

**ANALYSIS 7**  
CAN EXPENDITURE TAX BE  
ALTERNATIVE TO I-T?**MONEY 8**  
BUDGET 2022: INSURERS URGE HIGHER 80 C  
INVESTMENT LIMIT; REDUCTION IN GST**SPORTS 12**  
PM MODI WRITES TO GAYLE,  
RHODES ON REPUBLIC DAY

HYDERABAD, THURSDAY, JANUARY 27, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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10TH CLASS  
IS VERY SPECIAL  
TO ME: AVIKA

Page 11

**INDIA'S 1ST WOMAN RAFALE PILOT  
SHIVANI IN R-DAY AIR FORCE TABLEAU**

The country's first woman Rafale fighter jet pilot Shivangi Singh was part of the Indian Air Force tableau at the Republic Day parade on Wednesday. She is only the second woman fighter jet pilot to be part of the Indian Air Force (IAF) tableau. Last year, Flight Lieutenant Bhawna Kanth became the first female fighter jet pilot to be part of the IAF tableau. Ms Singh, who is from Varanasi, joined the IAF in 2017 and was commissioned in the IAF's second batch of women fighter pilots. She had been flying MiG-21 Bison aircraft before flying the Rafale.

**IMMUNE RESPONSE TO OMICRON  
EFFECTIVELY NEUTRALISES DELTA TOO**

An ICMR study has demonstrated that individuals infected with Omicron have significant immune response which could neutralise not only the Omicron, but also other variants of concern, including the most prevalent Delta variant. It suggests that the immune response induced by the Omicron could effectively neutralise the Delta variant, making the re-infection with Delta variant less likely, thereby displacing the Delta as dominant strain, the study said emphasising upon the need for Omicron-specific vaccine strategy.

**VIRAT, ELITE HORSE OF PRESIDENT'S  
GUARD, RETIRES; GETS PAT**

Virat, the President's Bodyguard Commandant's black horse, retired from his years-long service after the 73rd Republic Day parade today. Virat was the mount of President's Bodyguard Commandant Colonel Anup Tiwary and took part 13 times in Republic Day parades. President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh patted and bid farewell to the magnificent horse after the parade. Virat was awarded the Chief of the Army Staff Commendation on the eve of Army Day on January 15.

**RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE 'WILL  
CHANGE THE WORLD': JOE BIDEN**

The United States on Tuesday warned Moscow of damaging sanctions, including measures personally targeting Vladimir Putin, if it moves ahead with an invasion of Ukraine, as Russian combat troops massing around the pro-Western country launched new exercises. Tension appeared to be increasing, with the White House saying the risk of a Russian invasion of Ukraine 'remains imminent.' Warning that such a move would prompt 'enormous consequences' and even 'change the world,' President Joe Biden said he would consider adding direct sanctions on Putin to a raft of measures being drawn up.

## KCR skips R-Day fete at Raj Bhavan; Guv praises Modi, ignores CM

SNCN ACHARYULU  
■ HYDERABAD

Two incidents that took place at the Raj Bhavan during the 73rd Republic Day celebrations on Wednesday have raised eyebrows.

The skipping of the Republic Day celebrations by the Chief Minister may have occurred for the first time. Due to the third wave of the Covid pandemic, the state government had decided to conduct Republic Day celebrations at the Raj Bhavan instead of Public Gardens.

Usually, Republic Day celebrations are held at the Parade Grounds. But the government shifted the venue of Republic Day celebrations two years ago to the Public Gardens from Parade Grounds.

Due to the intensity of the Covid third wave the venue of Republic Day celebrations was shifted to the Raj Bhavan this year from Public Gardens.

But Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao did not attend



Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan delivering the Republic Day address after hoisting the national flag at the Raj Bhavan on Wednesday.

the Republic Day celebrations held at the Raj Bhavan.

**TS is making rapid  
strides in different  
areas: Governor**

Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Wednesday said the youngest State of Telangana is making rapid strides in different areas. Delivering the Republic Day speech at Raj Bhavan here after hoisting the tricolour, the Governor said Hyderabad is fast emerging as the Pharma Hub, IT Hub, and Medical Hub and is witnessing the establishment of offices by many global corporate organisations. I wish Telangana State to emerge as the leader in quality higher education, and consolidate its position as the Innovation Hub through constant efforts by promoting Innovation Eco-System and



Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao, who skipped the 73rd R-Day fete at Raj Bhavan on Wednesday, went later to the Army Memorial at Parade Grounds, where he paid floral tributes to the martyred army personnel by lighting a lamp.

**KCR appoints  
party presidents  
in all 33 districts  
at one go**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TRS President Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao has appointed new presidents for TRS district party units as part of the party's resolve to strengthen its organisational structure and give importance to party affairs.

The majority of the district party presidents are MLAs, MLCs and Zilla Parishad chairmen apart from three MPs. At one point of time, there were indications that other active party leaders would get an opportunity to become district presidents.

Before the TRS plenary meeting held on last October 26 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Pink Party, the party's Working President KT Rama Rao had completed the setting up of the party's organisational committees at the village, mandal and municipality levels.

## TS to declare war against drug menace

□ CM to chair meet with police, excise officials on Jan 28

□ Special Narcotics and Organised Crime Control Cell soon

ML MELLY MAITREYI  
■ HYDERABAD

Taking a serious view of the growing illegal trade in narcotics and psychotropic substances as well as the consumption of prohibited substances, Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao has instructed the officials concerned to crack the whip and root out the drug menace.

Chief Minister held a review at the Pragathi Bhavan here on Wednesday, and considered stringent measures that could be taken to control the abuse of narcotics. He decided to chair the State Police and Excise Conference at Pragathi Bhavan on January 28 to chalk out an action plan with the primary objective of initially curbing and eventually eliminating the



drugs menace spreading in the city and elsewhere in the State. Home Minister, Excise Minister, Chief Secretary, DGP, DGs, all Superintendents of Police, Commissioners, DCPs and the State Excise Department SPs and other officers concerned will attend the conference.

## Andhra Govt issues notifications proposing 13 new districts

□ Proposed districts are named after NTR, Alluri, Lord Balaji, Annamayya, Sri Satya Sai

SNV SUDHIR  
■ VIJAYAWADA

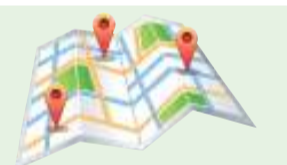
In a tearing hurry and with lightning speed, the Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy government issued gazette notifications for formation of 13 new districts in addition to the existing 13 in Andhra Pradesh at midnight of Tuesday.

If everything goes well as planned by the government, Andhra Pradesh will have 26 districts by April 2, Ugadi, the Telugu New Year day.

In the notifications, the government has sought objections or suggestions from those residing in the proposed districts. The objections or suggestions should be submitted in writing to the

Collectors of the existing districts within 30 days.

Though re-organising of the districts has been on the cards since quite some time in line with Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy's poll promise, the government sprang a surprise on Tuesday. Making each parliamentary segment a district was Jagan's poll promise in 2019.

**Names of districts:  
Jagan plays it to the gallery**

The Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy government has also tried to make a strong political point with the names of the proposed districts. As promised by the Chief Minister in 2018, his government has now proposed to name Krishna district after legendary actor,

**Not Machilipatnam,  
Vijayawada named  
after NTR**

Instead of Machilipatnam parliament segment, as expected earlier, the State government has proposed to name Vijayawada parliament segment after legendary actor and TDP founder N T Rama Rao. Interestingly, NTR's native village Nimmakuru falls in Machilipatnam parliament constituency.

**Sathya Sai devotees  
thank Jagan**

The devotees of renowned spiritual leader Sathya Sai are celebrating the government's proposal to carve out Sri Sathya Sai district. Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust's managing trustee RJ Rathnakar stated that it was a historic day, and profusely thanked the Chief Minister for conferring the 'great honour'. He thanked all the public representatives,

**State needs to pass  
Centre's test**

The State government may have to pass a test for its proposal to re-organise the districts to be implemented as planned. The Centre had, in the past, frozen the activity of redrawing the boundaries of the districts and villages across the country in the wake of the latest population census. As the census could not be taken up as per schedule due to Covid pandemic, whether the Centre would accept the proposal by the State government after the due procedure is followed here or not has to be seen.

## GST authorities arrest 27-yr old for issuing bogus Rs 1,000 cr bills

PNS ■ MUMBAI

An 'accountant' has been arrested for allegedly issuing bogus bills of Rs 1,000 crore and committing an input tax credit (ITC) fraud of Rs 181 crore, GST authorities said on Wednesday.

The 27-year-old man, who had studied till class 12 and worked as an accountant and GST consultant, was arrested by officers of the Palghar CGST Commissionerate of the Mumbai Zone, as per an official statement.

Investigations into the matter started based on specific inputs received from data mining and data analysis, which pointed to M/s Nithilan Enterprises being engaged in availing and passing of fake ITC by issuing fake invoices without receipt of goods or services, it said.

It later transpired that the accountant -- whose identity has not been disclosed -- had stolen the identity of one of his clients for committing the GST fraud for monetary gains, the statement said.

**HISTORICAL  
remains found in  
Nalgonda district****P  
3**

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month &amp; Paksham:

Pausa, Krishna Paksha

Tithi : Dashami - Jan 27 04:34 AM to Jan 28 02:16 AM

Bhadra - Jan 28 02:16 AM to Jan 29 11:35 PM

Nakshatram : Vishaka - Jan 29 10:05 AM to Jan 27 08:51

Anuradha - Jan 27 08:51 AM to Jan 28 07:10 AM

Rahukalam : 1:52 PM to 3:16 PM

Yamagandam : 6:52 AM to 8:16 AM

Varjyam : 12:34 PM to 02:03 PM

Gulika : 9:40 AM to 11:04 AM

Amritakalam : 09:30 PM to 10:59 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham : 12:06 PM to 12:51 PM

HYDRABAD

WEATHER

Forecast: SUNNY

Temp: 31°

Humidity: 41%

Sunrise: 6:53 AM

Sunset: 6:04 PM

Updated JANUARY 26, 2021 5:00 PM



## Parts of Telangana to shiver at 5°C

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Parts of Telangana will be reeling under severe winter starting Thursday, with northern and western districts likely to witness temperatures dropping to 5°C.

The western disturbance in the northern parts of the country is affecting the temperatures in Telangana.

Minimum temperatures are likely to drop to 9-10°C in Hyderabad and to 7-9°C in parts of the Greater

Hyderabad Municipal Corporation. On Wednesday, Bheempoor in Adilabad recorded 9.7°C and Rajendranagar in Hyderabad recorded 14°C.

## Dolo's popularity has not hit city paracetamol makers

NAVEENA GHANATE  
■ HYDERABAD

The paracetamol tablets distributed by the Telangana government to fight the Covid-19 pandemic are 'Made in Hyderabad' by a city-based pharmaceutical company named Granules India.

The company is committed to supplying 16 crore paracetamol tablets to the Telangana government free of cost.

Krishna Prasad Chigurupati, the founder of Granules India said, "Granules has supplied around 7.5 crore paracetamol tablets till date which costs around Rs 4.5 crore. We will continue to supply them as committed."

The drugmaker claims that the



popularity of Dolo 650 is not hindering the manufacturing of

The drugmaker claims that the popularity of Dolo 650 is not hindering the manufacturing of Paracetamol. Krishna Prasad said, "Granules primarily focuses on exports to North America and Europe, our primary markets. Paracetamol constituted around 30 per cent of the overall sales of the company in FY 2021."

Paracetamol. Krishna Prasad said, "Granules

primarily focuses on exports to North America and Europe, our primary markets. Paracetamol constituted around 30 per cent of the overall sales of the company in FY 2021."

The Covid pandemic has resulted in an increase in the production of paracetamol leading to Hyderabad-based bulk drug manufacturers registering increases in both volumes and demand.

As per a recent study, the Acetaminophen (Paracetamol) market is expected to grow in the period 2022 to 2029. Not only Covid-19, but the increasing prevalence of chronic disorders and conditions requiring pain management drives the paracetamol market.

**Vedas to Metaverse:  
Education Ministry  
tableau at R-Day  
parade****P:5**

## 9 non-BJP ruled states oppose Centre's proposal on IAS officers' central deputation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as nine non-BJP ruled states have opposed the Centre's proposal that gives it an overriding power while deciding on central deputation of IAS officers, whereas eight others have given their consent, officials said on Wednesday.

A reminder will soon be sent to the states and Union Territories which have not yet responded to the proposal on making changes in the relevant service rules, they said.

Odisha, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Rajasthan have raised their voice against the amendments, the officials said.

On the other hand, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh have given their consent, they added.

Karnataka and Meghalaya had opposed the proposal initially sent to them last month but are expect-

ed to send a revised proposal, the officials said, adding that Bihar had also opposed the move earlier.

While the nine states opposed the suggested changes saying they were against the federal structural of the country, the Centre has defended its proposal asserting that the states are not sparing sufficient number of IAS officers for deputation which is affecting its functioning, the officials said.

Sources in the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) said a trend of decreasing representation of IAS officers, up to the joint secretary-level at the Centre, has been noticed as most of the states are not meeting their Central Deputation Reserve (CDR) obligations and the number of officers, sponsored by them to serve at the Centre are much lesser.

Officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) are allocated a cadre, which is a state/states or states and Union territories.

The Nation is turning 75 and it is preparing to celebrate 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsavam'. This journey of 75 years has been a spectacular one. From an impoverished nation, it is today the world's third largest economy. India is today one of the leading countries in Information Technology, Space Science, Defence and Pharmaceuticals. India has shown the world its capability by vaccinating more than one and a half billion people in record time. Under the able leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi India is recognised today as a super power.

One area in which the country needs to utilise its resources is sports. Despite being the world's second most populous country with 70 per cent of its citizens young, India ends up at the bottom of the Medals Tally in international competitions like Olympics. Barring a few team sports like cricket and hockey and flashes of individual brilliance in games like badminton, shooting, tennis, wrestling, boxing, etc., the

# India@Sports superpower

**One area in which the country needs to utilise its resources is sports. Despite being the world's second most populous country with 70 per cent of its citizens young, India ends up at the bottom of the Medals Tally in international competitions like Olympics.**

Central and State Governments. Prime Minister Modi interacting with sportspersons before events, congratulating them personally on winning medals and later felicitating them has given a lot of encouragement to sportspersons. Now, Olympic medal winners are also treated as national heroes. Many new training academies have been added in the recent past along with world-class coaching. Some actions that we could

take are:

i) The country should focus on some key sports where India has been performing well, eg. badminton, wrestling, boxing, weightlifting, shooting, archery, hockey, throws (javelin, shot-put) etc. We need to identify sports where India can do well, for eg. track and field items.

ii) The early spotting of talent should be done by organising "talent hunt" competitions in three age groups: 6 – 10



AJAY JAIN, IAS

years; 10 – 14 years and 14 – 18 years.

iii) For each sport, top 50-100 children and teenagers should be identified and then imparted coaching.

iv) Central Ministries/PSUs, State Governments and private com-

panies should join hands to develop sports infrastructure for training the spotted talent.

v) Each sport should be adopted by one Central Ministry or PSUs of that Ministry; one of the State Governments and one private company. The Orissa Government adopting hockey helped the Indian men's hockey team tremendously and it won a bronze medal in the recent Olympics.

vi) All the three above should develop world class academies and coaching in the identified sport. This would include upgrading existing infrastructure.

vii) For developing new infrastructure, the State Government shall provide land and infrastructure; the Central Government/PSU shall fund the cost of building and equipment while the private compa-

ny shall look after operation and maintenance of the Academy.

viii) World-class coaches should be engaged. Top Indian players who have excelled in that sport should be engaged as coaches.

ix) The players who pass out from these Academies shall be Brand Ambassadors of the concerned Central Government/PSU/State Government and the private company. This would encourage the above Ministries/State Government and the private sector to adopt the sport. Already, spending in sports is part of Corporate Social Responsibility.

x) Domestic tournaments like the IPL, Hockey League, Kabaddi, Badminton, etc. should be conducted in all sports. International players should also be invited to take part in such tournaments. The experience of conducting IPL has shown that such tournaments go a long way in promoting talent.

xi) The concerned federa-

tions should also be involved in that sport. Federations should be kept away from politics and only professionals should be involved in those federations.

xii) Sports science and sports medicine should also be promoted. Top-class physiotherapists and personnel should be engaged.

xiii) The above Central Ministries/ PSUs, State Governments and private companies should also take the responsibility of developing sports infrastructure in schools and colleges.

xiv) India should aim to achieve top five ranks by 2047 when India turns 100. (100 Medals by 2047) should be our motto.

Initiatives like these will help provide the groundwork to make sports a viable career for Indians and put India on its way to sporting glory. Hopefully, we will see not one, but hundreds of Neeraj Chopras in coming years.

(The views expressed are personal)

## GST authorities arrest 27-yr old...

Continued from page 1

Confronted with material evidence, the accountant confessed to the offence of issuing more than Rs 1,000 crore of bogus bills and availment of fake ITC of Rs 181 crore, after which he was placed under arrest on Tuesday.

A local court remanded the arrested accused to judicial custody for 14 days.

The statement said the accused is suspected to be a part of a bigger network which lures innocent people to obtain GST registration and then 'steals' this registration, which is subsequently deployed for generation, availment and passing on of fake ITC.

Efforts are underway to identify the kingpin of the racket and other beneficiaries of this network, the statement said.

## Srinivas sees conspiracy behind affidavit tampering charge

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister V. Srinivas Goud has refuted allegations that he tampered with the election affidavit submitted by him during the 2018 Assembly elections.

He said that a petition on this was heard in the Delhi High Court regarding these allegations and that the case was dismissed on December 15, 2021.

He said that a former minister, a former MP and another leader from Mahbubnagar district will soon be exposed for conspiring against him.

Earlier in the day, reports circulated that the Election



Commission had received a complaint that Srinivas had committed irregularities in the 2018 Assembly elections. Two affidavits were found to have been uploaded on the

website in violation of rules.

Srinivas said, "Some people have filed cases against me in the Delhi High Court along with the Central Election Commission. The petition against me was struck down on December 15, 2021, in the Delhi High Court. Dismissing the petition, the High Court warned the petitioners not to file false cases. Some people are engaging in false propaganda against me as I hail from a backward caste. That includes a former minister and a former MP. They are playing such dramas as they have no political future. I won with a record majority in

Mahbubnagar."

He said that the allegations were being made based on a petition filed in the Delhi High Court which was already dismissed on December 15, 2021.

"In Mahbubnagar, some people are doing this by joining the party for growing as politicians. Doesn't they know that the affidavit filed with the B-Form is final? False allegations are also made that I did not pay the fines imposed on my cars and the loans I took. For having some unpaid fines on my car, will I lose my position? In that case no MLA, MP or even the PM will be eligible," Srinivas said.

## TS will get Centre to revive CCI: KTR

NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD

Center out to privatise Singareni IT Tower for Adilabad soon



Telangana IT and Industries Minister K T Rama Rao has asserted that he will bring pressure on the Centre so as to revive the Cement Corporation of India (CCI) with support from the state government.

Adilabad-based local MLA and former minister Jogu Ramanna, along with other key leaders of the district, met KTR at Pragati Bhavan here on Tuesday. They discussed the contours of the agitational path that may have to be adopted for the purpose of restarting the organisation.

KTR said that the Telangana government had been making efforts to restart the company, apart from approaching the Union government for taking

appropriate decisions. KTR offered to provide all kinds of special concessions required for the resumption to CCI if it could be set up as a new company.

KTR said that the government had been trying to create employment opportunities by setting up several indus-

tries in the erstwhile Adilabad district. The Union government was conspiring to sell all public sector companies in the state and elsewhere in the country. The Centre was making gradual moves to privatise Singareni as well, he said.

KTR recalled that he had personally met Union ministers several times for reviving CCI in Adilabad. However, there had been no positive response from the Centre, till date, he said.

KTR said if necessary they would go to Delhi, along with youth, and put pressure on the Centre for reviving CCI. An IT Tower would be sanctioned for Adilabad soon, the Minister said. KTR asked the authorities to also prepare proposals for setting up a textile park.

## 4 TS villages recognise their innovators

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Innovation Cell (TSIC), the ITE&C Department, and the Government of Telangana have identified four innovators from the districts of Azamnagar in Jayashankar Bhupalapally, Palampet in Mulugu, Jayaram in Mahabubabad, and Pamireddy in Wanaparthy.

The identification of the four innovators was done by the Sarpanch and Village Secretaries of the Gram

Panchayats. The first innovator recognised was Edulapuram Shashidhar, from the Azamnagar village of Jayashankar Bhupalapally.

He devised a mechanism to automatically switch off and on the streetlights in his village thus saving way energy.

His innovation works on a one-to-many mechanism, where one device fixed in the lane automates the on-off mechanism for all the streetlights in the concerned lane.

Vollala Sai Kumar, a man

from the Palampet village of Mulugu district is a serial innovator who has devised solutions for various groups like farmers, the specially-abled, electricians etc. His latest solution is a mechanism to save electricity in the village and to prevent electric shocks.

Velle Srinivas from the Jayaram village of Mahbubabad district is a cable TV mechanic who devised an Automatic Advance Drip Irrigation system using solar energy that once fixed in the centre of a farm, tests the

moisture of the soil at various intervals and automates the working of the motor for pumping water.

Barige Sai Praneeth Rao from Pamireddy in Wanaparthy district is a school innovator who took the problem of toilet commodes fixed at uniform height that was posing a problem for students with varying heights.

He and his teacher came up with an idea of wall-mounted toilet commodes based so that all students can use them comfortably.

## Parts of Telangana...

Continued from page 1

In GHMC, lowest temperature recorded was 12.8°C at University of Hyderabad, Rangareddy district. After the western disturbances in the north of the country, cold-wave like conditions may prevail in Hyderabad this week, IMD-H has predicted.

## Decision to replace deputy unwilling sarpanches to sign cheques with new ward members resented

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government has been causing severe inconvenience to the upa sarpanches by issuing an order that will affect their cheque power.

The orders suggest election of new ward member in place of upa sarpanch, if they refuse to sign cheques. To elect the new ward member, grama sabha should adopt a resolution and send it to the district collector for approval.

It would mean making it

Continued from page 1

The conference to be held on Friday would look closely at measures to be taken and the guidelines to be followed to curb drug abuse.

At Wednesday's review, in which Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, DGP Mahender Reddy and Hyderabad Police Commissioner C V Anand

took part, KCR said no one, however influential they might be, should be spared and all those involved in drug offences should be given stern punishment.

KCR instructed the DGP to form a special Narcotics and Organised Crime Control Cell (Counter Intelligence Cell) in the Police Department with 1,000 members.

mandatory for upa sarpanches to sign the cheques. The orders instilled a sense of insecurity among them.

The upa sarpanches feel that it is not proper for the government to override their authority in spite of they they take active part in development activity in villages.

They feel that such authority is not justified against them as they are democratically elected by people. Earlier, sarpanches opposed cheque power to deputy sarpanches after the

conclusion of sarpanch elections. The sarpanches protested in a big way demanding cancellation of cheque power to their deputies. But, the government tried to placate them saying that it was done only to strengthen local bodies.

But, the sarpanches are in no mood to buy this argument. They opposed the authority of district collectors to take action against them and sought amending the Panchayat Raj Act. But the government did not relent.

## 9 non-BJP...

Continued from page 1

Every cadre is allowed a CDR to ensure that officers have the opportunity to work on central deputation, which adds to their experience.

According to DoPT sources, the number of IAS officers on CDR has gone down from 309 in 2011 to 223 as on date.

The DoPT has recently proposed changes in the IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954 that will take away the power of states to override the Centre's request for seeking officers on central deputation.

Odisha, in its opposition, said once the move comes into force, it will affect the administration of states and have an impact on the implementation of various development projects.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg
Dressed/With Skin
Without Skin
Broiler at Farm

₹191
₹211
₹102

EGG RATES ₹/100
HYDERABAD
VIJAYAWADA
VISAKHAPATNAM

415
437
435

RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)
₹4.15

## KCR skips R-Day fete at Raj...

Continued from page 1

However, the CM conducted Republic Day celebrations at the Pragati Bhavan. Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, DGP Mahendar Reddy and other dignitaries attended the celebrations.

Political circles were surprised over the skipping of Republic Day celebrations held at the Raj Bhavan by KCR. Raj Bhavan sources said that they had invited the CM also, but they didn't know the reason for him skipping the Republic Day celebrations.

At the same time sources close to KCR said the CM did not attend the Republic Day celebrations held at the Raj Bhavan to avoid unnecessary problems due to the Covid third wave.

But in Andhra Pradesh the Republic Day celebrations were held at the IGMSC Stadium complex which was attended by Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy and his Cabinet

## TS is making...

take the lead in contributing for the realisation of Self-Reliant India, she said, according to an official release. Expressing happiness and appreciating the bountiful crop production in Telangana, the Governor said in the process, Telangana has emerged as the Rice Bowl of India. I salute the farmers for their toil, despite the pandemic conditions; they have produced a bumper harvest thus ensuring food security to millions of people, Soundararajan said. The Governor noted that India is moving forward and witnessing transformational changes in many sectors with the true spirit of Atma Nirbhar Bharat', as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

colleagues.

Meanwhile, in Telangana after the unfurling of the National Flag Governor

Tamilisai Soundararajan praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi but did not mention the name of Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao even once.

The Governor in her address did not mention the welfare programmes being implemented by the TRS government.

The Governor said, "India is witnessing transformational changes in many sectors in the true spirit of Atma Nirbhar Bharat, as envisioned by Prime Minister Modi."

"Due to the relentless efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is now considered an important global power," she added.

She said that Prime Minister Modi had sanctioned many medical colleges for Telangana. The Governor said that the government hospital system in Telangana needs to be developed. She said that the new state of Telangana is leading in many fields.

## Let us do our duties white demanding rights, says Dasoju

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"The republican system is about giving the people a chance to elect their leader. Our republic today is the result of the sacrifices of many great men. In the interests of our country's future, everyone should do one's duties. How long have we been talking

about rights without recognising our responsibilities?" asked AICC spokesman Dr Dasoju Sravan.

Dasoju was participating in the 73rd Republic Day celebrations organised in the Khairatabad Assembly constituency on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion Dasoju said, "Now people are

lethargic to exercise their franchise. They are taking money, liquor and meat to vote. We are selling our votes. We are ignoring our duties and endangering our rights. The sacrifices of great people strengthened our country, but we are weakening ourselves and the nation by ignoring our duties."

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# Historical remains found in Nalgonda dist

1,000-year- old rare sculptures found at Bhattugudem village under Peddavura mandal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

An archaeological site studded with Neolithic, Megalithic and Satavahana remain is reported by Dr E Sivanagireddy, Archaeologist and CEO , Pleach India Foundation at Bhattugudem village under Peddavura mandal in Nalgonda district on Wednesday.

Based on the information given by G Saidareddy and K Venkata Reddy of the village, he conducted an extensive survey in the fields of Nakkala Nagireddy and Kunireddy Ramanuja Reddy, and spotted a well-polished stone axe belonging to the Neolithic period (4000 BC), iron slags of the Megalithic period (1000 BC) and shreds of red polished ware of the Satavahana period (1st-2nd centuries AD). Dr Reddy also noticed beautiful and rare stone sculptures of



Bhairava, Brahma in Trimurti form, Valli Subrahmanya, Surya and Mahishamardhini representing the Rastrakuta and Kalyani Chalukyan styles lying uncared on the premises of Isthakameswara temple. During the exploration, he

could also spot a few hero stones of the Kakatiya period (13th century AD) are depicted mounting on an elephant and holding swords revealing that he these heroes lost their lives in local fights and are welcomed by the celestial



maids Rambha and Urvashi. According to him the sculptures of Bhairava and Brahma are rare in thier form and iconography. He expressed concern over the sad state of neglect of the temple pillars and sculptural panels dumped

in the garbage pit located close to the temple. Sivanagireddy after sensitising the villagers on the need to preserve these sculptures of historical importance and appealed to protect them for posterity.

# Lend support to reform initiatives: OU VC to staff

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Prof. D. Ravinder, Vice-Chancellor, Osmania University called upon the teaching and non-teaching community to continue to support the reform initiatives in the university. He was speaking at the flag hoisting ceremony at Arts College on the occasion of the 73rd Republic Day celebrations here on Wednesday.

Listing out major changes on various fronts, he pointed out that the results will be evident in the near future. He said that the new centres of excellence - Centre for Indo-Pacific Studies, Human Capital Development Cell and Civil Services Academy were on the anvil and these will further augment the university's academic ambience.



Further he added that the new interdisciplinary courses are being developed and will be introduced in the coming academic year which would facilitate students to pursue courses of their liking. He called on all the stakeholders of the university to rededicate themselves and uphold the cherished ideals of the Indian constitution - the finest in the

world and prepared under the guidance of Dr B. R. Ambedkar. He reiterated that the nation is also celebrating Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav marking 75 years of independence.

The programme was attended by faculty, administrative staff, non-teaching staff, research scholars, students and alumni.

# Fortune-teller fined Rs 5,000 for caging parrots

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Forest officials imposed a penalty of Rs 5,000 on a fortune-teller who caged parrots and was telling future in the form of cards for those who approach them. Activist Vinay Vangala had taken notice of the practice of parrots caged in the premise of a restaurant in Jubilee Hills and had complained to the forest department officials. They immediately went to the

spot and took up the issue with the card reader. He was fined and the parrot was released into KBR Park in Jubilee Hills. Speaking to The Pioneer, the activist said, 'Am thankful to forest officials who took immediate action and freed the caged parrot. Moreover, caging parrots or any bird is illegal under schedule 4 of the Wildlife Protection Act (1972) as they are categorised as wild animals.



# Traffic police provide green channels to ferry live heart, lungs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Traffic Police on Wednesday facilitated the transport of a live heart from the Begumpet Airport to the KIMS Hospital in Secunderabad and a live pair of lungs from the Yashoda Hospital in Malakpet to the Yashoda Hospital in Secunderabad by providing non-stop movement facility to the ambulance carrying the live organs.



The police arranged a Green Channel at 9.28 am for the transportation of the live heart from the Begumpet Airport to KIMS Hospital. The medical team carrying the live organ left the airport at 9.28 am and reached the KIMS hospital in Secunderabad at 9.32 am. The distance between the Begumpet Airport and the KIMS Hospital in Secunderabad is 3 km. It was covered in four minutes.

1.27 pm for the transportation of a live pair of lungs from the Yashoda Hospital in Malakpet to the Yashoda Hospital in Secunderabad. The medical team carrying the live organ left the Yashoda Hospital at Malakpet at 1.27 pm and reached the Yashoda Hospital in Secunderabad at 1.39 pm. The distance between the two hospitals is 12 km and it was covered in 12 minutes.

The efforts of the Hyderabad Traffic Police to facilitate the transportation of the live heart and lungs were hailed by the managements of Yashoda Hospitals and KIMS Hospital as it helped in saving precious lives. This year so far the Hyderabad Traffic Police has facilitated the transport of live organs four times, says a release issued by the Joint Police Commissioner of Hyderabad.

# Half-burnt body of man found

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The half burnt body of an unidentified man was found in an open area of RK Township at Bowrampet in Medchal on the city outskirts on Wednesday.

# NTT DATA service centre in Adilabad, says KTR

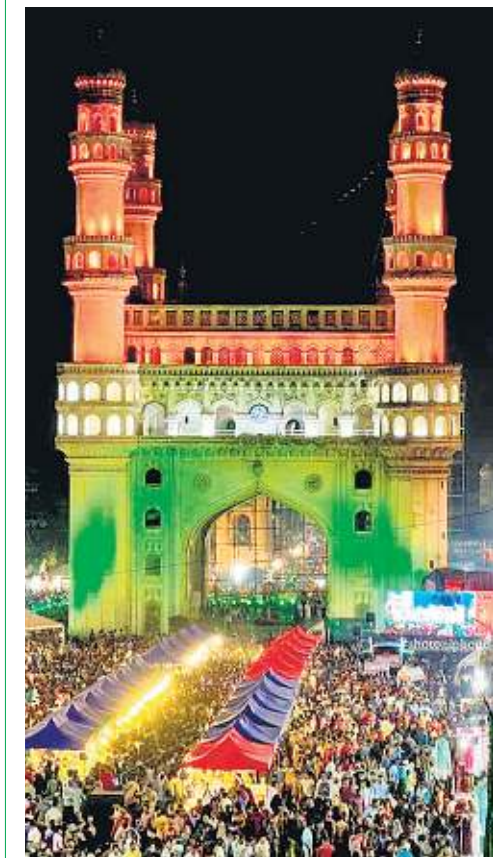
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

NTT DATA Business Solutions-India is going to set up a service centre in Adilabad, Minister KT Rama Rao announced on Twitter on Wednesday. He said that an IT business services centre would also be set up in Adilabad town. Describing it as "happy

news for Adilabad" KTR met and thanked Sanjeev Deshpande, the MD and CEO of NTT who came forward to set up the new IT business services centre in Adilabad. KTR reiterated that the Telangana Government is committed to taking the IT industry to tier-2 towns and this is a big step forward in that direction.



NTT DATA Business Solutions-India officials with Minister KT Rama Rao



As part of 73rd Republic Day celebrations, Charminar, Tank Bund, Durgam Cheruvu and Mozamjahi Market places were illuminated in Hyderabad on Wednesday

# Cops solve murder case with number on dead woman's palm

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Police were able to solve a murder case of a woman when they found a number on the right palm of the woman. It may be noted that the woman's body was found in a lake near Shameerpet and the murder case was reported on January 9. The number, which was suspected to be a mobile number, was not clearly visible initially as the body was in a decomposed state.

But with the help of clues teams, seven digits were extracted and the other three digits of the suspected mobile number were found on analysis of mobile phones which were active near the lake. This led police to the victim's identity and her family, who gave information on the suspects. Police arrested the victim's boyfriend Yogesh and his friend Rajesh.

Police said the body was in a decomposed condition, but no visible injuries were found on the body. The



Clues team started matching random numbers with the missing three digits. After verifying around 2,000 mobile numbers by changing digits, they zeroed in on around 90 mobile numbers whose movement was found near the lake where the body was found. Further analysis led police to Madhya Pradesh and the victim's brother. Her brother told the police that she was in a relationship with Yogesh and gave the contact number. Based on this clue, police arrested Yogesh and also his friend Rajesh who helped him in the murder. Yogesh killed the victim as he had been suspecting her of having affairs with other men.

# Cyberabad cops rescue 223 children

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyberabad Police rescued 223 children including 39 girls in a fortnight from January 1 to 15 during the 'Operation Smile - VIII' drive. The police had formed Operation Smile teams in the three zones which will work throughout the year to rescue children from child labour, begging, rag picking, etc. According to the police, of the children rescued, 45 were sent to the rescue homes and 178 children were handed over to their parents. Of them, 200 children were rescued from child labour, 14 from begging, and 2 from rag-picking. Among these children, many belong to other states including Odisha, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. A total of 26 cases were registered against the persons for using children for labour and begging etc.

# SCR, GHMC celebrate Republic Day

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The 73rd Republic Day of India was celebrated with great enthusiasm and pomp across the city on Wednesday. The heads of various organisations, business establishments and institutions hoisted the national tricolor at their respective offices, while following the COVID guidelines The South Central Railway (SCR) celebrated the R-Day at Railway Sports Complex Grounds, Secunderabad. General Manager, Sanjeev Kishore unfurled the national flag and

received the guard of honour presented by the contingents of Railway Protection Force (RPF). The dog squad of the RPF also took part in the parade.

GHMC Commissioner Lokesh Kumar unveiled the national flag at the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation headquarters. City Mayor, Gadwal Vijayalakshmi, GHMC officials and staff participated in the programme. Deputy Mayor of GHMC, Mothe Sriatha Reddy, unfurled the national flag at the camp office in Tarnaka division.



Republic Day celebrations by SCR in Secunderabad

# R-Day celebrated with patriotic fervour at NTPC southern unit

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The officials and employees of NTPC Southern Region Headquarters, in Hyderabad, celebrated 73rd Republic Day with patriotic fervor here on Wednesday (January 26). At a programme held at its office premises, chief guest Sunil Kumar Satya, Regional Executive Director (South), NTPC unfurled the tricolour. In adherence to Covid protocol, while few employees attended the event, rest connected through virtual mode.



Satya also threw light on NTPC's focus on renewable energy and the opportunity and challenges ahead for Southern Region which is leading in Capacity addition in Solar energy. Further, there is huge scope in floating Solar energy, he said.

He also appreciated Southern Region stations for their outstanding achievements in plant performance, project execution, new initiatives and receiving awards and recognitions.

Addressing the gathering, Sunil Kumar Satya stressed on the significance of Republic Day and NTPC's contribution in development of the country. He also highlighted NTPC's efforts in providing uninterrupted power supply even during Covid pandemic. He asked all the employees and others to follow Covid protocols and continue their fight against Covid-19.

He also appreciated Southern Region stations for their outstanding achievements in plant performance, project execution, new initiatives and receiving awards and recognitions. Southern Region (NTPC) is strategically placed with both Running stations and Upcoming projects. Hence, we should focus both on generation and completion of construction activities, he added. On the occasion, prizes were distributed to the winners of Medha Pratayogita which was conducted earlier.

# TRS-BJP fight set to get fiercer

NAVEENA GHANATE  
■ HYDERABAD

Going by the attack allegedly by TRS cadre "in the guise of farmers" on Nizamabad MP Dharmapuri Arvind's convoy on Tuesday, there will be no backing off by the pink party in going ahead with its version of Khela Hobe ('The game is on') even if the who's who of BJP land in the state.

The BJP central leadership, having taken a serious view of Bandi Sanjay's arrest, had launched a massive attack on the TRS in December by inviting bigwigs, including its national president J P Nadda.

The TRS too reacted strongly to Sanjay's deeksha and the



comments of the saffron party's 'political tourists' in the state. The attack on Arvind's convoy, coming at a time when BJP has been showing its determination to gain ground in Telangana, indicates that the pink party does not want the BJP to grow, come what

may. Tuesday's incident happened though Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah had spoken to Bandi Sanjay after his arrest. This charade of political attacks and counter attacks is likely to continue with increasing feroc-

ity.

According to sources, the BJP's central leadership is seeing Telangana as another gateway to south India and the aggressive take of TRS on BJP leaders is an indication on the gains made by them.

After Sanjay took over as BJP state unit president, the BJP claimed authoritatively to have emerged as an alternative to the TRS in the state, more so after the saffron party's series of wins, including in Dubbak, GHMC and Huzurabad. Both Sanjay and Arvind have been taking on TRS very aggressively, unlike leaders in the past. While their popularity has been increasing, the whole thing is apparently pricking the TRS leadership.

Sources pointed that the arrest of the party's state unit president Sanjay by the police had alarmed the national leadership, which concluded that there would be "Khela Hobe" (Game is on) in Telangana as well between TRS and BJP. Highly placed sources said that the harassment of BJP leaders by the Chief Minister had pricked the central leadership of the saffron party and was like what Mamatha Banerjee had done in West Bengal to BJP.

BJP has backing from its Delhi leadership to go aggressively and strengthen the cadre. Sources said that the saffron party wants to attract the Congress as well as the TDP cadres for capturing power in 2023.

## ‘Work for making TRS unchallenged political force’

PNS ■ MULUGU

In-charge minister for Mahabubabad, Jayashankar Bhupalapalli, and Mulugu districts Satyavati Rathod on Wednesday congratulated Mahabubabad TRS district president and MP Malotu Kavita, Mulugu district president and ZP chairperson Kusuma Jagadish and Bhupalapalli district president and ZP chairperson Gandra Jyoti on their new appointment. She also greeted the TRS district presidents appointed on Wednesday and asked the newly appointed district party chiefs to coordinate with elected people's representatives and party work-



**She asked the TRS district presidents to work as a bridge between the government and the people in taking the welfare and development schemes to the people.**

ers and live up to the expectations of Chief Minister KChandrasekhar Rao. She asked the TRS district presidents to work as a bridge between the government and the people in taking the welfare and development schemes to the people. She advised them to

sensitise the party workers constantly on the unprecedented development schemes being implemented under KCR's leadership and arrange training programmes for them and work for making the TRS as a unchallenged political force.

## Repulse Centre's attack on Singareni collieries: MLA

Korukanti Chandar says the Union government is conspiring to privatise four blocks in the collieries

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLY

Ramagundam MLA Korukanti Chandar on Wednesday said the Constitution drafted under the leadership of B R Ambedkar guaranteed every person the right to equality. The Constitution has granted freedom to the citizens, he said. On the occasion of Republic Day, the MLA unfurled National flag at the MLA camp office at Godavarikhani, TRS party office, Auto stand at Tilaknagar and TBGKS office. India is the only country where people of all religions have equal rights. Small



Korukanti Chandar

States would contribute to economic growth, he felt. There was tremendous development in Telangana State after it attained statehood.

Chandar said the Centre was hatching a conspiracy to privatise the Singareni collieries. Though the Singareni collieries were in profits, the Centre was trying to paint it black and privatise four of its blocks. He called upon the people to repulse the attack by the Centres on the profit-making Singareni collieries. City Mayor B Anil Kumar, Deputy Mayor N Abhishek Rao, corporators Addala Gattaiah, Pamukuntla Bhaskar, Kalwacharla Krishnaveni Bhumaiiah, Dontu Srinivas, Injapuri Pulender and Bala Raj Kumar and others were present.

## BJP urged to help school for blind get Centre's aid



DWAB general secretary Ponugoti Chokka Rao meeting Bandi Sanjay in Nalgonda on Wednesday

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Development and Welfare Association of the Blind (DWAB) general secretary Ponugoti Chokka Rao on Wednesday appealed to BJP MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar to ensure that the Centre sanction financial assistance to the school for blind in Nalgonda. He urged the BJP MP to see that the file relating to the financial assistance for the year 2020-21 is sent to the Union Minister for Social Justice.

## What is the message behind appointment of MP Kavita as district party chief?

SRINIVAS GUNDOJU  
■ MAHABUBABAD

Upsetting expectations of one and all, TRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao has appointed Mahabubabad MP Maloth Kavita as TRS president of Mahabubabad district.

In fact, TRS president KCR appointed 33 party leaders, including Maloth Kavita, on Wednesday as district presidents of the party. The list includes 20 MLAs, 3 MPs. The political move created a sensation in the party circles. Even Kavita was surprised over the appointment.

Whether the post is beneficial to her or not? What is the reason behind the political move? In what way the party aid her political career? What could be the reason for the TRS leadership to award her the



Mahabubabad MP Kavita

part post? Which TRS leaders the TRS is keen to checkmate through these appointments?

Besides these, many questions arise like "Whether the

appoints are targeted to reduce the impact of MLA Sankar Naik and district in-charge minister Satyavati Rathod in the district or to send an indi-

rect message that only two out of three leaders in DS Redya Naik family will get the party tickets in next elections? Of late, MLA Sankar Naik has been visiting all mandals and villages as part of "Mana Vooru-Mana MLA" aspiring to get nominated again in the next elections. He has been putting untiring efforts to seal his position in the party and district. The MLA has been developing Mahabubabad town in all respects providing all amenities. Whereas, the in-charge minister Satyavati Rathod, reportedly aspiring to get renominated from Mahabubabad or Dornakal in the district, is trying to get closer to the people of the Assembly constituency of her choice by sanctioning the available funds to the assembly segment for development.

## New TRS district chiefs thank CM KCR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The newly appointed presidents of the TRS' district units called on Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao at the Pragathi Bhavan here on Wednesday and thanked him. Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao, and Tribal Welfare and Woman and Child Development Minister Satyavathi Rathod congratulated the new district unit TRS presidents and said they should function as the link between the party, the government and the people.

The development projects and welfare schemes of the government should be taken closer to the people, they said. The Ministers said the district party presidents should work for strengthening the party and be worthy of the confidence shown by KCR in their leadership. Meanwhile, PUC Chairman and MLA A. Jivan Reddy who was appointed as the Nizamabad District TRS President lashed out at Nizamabad BJP MP Arvind and said that he would accept his challenge and defeat him in Armoor Assembly constituency. Jivan



MLA Aroor Ramesh presenting a bouquet to Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao in Hyderabad on Wednesday. (L) Jangaon MLA M Yadagiri Reddy, DCCB Chairman M Ravinder Rao, Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao, (R) Government Whip Vinay Bhaskar, Parakala MLA Challa Dharma Reddy, Minister for Tribal Welfare Satyavathi Rathod, Narasimpet MLA Peddi Sudharshan Reddy and MLC P Rajeswar Reddy

was addressing a media conference at the TRS LP office here on Wednesday. Even if Modi and Amit Shah came and campaigned for Arvind he would not get back his deposit, Jivan said. Reiterating that it was turmeric farmers who confronted the BJP MP on Tuesday, Jivan said that not only farmers but even Backward Classes and weaker sections

would revolt against the BJP leaders if they targeted KCR and used foul language against the CM.

Even after three years, Arvind has failed in getting the Turmeric Board as he had promised to the farmers of Nizamabad, he said. Not only in Telangana, even in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, farmers were turning against

BJP MLAs and not allowing them to enter villages. The Armoor incident is the result of the farmers' anger towards the BJP and Arvind, he said. Jivan thanked Chief Minister KCR, the party's Working President KTR, MLC Kavitha, and Minister Prashanth Reddy for appointing him as the district TRS president.

## Strive for nation's development, District Collector exhorts people

PNS ■ JAYASHANKER  
BHUPALAPALLY

The 73 rd Republic Day celebrations were held at various places in the district on Wednesday on a grand note. At the collectorate, District Collector Bhavesh Mishra received guard of honour from police personnel and hoisted the national flag. Earlier, the Collector and other officials garlanded to the portraits of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Ambedkar. Addressing the programme, the Collector said that country had achieved Independence due to sacrifices made by great personalities. From the Republic Day, people have become rulers for the country. By taking inspiration from the freedom fighters, people have to strive



Jayashanker Bhupalapally District Collector Bhavesh Mishra at the Republic Day celebrations in Bhupalapally on Wednesday

for the development of the country, the Collector said. He said that as per the guidelines of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, Ministers and with the cooperation

of people's representatives, he and the officials of nearly 70 departments in the district would strive to take the benefits of various welfare schemes to the people.

## ‘On this day, people got the right to rule’

PNS ■ KAZIPET

Sarvaprema Welfare Society Secretary Prabhakar stated that on Republic Day, people got the right to rule the country and all Indians have to celebrate the day with pride. The society celebrated Republic Day here on Wednesday and Prabhakar and others paid tributes to Dr Ambedkar. He hoisted national flag on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, he said that 'unity in diversity' is the main plank of our constitution which highlighted the greatness of India globally. People have to strive to achieve the ideals of Dr Ambedkar and youth should know the rights given to them in the constitution, he said. Society Supervisor Sadanandam, Satyaprakash, Bhaskar Reddy, Alia, Eugene, Vijay,



Sarvaprema Welfare Society secretary Prabhakar saluting the national flag in Kazipet on Wednesday

Ravi, Babu, Rajender and others were present.

## Admission to new medical colleges to begin next year

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Admission to eight new medical colleges in the State will begin from the next year, according to Kaloji Narayana Rao University of Health Sciences B Karunakar Reddy on Wednesday. Speaking at a function, shortly after unfurling the National flag on the occasion of 73rd Republic Day here, the Vice-Chancellor said the medical education in the State would make significant progress with the State government extending support. He further said the new medical colleges would help increase the medical infrastructure in the State.

## Doctors suspended for denying treatment to tribal woman

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

District administration on Wednesday suspended the Superintendent and duty doctor of Achampet Community Health Centre for refusing to provide treatment to a woman in labour on Tuesday. A tribal woman, named Lalamma, from Banala village under Balmoor mandal, was brought to the Community Health Centre. Though she was in the advanced stage of pregnancy, the doctor and the health staff refused to provide treatment to her on the suspicion that she was infected with Covid-19. The woman at last gave birth to a baby on the premises of the centre. On knowing the incident, Minister for Health T Harish Rao directed the district administration to take action against those responsible for denying

**Though she was in the advanced stage of pregnancy, the doctor and the health staff refused to provide treatment to her on the suspicion that she was infected with Covid-19.**

treatment to the tribal woman. The Minister directed Achampet MLA Guvvala Balaraj and MP P Ramulu to ensure that those responsible for dereliction of duty are punished. The Medical and Health Department officials, after an inquiry, placed Superintendent Hari Babu and duty doctor Krishna under suspension.

## NTPC retains its leadership position: CGM

PNS ■ RAMAGUNDAM

Republic Day celebrations were held at NTPC Ramagundam on Wednesday. The programme was held at M G stadium. Chief General Manager Sunil Kumar hoisted the National flag and took the salute at the march-fast by the CISF. Speaking on the occasion, Sunil Kumar stressed on the significance of Republic Day. He highlighted the glori-



NTPS-Ramagundam Chief General Manager Sunil Kumar receiving salute at march-fast on the occasion of Republic Day in Ramagundam on Wednesday

ous history of NTPC and its contribution to the develop-

ment of the country. He spoke about the success story of

NTPC-Ramagundam and its plant performance. Despite Covid disruption, the NTPC-Ramagundam is all set to achieve its annual target during 2021-22. It generated 13079 million units at PLF of 76.22 per cent against the target of 12012 million units and PLF of 70 per cent. He further said the NTPC-Ramagundam had achieved key milestone and thus reaffirming its leadership position in the industry. With

a capacity of 37.5 MW, India's largest floating solar PV project was declared commercial last year, he said and added that the increased in efficiency due to new turbine, would reduce annual CO2 emission by 53,000 MT.

He pointed out that the NTPC-Ramagundam was taking concerted efforts to enrich environment and released the water and biodiversity plan for 2022-2032.

## Republic Day celebrated with Covid norms

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

The 73 rd Republic Day celebrations were organised at the Collectorate premises here on Wednesday by following Covid norms and as per the guidelines of government. District Collector P Udaykumar hoisted the national flag. Earlier, SP arrived and later the Collector arrived at the venue of the programme. SP Manohar and RDO Nagalakshmi presented a flower bouquet to the

Collector and welcomed him. The flag hoisting was done at about 10.00 am and the national anthem was played. Then the Collector received a guard of honor from police personnel at a parade on the occasion. Government Whip Kuchukulla Damodar Reddy, SP Manohar, Additional Collector Manu Choudary, district officials, police officials, staff of various departments and media men were present.



Nagarkurnool Collector P Udaykumar hoisting national flag in Nagarkurnool on Wednesday

INDIA CORNER

## Chhattisgarh govt will give financial help to labourers for empowerment of girls

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Wednesday said a new scheme will be launched to promote empowerment of girls under which the first two daughters of labourers will be given financial assistance for their education and employment. The state government will also implement a five-day week working system for its employees in a bid to increase their work efficiency and productivity. The contribution of the state government under the employees' Contributory Pension Scheme will be increased from 10 per cent to 14 per cent, an official release quoted the CM as saying. Baghel was speaking at a function held at the Lalbagh Parade ground in Jagdalpur after unfurling the national flag to mark the 73rd Republic Day. Jagdalpur is the headquarter of the Bastar district, located over 300 km away from the state capital Raipur.



## Two Guj families who became 'untraceable' in Turkey found; in touch with parents: police

Amid reports that six members of two families from a village in Gujarat's Gandhinagar district were abducted in Istanbul by traffickers, police on Wednesday cited their parents saying they are found and currently staying at a hotel in Turkey and will return in the next two-three days. Police also denied any abduction angle citing their relatives. The six members became untraceable after reaching Turkey on the visitor visa earlier this month, a senior police officer said. Though there were reports that the two families, comprising two couples and two children, were abducted in Istanbul by human traffickers, their parents back here denied the abduction angle, said a senior police officer of the Ahmedabad crime branch who had questioned the agent through whom the two families had acquired visitor visas. "These two families have already been found."



## Freedom fighters, Constitution makers worked for country against odds

Gartala, Jan 26 (PTI) Tripura Governor Satyadeo Narain Arya on Wednesday called upon the people of the state to pay tribute to the freedom fighters and the constitution makers, who worked for the development of the country despite facing several difficulties. Unfurling the Tri-colour at the Assam Rifles Ground here on the occasion of the 73rd Republic Day, he hailed the state government for its selfless work to make Tripura a model state. "I appeal to all to pay tribute to the freedom fighters and be grateful to the constitution makers, who during the days of the freedom struggle had faced several difficulties, but worked for the development of the country. 'I also appreciate the work undertaken by the state government to make Tripura a model state."



# Vedas to Metaverse: Education Ministry tableau at R-Day parade



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Education and Skill Development's tableau at the 73rd Republic Day parade on the Rajpath showcased the key aspects of the new National Education Policy through the theme 'Vedas to Metaverse'. The front part of the tableau depicted the glorious past of the country in the area of education starting from the Vedas, the Gurukul system of educa-

tion and ancient universities such as Nalanda where students from all over the world used to gather. The rear part had a glowing bulbous brain-like structure symbolising innovation and creativity. Students of different age groups, accompanying the tableau, portrayed skill development, joyful learning while emphasising the latest technologies like augmented reality and virtual reality. Video on the LED screens of

the digital book placed atop the tableau illustrated multi-disciplinary education, research and innovation, startups, robotics and metaverse. Images of educationists and scientists from ancient times to the modern age could also be seen on both sides of the tableau. The NEP approved by the Union Cabinet in 2020 replaced the 34-year-old National Policy on Education framed in 1986 and is aimed at paving the way for transfor-

## Shah compliments JK Police's valour and commitment

New Delhi, Jan 26 (PTI) Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday complimented the Jammu and Kashmir Police for its valour and commitment and said its dedication has been reflected as it got the largest share of 115 gallantry awards announced on the occasion of Republic Day. The Jammu and Kashmir Police has been in forefront in fighting the Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in the sensitive union territory for more than three decades now. J&K Police has been spearhead of India's fight against terrorism. It is a matter of immense pride to the entire nation, that the @JmuKmrPolice has won the largest share, 115, of the gallantry awards today on Republic Day. This reflects their valour and commitment," Shah tweeted. Congratulating the Jammu and Kashmir Police, he said on this momentous achievement, he salutes their bravery. "PM Shri @narendramodi Ji led central government stands committed to recognising and honouring our brave police personnel," he said.



mational reforms in school and higher education systems to make India a global knowledge superpower. A choice between three or four-year undergraduate courses, multiple entry and exit options in degree courses, adding 3.5

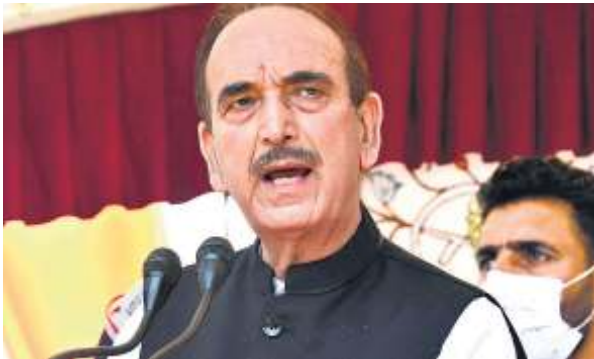
crore seats in higher education institutions, which will now have a single regulator, discontinuation of M.Phil programmes and fixation of fees are among the higher education reforms outlined in the new policy.

## 'CHANGE IN TWITTER PROFILE' 'Mischievous propaganda', says Azad over speculations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after he was awarded the Padma Bhushan, former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and Congress veteran Ghulam Nabi Azad on Wednesday sought to scotch speculation about his future political plans. Reports had claimed that he had changed his Twitter profile, but Azad, who has been critical of his party leadership and is the lone Congress leader to be awarded this year under the Modi dispensation, denied it. "Some mischievous propaganda being circulated by some people to create confusion. Nothing has been removed or added to my Twitter profile. The profile is as it was earlier," Azad said on Twitter.

Azad's Twitter profile has nothing written on it and there is no reference to the Congress party. In the age of social media, the Twitter profiles of leaders are keenly watched as many tend to change them before formal switching parties. Azad, the former Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, is a prominent member of the G23 dissident leaders who have been demanding an organisational overhaul in the Congress



**Reports had claimed that he had changed his Twitter profile, but Azad, who has been critical of his party leadership and is the lone Congress leader to be awarded this year under the Modi dispensation, denied it.**

and has faced backlash from a section of the party. After the announcement of the Padma awards on Tuesday evening, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, while commenting on CPI (M) leader Buddhadeb Bhattacharya's refusal to accept the award, said, "He wants to be Azad not Ghulam". However, senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal, who is also

in the G23, said on Wednesday that it was ironic that the Congress does not need Azad's services when the nation recognises his contributions to public life. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had showered praise on Azad during his farewell speech for the Congress leader in the Upper House and the latter had returned the sentiment.

## 'Meghalaya to be made one among top 10 states'



PNS ■ SHILLONG

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Wednesday said his government has laid the foundation for the state to become one of the top 10 states in the country in the next 10 years. Unfurling the Tricolour on the occasion of the 73rd Republic Day at the Polo ground here, he said the state with 3.8 million people need to grow together with the rest of the NE states and present to the world one North East market like the European Union. "We (the state government) have laid the foundation and it will become one of the top 10 states in the country in the next 10 years. We will do it. We need to realise the importance as a society to move positively in the direction that we have set," the chief

minister said. He said 3.8 million people (Meghalaya's population) is a small number in a global markets and if Meghalaya has to grow, it has to grow as one of the entities of the NE market. "I am happy to inform you that today the state's expenditure is touching close to Rs 14,000 crore... This is possible because of tapping of external agencies, timely implementation of projects and running central schemes in efficient manner," he said. Sangma said the state has mobilised Rs 7,500 crore from external agencies, a big jump from Rs 2,500 crore in 2018. "Funds from these agencies support projects in tourism, water catchment area, road construction, integrated transport system, early childhood development programme besides others," he said.

## Rail job aspirants go on rampage Exams suspended; Grievance panel set up, minister appeals for calm

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Railways suspended its NTPC and Level 1 exams on Wednesday after the candidates went on a rampage in some states alleging irregularities in the process whilst minister Ashwini Vaishnaw urged them not to destroy public property and assured redressal of their grievances.

The suspension of exams and the statement by the minister are being seen in certain quarters as a step down from the earlier decision to bar applicants found indulging in vandalism given that elections are due in five states, including the politically crucial Uttar Pradesh.

"I am telling the aspirants that this is their own property. Why are they destroying something that is their own? However, authorities will follow due process if public property is damaged," Vaishnaw said at a press conference. The Railway Ministry formed a high-level committee, headed by Deepak Peter Gabriel, the principal executive director of industrial relations in the ministry, to examine the aspirants' grievances. Sources say it was the protests by the job aspirants in



Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh for two days and the fear that the agitation may fan out in other parts of the country through the aggressive social media campaigns being run by the candidates forced the Railways' hand. Bihar, home to a majority of the job aspirants, saw violent protests for the third day in a row. A crowd stormed the Gaya Junction and set on fire the Bhabhua-Patna InterCity Express. But nobody was injured. East Central Railway CPRO Rajesh Kumar told PTI-

Bhasha, "The rakes were empty and parked inside the yard when miscreants set a coach on fire. It has not resulted in disruption of rail traffic." In Sitamarhi, police fired in the air to disperse the demonstrators at the railway station. Protests were also reported from Patna, Nawada, Muzaffarpur, Buxar and Bhojpur districts. In Uttar Pradesh, police arrested two persons and lodged a case against around 1,000 unidentified people for allegedly rioting and blocking

the train tracks. Six police personnel were suspended with immediate effect for using unnecessary force on Tuesday. A police official said it appears the accused had taken "money from some political parties" to cause unrest. Police were also probing the incident from this angle. A video of the incident surfaced on social media, following which Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra condemned the use of force against the protesting job aspirants.

## SP picks nominee for Ayodhya seat

PNS ■ AYODHYA

With the Samajwadi Party nominating old hand Pawan Pandey on the Ayodhya seat, all eyes are on the BJP which is yet to name its candidate for the high-profile constituency after buzz on Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stopped with the party fielding him from the Gorakhpur Urban seat. The BSP and Congress are also yet to come out with the names of their candidates but people here see the poll as a direct fight between the SP and the BJP. Akhilesh Yadav's party on Tuesday night declared the candidature of former MLA Pandey on the seat.

A promising youth leader from Lucknow University, Pandey had won the seat in 2012 but lost in 2017. He was also a minister in the Akhilesh Yadav government. Even as the SP has come out with the name of its candidate, BJP supporters are still guessing whether it will be sitting MLA Ved Prakash Gupta or someone else. Like in the past, Ayodhya is being used as a springboard by all major parties to launch its election campaign this

time too. Suraj Kumar of Nayaghat says, "There is resentment against the incumbent MLA as he could not fulfil the aspirations of the people. If the BJP changes its candidate, it will be to its advantage." "A lot of work has been done here due to which land was acquired and for development work, demolition also took place. When there is development, some structures are to be razed," he noted. When asked about the resentment prevailing among the traders, Ayodhya Vyapar Mandal President Nand Kumar Gupta, said the widening of road from Saadatganj to Ayodhya Ghat requires demolition of shops. "These shops are on properties of Raja (Ayodhya) or temples. The shopkeepers here will not be getting any compensation. It's a matter of their livelihood as they are here for the past three-four generations," Gupta said. According to the proposed plan, two stretches of the road in Ayodhya dham (Old Ayodhya town), including the one leading to the historic Hanuman Garhi temple, would be widened.

## 'Total prohibition can't be achieved by any govt'

PNS ■ INDORE

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday said that the total prohibition cannot be achieved by any government by banning the sale of liquor. He said that for achieving this goal, the trend of drinking alcohol in society will have to be changed by launching a de-addiction campaign. Addressing the Republic Day function in Indore, the chief minister said, "the consumption of alcohol by people cannot be stopped just by banning it by the government. It



will end only when we change the trend of drinking liquor in the society". Chouhan unfurled the national flag at the Nehru

Stadium here and inspected the customary parade on the occasion of the 73rd Republic Day. He also appealed to people

to run a de-addiction campaign in their villages and cities. The CM said people will have to take a pledge to not consume alcohol if the goal of the total prohibition is to be achieved in Madhya Pradesh. The chief minister also emphasised the need to launch a de-addiction campaign. Interestingly, the BJP government in MP is facing flak from the Opposition over its new Excise Policy approved by the Cabinet recently. In the new Excise Policy meant for the next Financial Year, the government has decided to allow the sale of

liquor at all airports and select supermarkets in four big cities, and issue home bar licenses to those earning Rs one crore or more annually. Chouhan said the state government has been supporting industrialisation and self-employment at a rapid pace. The government has set a target to create at least 2 lakh new opportunities of livelihood in the state, he added. The chief minister said that the state government had recruited 44,000 people in government jobs last year. By the next year, around one lakh government jobs will be given, he added.

## Missing Arunachal boy: Rijiju says PLA responded positively

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A hotline was exchanged on Wednesday between the Indian Army and China's People's Liberation Army which responded positively, indicating handing over of the missing youth from Arunachal Pradesh, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said. The PLA suggested a place of release, the minister said. "They are likely to intimate date and time soon. Delay attributed to bad weather conditions on their side," he wrote on Twitter. On Tuesday, Rijiju



had said that India had shared details of the missing Arunachal Pradesh teenager with the PLA to corroborate the

identity of the youth in their custody. "Hotline exchanged on Republic Day by Indian Army with Chinese PLA. PLA responded positively indicating handing over of our national and suggested a place of release," he said on Wednesday. The Union minister, who represents the state in Lok Sabha, had earlier said that the Chinese side had conveyed to the Indian Army on January 20 that they had found a boy on their side and requested for further details to establish the identity.

## Kiss and tell

A court has closed the Shetty-Gere case, which was actually just a trifle

Today as we celebrate the 73rd year of India becoming a Republic, can we take a moment to digress from freedom and heroism to ask ourselves where we stand on the subject of kissing? The context is a Mumbai court discharging actor Shilpa Shetty in an age-old kissing case involving Hollywood actor Richard Gere. At an event to promote AIDS awareness in 2007, Gere suddenly held Shetty's hand on the dais and kissed it. He then gave her a quick hug, bent her back in what he later explained as a dance hold from his movie *Shall We Dance* and kissed her on the cheek. Many Indians were angry. They called him indecent. They blamed Shetty for not objecting to the kiss. They filed cases against both. The case against him was quickly dismissed. Gere apologised, saying he had no bad intention at all. Shetty was left languishing, the case a millstone around her neck. She was called a conspirator or perpetrator just because she did not object to the kiss. The Indian judicial system chugged along all these years to finally 'discharge' her, pointing out what was evident in 2007 itself that she was victimised. The case should have been dismissed on the day it was filed instead of waiting all this while. Looking back, were we prudish in 2007? It is not easy to answer because we tend to mix up our sensibilities when dealing with real and reel incidents of oscular affection. The former, we oppose. The latter, we enjoy.



Remember when actor Padmini Kolhapure kissed Prince Charles in Mumbai in 1980? The orthodoxy went into spasms for days. Did not Shabana Azmi raise the hackles of conservative Muslims in 1993 when anti-apartheid hero Nelson Mandela kissed her at an event in Cape Town? There was no social media then or else the visuals would have gone viral like the 2016 video of Girija Srinivas, a panchayat member, kissing then Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. If we were prudish, or hypocrites, for these kisses to shock us, imagine the reaction back in the 1930s when Devika Rani, the first lady of the Indian cinema, did an intimate kissing scene with Himanshu Rai in *Karma*. Bollywood has ensured that our conservatism loosens up to the beats of modernity by inserting kissing scenes regularly in films. *Bobby* thrilled viewers, *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* sizzled them, *Dhoom2* was consummate. *Raja Hindustani* introduced kissing in family films. Even a film titled *Hey Raam* had it. If not most Indian viewers, Bollywood certainly has kept time with ever-changing relationships. Shabana Azmi and Nandita Das portrayed lesbian love in *Fire*. Saqib Saleem brushed lips with Randeep Hooda in *Bombay Talkies*. A kiss is an expression of endearment. Not every kiss is sexual. It can be civil or perfunctory, too. If our censor board, which frowns upon just about everything in films, could pass hot kissing scenes, there is every reason for us to be neither prejudiced nor hypocritical.

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### PICTALK



The CPWD tableau during the Republic Day Parade, at Rajpath in New Delhi

PTI

## Outreach

PM Modi's head cap and stole were a message to the voters of Manipur and Uttarakhand

Deviating just a little from sporting his usual type of headgear this Republic Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chose to don a cap from Uttarakhand and stole from Manipur around his neck. Normally, as seen on previous R-Day and Independence Day celebrations, he prefers to opt for a bright, multi-coloured *saafa* or turban. On Modi's cap was inscribed a 'Brahmakamal', which is interestingly the State flower of Uttarakhand. To be fair to him, though, the Prime Minister is apparently fond of the 'Brahmakamal' and uses the flower whenever he offers prayers at the Kedarnath temple. Similarly, the white, black and red woven stole that he draped around his neck is a leitmotif of the Meitei tribe in Manipur. Once again, his choice to wear these accessories may be seen as an attempt to cosy himself to voters in the two hilly States. No wonder, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami immediately took to Twitter to point out that the PM wore the famous 'Brahmakamal' cap, different from the colourful turbans that he has worn during the previous R-Day celebrations.



For his part, Minister Biswajit Singh wrote: "Moment of great pride and honour for entire #Manipur on seeing Adarniya PM @NarendraModi Ji wearing a Manipuri stole, Leirum Phee, on the glorious occasion of 73rd Republic Day of India, showcasing the exquisite tradition of the state." The Leirum Phee has been seen on the PM on many occasions in the past, especially during live addresses to the nation. The Prime Minister's hint to both Uttarakhand and Manipur, besides three other States where elections have already been notified, was rather vigorous than subtle. Uttarakhand votes on February 14 and Manipur on February 27 and March 3. However, the jury is still debating whether, legally or not, it behoves someone of the stature of the Prime Minister to use a national festival to further his party's agenda and send out a signal of endearment especially to the electorate in the poll-bound States. Continuing in the same vein, the choice of national heroes featured in the tableaux could have been more exhaustive. The grand parade depicted Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, quite deservedly; still it skipped any chances of showcasing a glimpse of Mahatma Gandhi, BR Ambedkar and Jawaharlal Nehru, all of whom have also been tall national leaders. The nation's moment of pride might just have been one more shade happier.

# It all boils down to appetite for conflict

A tired 'Free World', noticeably the US, is no match for autocratic regimes like China and Russia that are not answerable to anyone for their amoral acts

Irrespective of the governmental spine, the popular mood in Australia sums up the awkward conundrum: There is simply no appetite for conflict with China. With China's intimidating expansionism in the Indo-Pacific waters, Australia had hit back with suggestions for an independent inquiry into the origins of COVID-19 — a furious Beijing responded immediately by decoupling economic ties, and Canberra upped the ante by seeking nuclear submarines and forming AUKUS (partnership amongst Australia, the US and UK). Given Australia's pacifism and wariness of nuclear technology, this change of official stance was significant, though not commensurate with societal apathy, as the 'participation fees' for Australia in any potential conflict with China is widely imagined to be too high. The Chinese society is never allowed to harbour contrarian views from that of its expansionist regime, therefore the drums of war directed towards a Taiwan, Japan, Australia, or even India, are forever beating.

If the appetite for conflict for the US in the restive Middle Eastern theatre had visibly waned with the unsaid acceptance of the Iranian-Syrian triumph in the decisive fight for reclaiming ISIS-held territories, the meek flight from Afghanistan completed the picture. A year into the office, Joe Biden has openly conceded that there are "a whole range of things around the world that we can't solve" — the issue on hand was ability of the so-called 'most powerful military in the world' to defeat the Taliban mujahideen in Afghanistan.

Even earlier, during the bloody Indo-Chinese border standoff in 2020, the ostensibly 'muscular politics' of Donald Trump only led to an offer by the POTUS to "mediate or arbitrate" as he was "ready, willing and able"! Constant Chinese attempt to shift the existing norms and status quo on the Line of Actual Control was left for India to fend. Today, as a record number of Chinese fighter jets routinely intrude into Taiwan's Air Defence Zone, wary Taiwanese genuinely ponder: "Will the US show up?" in case Xi Jinping decides to



hold good his threat of the "historical task of complete unification". Even though the Biden Administration has ostensibly shed its traditional 'strategic ambiguity' vis-à-vis the official position and committed itself to defend Taiwan militarily, should China attack, the credibility of that commitment is a bit suspect, given the recent history and the apparent lack of appetite for conflict.

Recently, riots broke out in the Central Asian Republic of Kazakhstan, and the world watched with bated breath to see which international power would step in. Pitted against each other was the undemocratic, repressive and illiberal Kazakh regime (given to its own power struggles and intrigues among the elites) against the suffering masses who desperately sought reforms and relief from economic hardships. Expectedly, the security forces responded brutally and disproportionately by killing over 100 protesters even as unbacked claims of "20,000 bandits", "armed aggression by well-coordinated terrorist groups", "radical Islamist groups" etc were randomly postulated by the Government, with a brazen 'shoot to kill' order. The US, which has literally no leverage in the region, was left spouting platitudes like "deeply concerned", whereas the Russians under the aegis of Collective



QUASI-DICTATORIAL REGIMES LIKE RUSSIA (OR CHINA) CARE TWO HOOTS ABOUT 'INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNATION' WHEN IT COMES TO SAFEGUARDING THEIR PERCEIVED INTERESTS; IN THIS CASE, STOPPING UKRAINE'S BID TO JOIN THE NATO

Security Threat Organisation (CSTO) sent in 2500 troops to 'stabilise' the situation. Even the Chinese offered support towards 'counter-terrorism' to ward off portents of colour revolution (euphemism for the West-supported pro-democracy movements).

Basically, the autocratic regimes of Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping demonstrated an intent and sent an unmistakable message that whenever autocrats are in crisis, they could seek help from fellow autocrats as they would retain the appetite for conflict, unlike a tired 'Free World'.

Concurrent war of wits is escalating in neighbouring Ukraine, with Russian troops menacingly amassed on the borders, prepping for a possible invasion. Earlier in 2014, too, Russia had forcibly annexed Crimea from Ukraine and the US-led 'West' has since pitter-pattered with 'sanctions', to no avail. Even now, Biden has sheepishly admitted that "the US going to unilaterally use force to confront Russia from invading Ukraine is not...on the cards right now", added unconvincingly that there would be "severe consequences". Nonetheless, no one in Ukraine would be reassured with that kind of a back-up plan as they know that should Russia roll in, nothing and no one will hold out. Biden worsened the optics by

admitting that his allies were divided on how-to-respond to even a 'minor incursion' of Ukraine by Russia, let alone a full-fledged invasion.

Meanwhile, quasi-dictatorial regimes like Russia (or China) care two hoots about 'international condemnation' when it comes to safeguarding their perceived interest; in this case, stopping Ukraine's bid to join the NATO.

Insecure one-party regimes, like that of China, embed an invaluable message with their cross-border aggression, that is aimed as much for their own domestic audiences as it is for the countries attacked. Pandemic era has already worsened the economic conditions of the 'Free World', and the all-important opinions of the electorate in democracies are not for any external interventions. However, the Chinese or Russian regimes who are not answerable to anyone for their amoral conduct, and are relatively well-placed economically, do retain a bigger appetite for conflict. Evolving triangular tensions of 'One-against-One (US versus China), plus another one (Russia)' will be, eventually, all about appetite for conflicts.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### LEADER SHOULD SET AN EXAMPLE

Sir — One should be a diarch practitioner of morals before he starts preaching to others to follow. The entire nation is aware how the ruling dispensation has been amending the Constitution to enact Acts as per its whims without caring for the Opposition's demand to have at least discussions over such Bills, making it seem like a right in view of its brutal majority in Parliament. We have seen how the farmers affected by the draconian farm laws were treated for over a year, unmindful of their agony. We know how writers, journalists and NGOs have been tortured by stalling their operations and freezing their bank accounts.

The latest sad episode is their doing away with "Abide with me", a Christian hymn and the one most loved by Mahatma Gandhi, from the Beating Retreat ceremony this year, of course based on their rights gained through the majority in Parliament. The BJP Government is conveniently forgetting that it also has a bounden duty to the nation's people who had brought it to power. Is it not an irony that PM Modi says the country has wasted a lot of time "fighting for rights" and "neglecting one's duties"? A good leader is one who sets an example for others.

Tharcus S Fernando | Chennai

### THE SC IS RIGHTLY CONCERNED

Sir — The Supreme Court has recently expressed concern over the freebies and other sopas as major poll promises by almost all political parties, which is certainly not misplaced. The apex court has asked the Union Government and the Election Commission to spell out their stand on such misgivings that cheat not only the unsuspecting electorate but also go against the spirit of the Constitution. The amount spent on the promised freebies can out run an entire State's budget, is what was rightly expressed by the judiciary. Practically, however, it may be difficult for the Election Commission to impose checks on such promises made by the political parties in electoral fray.

## A part of our history relocated



To put it plainly, the eternal flame (Amar Jawan Jyoti) in the National War Memorial at India Gate, which has been burning for more than five decades to honour the martyred soldiers, has been extinguished. Indians are told, the flame was carried to the newly built NWM 400 metres away and 'merged' with the new flame there. However, history will remember this 'merger' only as one more added to the group of great flames extinguished

in the past. By the same logic, any memorial, monument, mausoleum, pillar or obelisk can be demolished and 'merged' with a new one elsewhere. Treating Amar Jawan Jyoti as a going concern under the Companies Act or any other legislation subject to amalgamation, absorption or reconstruction was a sacrilege.

Many countries have constructed more than one war memorial with ever-burning fires to honour war heroes. In France, under the archway in Paris, a flame has been burning in memory of all who died in World War I since 1921 and another one at Arras, at the Notre Dame de Lorette war memorial. Russia has two war memorials in Moscow: one at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Alexander Garden and another one at Victory Park. Perhaps, the ruling establishment fears that the NWM built under PM Narendra Modi's aegis would not gain importance, as long as the Amar Jawan Jyoti is aflame at the India Gate.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

To begin with, it has to be defined clearly as to what a freebie is and how it is different from a legitimate act of providing succour to common people. To propose a raise in the pension amount to a destitute cannot be seen as a freebie. To hand over a smartphone for free to a needy child for his online class can also be justified. But such genuine acts of empathy can't be allowed to run unchecked, lest these take the form of bribe. The Election Commission can ask the political parties to tell people how their promises are going to be met in a detailed way, if they are voted to power.

DVG Sankararao | Vizianagaram

### THE TREND OF ABANDONING CONG

Sir — Sir — It refers to the report "Cong first family loyalist RPN Singh joins BJP". Singh may not bring too much to the table for the BJP as far as elections are

concerned because he has not won any election in the last decade or so. But it sends a strong message to the Congress, and especially to the Gandhi family, that they are unable to keep their flock together. Priyanka Gandhi is the face for the Congress in UP elections, while Singh contributed to the party's good showing in last Jharkhand elections.

Only a few days back, Singh was named as a campaigner for the UP polls. There is a long list of promising, bright and popular leaders who left the Congress in last few years. The common factor is that they were all disillusioned, and Priyanka recently admitted that the party did not try to stop anyone. It is a clear reflection of the sad state of affairs in the 'grand old party'.

Bal Govind | Noida

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

## SOUND BITE

Make videos on the good works of Delhi Govt and share these on social media, appealing to people to give Kejriwal a chance.



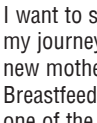
AAP national convener

— Arvind Kejriwal

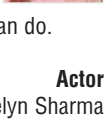


Ukraine President

— Volodymyr Zelenskyy



I want to share my journey as a new mother.... Breastfeeding is one of the most natural things you can do.



Actor

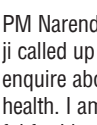
— Evelyn Sharma



I found a parallel in both the Test and ODI defeats. The same mistake was responsible: Team selection!

India ex-cricketer

— Sanjay Manjrekar



PM Narendra Modi ji called up to enquire about my health. I am thankful for his concern and good wishes.

NCP president

— Sharad Pawar

FIRST COLUMN

PLAYING WITH THE NATION'S HERITAGE

People feel that Amar Jawan Jyoti shouldn't have been merged with another flame



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Never before perhaps a national memorial to soldiers has sparked such a major controversy as the decision to extinguish the 50-year-old eternal flame -Amar Jawan Jyoti - at India Gate or the installation of Netaji's statue at a disputed canopy. Earlier, a proposal to install Mahatma Gandhi's statue there was not considered befitting to his stature and abandoned. Then how can Netaji's statue be installed there? India Gate was a memorial for the 80,000 Indian soldiers killed in foreign wars. The Jyoti was lit at its arch in 1972 by the then prime minister Indira Gandhi to commemorate the victory against Pakistan in 1971, creation of Bangladesh and in tribute to the soldiers. The dispute has now been sparked by an apparent targeting of the Congress at the height of the elections to UP and four other states. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee is the other target whose Netaji tableau for Republic Day parade was rejected and



BJP is alleged to be appropriating Netaji's legacy. The Government says though the flame was lit in 1972, the names of 3,843 martyrs of the 1971 war were not inscribed. The National War Memorial next to India Gate is the first national monument, with whose flame the one at Amar Jawan Jyoti has been merged. An unseemly situation is developing. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi slamming the government says that flames are for our soldiers and would be lit again. "This is insulting history and memory of the martyrs of Bangladesh war. It is shocking outrage", says former Congress minister Anand Sharma. Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan says it is an "unnecessary controversy" and the opposition lacks knowledge of history.

The Congress is accusing the present government of not giving due to leaders like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi even as BJP appropriates freedom fighters like Vallabhbhai Patel, BR Ambedkar Patel and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. The people in Delhi feel that the Jyoti is historic and should have continued. Many Hindu shrines, including in Badarinath, have jyoti lit continuously for centuries. It is being echoed that now it is not the same jyoti at the NWM. The nation has to respect, honour and be proud of its heritage. Doing anything new is not a novelty. Let the nation think, consider, discuss and then do. The government says that dignitaries cannot pay tributes at two shrines. On the other hand, people wonder why suddenly the decision to install the Netaji statue was announced without a discussion. The statue of George V was removed from the canopy in 1968. In 1991, former prime minister Chandra Shekhar wanted the canopy demolished and a Gandhi statue erected there. But since the canopy housed a colonial occupier, who was removed by Indian freedom fighters, a statue of an Indian leader was found inappropriate and insulting. So Gandhi was never given that place.

Netaji has been raised to an icon by RSS executive member Indresh Kumar who initiated an event in Andaman to celebrate Netaji freeing the island and setting up the first national Azad Hind government every December end. Most senior leaders feel Netaji should have an independent place and not a "tainted" one. But it is more than this. Narendra Modi wants to trounce Mamata Banerjee. In 2021, he tried by having the 125th birth anniversary celebrations on eve of Bengal elections at Kolkata's Victoria Memorial, an incongruous British symbol. Mamata had stolen the show. Now the government wants to install the Netaji statue to spite her. Would that help BJP? Unseemly battles do not behove a great nation. But politics is at a new low.

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

# Can expenditure tax be alternative to I-T?



SUBHASH CHANDRA PANDEY

If personal income tax is abolished but corporate income tax stays, as was done in some nations, it will be an open invitation to all sorts of manipulations

The budget for the next financial year is approaching and the pink press is full of comments and suggestions. Expectations are high on the post-pandemic economic recovery. For some, budget is all about taxation, particularly personal income tax.

There is a common gripe that the fixed-income group of salaried class and pensioners bear the brunt of income tax while flexible-income group of professionals and businesses have enough legal loopholes available to avoid paying income tax.

There are also voices against the very idea of taxing incomes because that means taxing low spenders and high spenders alike and actually discouraging savings. Here is an attempt to present different dimensions of this interesting debate.

Nearly 5.95 crore Income Tax Returns were filed for the financial year 2019-20 till the extended deadline of January 10, 2021. For the financial year 2020-21, over five crore ITRs were filed till December 29, 2021.

Out of total population of over 130 crore, only about 1.46 crore actually paid income tax for financial year 2019-20.

A detailed analysis of about 5.87 crore ITRs for FY2017-18 showed that 5.53 crore were from individual filers, 11.3 lakhs from Hindu Undivided Families, 12.7 lakhs from firms and 8.4 lakh from companies.

Out of the reported gross total income of ₹51.33 lakh crore, business income was ₹24.37 lakh crore and salary/pension income was ₹20.04 lakh crore. Taxable salary/pension (above ₹5 lakh pa limit) returned was ₹15.55 lakh crore with tax liability of about 3.95 lakh crore.

The salary/pension income is a major but not the dominant source of income tax. Total income tax collected in 2018-19 was ₹11.37 lakh crore out of which companies alone paid ₹6.64 lakh crore.

Of course, the argument that business and professional income is more evasion prone than salary/pension income is unassailable.

Efforts to curb income tax evasion revolve around tracking major expenditures and indicators of high conspicuous consumption (foreign travel, electricity consumption etc). Increasingly, high consumption and investment both are tracked by taxmen following the digital footprints left behind by PAN AAD-HAAR linkage.

Can any expenditure tax yield over ₹11 lakh crore to substitute expenditure tax? Over and above GST collection which at current rate of monthly collection of about ₹1.3 lakh crore comes to about annual collection of about ₹15.6 lakh crore?

To tax income or to tax expenditure? Which is more efficient and equitable way of collecting tax? An expenditure by one person is the income of another person



MOST INCOMES ARE LUMPY WHILE EXPENDITURES ARE MORE DIFFUSE. HARDER TO TRACK CRORES OF SALE/PURCHASE TRANSACTION, MORE SO IF MADE IN CASH. GETTING LUMPY INCOME IN CASH IS HARDER THAN SPENDING IN CASH. A LOW TAX BASE EXPENDITURE TAX WILL NOT COMPENSATE THE LOSS OF REVENUE BY ABOLITION OF INCOME TAX AND A WIDE BASE EXPENDITURE TAX WILL PROVE MORE REGRESSIVE WITH CASCADING EFFECT UNLESS GST-LIKE MEASURES ARE TAKEN

(The writer is President, Institute of Public Auditors of India and former Special Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The views expressed are personal.)



and vice versa. Whether you tax salary income of employee or salary expenditure of employer, the effect is the same. (Knife and water melon - what falls on what is immaterial.)

Just as some incomes are harder to detect by taxmen so are some expenditures. It all depends on how diffused is the income/expenditure streams. For some, income comes in big chunks for others it comes in bits and pieces. Some expenditures are lumpy some are micro payments. It all depends on what rate of expenditure tax is applied on what class of expenditures.

The philosophy underlying taxation of spending rather than income was propagated as early as the seventeenth century by Thomas Hobbes who considered it unfair to tax low spenders and high spenders having same income alike.

In spite of the endorsement by some economists exempting saving from taxation, an expenditure tax has never been used in any industrial country.

Prof Nicholas Kaldor of Cambridge University made a strong case for expenditure tax in 1955. He proposed an expenditure tax be substituted for the surtax on higher income taxpayers in Britain. India and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) had adopted Kaldor's suggestion to introduce an expenditure tax for a few years but dropped it by 1966. The tax was different from that recommended by Kaldor and the small revenue yield was considered not worth the burden of compliance and administration.

Kaldor received reconsideration in India when Expenditure Tax was re-introduced in 1987 with very limited scope. Under the

Expenditure Tax Act, 10 per cent tax is charged on payment made at a high-end hotel (with room rent exceeding ₹3000 per day).

The proponents of expenditure tax argue that the Income Tax burden falls on salaried class/pensioners and abolition of income tax will be a big relief to these hassled taxpayers freeing them from the tedium of filing tax returns (big loss to chartered accountants and lawyers and a dip in national income!)

The Income Tax Department tirelessly scrutinises millions of returns, which are followed by queries, clarifications, refunds and protracted correspondence. However, what is the guarantee that expenditure tax will not bring more hassles of record keeping. Most incomes are lumpy while expenditures are more diffuse, harder to track crores of sale/purchase transaction, more so if made in cash. Getting lumpy income in cash is harder than spending in cash.

A low tax base expenditure tax will not compensate the loss of revenue by abolition of income tax and a wide base expenditure tax will prove more regressive with cascading effect unless GST like measures are taken.

Every time money changes hands and every transfer/disbursement /payment is not EXPENDITURE. When some bank is given money to disburse salaries or pensions or dividends, the expenditure is only by the employer or company, the disbursing bank is only an intermediary, a courier. The money does not belong to the bank. Postman delivery of cash is not postman's expenditure. So obviously all such remittances would be out of expenditure tax.

We are talking of expenditure tax not transaction tax.

If we include salary, pension, interest, rent payment within expenditure tax, the recipient will not only face effective income tax but will be further liable to suffer more expenditure tax when spending the received income by way of salary/pension/ interest/rent.

Complexities of deciding which income to tax at what rate will be substituted by perhaps more complex task of taxing different types of expenditures at different rates. (Imagine a tax dispute: This is not wedding party but pre wedding or post wedding party taxable at lower rate!)

If personal income tax is abolished while corporate income tax stays as was done by some countries, there is open invitation to all sorts of manipulations. Personal expenses of shareholders and employees will get shifted as corporate expenses and promoters will drain out corporate profits by being lenders, landlords and employees of their own companies!! Have seen it all.

One of the reasons why expenditure tax did not find favour with major countries as the assessment that this tax will discourage spending (encourage savings) and would impede growth.

The risk of discouraging such spending as is reportable to tax department hurting overall economic growth is very much there. People resent government trying to snoop around finding what they earn. They will be more alarmed and more hassled if government starts hassling them and snooping around what they spend!!

I think expenditure tax is an idea whose time has gone.

## POINT COUNTER POINT

WHO ALL FROM THE SENA PARTICIPATED IN THE RAM JANMABHOOMI MOVEMENT? YOUR HINDUTVA IS MERELY ON PAPER. —BJP LEADER AND FORMER CM DEVENDRA FADNAVIS



HUNDREDS OF SENA WORKERS STOOD BY HINDUS DURING THE 1993 RIOTS AFTER BABRI MASJID'S DEMOLITION. MANY SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES. —SHIV SENA RAJYA SABHA MP SANJAY RAUT

# Ties with India can help Cambodia's long-term interests

Despite its increasing reliance on China, Cambodia must revitalise its relationship with other key and major partners in the Indo-Pacific

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's declaration of 2022 as the ASEAN-India friendship year goes beyond ceremonial rhetoric. India seeks to improve the level of partnership with key Southeast Asian countries. Recent developments indicate this trajectory. From high-level engagements with Indonesia and Vietnam to finalizing the sale of the BrahMos shore-based supersonic cruise missile with the Philippines, India has endeavored to bolster its strategic partnership with these countries. However, it will be interesting to assess the status of India-Cambodia relations given that both countries will be celebrating their 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations this year. Though the relations between India and Cambodia have been growing steadily over



DON MCLAIN GILL

(The writer is a resident fellow at the Manila-based International Development and Security Cooperation (IDSC). The views expressed are personal.)

the past years, Cambodia has been seen to be moving deeper into China's sphere of influence. Being Cambodia's largest trading partner, China continues to increase its influence there. China has funded at least 70 per cent of Cambodia's key infrastructure, particularly, roads and bridges. China promised to deliver an amount of RMB 4 billion (US\$588 million) in aid between 2019-2021. During the pandemic, China has also greatly supported Cambodia.

This heavy dependency on China has led to a series of diplomatic problems for Cambodia. From the deportation of Uyghur asylum seekers to blocking the issuing of joint communiqué on the assertion of China in the South China Sea, Cambodia has constantly been under the spotlight due to actions that con-



tinue to compromise its standing in the regional and global level. In fact, in 2020, former Singaporean diplomat Bilahari Kausikan highlighted how Southeast Asian countries may need to consider recocking Cambodia's ASEAN membership due to its vulnerability to external pressure. Recently, the US announced a new set of restrictions on Cambodia, including an arms embargo, due to its notorious human rights abuses and China's growing military influence.

Despite its inevitable and increasing reliance on China, Cambodia must attempt to revitalise and diversify its relationship with other key and major partners in the Indo-Pacific that seek to ensure the maintenance of a rules-based and transparent regional order as a foundation for international relations. Among these partners, India significantly stands out due to its historic relationship with Cambodia based on principles of mutual benefit and non-interference. As Cambodia assumed its role as ASEAN Chair for 2022, it will be a pragmatic option for both countries to step-up their relations. On January 10, Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar spoke with Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn to emphasize India's steadfast com-

mitment to boost its partnership with ASEAN. Moreover, both officials discussed a wide array of regional security issues that directly impact Southeast Asian countries.

India is among Cambodia's top 1 foreign investors and offers a massive market of 1.3 billion people for a much needed diversification of Phnom Penh's exports. Being recognised as one of Asia's most stable post-colonial countries and the world's largest democracy, India can serve as a practical model for Cambodia in its quest to maximize peace within its borders. Furthermore, as India's capabilities are growing exponentially in terms of economic capacity, military strength, and soft power, its role in Southeast Asia and the greater Indo-Pacific in general will also be expected to increase.

Given the intensifying power competition between the US and China, it will be imperative for Cambodia to bring in India into its overall strategic calculus to balance and safeguard its interests. This will also benefit India's Southeast Asia strategy as it seeks to present itself as an important security provider, capacity builder, and strategic partner in the region. Moreover, forging robust relations with India will not only improve the China-dependent narrative often attributed to Cambodia, but will also provide the latter with an opportunity to balance and diversify its external relations without directly getting embroiled in the existing US-China competition. India's adherence to strategic autonomy will provide Cambodia with a less controversial position vis-à-

vis its relations with China and serve as a complement to the overarching India-ASEAN partnership. It is therefore crucial for Cambodia to maximize its engagements with India given the geopolitical and economic uncertainty brought by the intensifying power competition and the crippling effects of the Covid pandemic.

However, India must also maintain a proactive level of consistency in applying its Act East Policy. The lack of momentum in the past has allowed countries like China to monopolize influence over key Southeast Asian countries. It will be necessary for India to project itself as a responsible stakeholder in the stability of the region and a trustworthy partner that seeks to achieve mutual gains.

# Budget 2022: Insurers urge higher 80 C investment limit; reduction in GST

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Insurance companies are seeking a separate deduction limit of Rs 1 lakh for insurance premium payment under Section 80 C of the Income Tax Act in the upcoming Union Budget to bring in more people under the ambit of insurance.

The insurers also want reduction in the goods and services tax (GST) rate of 18 per cent currently applied on health insurance products to 5 per cent to make such products more affordable to common people.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget for 2022-23 on February 1.

"The industry has long pending expectations from the policy makers for incentivizing people to get life insurance by giving a separate deduction limit of minimum Rs 1 lakh for insurance premium payment under Section 80C," Tarun Rustagi Chief Financial Officer Canara HSBC OBC Life Insurance said.

Life insurance is a long-term solution, unlike other financial products which have a shorter investment horizon



and are covered under the 80C provision.

Currently, all financial purchases are clubbed under the same IT deduction section (80C) capped at Rs 1,50,000.

"We expect the budget to consider creating a separate section for tax deduction on premium paid towards life insurance. This would enable a more logical segregation of customer's funds into long-term and short-term kitties," Edelweiss Tokio Life Insurance Executive Director Subhrajit Mukhopadhyay said.

Ageas Federal Life Insurance Managing Director

and CEO Vighnesh Shahane said the Section 80 C is currently cluttered with several investment options such as Public Provident Fund (PPF), Equity-Linked Savings Scheme (ELSS) and National Savings Certificate (NSC) amongst others. "At least, a separate section for term policies would be helpful given the current scenario and the huge protection gap in the country," Shahane said.

Future Generali India Life Insurance Senior VP and Head Products and Development Chinmay Bade said that life insurance is a proxy to social

## Bring natural gas under GST to realise PM's vision of gas-based economy

The government should bring natural gas under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime to realise Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for a gas-based economy and raising the share of the environment-friendly fuel in India's energy basket, an industry body that represents the likes of Reliance Industries as well state-owned firms, has said. Natural gas is currently outside the ambit of GST, and existing legacy taxes -- central excise

duty, state VAT, central sales tax - continue to be applicable on the fuel. In its pre-Budget memorandum to the finance ministry, Federation of Indian Petroleum Industry (FIPI), which boasts of members from across the oil and gas spectrum, also demanded rationalization of GST on transportation of natural gas through pipeline as well as on re-gasification of imported LNG to help bring down cost of the environment friendly fuel.

security in case of death of a person as well as survival and, therefore, the exemption limit of 1.5 lakh under Section 80C needs a revision.

As per IRDAI's Annual Report-2020-21, insurance penetration in the country is at 4.2 per cent of the GDP vis-à-vis a global average of 7.4 per cent. As of March, 2021, the non-life insurance penetration stood at barely 1 per cent.

Liberty General Insurance CEO and Whole-Time Director Roopam Asthana said due to the uncertainty spurred

by the COVID-19 pandemic, health insurance has become an everyday need in order to protect oneself from uncertainties and is more relevant than ever. "Therefore, the government should consider a drastic reduction in the GST applicable on health insurance premiums which is currently charged at 18 per cent. This will encourage people to purchase health insurance and additional top-up plans to protect themselves from medical crises and emergencies," Asthana noted.

# Air India likely to be handed over to Tata group today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian government is likely to hand over Air India to the Tata Group on Thursday, nearly 69 years after it was taken from the conglomerate, officials said on Wednesday.

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.

Meanwhile, two airline pilot unions - Indian Pilots' Guild (IPG) and Indian Commercial Pilots' Association (ICPA) - on Monday warned Air India's CMD Vikram Dev Dutt of legal action as "multiple deductions and recoveries have been projected" on the dues owed to pilots.

"This recovery exercise is entirely illegal, and we demand that this anomaly is rectified and the amount due is repaid with immediate effect," the letter sent by the two unions said.

Additionally, two other unions have opposed the carrier's January 20 order to check grooming and measure the body mass index (BMI) of cabin crew members at the airports just before their flights.

These unions - Air India



Employees' Union (AIEU) and All India Cabin Crew Association (AICCA) - on Monday wrote to Dutt opposing the order on the grounds that it is dehumanising and in violation of rules prescribed by aviation regulator DGCA.

"BMI is a person's weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in metres. A high BMI can indicate high body fatness," stated the website of US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Three days after Air India's sale was announced on October 8 last year, a Letter of Intent (LoI) was issued to the Tata Group confirming the government's willingness to sell its 100 per cent stake in the airline. On October 25, the

Centre signed the share purchase agreement (SPA) for this deal.

Officials said on Wednesday that the airline will most likely be handed over to the conglomerate on Thursday as all the formalities are close to completion.

As a part of the deal, the Tata group will also be handed over Air India Express and a 50 per cent stake in ground handling arm Air India SATS.

Tatas had on October 8 beat the Rs 15,100-crore offer by a consortium led by SpiceJet promoter Ajay Singh and the reserve price of Rs 12,906 crore set by the government for the sale of its 100 per cent stake in the loss-making carrier.

## MONEY MATTERS

### Feb, March to see increase in demand: Shriram Transport Finance



Signaling a return to normalcy, India's largest truck lender, Shriram Transport Finance Company on Wednesday said its collection efficiency returned to 100 per cent in the second half of January after undergoing a brief blip in the first fortnight.

Shriram Transport Finance Company Vice-Chairman and Managing Director Umesh Revankar said the collection rates would rise in February and March as more people get vaccinated and the Omicron variant was less impactful on business than originally feared. Collections rates reflects confidence levels in borrowers, often seen as a proxy of economic activity. Third wave (of Covid-19) was only temporary. Doctors advise normal treatment and people have come out of fear and business has returned to normal. Some state governments imposed some restrictions but later it was reversed, by most of them. Everything appears normal now," he told PTI. The company pegs disbursements to reach pre-Covid-19 levels and expects demand to "shoot up" in coming months. "For February and March we feel it will be good. We feel things will be normal and it will be pre-Covid-19 levels, demands will shoot up soon", he said. He expressed hope that additional allocations in the union budget for infrastructure would propel demand for trucks.

### Vedanta demerger call by March-end: Anil Agarwal



Metals and mining group Vedanta Ltd will announce the contours of a proposal to spin off key businesses into separate listed companies by March-end, its chairman Anil Agarwal said, as he looks to simplify and streamline the corporate structure to create value. While the zinc business is already housed in a listed subsidiary, the plan is to

demerge the aluminum, iron and steel, and oil and gas businesses into standalone listed entities. This will unlock value for all stakeholders as well as create businesses that are positioned better to capitalise on their distinct market positions and deliver long-term growth and enable strategic partnerships, he told PTI in an interview. It will also help tailor capital structure and capital allocation policies based on business-specific dynamics as also create distinct investment profiles to attract deeper and broader investor bases. "It (demerger) is a natural thing to do. Market is very good and production (at different divisions of Vedanta) is going well. And so we think having separate companies will create valuation," he said. "I think, maybe in a month and a half, sometime before March-end we will announce the full (contours)." Mumbai-listed Vedanta Ltd had in November last year announced that its board of directors had formed a sub-committee to evaluate a potential spinoff of its aluminum, iron and steel, and oil and gas businesses into separate listed companies.

### Coal Ministry CPSEs clock 28.33 pc growth in capex



The government on Wednesday said the Ministry of Coal, through its CPSEs, has registered a 28.33 per cent year-on-year growth in capex achievement at Rs 12,605.75 crore for the period ending December, 2021. The Ministry of Coal, through its Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), had registered a capex achievement of Rs 9,822.28 crore for the period up to December, 2020, "As compared to the last year's achievement of Rs 9,822.28 crore for the period up to December, 2020, Coal Ministry CPSEs have done capex of Rs 12,605.75 crore, thereby giving a major impetus to the COVID-struck economy," the coal ministry said in a statement. This capex achievement is also 75 per cent of the Ministry of Coal's annual target, the statement added. Coal India (CIL) is one of the CPSEs under the coal ministry. CIL had earlier said that its capital expenditure jumped more than two-fold to Rs 1,840 crore in the first quarter of 2021-22, compared to Rs 844 crore in the year-ago quarter.

# Jio-BP opens EV charging hub in Delhi; petrol pump count inching up

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



A joint venture of billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) and energy supermajor BP has opened one of the country's largest EV charging hubs in Delhi, as the duo scale up the fuel retail network, offering multiple fuel choices including EV charging infrastructure.

Reliance BP Mobility Limited, operating under the brand name Jio-bp, is working with multiple demand aggregators, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and technology partners with a vision of being the leading EV charging infrastructure player in India, RIL had said in its third quarter earnings announcement last week.

"Jio-bp has constructed and launched one of the country's largest EV charging hubs in Dwarka, Delhi with BluSmart as its primary customer," it had said.

RBML had launched its first

Jio-bp branded Mobility Station at Navde, Navi Mumbai in October last year. And since then it has been scaling up the network.

In 2019, BP had bought a 49 per cent stake in over 1,400 petrol pumps and 31 aviation turbine fuel (ATF) stations owned by Reliance for USD 1 billion. The existing petrol pumps of Reliance had since been transferred to the joint venture, which plans to scale them up to 5,500 by 2025.

Reliance holds the remain-

ing 51 per cent stake in Reliance BP Mobility Limited (RBML). RBML has already received the marketing authorisation for transportation fuels. Petrol pumps with RBML have since increased to 1,448, according to latest information available from the petroleum ministry. RBML had 1,427 outlets at the end of September 2021. India's auto fuel retailing is dominated by public sector oil companies that own the majority of 81,099 petrol pumps in the country.

# Indian Biogas Association urges govt to set up Fund

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The Indian Biogas Association (IBA) has urged the government to set up a 'Biogas Fertiliser Fund' with an initial provision of Rs 1.4 lakh crore for five years, as it has the potential to benefit five crore farmers and to reduce fossil fuel import bill.

For materializing the envisaged target of 5,000 plants under the SATAT (Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation) scheme, creating a 'Biogas-Fertilizer Fund' with an initial provision/corpus of Rs 1.4 lakh crore for the first five years period should be a welcome step, IBA said in a statement.

"The government has con-

stantly been talking about doubling the income of farmers by 2022. 50 million farmers will be benefitted with the outlay. Biogas Fertilizer Fund will not only ensure that India imports less fossil fuel but also help

farmers with bio-fertiliser," A R Shukla, President, IBS said.

The IBA has also suggested defining a blending quota for statutory mixing of bio-methane (CBG) in the city gas distribution network and nat-

ural gas pipeline. A tentative blending quota of 5 per cent for the first five year, followed by progressively increasing it up to 10 per cent at the end of 10 years. It also stated that the GST council recently notified the escalation of the GST slab from 5 per cent to 12 per cent for biogas plant-related equipment and their parts.

"This has put the biogas producers in a challenging situation. With the end product, biogas, and its other upgraded forms being slated at 5 per cent GST slab, the GST rate escalation further aggravates the existing inverted tax structure concerns, which eventually cascades onto an increase in the overall project price," it pointed out.

# To highlight economic growth, Biden goes shopping

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden pledged last week to chat more with everyday Americans and took an initial step Tuesday afternoon by visiting a gift shop and ice cream store in Washington's Capitol Hill neighbourhood.

Biden went shopping at Honey Made, a boutique that opened up last year amid the pandemic. The president perused the store, choosing a hoodie for his grandson and a necklace for his wife, Jill. He then picked up a mug with a picture of Vice President Kamala Harris on it.

"I'll get this one, too," he

said. The excursion occurred as the administration is trying to spotlight the healthier parts of the economy, at a time when many Americans are fretting over inflation at a nearly 40-year high. Higher prices have overshadowed the clear gains under Biden's watch as the unemployment rate has improved sharply to 3.9% and the economy is poised for the strongest growth since 1984.

The White House issued a fact sheet as Biden shopped that said the administration had provided \$400 billion in aid to more than 6 million small businesses.

# TCS 2<sup>nd</sup> most valuable IT services brand globally

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has become the second most valuable brand in the IT services sector globally, while Infosys and four other Indian tech majors have firmly established their position among the top 25 IT services brands tally, according to Brand Finance.

Following TCS and Infosys (third spot), there are four more Indian brands now firmly established among the global elite - Wipro (7th), HCL (8th), Tech Mahindra (15th) and LTI (22nd), as per the Brand Finance IT Services 25 2022 report.

All six Indian brands feature among the top 10 fastest-growing IT Services brands over the course of 2020-2022, the brand valuation firm added.

Accenture retained the title of world's most valuable and strongest IT services brand, boasting record brand value of

USD 36.2 billion, as per the report.

Indian IT services brands made a leap with average growth from 2020 to 2022 at 51 per cent, compared to a seven per cent drop for brands from the US.

A global turn to remote working for professional services and an accelerated digitalisation trend across the global economy have facilitated expansion of IT services hubs within India.

With strong IT services brands and a large population of people with digital skills, India will continue to play a major role in developing infrastructure for artificial intelligence, data analytics and Internet of Things (IoT), it added.

The report said as IBM has gone down to fourth rank, TCS has risen up to second spot in ranking, following 12 per cent growth year-on-year



and 24 per cent since 2020, to a brand value of USD 16.8 billion.

TCS - in a regulatory filing said - this growth is attributed to the company's investments in its brand and its employees, customer equity and strong financial performance.

Strong revenue growth in 2021, saw TCS cross an important milestone, hitting USD 25 billion in revenue for the first

time, with an industry-leading operating profit margin of over 25 per cent. "TCS continues to rise up the IT services rankings to become the second most valuable brand in the sector for the first time. "This great achievement is the result of strong financial growth, strong and continued investments in a new global brand positioning last year... I also see TCS' focused commit-

ment to serving the needs of its employees, customers, and communities, which always - in the long run - drives brand performance," David Haigh, CEO and Chairman of Brand Finance, said. TCS CMO Rajashree R said the ranking is a landmark milestone for the company and a validation of its increased market relevance and focus on innovation and transformation of clients, their customers, and the larger community. "With our differentiated 'customer focused' strategy, superior execution, investments in building newer capabilities and sustained focus on research and innovation over the last decade, we are indeed well positioned to capitalise on the multi-year technology transformation opportunities that lie ahead," Rajashree added.

Infosys, at the third spot, emerged as the fastest-growing IT services brand globally fol-

lowing 52 per cent brand value growth since last year and 80 per cent since 2020 to USD 12.8 billion. Over the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the change is even more impressive with the brand recording an 80 per cent gain, the report said. Strong business results can be attributed to the brand's ability to credibly adapt its offering to fast-evolving needs of today's economy as well as to its continued investment into innovative solutions that help clients securely accelerate their journey to the cloud, the report noted.

Infosys has also continued to build brand recognition globally by nurturing sports collaborations with ATP, Roland Garros, and the Australian Open, while also forging new ones with Madison Square Garden and media-heavyweights - The Economist, Financial Times, Bloomberg, it added.

## Write from home now!



**D**on't you think that the tech industry is shaping the future of this country? Well, the 21st century is earmarked as IT driven and we are at the centre of global attraction considered as a knowledge powerhouse. And, taking this act ahead Xebia, the US head-quartered IT consultancy firm has joined hands with Microsoft for their first ever blog-a-thon contest! The blog-a-thon invites IT professionals, students, developers, and leaders to participate by sharing solutions on a pre-identified list of topics that are critical for business applications.

The blogs will be further evaluated by the Xebia — Microsoft jury and winners will be provided a global visibility to showcase their perspectives and win prizes along with Azure credits and mentoring sessions by Xebia and Microsoft subject matter experts. "This initiative will not only enable the students, IT aspirants, developers to showcase their skills but also get the right exposure for future career endeavors. The seasoned professionals, developers and leaders on the other hand will have their tech strategy heard in the right way globally. It is also an opportunity to IT professionals and developers to learn more about Microsoft's path breaking technologies and empower them to build the India of tomorrow," says Runki Goswami — Chief Marketing Officer — Xebia Global Services.

As we all know, India ranks third among the most attractive investment destinations for technology transactions in the world. This modern India has had a strong focus on science and technology, realising that it is a key element for economic growth! The country has regularly undertaken space missions, so why not this now? Runki further says, "Covid times saw an unprecedented number of blogs presenting an array of perspectives in technology. Some never got the right highlight or a definitive call to action. Looking at the innovative potential of techies and developers, we thought of give the bloggers a strategic platform for thought leadership. This was away from the regular

coding games and could bring out brilliant ideas that can be the base for tomorrow."

Blogging seems to be like the new-gen thing and capitalising on it quickly is Xebia's strategic mind to infuse it with an interesting initiative like this! It proves how over just a few decades, the internet went from being a research project to being perhaps the most important piece of technology we have in modern society. The spokesperson continues, "The covid-19 crisis has brought about years of change in the way companies in all sectors and regions do business. Digital adoption has taken a quantum leap at both the organisational and industry levels. With new tech trends being introduced every quarter and information becoming obsolete, it's now an obligation to stay relevant and learn about the newest technologies including digital industry, social media, and the web in general. Updated technology trends today helps indicating new markets, open up new merchandise and also introduce new of development."

Why do they have a strong belief in this specific initiative and how are they aggressively working towards establishing pioneering leaders in technological development? To that she replies, "We believe such collaborations bring out the best of different worlds. This is the digital age and making opportunities for IT aspirants and leaders to share their opinions on relevant subjects surely helps in bringing out brilliant ideas and summarizing the pros and cons of certain trends. This initiative will not only enable the aspirants to showcase their skills but also get the right exposure for future career endeavors. The seasoned professionals, developers and leaders on the other hand will have their tech strategy heard in the right way globally."



## Shama Sikander all excited about future projects

**S**hama Sikander who spent her time in Dubai recently dazzled in the latest photoshoot by keeping super fit and indulging herself in spreading smiles. The actress is flying high even during these difficult times as she says there is no other way she knows to live life. We absolutely adored her pictures and we wanted to know more about her life in Dubai, what she feels about the situation back home and what was her idea behind the shoot.

We spoke to Shama on the current condition and her photoshoot and here is what she says, "It's not easy staying away from home during such a situation. But all thanks to the almighty that everyone is hail and hearty. Everyone follows the

rules there and there are punitive implications otherwise. We are although quite disciplined even at home. This photoshoot happened as one of my friends approached me with this concept and it seemed very exciting as you all know how much I enjoy doing new photo-shoots it keeps my creative side excited and busy So we rallied quickly and made it happen. There is a lot more coming on that space. I do get to see the scenic landscape here but I missed home as much because now I have Casper my puppy to come back to along with my family and friends. I'm happy to be back now and super excited for some good acting projects coming my way."

She loves Dubai and Dubai loves her. We loved those stills from the inimitable shama and we wish she keeps them coming.



## Chatbots to rescue

**D**elivering proper care to those with mental health issues has always been a big challenge. India is on the verge of a mental health epidemic, yet it's hard to find a public discourse on ways to prevent mental health disorders or treat them.

According to a report by the World Health Organisation in 2019, over 264 million people are affected by depression and almost 8,00,000 people die by suicide each year. The situation has been further worsened by the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. The isolation because of lockdown, uncertainty and fear due to job cuts and general discomfort due to the inability to control different aspects of life has triggered severe mental trauma in people across India. The issue has been

There are chatbots designed to detect subtle changes in facial expressions, length of pauses or rates of speech and build a diagnosis accordingly. In case the chatbot detects a deep-seated problem in the patient, an option to meet an actual therapist is offered to them, and relevant helpline numbers are shared.

A part of the population especially, the millennials and Gen Z, believe that chatbots are a great way to address the issue of the mental health crisis in India. The young crowd is tech-savvy and more comfortable in sharing responses with a chatbot rather than a real person. This makes sense when we think about how workplaces are becoming more remote, and increasing internet conversations are making human interaction more limited.

However, not all are convinced and it can be debated whether one ought to be. Issues related to mental health are complex and articulating how one feels

nuanced inflections in body language and even tone. Compared to that, using a chatbot may seem superficial.

Apart from that, there are other issues as well. A chatbot is trained with underlying neural nets and learning algorithms and can inherit the prejudice of its makers. The algorithms behind a chatbot have to be designed in a way that makes sure it behaves in a specific manner, which is helpful for the person talking to it on the other side. The people developing the chatbot need to be well aware of the nuances of mental health.

### Bridging the gap

Human beings are complicated creatures, even those who are not struggling with mental health issues. Those suffering from anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, and suicidal thoughts have several layers of thinking and multiple faces that they put on for their interactions. A chatbot, in this scenario, often helps to bring down the 'wall' since its biggest weakness is its greatest strength too. A chatbot is never judgemental, it will never show empathy too. Most questions used by chatbots are fed in an algorithm based on the CBT technique. The lack of emotional bonding is often what a person suffering from mental health is often looking for. However, it is important to remember that chatbots can be effective in early interventions and a primary diagnosis of mental health disorders but it is best not to let chatbots engage in full-blown mental health therapy without any human supervision.

In conclusion, chatbots can offer support, companionship and therapy which can lessen the load on therapists drastically. It is indeed a viable option for people who face challenges in terms of affordability and accessibility. In the years to come, technology companies need to develop chatbots that can strike the right balance of being empathetic without being judgemental. Those using them must be made aware of the limitations of the chatbot and the areas in which it can help — a transparent system is what is required.

made even more complicated by the fact that no one has any idea when things will ever return to normal.

To tackle the issue of rising mental health issues among people, technology companies are leveraging Artificial intelligence-based solutions to develop chatbots tuned to help patients with mental health concerns. These conversational agents support patients with mental health issues while offering a high level of privacy and anonymity.

Chatbots can be effective but are they really the answer? Dr Prakriti Poddar, Mental Health Expert Director at Poddar Wellness, answers it all.

A chatbot is able to simulate a conversation on different platforms using audio or text and sometimes video too. While some chatbots are fully automated, some utilise human interfaces. The AI frameworks required to be trained with vast amounts of data to make these chatbots compatible with the complexity of human communication have the ability to understand cultural nuances.



# Bond with the best this February

From stories that detail the shenanigans of animals, to the BCCI's impact on Indian cricket, to discovering the unity in diversity that is India through the workings of the 15th Finance Commission, to the saga of India's first manufacturing park for medical devices to lessons homemaker-CEOs can teach MBAs, corporate managers and businesses, to magical foods that will change your life, to the agony and ecstasy of falling and failing in live, *Rupa Publications* invites you to Bond with the best this February.

**Here's what's on offer:**  
**All Creatures Great and Small – By Ruskin Bond**

'Samuel was a snail of some individuality. Some considered him to be the bad snail in the family, but that was because he did not listen to his elders and liked to do things on his own... Birds and butterflies recognized no man-made borders, so why should snails?' If there is one thing that never gets old or boring or repetitive, it is stories that detail the shenanigans of animals. Often extremely entertaining, animals act in certain ways that are intriguing, wondrous and fascinating. In *All Creatures Great and Small*, Ruskin Bond, known for his signature simplistic and witty writing style, brings us stories and personal essays that speak to this animal-human equation. He takes us into the world of ambitious snails, conniving eagles, monkeys that love hot baths, humans who befriend them and many other exciting tales!

**On Board: Test, Trial, Triumph – My Years in BCCI – By Ratnakar Shetty**

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is an institution that elicits extreme reactions. While some marvel at the remarkable work it has done to promote and develop cricket in India and elsewhere, others decry it as being myopic, arrogant and money-minded. However, nobody can deny the impact the BCCI has had not only on Indian cricket, but also international cricket and the influence it commands. Over the years, the professionalism and excellence displayed by Indian cricketers on the field has been complemented by the zeal and diligence of those who worked

tirelessly behind the scenes to take Indian cricket to where it is today. *On Board* offers the reader an opportunity to walk through the corridors of this extraordinary institution and enter its meeting rooms, where many issues were discussed and momentous decisions taken. Penned by Prof Ratnakar Shetty, who has been an integral part of the BCCI's evolution from being just a member of the International Cricket Council (ICC) to the most powerful cricket board on the planet, the book is an engaging read.

**Those Were the Days: Tales From The 15th Finance Commission – By Ashok K. Lahiri**

The Finance Commission has played a critical role in India's federal structure since 1952.



ing all the states of our large and diverse country, and their interpersonal interactions. *Those Were the Days* captures vignettes of such experiences of the 15th Finance Commission. It is a book not of history or economics or even secret deliberations within the Commission, but one that captures the joys of working as a team, a sense of discovery of the unity in diversity that is India and the great camaraderie that it enjoyed with leaders and civil servants in the different states.

**Made in Lockdown: India's Medtech Growth Powered by AMTZ – By Jitendra Sharma**

AMTZ is India's premier medical technology park with common manufacturing and scientific facilities that include specialized laboratories, warehousing and testing centres such as the centre for electromagnetic compatibility and safety testing, centre for biomaterial testing, centre for 3D printing, centres for lasers, MRI magnets, gamma irradiation, moulds and many other industrial service centres. This book highlights the real strength of AMTZ – not just the products to fight the pandemic, but a broader ambit of the healthcare value chain. *Made in Lockdown* is all about how AMTZ showcases modern India as a leader in the medical technology global stage.

**Every Mother Is a CEO: Management Lessons From My Mother – By Dhanjit Vadra**

Homemaker-CEOs can teach MBAs, corporate managers and businesses much more than you ever imagined. Doesn't managing a home's finances, nurturing the family's nutritional and emotional needs and planning the workflow of everyday activities of different family members count as management? *Every Mother Is a CEO* answers these

questions and more. In a breezy, conversational style, the author Dhanjit Vadra – Managing Director, Allen & Alvan Pvt Ltd and CEO, Allen & Alvan Defence & Aerospace – recounts the ways in which his mother Urmil Vadra worked tirelessly towards managing a large household, raising a family and assisting his father build a hardware manufacturing empire from scratch.

**Heal With Foods: Magical Ingredients That Will Change Your Life – By Manjari Chandra**

A vibrant, healthy you starts with your gut! Our food choices are driven by what we subconsciously feed to our brain, influenced by advertisements, peers, societal norms and many environmental factors. Immaculately designed packets and their strategic placement on store shelves compel us to buy foods that, in reality, we do not need. These are the foods that deteriorate our overall health, particularly the gut, when in fact, the gut defines and influences every aspect of our health – from digestion and body weight, to mood, hormonal balance and immunity. And gut health can only be enhanced by eating nutritionally rich, wholesome foods.

**Premier Amour: First Love – By Abhay**

A love story that is at once exciting and tender! The fact and fiction about love stories inevitably merge at some point, and one becomes the other. The proof lies between these pages. Just like the lovebirds in real life, Bhanu and Bhushan experience the ecstasy and agony of falling and failing in love. But will they rise again in love? Will their first love give them a second chance? Those who have loved will get a clue from these lines: A woman's heart in love is like a peacock in the rains. It has to give in to much singing and dancing, flutter its rainbow feathers and spread them in an oversized arch, then strut all over the place wearing that colourful cloak, announcing to the world that it is the season of love. First love is a rare lucky charm. Always wear it close to your heart. To love and to lose in love is worse than not to love. I am still recovering from a fractured heart, and it is unfair to give someone something that is broken. Some women prefer to win their man, not steal him. Let's ride the tide, love is by our side.

— IANS



## TRANSFORM will make you a better leader, manager

Widely known for his bestseller books *Catalyst* and *Get Better at Getting Better*, the late Chandramouli Venkatesan's third book titled *TRANSFORM* was completed just before he succumbed to pancreatic cancer. It was intended to be a part of a longer series of books he wanted to write to help guide people to better navigate their careers. In this new book, published by Penguin, Mouli does what he does best, highlighting the most important ways to grow and improve through a key skill – people management.

Having a proven 29-year track record across companies like Asian Paints, Onida, Mondelez (erstwhile Cadbury) and Pidilite, Mouli has worked across multiple disciplines and brings all his experience to life through the insights he provides in this book. During his career, Mouli observed that people management skills are a near universal requirement in all industries, and their impact in making a person successful is high. He also found that the people at the top are not necessarily the most technically competent or the most creative, but they were almost always good leaders and managers – making them good at people management. He viewed people management as one of the four key levers to achieving success in one's life and work.

We often view people management to be the actions that "leaders" and "managers" take, and many of us dream of being "leaders" one day ourselves. Mouli's writing style, however, makes you rethink concepts such as leadership and management and how they actually aren't one

dimensional in nature. This book is based on a development program Mouli used to run called *Lead & Manage*. The book aims to bust certain myths we have – such as "leaders" only being those with leadership built into their role, like a CEO. In fact, he argues that no matter your role, your actions must be to both lead and manage simultaneously. What makes *Transform* different is that Mouli has developed a practical work plan for his readers. By completing the few simple exercises in the book rigorously, you can learn to drive various behavioural and action based shifts in the way one approaches their career. On book, Anand Kripalu, Managing Director & CEO, EPL says, "Mouli has been one of my best reportees. The book shares insights on people management to help young managers move up the corporate ladder fast. I am sure the book will leave a lasting impact and accelerate the careers of those who read it." Dr. Ranjan Banerjee, Dean – BITSom, says, "How do you grow your people and in doing so, grow yourself? As somebody who has been both CEO and HR head, Mouli is/was uniquely placed to speak about this. Clear, simple and actionable, this is a must read for both aspiring and current leaders." Insightful and practical, *TRANSFORM* is a comprehensive book on leadership and management which covers many important concepts to improve chances of corporate success.

Available at book stores and on Amazon.in  
Hardcover | Non-fiction | Rs 399

## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



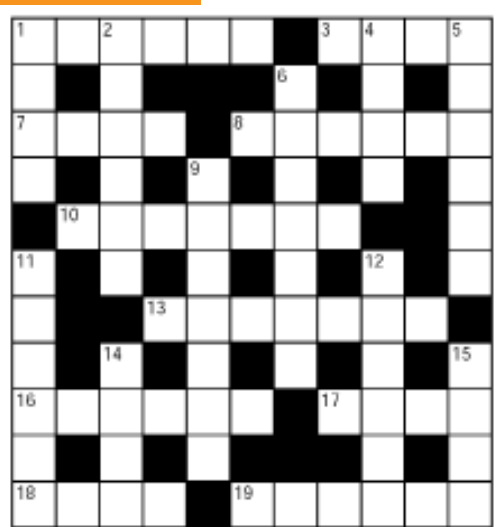
### REALITY CHECK



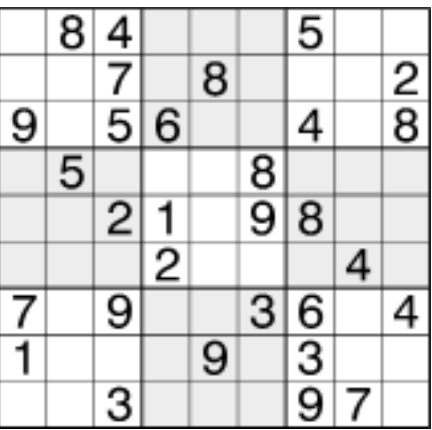
### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### SUDOKU



**Yesterday's solution**

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

**Rules**

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

### ACROSS

- A season
- Strike with an open hand
- Jump over
- Having a sharp sour taste
- Applauded
- Bumped
- Sleepy
- A biting, jumping insect
- Require
- Something built over a river

### DOWN

- Not sick
- Just about
- Overdue
- A talking pet bird
- A permit to drive
- The language of Spain
- Concealed from view
- Shouted
- Down
- A strong box for storing valuables





## Chiranjeevi tests positive for Covid

**A**ctor Chiranjeevi tested positive for COVID-19, announced the actor through his Twitter account. The actor stated that he is experiencing very minor symptoms and is confined to his house. He also advised everybody who had touch with him to get tested and stay careful. The actor resorted to Twitter to express his feelings, writing, "Dear All, Despite all precautions, I have tested Covid 19 Positive with mild symptoms last night and am quarantining at home. I request all who came in contact with me over the last few days to get tested

too. Can't wait to see you all back soon!" This is the second time the actor tested positive for Covid. Meanwhile, on the work front, Chiranjeevi has four exciting projects lined up. He is waiting for the release of his next film *Acharya* directed by Koratala Siva. The film also stars Ram Charan, Kajal Aggarwal and Pooja Hegde. *Acharya* is scheduled to release in theaters on April 1, 2022. The actor also has *Bhola Shankar* directed by Meher Ramesh with Keerthy Suresh, Godfather directed by Jayaram Mohanraja and Mega154 directed by Bobby.

## 'We are silently spearheading socially driven cinema'

SHIKHA DUGGAL

**L**oser 2 explores the numerous dimensions of what it means to be an aspiring athlete in India and *Jathi Ratnalu* fame Priyadarshi Pulikonda left no stone unturned in tutoring himself to be best air rifle shooter the team have on block. Describing about the tutelage process he had to go through for Telugu webseries *Loser 2* streaming on Zee 5, he begins, "Coaching for the sequel of *Loser* was so similar to reading your most favourite book after an interval. This time, training for an air rifle shooter twitched me up a little more. It was like a library calling me to open those best-loved pages! All this was going on when I headed back to the association where I trained all this while. I was falling back to that discipline which is so essential in my life because I remember the prolific coach advising me to stop smoking and going to the gym, doing this is not necessary to be an ace player. He narrated to me an example of the guy with a punch who got us a gold medal in air rifle shooting. He had no six-pack abs, flamboyance or chiseled arms — this is how he suggested that people who are likely to win gold for the country do not necessarily need to extremely physically fit. He asked me to focus heavily on building a deeper concentration instead. Fitness is desired, but a 1 rather believe in a fit mind. Suri Yadav is the gun and vice versa!" He was building another guy in himself which slightly took on a toll on him, it was taxing as he mentioned. He continued, "Maybe there will be a season 3 of *Loser* and Suri Yadav will re-emerge. There's no official confirmation yet. I'll wait for the reactions and reviews to pour in by next month because during promotions, we made it a point to revisit *Loser* primarily. We are aware that the num-

ber of people haven't subscribed to Zee 5 Telugu but when it comes on television, they do watch it on a mass level! At the moment, I have wrapped Suri Yadav and placed him in the warehouse of my mind and hoping to revisit if and only there's a season 3."

As an air rifle shooter in the web-series, Priyadarshi is not just aiming for the practical target but also aiming for the highest viewership simultaneously. Talking a little about his admiration for the Telugu film industry, he stated, "Pandemic has changed the whole scenario here. Before it, Tollywood was all about commercial success! Nowadays, there's a different set of cinematic content hovering around. Fans have shown immense acceptance. We are silently spearheading socially driven cinema. Because of a pandemic, we really look up to cinema in its truest form which is



art! Though the industry suffered huge losses recently unlike the software industry, today we are running so well that sometimes we have a shortage of equipment, vanity vans and cinematographers. I have seen production houses moving to our city to shoot quickly these days not because Telugu cinema is star spangled or known to be a 'film city', but because the kind of stories we are churning out." He just couldn't swathe his interview without mentioning a very pertinent name from the Telugu film industry who according to Priyadarshi gave a new face-lift to Tollywood. He draws to a close, "Rajamouli is the name — he gave Tollywood a new spectacle. He bought in an advanced technology with *Baahubali* franchise. Tollywood became a level-playing field in all its cinematic aspects. Years ago we were watching a Malayalam movie with the help of torrent but today we have OTT platforms. Film stories are crossing borders, Allu Arjun's *Pushpa* proves it. Nagarjuna Akkineni mentioned at the press conference of *Loser 2* on how Rajasthan has demanded twenty prints of *Bangararaju* — this is indeed pan India."

## 10th class is very special to me: Avika

**1**0th Class *Diaries* starring Avika Gor and Sriram in the lead roles is all set to get a grand release. Noted Telugu cinematographer Anji is making his directorial debut with this upcoming film. Touted to be a romantic and youthful

drama, the film is produced by Achyuta Rama Rao P and Ravi Teja Manyam. Recently, director Harish Shankar unveiled a peppy mass song *Silaka Silaka*. Speaking about the film leading actress Avika Gor said, "My 10th class is very special to me. I did *Uyyala*

*Jampala* when I was in 10th class. The Telugu audience accepted me with that film. Therefore, I will always remember 10th class. My character in this film is very interesting. I am hoping you will like me playing a bubbly character. This role is very different."

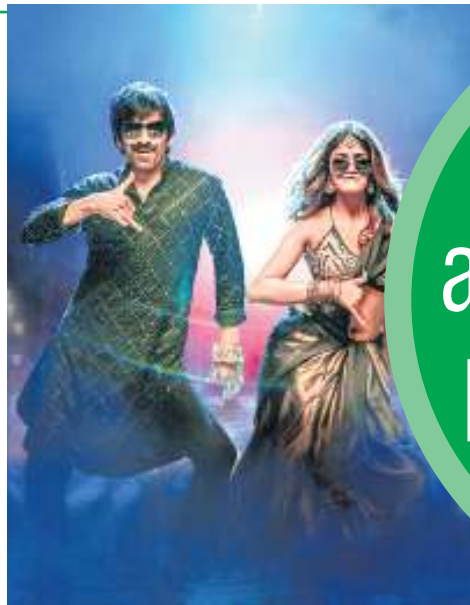
## Adivi Sesh on *Major*: Important to me that his story be shown in theatres

**A**ctor Adivi Sesh, who has been waiting for his upcoming movie *Major* to hit the screens, pens down a heartfelt note on the occasion of Republic Day. As the *Kshanam* actor reflects on the beautiful moments spent with 26/11 martyr Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan's parents, he shares some pictures on his social media handles. Sesh also pens a note about the release struggles being faced by the *Major* team and explains that he only wants the movie to be out when it is safe for everyone to watch it in the theaters. "On this #RepublicDay I reflect on some beautiful moments I spent with #MajorSandeepUnnikrishnan's parents, @NSG base #Mumbai", Adivi Sesh's note reads. Sesh's emotional note also reads, "It's important to me that his

story be shown in theaters across the country, at a time when it's truly safe. No waves threatening public health." "No theatres closed in cities like #Delhi. This is what he would want I feel. Safety. Protection. Of his people. Of his country. He was always a Soldier first. :) I'm thankful to find a small place in the hearts of his parents. His family," Sesh wrote, concluding his Republic Day post. Sesh is seen having a wonderful time with Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan's parents, as featured in the pictures shared by him. Sesh, who portrays the role of Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan in Mahesh Babu's *Major*, has always maintained a close relationship with the martyr's family. *Major* was supposed to hit the screens earlier, but is now postponed due to the uncertain times of the Covid pandemic.



## Ravi Teja's action-packed poster wows fans



**M**ass Maharaja Ravi Teja and director Ramesh Varma's action entertainer *Khiladi* produced by Satyanarayana Koneru has been carrying good buzz, thanks to aggressive promotions by the team. As part of musical promotions, the makers on the special occasion of Ravi Teja's birthday unveiled lyrical video of fourth single *Full Kicku*. Rockstar Devi Sri Prasad, who is the master in rendering mass tracks, has come up with an energetic mass and dance number which makes fans go crazy in the theatres. Sagar and Mamta Sharma crooned the number with high pitch vocals, while Shreeman's lyrics are mass appealing. Shekar VJ has choreographed, while Ravi Teja and Dimple Hayathi offers mass blast with their graceful mass moves. Ravi Teja appears in lungi and vibrant outfits, Dimple Hayathi is

a sizzler. It will be an eye feast to watch the song in big screens with full visuals. Meanwhile, Ravi Teja's unique action thriller *Ramarao On Duty* being directed by debutant Sarath Mandava

under Sudhakar Cherukuri's SLV Cinemas LLP and RT Teamworks is gearing up for its theatrical release. They will begin canning a song from Wednesday in Ramoji Film City. The makers have released a new poster to wish Ravi Teja on his birthday. Ravi Teja appears aggressive in the action-packed poster that also shows his various emotions. He can be seen with his wife in one image, while his family can be seen in another. While one poster sees Ravi Teja busy with his work in office, we can also observe him in action in some other image. The other image shows burning train. The poster indeed suggests *Ramarao On Duty* is a film of all emotions and will have elements for all sections. Divyansha Koushik and Rajisha Vijayan are the heroines opposite Ravi Teja in the film where Venu Thottampudi will be seen in a vital role. The film also features some noted actors in important roles. Music for the flick is by Sam CS, while Sathyan Sooryan ISC cranks the camera. Praveen KL is the editor.



"THE CONDITIONS MIGHT HAVE CHANGED A LITTLE BIT AFTER THE ROOF WAS CLOSED — SLIGHTLY FASTER, NOT AS BOUNCY AS BEFORE.

# Tsitsipas advances in Australia

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Stefanos Tsitsipas maintained his perfect record in Grand Slam quarterfinals, beating No 11-seeded Jannik Sinner 6-3 6-4 6-2 on Wednesday to reach the last four of the Australian Open. The 23-year-



old, No 4-ranked Tsitsipas improved to 5-0 at this stage of a major. It's the semifinals he's yet

to master, winning just one — at Roland Garros last year — from four so far.

He'll next player either Daniil Medvedev, who made his Grand Slam breakthrough when he won

**Tsitsipas didn't face a break point and converted all four he got on Sinner's serve in the match that lasted just over two hours, considerably less than his five-set fourth-round win over Taylor Fritz.**

last year's US Open title, or No 9 Felix Auger-Aliassime. No. 2 Medvedev and Auger-Aliassime were meeting later on Wednesday in a night match.

Tsitsipas didn't face a break point and converted all four he got on Sinner's serve in the match that lasted just over two hours, considerably less than his five-set fourth-round win over Taylor Fritz.

The only real delay came from a weather disruption, when a late afternoon storm meant the roof over Rod Laver Arena had to be closed when the Greek star was already up a set and a break.

"I knew I was heading toward the right direction," Tsitsipas said. "The conditions might have changed a little bit after the roof was closed — slightly faster, not as bouncy as before. I tried to adapt to the new conditions, and it just worked."

Dozens of ball kids and staff used towels to soak up water on the court in the 15-minute break.

The temperature dropped from the highs of the afternoon, when Iga Swiatek took three hours in the afternoon heat to beat 36-year-old Kaia Kanepi 4-6 7-6(2) 6-3, with the payoff being a spot in the semifinals against Danielle Collins.

"This match was crazy," the 20-year-old, 2020 French Open winner said.

"First set I think my mistake was I had so many break points, I felt like I missed my chances. In the second set ... I felt like she's playing so fast that I can't be tight. I had to finish my forehands."

The temperature reached 36 degrees Celsius (97 degrees Fahrenheit) on Day 10, continuing a week of hot weather.

Collins won the opening match before the heat peaked, swinging it in her favor with a key service break in the final game of the opening set on her way to a 7-5 6-1 victory over Alize Cornet.

No 115-ranked Kanepi was coming off an upset, three-set win over No 2-ranked Aryna Sabalenka and took the match to Swiatek, who saved nine set points before losing the first set.

Swiatek rallied in the second, exchanging service breaks twice before winning it in a tiebreaker.

After getting on top in the third, Swiatek was broken in the eighth game when she was serving for the match. She eventually clinched on Kanepi's serve, scrambling to stay in the last point until the Estonian player sent a forehand wide.

After the first three quarterfinals were decided in straight sets — Ash Barty beat Jessica Pegula and Madison Keys beat Barbora Krejčíková on Tuesday — the last one went all the way.



## Quarterfinals spot secured but Australia not dropping guards against Thailand

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Title contenders Australia have secured their place in the quarterfinals after two dominating wins and they would look to continue their strong show against Thailand in their final group B match of the women's Asian Cup here on Thursday. That the Matildas will be one of the eight teams to advance to the knock-outs is certain, but they require at least a point against Thailand to be sure of becoming group winners.

The Thais, on the other hand, will have a complicated knockout stage equation when they face the 2010 champions at the Mumbai Football Arena. Australia head coach Tony Gustavsson warned his players against expecting a drop in their standards during Thursday's match. Gustavsson's side have taken no prisoners since touching down in Mumbai, piling on 22 unanswered goals in wins over Indonesia and the Philippines, and living up to their billing as title contenders.

The 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup co-hosts have fielded exceptionally strong starting line-ups in their group stage matches, with stars like Sam Kerr, Ellie Carpenter and Steph Catley all starting on both occasions.

Gustavsson hinted at possible changes for his side's third and final match in Mumbai but declared there would be no letup in terms of how they approach the match itself.

"We're going to treat that game the same way we've done with these two. We have two main targets for the group stage. One was to win the group, and two was to get out of the group peaking physically and mentally going into the playoffs," he said.

"Now we have secured a spot in the playoffs. A tie in the last game would secure that (top in group). We're going to do that in a way that makes sure we have as many players as possible available for the quarter-final, but also peaking." Australia's path to winning the group -- and booking a quarter-final date with either Japan or Korea Republic -- is clear, but Thailand's position in the race for the knockout stage is far more complicated.

The Thais are level with the Philippines on points after a Kanyana Chathabutr-inspired 4-0 win over Indonesia on Monday, but the loss they suffered to Alen Stajcic's side in their first match means they still sit third in the group standings.

AP ■ SAO PAULO

With World Cup spots secured, Brazil and Argentina appear set to test players in qualifying who are beloved by fans while trying to prove themselves with national teams.

Vinicius Junior has not scored in his first nine appearances for Brazil and Paulo Dybala has two goals in 31 games for Argentina.

Vinicius Junior is expected to replace Neymar for the Selecao against Ecuador and Dybala is likely to take the field in place of Lionel Messi against Chile.

Four South American nations qualify for this fall's tournament in Qatar and fifth places advances to a playoff against an Asian opponent, leaving two automatic berths still in contention. Only last-place Venezuela, with seven points, is out of contention.

Brazil leads with 35 points, followed by Argentina (29),

Ecuador (23), Colombia, Peru (17), Chile, Uruguay (16) and Bolivia (15).

The contenders each have four games remaining.

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### ECUADOR VS. BRAZIL

Vinicius Junior's top form at Real Madrid has drawn criticism at home for Brazil coach Tite, accused of not giving the 21-year-old enough time to show his dribbling skills and quick passes. Some allege the coach has difficulties to innovate and test rising players in new roles.

Tite maintains the winger requires patience. Based on Tuesday's training session, Vinicius Junior appears likely for the starting lineup.

Midfielder Casemiro, who plays with Vinicius at Madrid, agrees with his national team boss on not rushing the youngster.

"He has been exceptional. I see him every day. I saw him grow at the club," Casemiro said. "With the national team there is a different style of playing, another period to adapt. The competition is different. The quicker he adapts, the better. But we can't forget he is just 21 years old."

Ecuador, coached by Argentinian coach Gustavo Alfaro, should clinch with four points from its remaining games.

## PM Modi writes to Gayle, Rhodes on Republic Day

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As India celebrates its 73rd Republic Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has written to celebrated cricketers Jonty Rhodes and Chris Gayle, acknowledging their "profound connection" with the country.

While South African Rhodes, a former Mumbai Indians fielding coach who resides in the country for a considerable part of the year, has a daughter named 'India', West Indian swashbuckler Gayle has been a big hit among cricket fans for his exploits in the IPL.

Modi, in his letter to Rhodes, wrote: "I would like to convey my Republic Day Greetings to You."



"Over the years, you have developed a profound connection with India and its culture. This is truly reflected when you named your daughter after this great nation. You truly are a special ambassador of the strong relations between our nations,"

the letter that Rhodes shared on his social media page said.

"India is witnessing a series of historic socio-economic transformations.

I am confident these will empower lives and contribute to the global fund."

Both Rhodes and Gayle thanked the Indian Prime Minister for his gesture.

"Thank you narendramodji for the very kind words. I have indeed grown so much as an individual on every visit to India. My whole family celebrates RepublicDay with all of India, honouring the importance of a Constitution that protects the rights of the Indian people JaiHind," Rhodes tweeted.

Jamaican Gayle, who represents the West Indies in international cricket, also spoke about his special bond with Indian people.

"I would like to congratulate India on their 73rd Republic Day.

## Anthony Martial seals move from Man United to Sevilla

AP ■ SEVILLE

Anthony Martial will play for Sevilla on a loan from Manchester United until the end of the season, the Spanish club said. United manager Ralf Rangnick said last month that the 26-year-old Martial wanted to leave after tumbling down the list of forwards at the club, behind Cristiano Ronaldo, Marcus Rashford, Edinson Cavani, Jadon Sancho

and Mason Greenwood.

The France forward became the world's most expensive teenage player when United signed him from Monaco in September 2015 for 36 million pounds (then \$55.1 million) that could potentially rise to 58 million pounds (\$78 million).

There was no reported transfer fee or option to buy.



## Santosh Trophy football tournament postponed due to rise in COVID-19 cases

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy, which was scheduled to be held at Malappuram in Kerala from February 20 to March 6, was on Wednesday postponed till further notice due to rise in COVID-19 cases.

The All India Football Federation said it will review the circumstances next month before announcing the new schedule.

"The AIFF has communicated to participating state associations that in wake of rise in COVID-19 positive cases, and after consultation with the Government of Kerala, the competition schedule for the Hero National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy has been deferred," the federation said in a release.

"A review of the circumstances will be undertaken in the third week of February to decide on new dates and the new schedule."

# Dennerby blames AFC for COVID outbreak in Indian team

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Indian women's football team coach Thomas Dennerby on Wednesday squarely blamed the AFC for the COVID-19 outbreak that led to the country's ouster from the ongoing Asian Cup here, alleging that his players were infected by the hotel staff in a bio-bubble that was not "foolproof". In a scathing attack on the continental body, Dennerby said India's dream of taking a shot at the FIFA World Cup was shattered not because of any fault of the players but due to the weak bio-bubble created by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). He said the AFC did not show any "respect, compassion, empathy" to the team to deal with the "extraordinary" situation in such a high-stake tournament.

"We were all negative of COVID when we reached team hotel (on Jan 13)

and after arrival tests. The first positive case came on the day we went out of hotel for training and a day later (January 17), seven hotel staff tested positive. It is not rocket science to know how the outbreak came," he told PTI after a virtual media interaction. "The first huge outbreak was among the hotel staff. From my point of view, it's very clear where it (COVID) started, it definitely did not start in the team. It came from the AFC bubble inside the hotel," he said. "The hotel staff was tested for every six days and not every three days as done in case of teams. We know tests were conducted on hotel staff on Jan 11 and then on Jan 17 and seven positive cases were known on Jan 18. But the information was given only on Jan 19 afternoon. What was AFC doing for whole one day, we don't know." India were forced out of the AFC Women's Asian Cup on Sunday after a



dozen COVID-19 cases among their players led to the cancellation of a group match against Chinese Taipei minutes before kick-

off here. The AFC had said given the situation, Article 4.1 of the tournament rules came into effect, which made it clear

that if a team failed to assemble for a match, it would be "considered to have withdrawn from the relevant Competition."

Dennerby said the AFC should have asked the infected hotel staff to leave immediately and not have any contact with players. "We don't know why the AFC did not take immediate action. AFC should have called the hotel directly and asked the infected staff to immediately leave and not to have any contact with players," said the Swede who will also coach the Indian team in the FIFA Women's U-17 World Cup in October. "Several hotel staff infected with COVID, including team India coordinator, kitchen staff, chef, housekeeping, service staff, all of them taking care of us, cooking and serving food, cleaning our rooms, while we were inside isolated in our rooms, still the AFC waited for a whole day."

### CHILE VS. ARGENTINA

Under coach Lionel Scaloni, Argentina won last year's Copa America.

Following decent form at Juventus, the 28-year-old Dybala is expected to replace Messi in a match played at nearly 7,900 feet (2,400 meters) at Calama, in northern Chile's Atacama Desert.

Dybala also started for Argentina in November's 1-0 qualifying win at Uruguay, when Messi was recovering from a knee injury and entered in the second half.

Despite Argentina's early qualification to the World Cup, goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez said he and his teammates "are still hungry" and "not relaxed."

"We want to continue uniting as a team and as a group. We have to give our best to be in the final list,"

he said.

"We will try to win every match or play them as if they were our last. People have to see the best version of us in this World Cup year and we want to reach that goal."

Messi will miss these games while regaining fitness following a positive COVID-19 test last month.

"We don't have (Arturo) Vidal and we have to win. If our opponent doesn't have Messi, we have to beat them too," Chile coach Martin Lasarte said Tuesday.

No. 7 Uruguay will need a win at ninth-place Paraguay on Thursday to climb back to a qualifying position and to start strong under coach Diego Alonso, who took over after Oscar Tabárez was fired.

Fourth-place Colombia will host No. 5 Peru, and Bolivia will play at Venezuela.