were swept by England 3-0. He accumulated 177 runs in three games but found no support as none of the other batters managed to score more than 100 in the series.

Alize Cornet reaches quarterfinals at her 63rd Grand Slam

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Alize Cornet dropped to her knees on the hard blue court, clasped her hands and took a few moments to let it sink in.

In her 17th trip to the Australia Open, her 63rd run at a Grand Slam, and two days after celebrating her 32nd birthday, Cornet finally qualified for the quarterfinals at one of the four major events in tennis.

Cornet recovered after a second-set meltdown in the hot Melbourne sun on Monday to advance to the last eight at the Australian Open with a 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 win over two-time major champion Simona Halep.

"It's never too late to try again!" Cornet said in her on-court TV interview. "To be in my first quarterfinal. It's a dream come true."

"The journey goes on. I still

can't believe it."

Cornet led by a set and 3-1 before losing five consecutive games and 16 straight points as Halep took the match to a decider.

The match was 2-2 in the third set after Cornet held a service game at love, saying "allez" after every shot she hit.

Halep got a break-point chance two games later with a forehand down the line that just caught the outside of the paint and which Cornet could barely believe. She saved it and held serve, then broke Halep's serve for a 4-3 lead that set her on course for the quarterfinals.

Cornet will next play Danielle Collins, the No. 27 seed from the United States who beat 19th-seeded Elise Mertens 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 in an almost three-hour match to open play on Rod Laver Arena. Collins was a semifinalist in Australia in 2019.



Cornet made her main draw Grand Slam singles debut as a wild-card entry at the 2005 French Open. She lost five previous fourth-round appearances but had gone close to reaching the quarterfinals before, having match points in the fourth round in Australia in 2009 before losing to eventual runner-up Dinara Safina.

With a ranking of 61 — 50 lower than her career-high No. 11 — Cornet came into the 2022 season acknowledging retirement must be close and that it was now or never for a Grand Slam breakthrough.

"I don't know if it's helping," she said.

"I just told myself that if it should happen, then it will happen. Maybe leave it in the hands of fate, destiny, I don't know."

The marquee men's match was

on Margaret Court Arena, where U.S. Open champion Daniil Medvedev beat 70th-ranked Maxime Cressy 6-2, 7-6 (4), 6-7 (4), 7-5. The second-ranked Medvedev is trying to become the first man in the Open era to win his second major singles title in the next Grand Slam event. He's now potentially three wins from achieving that.

Medvedev was a runner-up in Australia last year but avenged that with a win over Novak Djokovic in the U.S. Open final. Djokovic isn't defending his Australian Open title after being deported on the eve of the year's first major for failing to meet the country's strict COVID-19 vaccination criteria.

Cressy's serve-and-volley style created some frustrations for Medvedev, who said late in the fourth set that this was the "most

unlucky day I've ever had in my life."

His luck changed quickly. After saving eight break-point chances in the set, Cressy was broken in that game and Medvedev served out at love.

He will next play ninth-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime, who beat 2014 U.S. Open champion Marin Cilic 2-6, 7-6 (7), 6-2, 7-6 (4). Medvedev beat the Canadian in the semifinals at last year's U.S. Open. No. 11 Jannik Sinner ended Australia's last hope in the men's draw when he beat No. 32 Alex de Minaur 7-6 (3), 6-3, 6-4.

The temperature hit 34 degrees Celsius (93 degrees F) on Day 8, with extra breaks allowed for players to cope with the heat.

Cornet used bags of ice to cool down her head during changeovers, and draped cold towels over her neck.

