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HYDERABAD, FRIDAY, JANUARY 28, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



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RASHMIKA  
OVERWHELMED BY  
AUDIENCE RESPONSE  
TO SAAMI SAAMI

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DELHI LIFTS WEEKEND CURFEW,  
RESTAURANTS, CINEMAS TO OPEN

The weekend curfew has been lifted in Delhi, odd-even curbs for markets have been removed and restaurants and cinemas can reopen at 50 per cent capacity, the government said today, as Covid cases continued to drop in the capital. Schools and colleges will remain shut for now. The decision to ease curbs enforced during the Omicron surge was taken at a meeting of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), in which the Delhi government and Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal were present. Cinemas, restaurants and bars can operate at 50 per cent capacity.

MAHA: WINE CAN NOW BE SOLD IN  
SUPERMARKETS, WALK-IN SHOPS

The sale of wine will be allowed in supermarkets and walk-in stores in Maharashtra, the state cabinet decided on Thursday. Opposition BJP slammed the decision, saying that the government was promoting liquor. The decision was taken to give a boost to fruit-based wineries which provide additional income to farmers, Minister for Skill Development Nawab Malik told reporters. A statement from the Chief Minister's Office said 'shelf-in-shop' method will be adopted in supermarkets and walk-in-stores which have area of 100 sq mt or more and which are registered under the Maharashtra Shops and Establishments Act.

SPOOKY OBJECT FOUND IN MILKY  
WAY 'UNLIKE ANYTHING SEEN'

Australian researchers have discovered a strange spinning object in the Milky Way they say is unlike anything astronomers have ever seen. The object, first spotted by a university student working on his undergraduate thesis, releases a huge burst of radio energy three times every hour. The pulse comes 'every 18.18 minutes, like clockwork,' said astrophysicist Natasha Hurley-Walker, who led the investigation after the student's discovery, using a telescope in the Western Australian outback known as the Murchison Widefield Array.

TWITTER SUSPENDS BOT ACCOUNT  
OFFERING SPOILERS FOR 'WORDLE'

Twitter suspended a bot account on Wednesday for spoiling the solution to the next day's Wordle, the wildly popular internet word puzzle. The game, which only offers one puzzle per day, has amassed millions of players since it came online last year. But the Twitter profile @wordlinator seemed determined to ruin the fun for participants posting their scores on the social media site. "The account referenced was suspended for violating the Twitter Rules and the Automation Rules around sending unsolicited @mentions," a Twitter spokesperson told AFP.

## Karvy stocks fraud pegged at Rs 2,874 crore

## MD Parthasarathy remanded in 4-day ED custody

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A special court on Thursday granted to the Enforcement Directorate four days' custody of Comandur Parthasarathy, CMD of Karvy Group, and G Krishna Hari, CFO of Karvy Group, arrested in an alleged multi-crore money laundering case.

The Enforcement Directorate had arrested Parthasarathy and Hari Krishna in the Rs 2,000 crore security scam. The accused were lodged in Central Jail, Bangalore and, on a production warrant of ED Court, produced before the PMLA Special Court MSJ Hyderabad on 20 January. The Court has now remanded the CMD and CFO of the Karvy Group to ED custody from 27 January to 30 January.

Parthasarathy was arrested under the Prevention of Money

laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 in a money laundering case connected through illegal diversion of clients' securities worth Rs 2,873.82 crore by Karvy Stock Broking Ltd and pledging of these securities with banks/NBFCs for seeking loans and subsequent loan default.

The ED initiated money laundering investigation based on a FIR filed by HDFC bank with CCS Hyderabad Police under various sections of IPC for defrauding HDFC bank. Subsequently, more FIRs were filed by other banks and a few investors.

ED had recorded the statements of several employees of the Karvy Group and conducted searches at 9 locations on 22 September 2021.

IT uncovered the complex web of transactions designed by the senior management of the Karvy

Group to misuse the securities of their clients and to raise loans fraudulently which were then rotated via multiple related companies and diverted away from the stated purpose.

The shares of clients who did not owe any funds to KSBL were also transferred to the margin/pool account of KSBL and were pledged with the banks/NBFCs. The Power of Attorney (POA) given by clients to KSBL to facilitate exchange settlements was grossly misused by KSBL at the directions of the CMD and senior executives.

ED, in a press release, said: "Comandur Parthasarathy and G Krishna Hari were the main conspirators who gave instructions to others. Fund trail investigation has shown that the borrowed funds were transferred to other group companies, particularly to one

ED seizes assets of absconding  
Hyd firm promoters under FEMA

**NEW DELHI:** Assets worth Rs 3.19 crore of three promoters, including one arrested by the FBI in the US, of a Hyderabad-based firm have been seized for alleged contravention of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said on Thursday. The action has been taken against Karusala Venkat Subba Rao, Tejesh K Kodali and Kadiyala Venkateswara Rao of a firm identified as 3K Technologies Limited. The seized assets are in the form of 15 immovable properties situated in the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the federal probe agency said in a statement. Out of the three promoters, the ED gave details about Kodali saying he is presently working in the US. Recently, a news article reported that he was arrested by the FBI in New Jersey for "orchestrating an immigration fraud to fraudulently maintain immigration status and obtain work authorisations for foreign clients through a bogus 'Pay to Stay' New Jersey college."

WoS of KSBL i.e. M/s. Karvy Realty (India) Limited (KRIL) and then to 14 shell companies floated by the Karvy Group. The same have been further diverted by layering done through complex web of transactions from the sev-

eral accounts of group companies without any financial rationale. Various financial consultants and defunct NBFCs were used to route the funds".

Bank loan fraud:  
ED attaches assets  
of Telangana firm

**NEW DELHI:** Assets worth Rs 43.25 crore of a Hyderabad-based firm have been attached under the anti-money laundering law in connection with an alleged bank loan fraud case, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said on Thursday. A provisional order under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) has been issued by the agency attaching 15 land properties located in Telangana, in the case against Sheetal Refineries Ltd. and its promoter and managing director Jitender Kumar Agarwal. The ED case of money laundering was filed on the basis of an FIR registered by the CBI in Bengaluru against the accused for "causing a total loss of Rs 87 crore" to the State Bank of Hyderabad (now SBI) and the Punjab National Bank (PNB). Probe found, the ED said in a statement, that the accused promoters "availed credit facilities from SBH and PNB Hyderabad, by submitting fabricated financial statements, invoices, etc." They got letters of credit (LCs) issued from lending banks in the name of related shell entities as if material is being purchased.

LIC to list on  
bourses by  
March 31: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government will list the country's largest insurer LIC on the stock exchanges by March-end, a top official said on Thursday.

The draft papers for LIC's initial public offering (IPO) is being finalised and will be filed with market regulator Sebi soon for its approval.

"LIC disinvestment amount will be included in this year's (Budget) because we aim to list it before March 31," Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey told PTI.

LIC IPO is crucial for meeting the disinvestment target set for the current fiscal ending March 2022.

The Budget for 2021-22 has set a disinvestment target of Rs 1.75 lakh crore, as against Rs 32,835 crore garnered in the last fiscal. Of the Rs 1.75 lakh crore, Rs 1 lakh crore is to come from selling government stake in public sector banks and financial institutions, and Rs 75,000 crore will be CPSE disinvestment receipts. So far this fiscal, Rs 9,330 crore has been mopped up through minority stake sale in PSUs.



## Air India back under Tatras wings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Salt-to-software conglomerate Tata Group on Thursday took over Air India and vowed to turn the loss-making carrier, it had founded but had lost control nearly seven decades back, into a world-class airline.

N Chandrasekaran, Chairman of Tata Sons, which in October last year beat a consortium led by rival SpiceJet promoter to win the bid for the national carrier, first called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi before heading to the Air India office where the takeover formalities were completed.

A new board of directors met shortly thereafter, formalising the management takeover.

Both the government and Tatras made separate announcements of

## Govt settles over Rs 61,000 cr Air India debt

The government has settled over Rs 61,000 crore of Air India's legacy debt and other liabilities that were left in AIAHL -- the company holding residual assets and liabilities of the airline -- ahead of the transfer of the national carrier to the Tata Group, a top official said on Thursday. The airline had a total debt of Rs 61,562 crore as of August 31, 2021. Of this, the Tata Group took over Rs 15,300 crore and the rest 75 per cent or around Rs 46,000 crore was transferred to a special purpose vehicle, AI Asset Holding Ltd (AIAHL). AIAHL also held Air India's non-core assets such as stake in Hotel Corp of India (HCL), paintings and artifacts and immovable properties. In an interview with PTI, Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) -- which ran the Air India privatisation process -- said Parliament had last month given nod for spending of Rs 62,057 crore towards equity infusion in AIAHL for repayment of dues and liabilities of Air India.

completion of the transaction -- the first privatisation in nearly two decades that will put an end to thousands of crores of taxpayers' money being provided over the

years to keep the airline afloat.

For Tatras, Air India will be the third airline. It already operates Vistara in joint venture with Singapore Airlines and AirAsia

India in partnership with AirAsia Group.

The finance ministry in a statement said the Air India strategic disinvestment transaction has been completed with the government receiving Rs 2,700 crore from Talace Pvt Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tata Sons.

Tatas took over Rs 15,300 crore of debt in Air India and Air India Express Ltd while the remaining Rs 46,262 crore loan plus an outstanding of about Rs 15,000 crore towards unpaid fuel bills were paid off by the government.

"It is indeed noteworthy that the disinvestment process of @airindiain has been brought to a successful conclusion in a time-bound manner," Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia tweeted.

Regular approval granted  
for Covishield, Covaxin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's drug regulator has granted regular market approval for COVID-19 vaccines Covishield and Covaxin for use in the adult population subject to certain conditions, Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Thursday.

The minister also said that the government's vaccination drive will continue as it is to provide first and second doses for all and a precautionary dose for senior citizens with co-morbidities as well as for frontline workers.

Soon after the approval, highly-placed sources said the two vaccines will now be available in private clinics at pre-decided MRP



and people can buy those, but jabs can be administered only as per the prevailing government guidelines.

Gradually, the vaccine will be available in the market at a price lower than at what it was being sold earlier at private hospitals, sources added.

Guv saddened by Achampet  
incident, reacts tagging Centre

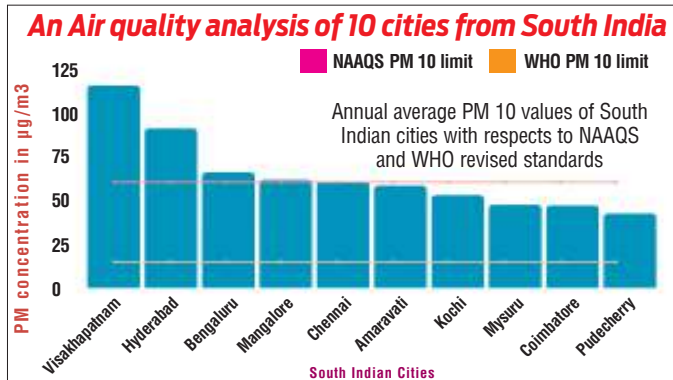
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan has reacted to the revolting incident of a pregnant woman being denied admission in Nagarkurnool on Thursday.

In a tweet tagging Prime Minister, Home Minister and Union Health Minister, Tamilisai wrote, "Saddened about the incident of refusing to admit a pregnant tribal woman citing

COVID19 as reason at Achampet hospital in Nagarkurnool district in Telangana. Assured them all the necessary support & assistance through Indian Red Cross" (sic).

It may be mentioned here that two doctors were suspended on Wednesday for denying admission to the pregnant woman at CHC Achampet, Nagarkurnool on 25 January,

Vizag, Hyd record sharpest rise in  
pollution levels in south Indian cities

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Visakhapatnam and Hyderabad have recorded the sharpest rise in particulate matter (PM) levels among 10 southern Indian cities. As per a report by Greenpeace,

in comparison, annual PM10 levels in Visakhapatnam and Hyderabad exceeded the prescribed WHO guidelines of 15 µg/m3 by 6 to 7 times.

## KTR pitches for MGNREGS-like scheme for urban poor

NAVEENA GHANATE  
■ HYDERABAD

Telangana IT Minister K T Rama Rao has requested Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to bring MGNREGS-like scheme for urban poor as part of steps to strengthen social security measures.

KTR, in a letter to the Finance Minister, sought introduction of 'National Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme (NUEGS)' in the upcoming Budget on the lines of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) to help urban poor in the country. He requested her to take the upcoming Budget as an occasion to "think big and come out with a policy measure akin to the one in the form of MGNREGA to best protect and safeguard the interests, especially the livelihoods and to raise the income levels and savings of the



KTR said that it was about ensuring something more than a job guarantee. "What is essentially required for a labour force is rising income and increased savings that could be of any help to his or her family in times of distress".

urban poor".

KTR said that it was about ensuring something more than a job guarantee. "What is essentially required for a labour force is rising income and increased savings that could be of any help to his or her family in

times of distress. Hence, a national policy aimed at increased daily incomes for urban labour is the need of the hour," he said.

"Urban centers/towns have become the growth engines of Indian economy and the urban

informal sector is the major thrust factor. Hence, it is high time the government created a facilitating environment for the urban informal sector in the form of skill up-gradation, financial linkages, social security to the labour, etc," he said

KTR said, "With the support of the employment guarantee scheme in urban areas, we can provide job cards like in rural areas and take their services in urban environment protection by engaging them in city-level green action plan (Haritha Haram) and in basic infra works like laying pavements & other repair and maintenance works".

KTR said that he was of the opinion that meeting the needs of India's rising urban population would continue to be a critical strategic policy matter for all the national, states, and city governments,

## TODAY

## ALMANAC

Month &amp; Paksham:

Pausa, Krishna Paksha

Tithi : Bhadresh - Jan 28 02:16 AM to Jan 28 11:36 PM

Dwadshathi - Jan 28 11:36 PM to Jan 29 03:37 PM

Nakshatram : Anuradha Jan 27 03:51 AM to Jan 28 09:10 AM

Jyestha Jan 28 07:10 AM to Jan 29 05:07 AM

Rahukalam : 11:05 AM to 12:29 PM

Yamagandam : 3:17 PM to 4:41 PM

Varjyam : 01:22 AM to 02:49 AM

Gulika : 8:16 AM to 9:40 AM

Amritakalam : 09:04 PM to 10:32 PM

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

## HYDRABAD

## WEATHER

Forecast: SUNNY

Temp: 31°C

Humidity: 41%

Sunrise: 6:53 AM

Sunset: 6:04 PM

Updated JANUARY 27, 2021 5:00 PM



## SC asks Revanth's advocates to file affidavit on case in High Court

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC chief and Malkajgiri MP A Revanth Reddy's petition relating to the 'vote for note' case was heard in the Supreme Court on Thursday. Revanth Reddy had filed the petition claiming that the vote for note case did not fall under the purview of the ACB. The SC bench directed Revanth's advocates to file an affidavit on the status of the case in the High Court. The Supreme Court adjourned the next hearing for two weeks.

## Who sponsored Raja Kumar's Daughter's wedding: Revanth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC Chief A Revanth Reddy has on Twitter questioned as to "who sponsored the five-star wedding of Telangana State Special Chief Secretary for Irrigation Rajat Kumar's daughter. Was it done as Quid pro quo," Revanth Reddy wondered. In his second tweet,

## '95% of India's adult population given 1<sup>st</sup> dose, 74% fully inoculated'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

95% of India's eligible adult population has been administered the first dose of Covid vaccine while 74% are fully inoculated, the Union health ministry said on Thursday as the total vaccine

# TPCC serves notices to leaders who skipped meet on membership drive

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) has served notices to the leaders who skipped the review held at Gandhi Bhavan on January 19 on the ongoing digital membership under the leadership of TPCC chief A Revanth Reddy. The notice sought an explanation from the leaders for their absence, it is learnt. AICC in-charge secretaries Bose Raju and Srinivasa Krishnan were present at the meeting. This being so, Congress senior leader V Hanumantha



Rao has warned the TPCC stating that he would stage a silent deeksha on Friday (January 28) should the TPCC

disciplinary action committee fail to keep its word and issue show-cause notice to former MLC and Adilabad leader K Preamsagar Rao. VHR said that he had been insulted six times; yet, he went to Mancherla following the directions of Revanth Reddy. However, Preamsagar Rao's followers attacked him, apart from using abusive words. It is understood that many issues are pending with the Disciplinary Action Committee headed by former Minister Dr G Chinna Reddy. A leader, requesting anonymity, said that the DAC

did not solve issues that had been pending and wondered how TPCC could serve notices seeking explanation. He said that it would be better for the party to solve pending complaints before serving new notices to party leaders, though the latest one had come from Revanth Reddy. There was nothing wrong in seeking explanation from leaders if they were found guilty and it would help the party maintain discipline. However, the party was not applying rules uniformly for all leaders. It was not good for the party to shown partiality towards some leaders, he said.

# Parliamentary Privileges Committee in the eye of storm

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The functioning of the Parliamentary Privileges Committee raises eyebrows especially over the way in which each case is being treated. Sources in the TRS pointed out that on one hand the officials in Telangana State were summoned on BJP State president Bandi Sanjay's complaint, but it kept calm on such issues raised by other Parliamentarians. The TRS sources indicate that it would not be a surprise if the Privileges Committee issues summons even for the alleged attack by farmers on MP Dharmapuri Arvind. It may be mentioned here

that the Lok Sabha Privileges Committee last week summoned Telangana Chief Secretary Suresh Kumar, Director General of Police M Mahender Reddy and five others based on a complaint by Karimnagar MP and BJP State president Bandi Sanjay Kumar that he was manhandled by police while arresting him at his camp office in Karimnagar town on January 2 night. However, there was no progress on the matter of Raghu Ramakrishnam Raju, who had issued a breach of privilege notices against Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, AP DGP Gautam Sawang, APCID ADG, APCID SP, The Lok Sabha

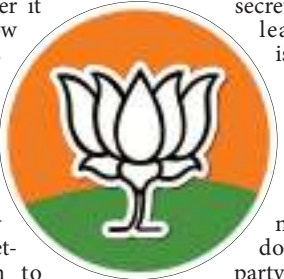
Speaker's office finally responded in June and issued directions to the Union Home Secretary to submit a comprehensive report on custodial torture within 15 days. But nothing happened afterwards. Now BJP MP Dharmapuri Arvind on Tuesday said he would lodge a complaint with the Lok Sabha Privileges Committee and explain, what he alleged, an 'attack' on him by the ruling party leaders at Issapally village in Nizamabad district on Tuesday. It may be mentioned here that All Members of Parliament enjoy rights and immunities so that they can "effectively discharge their functions".

## TS BJP suffers from disunity

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP has been suffering from disunity now. The old and new leaders are divided between each other and maintaining their coteries. Most of the old-timers have not been digesting the speed of the Telangana BJP Chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar, it is learnt. With Bandi Sanjay's speed, the leaders—Union Tourism Minister G Kishan Reddy, BJP OBC Morcha national chief Dr K Laxman, Madhya Pradesh Party in-charge P Muralidhar Rao have been maintaining their own coteries and are not extending their full cooperation to the young head of the party, it is learnt. Besides these coteries, there were also coteries in the name of BJP national vice-president DK Aruna, SC Assembly Constituencies Committee chairman AP Jithender Reddy. There were also a few more coteries like Eatala Rajender; however, they are not as effective

as these coteries, it is learnt. One of the party leaders has lamented saying that "the party is becoming strong in the state, however, these leaders are applying brakes with their egos. It is not the time to the leaders whoever it may be to show their egos as the party is emerging as a stronger one. The elections may take place in the state at any time and it is better for them to refrain from the egos". He said that the opposition parties will try to disturb the party and it is not good for the leaders to fall prey to their egos resulting in benefit for the opponent parties. However, senior-most leader and 'Joinings and Coordination Committee' chairman Nallu Indrasena Reddy has been



playing a 'Peddanna' role to see that the party not to be suffered from disunity, it is learnt. As part of it, the party high command has entrusted the responsibility to Indrasena Reddy of Karimnagar and Nizamabad leaders & #39; secret meetings. It is learnt that these issues are pacified now. However, another leader opined that due to the leaders' immature egos, many were in doubt to join the party though they are in touch with the party. Some Telangana BJP leaders are opposing the joining of some leaders from other parties and others are opposing some others giving doubts to the leaders trying to join from other parties, he said. The Party needs teamwork now to emerge as a strong one further, he added.

## Guv saddened by Achampet incident, reacts tagging...

Continued from page 1

just because she had tested positive for COVID. Nimmala Lalamma delivered the baby on the road. Later, the Governor appreciated C Ramesh Reddy and his team of the Indian Red Cross Society's unit in Nagarkurnool District of Telangana for donating a pack of hygiene kits & mosquito nets as well as cash worth Rs.5,000 cash to Nimmala Lalamma.

## People may be free to set up standalone energy storage systems: R K Singh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy R K Singh has indicated that people may be free to set up standalone energy storage systems (ESS) as the government plans de-licensing that under the policy for ESS. According to a statement issued by the power ministry, Singh interacted with renewable energy developers, industry and various government representatives to discuss the elements of the draft policy on the energy storage system to promote the creation of storage

systems on a large scale across the country. The policy aims at the creation of the technology-agnostic storage system across the value chain of the electricity sector generation, transmission and distribution levels. In the meeting held on January 25 with representatives of the industry, Singh galvanised the industry representatives and called for their active participation in establishing storage systems and associated manufacturing industries domestically within the country.

## LIC to list on bourses by March 31: Govt

Continued from page 1

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) earlier this week reported a profit after tax of Rs 1,437 crore for the first half (April-September) of the current financial year, compared to Rs 6.14 crore in the year-ago period. Its new business premium growth rate stood at 554.1 per cent in H1 FY22, as against 394.76 per cent earlier.

The government in September last year appointed 10 merchant bankers, including Goldman Sachs (India) Securities Pvt Ltd, Citigroup Global Markets India Pvt Ltd and Nomura Financial Advisory and Securities (India) Pvt Ltd, to manage the mega initial public offering of the insurance behemoth. Other selected bankers include SBI Capital Market Ltd, JM Financial Ltd, Axis Capital Ltd, BofA Securities, J.P. Morgan India Pvt Ltd, ICICI Securities Ltd, and Kotak Mahindra Capital Co Ltd. Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas has been appointed as legal advisor for the IPO.

The government is in the process of deciding the quantum of its stake that will be divested through the IPO. It is also mulling allowing foreign investors to pick up stake in LIC. As per Sebi rules, foreign portfolio investors (FPI) are permitted to buy shares in a public offer. However, since the LIC Act has no provision for foreign investments, there is a need to align the LIC IPO with Sebi norms regarding foreign investor participation.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
Dressed/With Skin	₹202
Without Skin	₹222
Broiler at Farm	₹109
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	405
VIJAYAWADA	430
VISAKHAPATNAM	425
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.05

## Vizag, Hyd record sharpest rise in pollution levels in...

Continued from page 1

The PM2.5 levels in Visakhapatnam and Hyderabad have increased by 7 to 8 times. Apart from that, Visakhapatnam and Hyderabad values are 1.5 to 2 times higher than NAAQS prescribed standards and those of the rest of the cities are within the limits. On other hand, Bengaluru, Mangalore, Amaravati, Chennai and Kochi recorded data that exceeded the limit by 3 to 4 times. Mysore, Coimbatore and Pondicherry recorded PM10 data that exceeded the WHO guide-

lines for safe air by 2 to 3 times. It was found that, despite pandemic-induced lockdowns and subsequent reduction in economic activities, the annual average values of PM2.5 and PM10 exceeded WHO revised standards substantially. In Hyderabad city, there are 6 monitoring stations located by CPCB and TSPCB. The annual average values of PM 2.5 and PM 10 show that at all the locations, the values are higher than WHO revised standards. Apart from that, three stations are higher in PM 2.5 and almost all the stations' PM 10 values are higher than NAAQS standards.

The primary contributors to the worsening air quality are fossil fuel-powered infrastructure development, industries, transport, waste burning, and construction activity. Chronic exposure to air pollution increases the likelihood of asthma, low birth weight, depression, schizophrenia, diabetes, stroke, lung cancer and can cause premature deaths. Avinash Chanchal, Campaign Manager, Greenpeace India, said: "The data shows that lockdown is not a solution to air pollution. Relatively lesser economic activity and vehicles is also putting us in a dangerous position."

## KTR pitches for MGNREGS-like scheme...

Continued from page 1

more particularly when the true objectives of governance was caring for the urban poor. Stating that lockdown-like uncertainties impacted the urban poor more than any other segment, KTR said: "It is the urban informal sector propelled by the urban poor that provided the necessary thrust to the revival of Indian economy. Hence, there is a lesson to protect the urban informal

sector from the ravages of any economic blackouts in future". The Minister added: "Since migrant labour - often pan-Indian - constitute a significant proportion of urban poor providing their distinct contribution to the urban economies, away from their native states, there is a need for a social security scheme that could guarantee a minimum safety net to the labour force, irrespective of the fact whether the beneficiary lives in his native state or not."

## Regular approval granted for...

Continued from page 1

"The idea is that those who are keen to get a booster dose can now avail it through private clinics as the vaccine available in private clinics can be used for any purpose, whether it's first dose, second dose or a booster as one wishes, provided that all guidelines including for eligibility of beneficiaries are followed," a source said. Also, registration of the vaccination on CoWin platform will be mandatory.

# Karvy stocks fraud pegged at...

Continued from page 1

ED found that KSBL availed loans from NBFCs to the tune of Rs 400 crore in the name of five such shell companies by pledging shares of clients of KSBL after illegally transferring these shares

to their account. The fraudulently availed loans were used to clear pending loans of related companies, do massive stock transactions which have allegedly turned into complete losses and diverted to personally held family companies.

## Bank loan fraud: ED attaches...

Continued from page 1

"LCs were discounted by the related entities and the money so received was routed back to the promoters of Sheetal Refinery," it said. The company 'defaulted' in payment of LCs on due date and the devolvement of LCs caused loss to the banks, it alleged. In total, the ED said, the company owes Rs 146 crore to the banks. "The diverted loan proceeds which are nothing but proceeds of crime were utilised for purchase of properties and to foreclose older loans and were not used for the stated purposes," it said. The agency earlier too had attached assets in this case and with the latest order of attachment of properties worth a purchase value of Rs 43.25 crore, the total now stands at Rs 52.78 crore.

## ED seizes assets of absconding...

Continued from page 1

It is also learnt that Kodali was sentenced to five years in prison and a fine of USD 2.50 lakh imposed on him in a student visa fraud case, it said. The agency said it initiated action in this case "on the basis of" information received from the office of development commissioner, Visakhapatnam Special Economic Zone (SEZ), which stated that the company reported "abnormal" exports. The probe found "3K Technologies Limited transferred foreign exchange to the tune of USD 1,15,32,000 (equivalent to Rs 52,47,02,935 or over Rs 52.47 crore) to 3K Technologies Inc., USA, in 2010 in the guise of overseas direct investment (ODI)." "3K Technologies Inc. USA was incorporated on 23.02.2007 and Kodali was also the director of the USA company," the agency said. "It is gathered that 3K Technologies Inc., USA, was dissolved on 28.01.2011, within 3 months after receipt of the final ODI tranche, and no shares were issued by the US company and no annual reports were filed with the RBI," it said. After the transfer of the above funds, the three left India and are residing in the US. They are not responding to the summons of the ED and the above funds are still being held outside India in contravention of Section 4 of the FEMA, 1999, the agency said.

## 2 elephants die, 1 injured in Assam

PNS ■ RANGIA/GUWAHATI

An elephant was killed and another was injured when a goods train knocked them near Palasbari in Kamrup district of Assam, prompting the Northeast Frontier Railway to conduct a "detailed enquiry", officials said on Thursday. Another elephant was killed due to electrocution at Lanka in Hojai district, officials said. According to officials of the Palasbari Forest Office, a speeding goods train from Guwahati to New Delhi knocked down the elephants when they were crossing the tracks at Gosaihat Uparpara between Azara and Mirza stations on the Kamakhya-Jogighopa rail line under Rangia Division of the NFR. While one jumbo was killed on the spot, another was injured in the accident during the early hours of Thursday. The train dragged the ele-

phant for about 200 metres, the forest official said, adding "the injured elephant entered into the deep forest". The railway and forest staff reached the spot after getting intimation of the accident and removed the dead elephant to clear the track. The dead elephant was buried near the rail line after conducting a post mortem, the Forest Department official said. The local public urged the railway authority to decrease the speed limit in this area and display a board marking "Elephant Corridor" to save the jumbos as they regularly cross the rail tracks in and around the accident area. The NFR Chief Public Relations Officer Gunee Kaur said that the area where the incident occurred is not a forest declared elephant corridor and no information from forest officials or villagers on the movement of the elephant in the area was received.

"As a preventive measure, Forest Department and railways have dedicated representatives from both sides at the railway's divisional 24 hour working control office, but no information regarding movement of elephant was available with the forest official available at control as well. "After the incident, information was given by railway officials to the Forest Department," she said in a statement. Due to the accident, several passenger and goods trains were delayed by many hours and were stopped at different stations, Kaur said. "After the incident of last night, NF Railway has proactively decided to conduct a detailed enquiry of the incident and has imposed caution during train movement and reassessment of notified elephant corridors are also being taken in coordination with Forest Department," she added.

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# Sampark Kranti Express from Telangana is still elusive

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The promised Sampark Kranti is still eluding Telangana for the past seven years. In fact, there is only one train available for the people of Telangana to go to Delhi - the Telangana express. Moreover, there are Sampark Kranti Express trains running from all states to Delhi. Those who want to travel to Delhi have to wait for months together to find a berth in Telangana Express. Annually, railway budgets are presented but there are no new trains introduced. The residents of the state are aspiring that the Union government will introduce more trains in the forthcoming railway budget. The Sampark Kranti

Express trains are being run from AP, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala. The train from AP (12708 to 12707) is being run from Tirupati to Nizamuddin. It travels via Kachiguda, but finding a berth is difficult on the train for the people of Telangana. For long, the people of Telangana have been demanding the Centre to run one Sampark Kranti express, which is being run either from pilgrimage centres or state capitals, from Telangana. The Telangana Express is being run via Nampalli, Kazipet and Balarsha to Delhi. The Telangana Sampark Kranti Express, if at all introduced, should be run from Secunderabad to Delhi via Nizamabad, Karimnagar,



Peddapalli, Balarsha and Dehradun to provide train connectivity to some of the towns and cities in Telangana that have poor train connectivity. Earlier, the Centre announced the Vande Bharat train from Hyderabad. Proposals have been prepared for running 100 such trains in

the country. Currently, Vande Bharat trains are being run between Delhi and Varanasi, Delhi and Vaishnodevi temple. The proposals to run Vande Bharat train, which runs at 130 kmph, between Secunderabad and Delhi, still did not see light at the end of the tunnel.

## Firm donates Rs 18.72 lakh worth tablets to cops

PNS ■MEDCHAL MALAKJGIRI

Intending to support the efforts of Rachakonda Police in fighting the Covid, Concord Drugs, Hayathnagar has donated tablet strips worth Rs 18,72,000 to Rachakonda Police Commissionerate. Nagireddy, Manoj Kumar Reddy of Concord Drugs Limited have participated in the programme and handed over tablet strips of 6500 LemonCee, 6500 Zincovita and 6500 Vitamin D3 to CP Mahesh M Bhagwat , on Thursday at Neredmet. CP instructed everyone to avoid crowded places and take vaccination.

# Mayor reviews Langer House lake beautification

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi held a meeting with the Additional Commissioner (Health) Santosh, Zonal Commissioner Khairatabad (Zone) Ravi Kiran and others on the plan of action on cleaning and beautification of Langer House lake on Thursday. On the occasion, Addl. Commissioner Santosh said that 39 lakes have been identified for removal of hyacinth and maintenance. Work has commenced and completed in 31 lakes. Mayor said that hyacinth is being accumulated as sewage water is flowing into the lake, is becoming a place for mosquito breeding and the people in the surrounding localities are suffering from mos-



Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi holding a review with officials in Hyderabad on Thursday

quito menace and foul smell. Mayor asked officials to get rid of hyacinth using floating devices. Once it is cleared, regular maintenance of the lake is to be taken care by the entomology wing and regular anti larva activities can be taken on the lake and fogging at nearby houses. Mayor asked about the feasi-

bility of using Barrage Trash Cleaner (BTC) / Floating Trash Collector (FTC) for removing hyacinth from the lake. On beautification of the lake, Mayor instructed the officials to take up aromatic plantation, mosquito repellent plants on both sides of the path around the lake.

## Notorious house burglar held, property worth Rs 13 lakh seized

PNS ■MEDCHAL MALAKJGIRI

Meerpet PS of Rachakonda commissionerate police crime team nabbed the notorious house burglar with the coordination of CCS, IT CELL and recovered stolen properties from the accused within 4 hours. Police recovered gold ornaments and silver articles all worth of Rs 13,10,000. The accused is identified as Kodidela Sudhaker (27), Old village, Meerpet, Ranga Rddy district and native of Revella Mandal, Nagarkurnool district. According to the police, accused was earlier arrested in a murder case, house burglary and auto mobile theft cases from Nagarkurnool, Meerpet and LB Nagar police stations. On 7th Jan, he was released from jail and he again started committing offences. He had committed house burglary during day time in



Police officials displaying seized gold ornaments at a press meet in Hyderabad on Thursday

the limits of Meerpet, Rachakonda Commissionerate. The victim Kattetola Rathnakar Rao, resident of Badangpet, Balapur, R.R. Dist gave a complaint in which he had stated that on Jan 26th, he and his family members went to his brother-in-law's house in the same colony by locking their house to attend his mother-in-law's death

anniversary. When they returned to their house, they noticed unknown offenders gained entry into their house and committed theft. DI and his team took swift action and arrested the accused. The arrest was made under the guidance of Mahesh Bhagwat, Commissioner of Police, Rachakonda.

## Police arrest house burglary offender, recover Rs 1 lakh

PNS ■MEDCHAL MALAKJGIRI

The sleuths of CCS LB Nagar team, along with Saroornagar police of Rachakonda Police Commissionerate, apprehended the professional house burglar and recovered about Rs 1 lakh cash from his possession. According to police, the accused Ambati Chakravathy (32) who hails from Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, is a resident of P&T Colony in Dilsukhnagar. When he was at his native village earlier, he involved in 20 cases of house burglary and other property cases and he was arrested by Dacheppally police, Piduguralla police, Narsaraopet, Krosuru police of Guntur district and by Kodada police and Nakarikallu police of Suryapet district. After getting released from jail in 2021, accused came to Hyderabad and was staying in P&T Colony. He

again committed offence on Jan 26th at the Mee Seva Centre at P&T Colony X road and police received a complaint from Baira Shankar. The police arrested him when the accused was moving under suspicious circumstances during vehicle checking at Saroornagar limits. On questioning, he revealed his name and also confessed that he had committed the burglary. The case was investigated under direct supervision of Mahesh M Bhagwat, Commissioner of Police and G. Sudheer Babu, Addl. Commissioner with the guidance of Sunpreeth Singh, DCP LB Nagar, P. Yadagiri, DCP Crimes and under the supervision of M. Srinivasulu, Addl. DCP Crimes, P. Sreedhar Reddy, ACP LB Nagar and the Inspector, Detective Inspector, CCS LB Nagar team, IT Cell & Inspector LB Nagar PS.

## CV Anand : Mahesh Bank's negligence led to hack

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Commissioner of Police CV Anand said that the main reason for hacking of Mahesh Bank is problems in the banking server. CP said, "The bank holds the accounts of the public worth several crores. The management should have safeguarded public money and seen to it that all necessary safety measures are in place. But it failed. There is no proper safety mechanism for the bank's main server, which was compromised and hacked". He said, "We will also file a case against the bank for negligence. Online banking segment of the bank does not have proper cyber security". Earlier this week, Mahesh Bank Co-operative Bank server in Hyderabad has been hacked and a sum of Rs. 12 crore was reportedly looted.

## WTP elects 4 students of MS Creative School as MPs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Four students of MS Creative School have been elected as Member of Parliament of World Teen Parliament (WTP) - a UNESCO supported body for teens. These four MS Creative School students are the only MPs of WTP from Telangana state, said Mohammed Moazzam Hussain, senior director MS Education Academy. The selected students are Amana Aziz, d/o Mohammed Aziz Ali, Atika Amoodi d/o Shaik Abdul Raheem, Mariya Khalid Saache d/o Khalid Saache and Sumera Ummey Kulsum d/o Mohammed Rafeeq. They are students of class X of MS Creative School, said the senior director. "They have been selected after a rigorous selection process spread into three

stages. The final result was declared on the 21st of this month. These students have also received various curricular and extracurricular awards and prizes," he said. The Blubworld, that empowers teens by getting them onstage at the world's most important forums, invited applications for this prestigious position. About 72,000 applicants participated at this competition which held in three rounds and finally 100 students were selected. Sumera Ummey Kulsum while proposing a suggestion on "How to make life better" said, "To change the world we need to first change ourselves from inside. Only then we can bring changes in the world. She suggested to tune oneself in such a way that the outside world cannot affect you.

## Bansilalpet stepwell restoration will be completed by Aug 15: Talasani

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Nizam era Bansilalpet stepwell will be fully restored by August 15, Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav said on Thursday. Special Chief Secretary, Municipal Administration, Arvind Kumar along with Kalpana Ramesh, a volunteer organisation manager, inspected the Nizam era stepwell at Bansilalpet. In the past, the well was completely filled with rubbish and waste and after 6 months of hard work, the NGO, GHMC, removed 2,000 metric tonnes of rubbish. A photo exhibition was set up to illustrate the situation prior to the removal of garbage from the well and a comparison to the current situation. Speaking on the occasion,



Talasani Srinivas Yadav said that Hyderabad has a special identity as a historic city and has many ancient monuments. Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has directed officials to preserve ancient monuments that bear witness

to history. It is said that the stepwell was built in the 17th century in Bansilalpet for the needs of the people of the area at that time. Yadav said steps would be taken to make it more attractive to tourists.

## Post-card campaign for zero GST to handloom sector

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In response to a call given by the All India Padmasali Association's handloom division, a post card campaign will be launched here on Friday demanding zero GST for handloom sector. Over one lakh postcards will be addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman highlighting their demands. MLC L. Ramana, MLA Pylla Sekhar Reddy and Padmasali Association leaders will launch the campaign on Friday. The Padmasali Association appealed to people to make the campaign successful.

## Mission Bhagiratha set to quench the thirst of people in tribal habitations

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government initiated measures to supply protected drinking water to the tribal people living on hilly regions through Mission Bhagiratha. As the Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao directed the officials to supply protected water to the tribal habitations, the officials were able to supply water to the people in the remote tribal areas within two years in Adilabad district. Accordingly, government was able to supply protected drinking water to Adivasi Gonds settled in remote forest areas of Adilabad district. Up to three years ago, the people of Rajulavarigudem of Bhimpur mandal in the district, with 48 houses (160



population) used to walk long distance to fetch water from a stream (Vagu). They used to suffer from water-borne diseases like diarrhea. When the canal dries in summer, they were facing water scarcity problems. Due to water shortage, they sold away their cattle. As it was rocky terrain, bore-wells could not be dug.

On knowing the problems of these poor tribal people, state government decided to supply drinking water to them through Mission Bhagiratha. It was planned to draw water from Madegaon to Rajulavarigudem covering 180 km. Water connection was given to each household and water was supplied. Government devised a special programme to supply water to tribals settled in hilly regions in the districts of Adilabad, Khammam and Nagarkurnool districts by spending Rs 150 crore. Pumping houses were constructed and pipelines were laid. Water was supplied to the tribals (Adivasis) in the hilly forest region of Adilabad district through Mission Bhagiratha.

## Azhar lodges complaint against HCA ombudsman

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC working president and HCA president Azharuddin lodged a complaint against the ombudsman of the HCA at Begumpet PS in the city on Thursday. In his complaint, Azhar said that the ombudsmen in the Gymkhana office threatened the HCA current staff. Begumpet police received Azharuddin's complaint. The ombudsman and Azharuddin have been at loggerheads for several days. The dispute is currently pending in the Supreme Court.

## SBI local head office celebrates Republic Day

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Amit Jhingran, Chief General Manager, State Bank of India, Hyderabad Circle unfurled the tri-colour flag at SBI local Head Office, Koti, Hyderabad to mark the celebrations of the 73rd Republic Day. Staff members participated in the event strictly adhering to Covid protocols. Addressing the gathering on the occasion, Jhingran said that we all cherish this memorable day as our nation attained sovereignty by the selfless sacrifices made by our great leaders and freedom fighters. "Today, we feel proud to be a part of this diverse independent India endowed with rich cultural values and traditions. We salute the armed forces who are maintaining strict vigil and protecting our country from invasions, challenges & threats," he said. SBI has been in the forefront in the fight against Covid -19 by providing uninterrupted banking service despite the challenges. Our Bank is partaking in Covid relief measures by distributing ration/ food to the needy.

## T-Works invites applications for 2022 Fellowship programmes

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

India's largest prototyping centre, T-Works is inviting applications for its 2022 Fellowship programme for creative individuals. The position is based out of Hyderabad and the fellows will get to engage with stakeholders from government, corporate, educational institutions, startups, artists and makers. The 12-month programme will involve learning about T-Works existing programmes and also conceptualising new

ones. In addition, they will also spend time executing proposed plans and can choose to work independently or with the existing teams or take complete ownership of a project or programme. Candidates with the passion for the maker culture and one or more skills across functions can apply. Whether you like to sketch, design, model, prototype, experiment, cut, weld, drill, or just make things, you can contribute. The last date for submitting the application is

February 15 and candidates with a formal education in engineering/arts/design/management/operations/or any other field can apply. Having graduation/diploma/certification in respective field of education will be preferred. Remuneration is being offered at two levels - for fellow with work experience under 10 years, the remuneration is Rs 40,000 per month and for senior fellow with work experience greater than or equal to 10 years the remuneration is Rs 55,000 per month.



## PMGSY works progressing as per norms: Errabelli

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development stated that the Pradhan Mantri Gramteen Sadak Yojana works are being implemented at a brisk pace adhering to quality specifications. The government is not at all compromising on quality, he said. He responded thus on Thursday to a video conference addressed by Union Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister Giriraj Singh and union secretaries. Besides Dayakar Rao, Secretary Sandeep Kumar Sultania took part in the video conference. The minister said that the state officials have been inspecting the progress of the works and constantly monitoring the works and told the Union Minister that the works would be completed within the deadline stipulated.

## HMDA razes illegal structures in Nizampet municipality

PNS ■MEDCHAL MALAKJGIRI

The HMDA teams, along with district Task Force teams, continued demolition of illegal structures in Nizampet Municipal limits on Thursday. They demolished two blocks on an apartment constructed illegally in the municipal limits. A house owner in survey No. 92/P under Nizampet

Municipality obtained house construction permission for constructing G+2 building in his 840 sq.yards plot. However, he constructed three blocks, still+5 upper floors. The Task Force teams demolished the unauthorised structures on Thursday. So far, the HMDA and Task Force teams have taken action against 101 unauthorised structures. They demolished 78 illegal struc-

tures and seized 23 structures. As some of the HMDA officials working in municipalities have been keeping away from duties due to Covid pandemic, the demolition of illegal structures is disrupted to certain extent, the officials said. However, demolition of illegal structures will be continued and at any cost violators will not be spared, the officials added.



HMDA and Task Force personnel demolishing illegal structure in Nizampet municipality on Thursday



# Is KCR giving prominence to 'Udhyama Telangana' batch

NAVEENA GHANATE  
■ HYDERABAD

Going by the activity in the Telangana Rashtira Samiti in the aftermath of the Huzurabad bypoll, it appears that Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has been giving prominence to the 'Udhyama Telangana' batch. For the unversed, the Udhyaama Telangana (UT) batch refers to those leaders who have been with TRS party since 2001, while the 'Bangaru Telangana (BT)' batch signifies those who joined the party after June 2014.

The growing discontent among the UT batch over their position vis-à-vis the

BT batch had to be addressed. So, one of the steps in this direction was appointing the UT batch members as TRS district in-charges and chairpersons.

Most of the leaders named as district incharges belong to the UT batch. Even during the recent appointments of chairpersons, people who had walked alongside KCR since 2001 were given prominence, including student leaders.

These include Laxma Reddy, Jogu Ramana, Balka Suman, Guvvala Balraju, Jeevan Reddy, Padma Devender Reddy, Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar, Aroori Ramesh, Sampath Reddy, Jagadish, and K Vidya Sagar, all of whom were part of the



Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao

Telangana agitation. Even though TRS presidents claim that the party is now a political party, and not just an 'Udhyama' avatar; it is apparent that there is now dire

need for ensuring balance between BT and UT batches.

Differences crop up regularly between members belonging to these two batches. Eatala Rajender, a member of the UT batch, was the first to voice dissent. Even a scheme like Dalit Bandhu could not help TRS defeat Eatala.

Sources said that the party could not afford to keep the UT batch waiting for Cabinet rank posts and Ministerial berths anymore. It is a different matter that there are not many who can be given positions in the government. Giving the district president post was relatively a better way to calm the restive members who have been travelling along for long.

## All set for auction of Sri Valli Township plots

PNS ■ NALGONDA

The district administration is all set to auction the Sri Valli township open plots in Dasarigudem under Narkatpally mandal in accordance with direction of the State government. District Collector Prashant Jeevan Patil, accompanied by Panchayat Raj Engineering officers, officers of Survey land Records, MPDO, Tahsildar visited the township. He directed the officials to ensure that the plots are demarcated. The township consists of 250 house and 574 open plots. The Collector directed the officials to constitute four teams in each of the four blocks.

## DALIT BANDHU

# 100 beneficiaries to be selected in each Assembly segment

PNS ■ MEDAK



Minister for Finance holding a review meeting on Dalit Bandhu, in Medak on Thursday

Finance Minister T Harish Rao stated that 100 beneficiaries will be selected in each Assembly constituency under Dalit Bandhu programme first phase and Rs 10 lakh would be paid into their bank accounts. The Minister held a review meeting at Aranya Bhavan here on Thursday on the implementation of Dalit Bandhu. He directed the district collectors to select 100 beneficiaries in each Assembly constituency under Dalit Bandhu. Following the directions of Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, the process of identifying the villages and beneficiaries has to be completed in the first week of February and units have to be grounded by March 5. Separate bank accounts have to be opened for beneficiaries, he said. 'The beneficiaries by forming groups of two or three can also start a unit and

three units can be started with Rs 10 lakh,' he said. The Minister further said that Rs 9.90 lakh will be deposited into the account of the beneficiary. Along with the balance of Rs 10,000, the government will add another Rs 10,000, and with that amount Dalit Protection fund will be set up. It is a unique programme launched by Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao for the welfare of Dalits, he added. Harish Rao, at another review, directed the officials to hand

over the completed 2BHK houses to the beneficiaries in the district at the earliest. The details of beneficiaries have to be uploaded online, he said. He also asked the collectors to complete land acquisition for Medak-Siddipet-Elkathurthi highway widening works. MLAs Padma Devender Reddy, Madan Reddy, Chanti Kranti Kiran, Manik Rao, Odithela Satish Kumar, FDC Chairman Vanteru Pratap Reddy, collectors Harish were present.

## Gudur Narayana Reddy strongly objects to hike in market values of lands

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharatiya Janata Party senior leader in the state Gudur Narayana Reddy on Thursday strongly opposed the state government's proposal to raise the market values of the lands. In a media statement here, he alleged that the government has been proposing to rise the market values of the lands to increase its revenues from registrations. This is an example of how the cash-strapped state government is squeezing money from all available means, he said.

Narayana Reddy said that the government is facing severe financial problems and is not in a position even to pay salaries to the government employees on the first of every month. Every month it has been paying 20 percent of the revenue as an interest to the banks. The BJP senior leader said that to increase its rev-



Gudur Narayana Reddy

enues from its own sources, the government has already been encouraging the rampant sale of liquor. Now it has been eyeing on the income from registrations. He said that it was the second time to raise the market values of the lands in one year and the government has been using backdoor methods to raise the income from registrations.

He said that raising the market values of the lands

would put house sites out of reach for the poor people. Apart from that, the rates of the lands are going up and day by day. He said that as the Urban Land Ceiling Act was repealed in the state, businessmen were purchasing hundreds of acres of land in the urban areas and raising the rates of the plots indiscriminately. The prices of the lands were under control when ULC was in force in the state. After its repeal, the real estate businessmen have turned into a mafia and raising the rates of the lands abnormally. He further said that the government would try to show that all is well as far as the revenue of the state government is concerned. With the help of income from liquor and registrations, the government would try to show a big figure as the budget of the state and would try to cover up its failure in maintaining financial discipline.

## Guv enquires about 'attack' on Nizamabad MP

PNS ■ Nizamabad

Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Thursday reportedly made a telephone call to Nizamabad Lok Sabha member Dharmapuri Arvind enquired about the alleged attack made on him a few days ago. Arvind accused the TRS activists of attacking him and damaging his vehicle too in a broad daylight at Issapally village under Armoor Mandal.

The alleged attack took place while the MP was on his way to Nandipet. Arvind reportedly told the Governor that some knife-wielding goons obstructed his convoy. He alleged that in fact, the local police had led his convoy into the 'ambush' at the instance of the TRS party leaders. He also told the Governor that he and his personal assistant had suffered injuries and the windscreen of



Dharmapuri Arvind

his car was damaged.

The MP accused the Commissioner of Police too of turning a blind eye to the incident at the instance of the ruling party and the police had miserably failed to provide security to him. He felt that the attack was pre-planned.

## Collector unveils The Pioneer calendar

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

District Collector C Narayana Reddy on Thursday released The Pioneer calendar. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector stressed the need to improve reading skills. He also highlighted the importance of English language. He lauded The Pioneer for highlighting the problem being faced by people.

He suggested that the youth read The Pioneer English daily to improve their reading skills. The Pioneer is playing an important role in imparting knowledge to students, employees and officials, he said.

The Collector urged the youth to learn English as language,



Nizamabad Collector C Narayana Reddy releasing The Pioneer calendar in Nizamabad on Thursday

but should not ignore their mother tongue.

## Improve functioning of Anganwadis: Collector

PNS ■ MAHABUBABAD

Mahabubabad District Collector K Shashanka on Thursday directed the authorities concerned to improve the functioning of Anganwadis.

The Collector reviewed the functioning of Anganwadis at the Collectorate. District Women and Child Welfare Officer attended. On this occasion, the Collector said out 25 Anganwadi have their own buildings. Repairs should be carried to the Anganwadi buildings and also for provision of drinking water. He asked the officials utilize the Gram Panchayat funds for repairs.

He directed the officials to give training to Anganwadi teachers and helper in kitchen gardening. He urged the teachers to work hard, organise nutrition day every Friday. The teachers should give counselling to the parents of the children who are malnourished.

## Jyoti Reddy thanks CM for making her district TRS chief

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALAPALLI

Bhupalapalli MLA Gandra Venkataramana Reddy and his spouse Gandra Jyoti Reddy, the latter is also Warangal ZP chairperson, on Thursday called on Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao as a matter of courtesy thanked him for appointing Jyoti Reddy as Bhupalapalli district TRS president.

The couple thanked KCR for the appointment if Gandra Jyoti kept faith in her

abilities and leadership qualities. She along with her spouse told the CM that they would strive to strengthen the party in the district and would spare no effort in this regard.

They also thanked the CM for releasing funds as and when sought for the development of Bhupalapalli. Panchayat Raj Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao, Rytu Bandhu Samiti president and MLC Palla Rajeswar Reddy and others were present on the occasion.



Jayashankar Bhupalapalli District Zilla Parishad Chairperson Gandra Jyoti Reddy thanking Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao for appointing as party district unit president, in Hyderabad on Thursday

## Poor florist saves every rupee to get damaged Gandhi statue replaced

PNS ■ DUGGONDI

A 60-year-old poor woman who ekes out a living by selling flowers saved every rupee to replace the damaged idol of the Father of the Nation - Mahatma Gandhi's in Reballe village of Duggondi mandal of Warangal district. She was identified as Naugari Buchchamma. In fact, the statue was installed by her grandfather in the village in 1965. But, the statue got damaged due to continued exposure to rain and shine.

She sells flowers near the statue. She saved Rs 25,000 to replace the old and worn-out statue with a brand new statue of Gandhi. She herself unveiled the statue in the village on Wednesday. The people of the Mandal felicitated Buchchamma for her gesture. Sarpanch Gatika Mamata, Upa Sarpanch Pakide Minor Babu, and others were present.

## 'Govt giving priority to cooperative societies'

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Government chief whip Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar has said that cooperative societies received thrust in the new state of Telangana under the administration of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao.

He was addressing a gathering after presenting certificates to those who have undergone training by the Kakatiya Cooperative Training Institute of undivided Warangal district at a function held in Collectorate here on Thursday. Kakatiya Cooperative training institute principal Rajaiiah presided. The CM has been releasing funds to cooperative societies and providing various amenities to them. The Kakatiya Cooperative Training Institute was sanctioned 1300 square yards of site in Warangal. Over 150 received training from the institute during the past five years. Vinay Bhaskar assured the training institute to sanction a hostel to it and take steps to benefit the workers and poor working in organ-



Government Chief Whip Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar at a meeting in Warangal on Thursday

ised and unorganised sector through the institute. The cooperative societies have played crucial role in post-independence in the country. These institutions have produced many great leaders, district collector Rajiv Gandhi Hanumantu said. Because of minor reasons, many industries faced closure, he added.

He asked the trainees to implement the lofty ideals as per the training given to them and earn recognition.

Telangana state cooperative union MD B Aruna said that several training programmes are being conducted by the union on women empowerment, leadership qualities and other aspects. TGO district president K Jaganmohan Rao spoke. Later, certificates were given away those who excelled in the training programme. District Cooperative officers Sanjeeva Reddy, Rajeswar Rao and Neeraja and others.

**The CM has been releasing funds to cooperative societies and providing various amenities to them.**

## Online monitoring of inflows, outflows in TS projects

MALLEPALLI GOVERDHAN  
■ NAGARKURNOOL

The state government has decided to exploit technology to monitor inflows and outflows into various irrigation projects by linking them online.

The government has launched efforts in this regard so that the online system will be in vogue in the irrigation department by the time the monsoon season arrives this year. The government of Telangana is likely to emerge as a unique state in the country by achieving this feat.

Besides Rivers Krishna and Godavari, several major, medium irrigation projects have been built on these rivers. There are many minor irrigation schemes in the state.

Besides, many tributaries to the main rivers flow across the state, To release water for irrigation from the reservoirs, ayacuts, LI schemes, main canals, tunnels, these will be



brought under an online mechanism for their easy monitoring and to reduce the cost of maintenance of these projects. Moreover, it will make their management facile.

It would enable the author-

ities to monitor the inflows and discharge from the project's main office at the desired level. There are Srisailem project, Priyadarsini Jurala Project, Nagarjuna Sagar project, Beema project, Mid-Maneru project, Nettempadu

project, Kalwakurthy project, Koil Sagar project, Singuru project, Nizamsagar project, choutupalli Hanumanta Reddy Project, Palamuru-RR LI scheme, Mahatma Gandhi LI scheme, Elimineti Madhava Reddy LI scheme,

Rajolibanda Diversion scheme, Tummillla scheme, Wyra scheme, Musi project, SLBC project on River Krishna. On river Godavari, the projects built are Kaleswaram, SRSP, Sripada Yellampalli Chokka Rao LI project, Bagareddy Singuru Project, Raja Narsimha Project, Kakatiya-Saraswati Main canals, Sitarama LI scheme, Katayini Srujala Sravanti project will be linked online. Once the task is completed, the losses due to floods could be minimised. Moreover, the inflows in the reservoirs and outflows can be recorded automatically. The online mechanism will make the management of irrigation projects and supervision vey easy, experts opine. On the lines of online monitoring of the power production, power tripping and power consumption, low-voltage problems, the online monitoring of the irrigation projects would be implemented.

## Strengthen party: Seethakka to Cong workers

PNS ■ MULUGU

Mulugu MLA and All India Mahila Congress general secretary Seetakka on Thursday exhorted the party activists to strengthen the party.

Participating as chief guest at a meeting, held to review the membership drive, Seethakka stressed the need for party activists to work in coordination. She urged the activists to take forward the membership drive by motivating the people. She asked the party cadre

to visit households to ensure that more people join the party.

The meeting was held under the presidency of V Saraiah. Seethakka said those who enrolled as member would secure Rs 2 insurance cover. It was important to take the message to the masses. Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee leader Ravali Reddy, TPCC organizing secretary Challa Narayana Reddy, ZPTC member and others were present.



Mulugu MLA Seethakka at the Congress membership drive review meeting in Mulugu on Thursday

## CPI opposes move to hike land value

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

CPI State secretary Chada Venkat Reddy on Thursday said it was not the right move on the part of the state government to increase the market value of land for the second time in a year. Venkat Reddy said the common people are not in a position to buy house sites with land prices skyrocketing. The middle-class too would be hit hard if the market value of land is further increased. With the repeal of the Urban Land Ceiling Act and the increase in prices of lands in Hyderabad, Warangal, and other major cities, poor and middle-class people were already hit hard. He said land prices were somewhat under control when the Land Ceiling Act was in force. Now that the law had been repealed, land prices had skyrocketed due to the machinations of the real estate mafia in the State.







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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Scalping hair

India exports hair but there's more moolah if it turns to the hair products industry

Human hair can cause hair-raising problems and the Indian Government is waking up to the reality. If India has a commodity that can never become scarce, grows for free, and has the most of it in the world, it is human hair. Yet, India gets no benefit from this asset because it is not the leader of the hair products industry. It is merely an exporter. Between April-November last, hair exports stood at \$144.26 million. The pandemic lowered these to \$15.28 million in 2020-21. Exports are also hurt by rampant smuggling. Smugglers hire people to collect raw hair and illegally move it in bulk to some East Asian countries. The allegation is the hair is processed there and sent across to China, which makes wigs and hairpieces and exports them for a tidy profit. Hair products manufacturers and the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence could not end smuggling despite best efforts. It is estimated that around 16,000 tonne of human hair are smuggled even now. Finally, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade stepped in this week and placed human hair in the restricted export category. That should help genuine exporters. However, it is time the industry shifted from exporting hair to exporting hair products. There is some talk of improving value addition in export products from



India, like wigs and hairpieces, to increase foreign exchange earnings. It has to turn into reality now.

India raises huge quantities — 80 per cent — of the best quality of human hair in the world. All of it is donated, at places of worship. The Tirumala temple is the biggest source in the country. If hair export is banned, India's exports of hair products can touch \$3 billion annually and go up to \$6 billion in a few years. Importantly, stopping exports can bring back around 8.6 lakh jobs lost over the last few years and open up new jobs as well. It is not difficult for India to become the leader in the hair industry. But with it

comes the responsibility that Indian hair collectors, aggregators, product manufacturers and exporters are unaware of. For instance, the collection of hair from non-temple areas like salons and the villages is not organised at all. Planned collection can earn regular employment for rag-pickers. It can reduce the clogging of hair in pipes and sewers — the biggest contributor to rising plumbing costs. India should have expertise in synthetic hair materials and products to be able to compete with countries that lack natural hair. That the production of polymers, used to make synthetic hair products, leads to several environmental problems is another complication on the way. Indian manufacturers need to speed up research into a key area — the life cycle of hair products. At present, the products have a short life and are deemed disposable. If these are designed for a circular economy where they can be recycled, reconditioned and remanufactured, they can help reduce the demand for hair.

### PICTALK



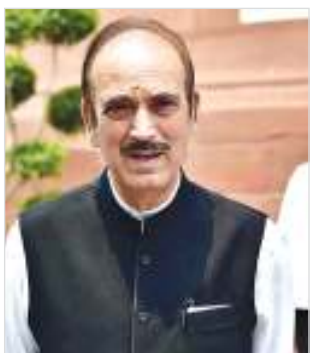
Fishermen row their boats in the Arabian Sea near the Bandra-Worli Sea Link, in Mumbai

PTI

## Missing focus

Rather than taking a jibe at Azad, the Congress will do well to get ready for Assembly polls

The announcement of the Padma Bhushan for senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad has set the cat among the pigeons in the 'grand old party'. While several party members — especially those belonging to the so-called G23 — have congratulated him for being named for the prestigious award, there understandably is a section that is miffed with the Kashmiri leader for accepting the honour. The prominent Congress leaders from among the G23 who supported Azad include Kapil Sibal and Shashi Tharoor, with Sibal even calling it "ironic that the Congress doesn't need his services when the nation recognises his contributions", but the party's chief whip in the Rajya Sabha Jairam Ramesh took a swipe at Azad, hinting that the latter should have refused to accept the honour. Even though the reasons for the upset section's grouse are not being explained openly, it is being speculated that these leaders are not happy with Azad as he has accepted the award from the BJP-led Government. Now, to put matters in the right perspective, even though the honour may have been bestowed upon Azad during the BJP-led Government's rule at the Centre, it can be no stretch of imagination to be counted as coming from the Bharatiya Janata Party.



It has simply been announced by the Government of India, by the President who is the executive head of the sovereign Republic. However, the upset colleagues refuse to subscribe to this view and, in this context, are even citing the "example set by" former West Bengal Chief Minister and CPM leader Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, who has since refused to accept the award. Now Bhattacharjee's reasons and circumstances could be totally different from Azad's who has been for a long time now sidelined within the party and practically forced into oblivion. Had the Congress been treating him fairly, even of late, there was a possibility that the Kashmiri leader might have considered the wishes of the party old guard and high command. But now that he has been left to his own devices, there is no justification in trying to vilify him, especially for something which isn't even his own doing. It's time that the Congress, which is already in a visible state of decline across the country, had a relook at its priorities and kept its focus on Assembly election in the five States that are going to polls within days from now.

# Why Buddhadeb said no to Padma Bhushan



PRAFULLA GORADIA

It could have been an opportunity to re-enter the mainstream of politics; in India, there is increasing space for politicians of quality



It is a pity that Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, West Bengal's former Chief Minister, has refused to accept the Padma Bhushan he was offered this Republic Day by the President of India. The offer was not from the Bharatiya Janata Party Government or the Prime Minister. Even his refusal was confused; no one informed him or any member of his family, said Buddhadeb, as if that was the reason for declining the honour. The late Jyoti Basu had declined the opportunity of becoming a coalition Prime Minister when Deve Gowda had to resign as the PM. Later, he described it as "a historical blunder". The immediate reason given then was his party, the CPM, did not permit him to accept the post. While one might not question the genuineness of these persons in not accepting the honour/executive post, their refusals certainly do say something.

With the demise of Marxism as an ideology the world over, these could be the little opportunities to re-enter the mainstream of politics, at the Centre or in States. Why not seize them like floral bouquets? Is there something inherently different about communists? It is true that in Eastern Europe, some of them have managed to creep into the mainstream. However, in Europe, politics has swung towards the Right, especially because of a wave of migrants from Africa and Arabia, more so from Syria. In India, the Left is vacant without any prejudicial obstruction as in Europe. In fact, in our country there has been increasing space for politicians of quality; the Congress continues its decline, which increasingly looks terminal, while no replacement for it as a national Opposition has come up. The communists cannot, it appears, see this widening gap.

Is this because the communists are essentially trade union leaders and not politicians? When their trade unions weaken, they sink with their cadres. In the free world, Margaret Thatcher blew the whistle and best the Left could do in

response to her uncompromising right-wing way of rule was to bring forth Tony Blair, but with the novel label of New Labour, which shunned Leftism during its 10 years in power. The Soviet Union collapsed and scattered into 16 Republics with the advent of the 1990s. The French and Italian communist parties went virtually out of existence just a little earlier.

Nor did Leftism revive in the rest of Europe after 1991. China learnt its lesson from the Soviet Union and converted itself into a pseudo-capitalist system. The Beijing experiment is a novel one with the Communist Party of China owning the armed forces and controlling, with shares, many or most of China's mega enterprises. This was done perhaps with the objective of thwarting any revolt against the regime. Citizens there aren't allowed to set up a political party to compete for votes. But isn't this a new version of fascism?

Can it last? If so, for how long? After all, the CPC members are not blood relations, and they cannot remain beholden forever. Nevertheless, the Chinese experiment is unique and has been studied by experts, although one must add that it



IN INDIA, THE LEFT IS VACANT WITHOUT ANY PREJUDICIAL OBSTRUCTION. THE CONGRESS CONTINUES ITS DECLINE, WHICH INCREASINGLY LOOKS TERMINAL, WHILE NO REPLACEMENT FOR IT AS A NATIONAL OPPOSITION HAS COME UP

is a work in progress.

Until the 18th century, religion, particularly Christianity, provided the governing ideologies through monarchs. The French Revolution shook up this ideological quality and gave birth to a kind of pseudo-nationalism. To prevent nationalism being used or misused by capitalists, the communists supported by the industrial classes became the antidote to the Soviet Union in the lead. The spectre of communism spreading throughout the continent and engulfing European civilisation was very real, and it was in order to prevent such an eventuality that fascism was born. It first came into being in Italy under Benito Mussolini and was soon adopted by Adolf Hitler in Germany with all its consequences, particularly WWII. Today, both communism and fascism have virtually expired. Some former communists believe that they lost because of their lack of democratic functioning within the party. There can be no denying that parties that spawned and brought this ideology to power acquired dictatorial authority over their respective countries. The result was that the fascist leadership did not obtain any regular feedback

nor authentic information about how people felt, or where their country was headed. Third, people in the world outside also did not come to know as to what was happening in a particular communist country.

Regimes did not change often; it was only when a revolutionary cataclysm took place that everyone, inside and outside the country, became aware of what had been wrong. By the time they did become aware, they found that it was too late; they were swept away by the tide of change. It needs no reiteration that communism as an ideology has no future anywhere in the world. Places like China and North Korea have to use the State's brute muscle to remain in power. For any political future in free countries, former communists have to jettison their hidebound mindset and embrace a democratic way of functioning, beginning with their own parties.

But given the inherent contradiction between democracy and communism, this does not look like materialising.

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### LEAVE GHULAM NABI AZAD ALONE

Sir — Those who believe in the adage, "Coming events cast their shadow earlier" were already perking their ears when the Prime Minister got emotional and broke down during Ghulam Nabi Azad's farewell function in February last year due to his long association with the latter. Now, several people, including some of Azad's colleagues, are casting aspersions on him upon being conferred the prestigious Padma Bhushan, though some expressed happiness and extended their greetings. Among the G-23 members, Anand Sharma heaped praise on his friend being awarded the country's third highest honour but Kapil Sibal's tweet, "Congratulations bhaijan; ironic that Congress does not need his services when the nation recognises his contributions to the public service", carried a sarcastic touch.

Jairam Ramesh came up with the phrase "Ghulam, not Azad" (enslaved, not free) and simultaneously referred to former West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee who refused to accept the honour. Film star-turned-politician Raj Babbar, however, felicitated Ghulam Nabi Azad, calling him an elder brother whose immaculate public life and commitment to Gandhian ideals have always been an inspiration. The Congress leadership, meanwhile, has maintained a studied silence. All these scenarios have made public the ideological fissures continuing unabated among the grand old party members.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

### DON'T LET THE GUARD DOWN

Sir — On the one hand, the spirit of people has been just amazing and an example is the way people have been venturing out in large numbers to celebrate festivals and functions. On the other hand, most people have been turning a blind eye to the current COVID status, especially in the wake of the Omicron variant, by not wearing masks. Ignoring such serious yet simple protocols as wearing masks, these people pose a great threat to society. Incidentally, I see numerous

## Arunachal teen returns home



It's heartening to know that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has handed over 17-year-old Miram Taron from Zido, in Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh, to the Indian Army. The matter of Miram's kidnapping was first reported by BJP MP Tapir Gao, though the PLA had denied the kidnapping allegation. Instead, it claimed that he "illegally entered Chinese territory... and then was routinely questioned... and given humanitarian assistance". Kudos to our Army for pursuing the case meticulously with the PLA and safely securing our Miram back home. This is not the first such incident. In March 2020, a 21-year-old was kidnapped by the PLA from the Asaphila area in the same district and was returned after two weeks.

On September 3, 2020, five youth of Tagin community, engaged as porters for the Indian Army, were captured by the PLA on the McMahon line and returned home after 10 days. The reason for this type of dispute with China and why our citizens are continuously harassed is that Upper Siang district shares the boundary with China. People from Arunachal Pradesh often go into the interiors for hunting and inadvertently cross the border. To stop it permanently, some barbed wire barricade on the border with China or other method should be resorted to. Who knows it may create a major problem for both the nations one day?

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

people venturing out for their daily needs without wearing masks. Sticking to my own mask, I have been advising to wear masks to many people in my native areas in Tamil Nadu.

As for the Omicron threat, it depends on us to keep away these fears. Even though vaccination has been a big hit worldwide, people should come out only after wearing masks. Plus, the Government and all media houses should come forward to churn out daily local feeds about important Corona protocols with a strong message and celebrity voice/word of advice. After all, countries have to look into their economic needs like agriculture activities and industrial operations. For this, the international community must come out of the COVID loop soon.

P Senthil Saravana Durai | Mumbai

### KICKING UP A CONTROVERSY

Sir — This refers to three different issues, with the common agenda to defame Prime Minister Modi, that are hitting the head-

lines in media during the last three days. I would like to repudiate these one by one. The first issue pertains to withdrawal of "Abide with me" from the Beating Retreat ceremony. The Scottish-origin tune has been replaced by Lata Mangeshkar's popular "Ae mere watan ke logo".

The second controversy which should be laid to rest is the shifting of Amar Jawan Jyoti to the National War Memorial. The eternal flame at India Gate has still not been extinguished. The third dissent is the refusal to accept the Padma Vibhushan bestowed on former West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and its acceptance by Ghulam Nabi Azad, with castigation of the latter by his party colleagues. The corollary of all these uncalculated situations is that since all this has been done by the Modi dispensation, it is not acceptable to those who hate him *ad nauseum*.

Sagar Singh | Muzaffarnagar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## SOUND BITE

It's our sacred national duty to follow the precautions suggested by our scientists and experts.

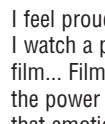


President — Ram Nath Kovind



The Afghan girls must return to schools, women to work. Our religion allows it.

Afghan ex-President — Hamid Karzai



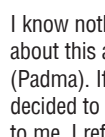
I feel proud when I watch a patriotic film... Films have the power to evoke that emotion.

Actor — Rakul Preet Singh



Setbacks normally are part of life when you are in sports. But not these kinds.

Indian women's football coach — Thomas Dennerby



I know nothing about this award (Padma). If they've decided to offer it to me, I refuse to accept it.

West Bengal ex-CM — Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee











# Dibyendu Bhattacharya looks forward to better days

SHREYA SRIKONDA

Dibyendu Bhattacharya, who you've previously seen in *Delhi Crime*, *Undekhi*, *B.A Pass* and many more as a supporting character, now weaves his magic again in the much-awaited *Rocket Boys* that's soon to hit OTT screens. He talks about his excitement for the show's release on February 4, saying, "Everyone has worked really hard on the show. I'm very emotionally attached to the series as well and I'm glad that it's finally seeing the light of day."

The show has been repeatedly postponed because of the Pandemic, but it's finally going to be streaming on SonyLIV as another one of its original projects after the extraordinary success of *Scam 1992*.

"*Rocket Boys* was the ideal set for me. A filmmaking set is like a playground, there's openness and attention to detail — you read and re-read before shooting and then improvise during the shoot—there's a give and take with all the people on set and it was very fun to work on this particular set. A lot of my favourite actors and filmmakers were involved in this project, so it was a wonderful experience," the actor says.

*Rocket Boys* is based on life events, the series is a story of Homi J Bhaba and Vikram Sarabhai, the men behind India's nuclear energy and space programs. The trailer of the show went viral recently. Dibyendu plays the role of Raza Mehdi, a scientist. He mentions that though the show is based on events that took place in real life, Raza Mehdi is a completely fictional character.

He explains, "Raza is the representative of many scientists. It's

a very important character as he plays a role in propelling the story forward. In filmmaking, you have to take creative liberties for the overall flow of storytelling."

"I am an actor who enjoys every sort of role. If you see my body of work, you'll see that I've worked in every kind of genre. By the grace of God, no one's ever given me a role I didn't enjoy. I've had fun with all of them so far. But I do find every role difficult. To identify with a character who is a completely different person from me, is always a challenge- and I love the challenge," he says, before talking about how the pandemic stalled many of his projects, but 2022 seems to have a lot in store. He goes on to talk about how he's looking forward to a better world. "I'm really looking forward to the better days. We could freely meet people, go around town, shoot without fear — those were better times."

He says that OTT is exciting with the huge amount of choice it presents it's viewers with.

"It's not like the movies where you can only get a ticket for something and have to sit through the whole movie,

there's truly something for everyone in OTT and frankly speaking I really enjoy it. Along with the Audie, there's more things for filmmakers to play with. There's more topics to work on, and more formats that are exciting. This has brought in a lot of new actors and directors and everyone is busy! Earlier, directors had to spend lots of time getting everything together to make a movie but now — everyone's always at work! It's wonderful," he signs off on a positive note.



Rocket Boys was the ideal set for me. A filmmaking set is like a playground, there's openness and attention to detail — you read and re-read before shooting and then improvise during the shoot—there's a give and take with all the people on set and it was very fun to work on this particular set. A lot of my favourite actors and filmmakers were involved in this project, so it was a wonderful experience.



## Do not pass off abdominal pain!

Omicron can affect your gut apart from the upper respiratory tract and the abdominal symptoms are becoming common in people infected with the new strain. Some of the new symptoms of Covid-19 include nausea, abdominal ache, vomiting, loss of appetite and diarrhoea.

"People may initially present with abdominal symptoms without any respiratory complaints. The presenting complaints could be back ache, abdominal ache, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite and diarrhoea. This could be due to Omicron infecting the gut mucosa and the resulting inflammation," says Dr Manoj Goel, Director, Pulmonology, Fortis Memorial Research Institute.

The doctor also says that even though double-vaccinated people are also coming forward with complaints of abdominal issues, these symptoms are not adverse and not of much concern.

"Do not pass off abdominal pain, nausea and loss of appetite as a normal flu, if you have symptoms, isolate yourself. Avoid self-medication including so-called safe Ayurvedic treatment without consulting your doctor. Try and maintain good hydration, eat frequent, small, wholesome and light meals including nuts. Avoid spicy food and alcohol. Symptoms if mild might not be of concern," says Dr Goel, adding, "One should test for Covid if you have abdominal complaints even without respiratory symptoms or fever as this could be due to Omicron infection."

# Building blocks

Architecture is more than just throwing together raw materials such as concrete, glass, and wood. The concept of architecture has changed over the years, and today, architecture is a way for the designer to play around with various elements while honing their art and practice.

Architecture is a complex discipline that is an amalgamation of design, art, math and science to arrive at a balanced compendium of form and function. The monuments of India are some of the world's most stunning works of architecture. From the Red Fort to Hampi, everything that our forefathers and ancestors built has been a source of great pride. But due to pollution, natural weathering, and poor civic sense, the monuments have been facing a preservation crisis. However, with the help of architects, and the way they are devising new plans to preserve the monuments, there is an excellent chance that these pieces of our collective history will be standing tall for future generations. Architects have been employing stratification techniques, logistic recognition, and using reconstruction methods to preserve the monuments in all their glory.

We got in touch with four architects to learn how architecture has transformed over the years in our country.

Manish Dikshit, the founding partner of Aum Architects believes that architecture is a way to look at human history as a whole. "It reflects the change in needs and thinking patterns of a community, which becomes even more critical when one is looking to contextualise their existence. The power of good architecture must not be underestimated as it helps in connecting people while protecting the environment. Since the awareness and need for sustainable architecture have been expressed by experts, architects have been working tirelessly to help fit extremely utilitarian buildings while expressing the need to have carbon-neutral structures. We, as architects, are constantly looking to upgrade systems and functions, so it is fulfilling for us to deliver highly concise designs," says Manish.

Meanwhile, Sumit Dhawan, the founder and principal architect at Cityspace '82 Architects

is of the view that architecture is synonymous with endurance and longevity. He explains that buildings and structures made by man must be long-lasting while being able to withstand the rapidly changing human times. "A building needs to be both functional and have perfectly-balanced aesthetics. It also needs to be expectant of the human changes that will inevitably come as time passes. Architecture is also becoming more community-based. So, long gone are the days wherein architects would create lofty structures that would inevitably intimidate folks. Simple and highly utilitarian buildings are the new vogue. We cater to a myriad of community-based activities that serve to increase its value," he shares.

Anil Badan, founder and architect at Studio B Architects, states that architecture is all about being accessible. "From simple structural incorporations like ramps and banisters that would help the elderly or the disabled to buildings designed with the help of logic and common sense, we firmly believe in having architecture made for the public and its people. So, in a way, architecture is all about improving the lives of people. Architecture also deals with the simplest forms of human equations, wherein it has the capacity to change lives, enrich human experiences and create a context for human existence to move forward. With the advent of new materials or finding new methods of using old, reliable materials, the art of architecture has changed by leaps and bounds," adds Anil.

In conclusion, Anurag Pashine, the principal architect from Salankar Pashine & Associates, recommends that design has the potential to change the way we work. Explaining his view with an example, he says, "An office with a scorching and sweltering area with poor ventilation and lack of windows will impact the productivity of employees as they will not be able to focus on their work. With the help of new technology and new materials being discovered every day, this office conundrum can easily be solved with proper glass facades that allow ventilation and an HVAC system that will eventually help air circulation. Taking one element out of the equation and working on it so that it is better

can lead to changing human lives for the better. While architects aim to create user-friendly buildings, aesthetics also play an essential role in attracting people to the facets, so it is more like a delicate game of Jenga that needs to balance various elements."

At the same time, it is also essential to recognise the fact that architecture and human lives are constantly in touch with each other. While recognising that architecture is used to shape and help propel human lives, human interactions also aid in shaping architecture. Reflecting the changing needs and wants of the communities, architecture ultimately helps in the proliferation of urbanisation of various rural areas as well.





# Spiced coffee for chilly evenings



- Pumpkin puree: 3 tsp
- Honey: 15 ml
- Nutmeg (pinch of)
- Cinnamon: 1 stick
- Whipped cream

## How to make:

- In a pan take almond milk, honey, pumpkin puree, cinnamon stick and nutmeg and boil it in medium heat.
- Once the milk starts boiling, remove it from the fire and also remove the cinnamon stick. Pour milk mixture into a French press and pull the plunger 6-8 times to get nice silky and smooth texture foam.

**D**o you love coffee? While coffee shops are a favourite hang-out place, the Covid guidelines have restricted this winter indulgence. Considering your caffeine needs Lavazza training centre shares spicy, hot & easy DIY coffee recipes for winter.

## Vegan spicy pumpkin Cappuccino

A vegan and healthier option for one of the most famed recipes which you should try making at home this winter season. It's a tasty, delicious and very simple recipe to give a festive feeling.

### What you need:

- Espresso (also can try Moka pot coffee): 30 ml
- Almond milk: 200 ml

- Take a shot of espresso or Moka pot coffee into a serving mug, pour the milk with foam over espresso.
- Make sure you get a thick layer of milk foam top, if you can't manage to get it by pouring then just scoop it with a help of spoon.
- For garnish, add whipped cream on the top and sprinkle some freshly grated nutmeg.

## Spice Latte

This simple diet-friendly latte is flavourful, easy to make, and with an amazing aroma.

### What you need:

- French press coffee: 200ml
- Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
- Cloves: 3
- Small cinnamon stick: 3

- Water: 60 ml
- Demerara Sugar for sweetness
- Milk: 200 ml
- Whipped cream: optional

### How to make:

- Combine the water and spices in a saucepan, cover and simmer for 3-4 minutes.
- Add the demerara, milk and

bring to the boil. Remove from the heat and stir in the coffee. Strain to remove the spices and pour the coffee into a coffee mug or glass.

- For more creamer options, add a swirl of whipped cream on the top, sprinkle some demerara and cinnamon.



## Spicy Mexican Mocha



This coffee is the perfect combination of strong, freshly brewed coffee, chocolate, and spices. You'll love the sweetness of chocolate and spice flavours of cinnamon and cayenne pepper with the richness of whipped cream on the top.

### What you need:

- French press coffee: 200 ml
- Pinch of cinnamon.
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- 200 ml half-and-half (simply a mixture of equal parts whole milk and cream).
- Chocolate syrup: 15 ml
- Demerara: 2 sachet
- Vanilla syrup: 10ml
- Cinnamon sticks, whipped cream, chocolate shavings, optional, garnish

### How to make:

- Add the coffee grounds and cinnamon together while brewing in a french press.
- While the coffee is brewing, bring the half-and-half, chocolate syrup, and demerara to a gentle simmer in a small saucepan. Make sure to cook on low heat so you don't burn the mixture.
- Remove from the heat and add the brewed coffee to the milk mixture. Whisk in the vanilla extract/ flavour.
- Pour the coffee into Mug and top with whipped cream and garnish with a sprinkle of cinnamon or chocolate shavings, and add a cinnamon stick, if desired. Enjoy immediately.

## FUN

### ARCHIE



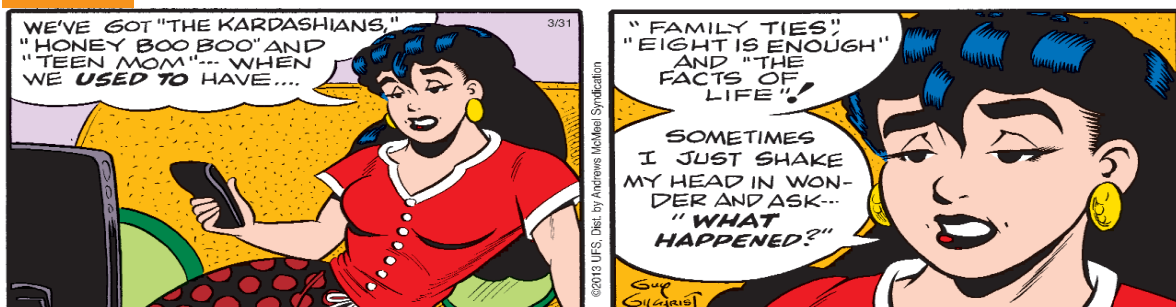
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



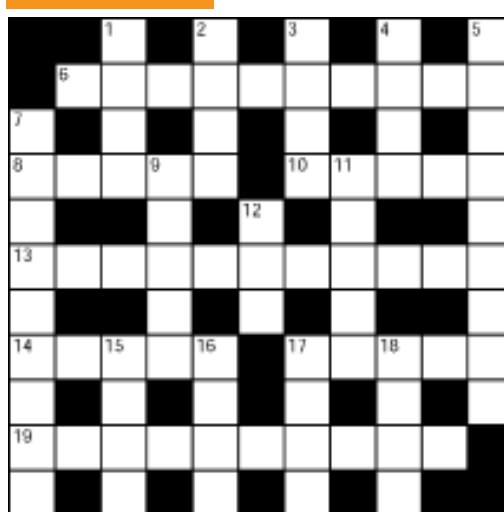
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### SUDOKU



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

### 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

- Words that ask you politely to come
- Arm joint
- The head of a city council
- Very tall city buildings
- From Ireland
- These birds honk
- A person who has seen something happen and can give evidence in court

### DOWN

- A round handle
- The scene from a window
- Do damage to
- Very small
- Took clothes off

### 7 Sweated

- A desert green place
- This fruit has pips
- Rub with a towel
- A thought
- This grows on heads
- Firearms
- The direction opposite west





## Saad Khan to make directorial debut in Telugu!

SHIKHA DUGGAL

**S**aad Khan is wearing many hats these days including writer, director and a comic. Under his company FirstAction Studio, Saad has produced content-rich films including *Station, Love, She*, as well as the much-hyped *Humble Politician Nograj*, which made Danish Sait a household name recently. But what's the latest buzz that led us to speak to the typical Bengaluru guy? Now, Saad Khan is making his directorial debut with a romantic movie titled *Sangeeth* in Telugu! He exclusively spills the beans, "Supposed to go



on floors in February, *Sangeeth* is a romantic comedy and I always wanted to merge comedy with some romance. Years ago, I got a chance to play with this genre

on the stage as a play-writer but this is going to be the first time that I'll showcase it on big screens. I am dwelling all my energies in moving out from political satires now and adorn the urban comedy mood. I had been working on this script for a really long time and the screenplay has come out so well." Wondering who the lead pair is? He continues, "We are yet to start the casting process, I'll be locking my lead pair by mid February! Earlier, I was conceptually involved with a romantic genre with a little bit of drama but comedy will be new to me. This time, the lead pair will be going through a free-flowing urban romance that's going to catch hold of Teluguites. The male protagonist will spot his lady love at a friend's *Sangeeth* and then you can imagine the plot! Even though I am going regional these days, I make it a point to keep the concept well urbanised because that's how I like it as a director. I am sure *Sangeeth* will not just be a hit in Hyderabad, but in cities like Bangalore and Bombay too."

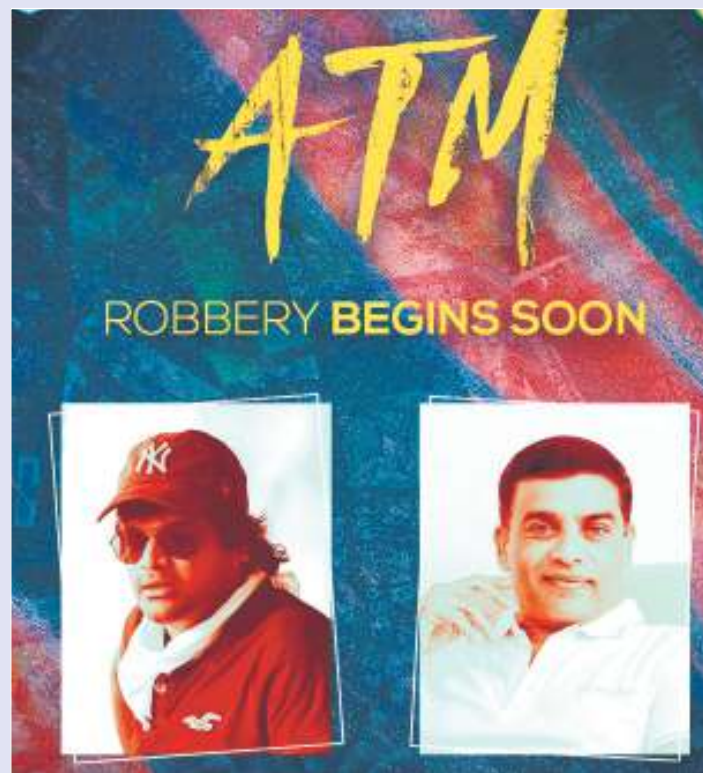
**T**he advent of OTT is taking the entertainment industry by storm. Many biggies have already made their OTT debut. The latest to join is the famed producer Dil Raju along with director Harish Shankar. The duo has joined hands for a web series, a thrilling heist in the city of Hyderabad titled *ATM*. Director Harish Shankar turned producer for this drama. The thriller will be aired on Zee5 soon.

Apart from producing *ATM*, Harish Shankar is also providing the story, and the web drama will be helmed by Chandra Mohan. Dil Raju's daughter Hanshitha Reddy and nephew Harshith Reddy are bankrolling it along with Harish Shankar.

Speaking about their association and the project, Dil Raju shares, "After

being a successful distributor, I was thinking 'what's next?'. Then, I started my journey as a producer in 2003 with the film *Dil*. From there, I have been making new-age movies like *Arya*, *Bommarillu*, *Munna*, introducing many new directors. Many directors have worked hard to sustain themselves in this industry. After being a successful producer, I started to think, 'What's next?'. Now Dil Raju Productions is all set to make an entry in Bollywood. When Harish Shankar called me and told me about this story, I was impressed. We immediately decided to do a web series called *ATM*." Further, about the series, he says, "This series will have all elements. We made *ATM* with many new elements. We look forward to seeing you with our brand value."

## ATM will have many new elements: Dil Raju



## Rambha living her dream

**O**ne of Tamil and Telugu cinema's most popular actresses Rambha, who is now happily settled with her family in Canada, has announced that she is fed up with gym exercises and is going to take a break.

Taking to Instagram, the yes-teryer actress, who

was at one time one of the top actresses of the Tamil film industry, said: "Training off this week. I suggest you follow your heart. Got fed up with gym exercises, dieting, beauty tips, yoga, cooking healthy food etc. Thinking of the above makes me depressed, scared and sad! I decided to follow my heart and keep myself happy by just enjoying

nature, my love and my kids! I am going to live my life the way I wanted and dreamed about. I am living my dream."

The actress posted a picture of herself with her son on a snowmobile along with the post.

Rambha married Indrakumar, a Canada-based Sri Lankan Tamil businessman, after which she quit acting in films.



## Nikhil worried about his films

**A**fter many ups and downs, actor Nikhil Siddarth finally seemed to be getting back in form until Covid hit us. Like many others even Nikhil is now worried about his films that are taking a backseat. Nikhil, who is becoming increasingly concerned and conflicted about his films, expressed his feelings in a video shared by him on his social media.

The actor said, "It's heart-breaking to learn that the pandemic is affecting careers at this level. Following the success of *#ArjunSuravaram*, I

signed four films... four fantastic scripts in which I have complete confidence. However, all of the release dates have gone awry. I'm praying to God that everything works out and that the movies are released flawlessly."

On the work front, Nikhil is now working on a variety of projects, including *Karthikeya 2*, a sequel to his popular film *Karthikeya*, directed by Chandoo Mondeti, and *18 Pages*, directed by Palnati Surya Pratap. He is currently starring in a spy thriller directed by Gary. He also has *BH*, as well as *Traitraim*, directed by newcomer Ravikumar.



## Rashmika overwhelmed by audience response to Saami Saami

**H**ailed as the National Crush of India, Rashmika Mandanna managed to leave a lasting impact even in a deglam role like Srivalli from the mega-blockbuster *Pushpa: The Rise*. Her song *Saami Saami* went on to become a nation-

al sensation, and has even been trending across all social media platforms. It had clocked over ten million views in less than 24 hours of its release.

Expressing gratitude, Rashmika Mandanna said, "The amount of love I have received for my song *Saami Saami* is overwhelming. I would like to thank all my fans for making the song so successful and loving me in it. I had great time shooting for *Saami* and I remember rehearsing for it for long hours to give my best to the peppy number. In the past few days, I've been seeing so many of you doing the hook step on social media, which takes me back to the

shooting days of *Pushpa*. All the love I have received from people all over the world just makes the song super special and memorable!"

The actress was praised for pulling off the choreography in her signature style with hundreds of fans and social media users recreating the steps from the popular song that's become a mass sensation.

With the massive success of *Pushpa: The Rise*, Rashmika has achieved waves of appreciation and praises from all across, and is rightfully touted as 'The Next Big Thing' in Bollywood'. She will be making her big ticket Bollywood debut with *Mission Majnu* and *Goodbye*.







PTI ■ NEW DELHI

**Y**oung leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi was on Wednesday rewarded with a maiden India call-up for the upcoming Twenty20 series against the West Indies, while senior wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav also returned to the white-ball setup after a knee surgery.

Skipper Rohit Sharma on the day cleared his fitness test and as reported by PTI on January 17, was back in-charge for the series that starts with ODIs in Ahmedabad from February 6.

Among senior players, Ravichandran Ashwin has been dropped from the white-ball team, while Washington Sundar, who missed the South Africa series due to COVID-19, was back in the squad. "Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammad Shami have been rested from the series,"

BCCI secretary Jay Shah was quoted as saying in a press release.

While Ashwin is believed to be

injured and out for six weeks, BCCI statement didn't mention his injury status so it can be concluded that even if he is fit, he wouldn't have been picked after an indifferent white-ball series in South Africa.

The other notable comeback has been Baroda batter Deepak Hooda, who had changed states and did wonderfully well for Rajasthan in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy as well as Vijay Hazare Trophy.

Hooda is being looked as a potential finisher in shorter formats and for now in the ODI team. He was part of the Nidahas Trophy squad in Sri Lanka four seasons back but didn't get a game.

"If you go and look at Hooda's performances in white-ball cricket this season, most of his runs have come when the team has been in trouble. That shows he can take pressure. The selectors would like to see more of M Shahrulkhan, who is a good talent. There are a lot of matches and if he has a good IPL, who knows, he will

**"Ravindra Jadeja is undergoing his final stage of recovery post his knee injury and will not be available for the ODIs and T20Is. Axar Patel will be available for the T20Is," Shah added**

be right there," a BCCI source informed PTI on condition of anonymity.

However it is understood that Himachal Pradesh captain Rishi Dhawan wasn't in consideration as his bowling is friendly medium pace and can't be seen as a finisher in

white-ball cricket.

It is also learnt that vice-captain KL Rahul will be available from the second ODI onwards as he is set to miss the first 50-over game due to personal reasons.

"Ravindra Jadeja is undergoing his final stage of recovery post his knee injury and will not be available for the ODIs and T20Is. Axar Patel will be available for the T20Is," Shah added.

Bishnoi has been one of the finds of the Indian Premier League for the Punjab outfit and has been picked up by new franchise Lucknow Super Giants from the drafts for the next IPL. In 42 T20 games, he has 49 wickets at a great economy rate of 6.63. In 17 List A games, he has 24 wickets and an economy rate of 5.48.

He primarily bowls googlies which is his stock delivery and occasionally

bowls leg-breaks. With Kuldeep, Yuzvendra Chahal and Bishnoi, India is again going back to the trusted formula of wrist spin which gave

them lot of success between 2017 to 2019.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar has been dropped from the ODI squad but retained for the T20Is while former skipper Virat Kohli featured in both the teams.

It is understood that Kuldeep, who had lost his mojo in the Kohli-Ravi Shastri era, has been called back as the current team management and selectors feel that he has the X-factor to contribute to the team's cause.

He underwent a knee surgery in September last year.

Avesh Khan and Harshal Patel, who were part of the New Zealand T20 Internationals are predictably back as reported by PTI.

The six-match series against the West Indies will feature three ODIs starting in Ahmedabad from February 6, followed by as many T20 Internationals in Kolkata.

Due to COVID-19 protocols, the BCCI has curtailed the number of venues from six cities to two.

## Roach returns to West Indies squad



PTI ■ ST JOHN'S (ANTIGUA)

**S**easoned pacer Kemar Roach and young all-rounder Nkrumah Bonner have been recalled to the West Indies ODI squad for the three-match series in India beginning February 6. Roach, who has not played any List A cricket since his last ODI in 2019, has made the return with West Indies great Desmond Haynes picking him in his first squad selection since taking over as lead selector. Six additions have been made to the squad, to be led by Kieron Pollard, that lost to Ireland at home. The ODIs against India will be played at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on

February 6, 9 and 11.

The T20Is will be played at Eden Gardens in Kolkata on February 16, 18 and 20 and the Caribbean squad for that is expected to be announced on Friday. Besides the experienced Roach, the 22-year-old Bonner, a middle-order batter whose last ODI appearance was exactly a year ago, and Brandon King, an opener, have been recalled to the squad.

The 27-year-old King's last one-day outing in national colours was back in 2020. Roach has so far played 92 ODIs with 124 wickets. Bonner made his ODI debut in Bangladesh a year ago and has so far played three matches, while King has appeared in four matches

in this format.

"Kemar Roach is one of our leading fast bowlers and we believe we need bowlers upfront to get early wicket, and Kemar, with an economy rate of five, is certainly good enough to play. "Over the last few years, Nkrumah Bonner's cricket has come on leaps and bounds and we believe he should be given an opportunity to play in the 50-over format," said Haynes in a statement."

The series will be part of the ICC ODI Super League and the West Indies will have the opportunity to win points to be one of the top seven teams, excluding hosts India, to gain automatic qualification for the 2023 World Cup.

## Powell's 107 leads West Indies over England by 20 runs



AP ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)

**R**ovman Powell hit 10 sixes among his 107 runs from 53 balls to lead West Indies to a 20-run victory over England and a 2-1 lead in the five-match Twenty20 series.

Powell, brought in for Odean Smith, formed the backbone of the home side's 224 for five, with Nicholas Pooran clubbing 70 off 43 deliveries. England finished at 202-9.

Tom Banton gave England hope of pulling off its third-highest chase ever with a 39-ball 73 but his dismissal left the tourists needing 96 from 45 deliveries before Phil Salt kept its flickering hopes alive.

Salt, one of three T20 debutants alongside George Garton and Harry Brook, brought the equation down to 36 in an over, playing the first two deliveries for six en route to a 22-ball 50 before being bowled.

England was captained by Moeen Ali because of a slight quad injury to Eoin Morgan.

The final two matches are on Saturday and Sunday, also in Bridgetown.

## NZC moves all games against Indian women to Queenstown

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

**T**he Indian women's team will play all its six upcoming matches against New Zealand in Queenstown as NZC on Thursday announced a revised schedule to reduce chances of a COVID-19 outbreak.

The Indian women's team, which is already in New Zealand, is now scheduled to play all five ODIs and a T20I, starting February 9 at John Davies Oval in Queenstown.

The bilateral series, which is key for India ahead of the World Cup in March-April, was earlier scheduled to begin with the one-off T20I at McLean Park in Napier followed by the first ODI at the same venue two days later.

The Saxton Oval in Nelson was to host the second and third ODIs on February 14 and 16, with the final two ODIs to be played in Queenstown on February 22 and 24.

Other changes in the schedule announced by NZC include the South Africa men's side remaining in Christchurch for the entire duration of its visit, playing both its scheduled Tests at Hagley Oval rather than



decamping to Wellington for the second match, as initially scheduled.

Australia's three T20s against the New Zealand men's side will now be hosted in Napier (subject to MIQ availability), and the Netherlands men's tour is set to be split between Mount Maunganui (one T20 and one ODI) and Hamilton (two ODIs). All matches have been kept on originally-scheduled days. The changes in the venues is aimed to cut down on domestic travel and the increased likelihood of exposure to the Omicron variant of COVID-19.

"These risk mitigations

are based on avoiding known Covid-19 hotspots, and include limiting air travel, limiting accommodation transfers and, essentially, operating in safer environments," NZC chief executive David White said in a statement.

"We know the more domestic flights we have, and the more movement there is between hotels, the greater the chance of a match or even a series being put at risk," he added.

White added the intent is to explore the concept of allowing multiple pods, each of no more than 100 spectators, in venues in accordance with government guidelines.

## Tough road awaits Kuldeep, Harbhajan wants Team India to 'stick by'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

**W**hen Kuldeep Yadav had gone for a skier during a Kolkata Knight Riders practice session in the UAE last September, little did he know that within seconds his world would come crashing down with a twisted knee.

Those present at the Dubai training facility were horrified seeing his condition as he lay there writhing in pain, waiting to be stretched out.

In a week's time, he underwent a major knee surgery in Mumbai, which cast doubts on how long it would take for him to get fit for competitive cricket. He visited Mathura with his family on Thursday to offer

prayers on his comeback, for Kuldeep really needed some divine intervention to make his way back into the Indian team.

Otherwise, all that he could have done was to wait at home to hear from the BCCI if it would hold the now-postponed Ranji Trophy, where he was supposed to lead Uttar Pradesh.

"It will be a very tough road ahead for Kuldeep. He hasn't had any proper domestic games under his belt and it's not easy to make an international comeback just like that," one of India's greatest spinners, Harbhajan Singh, told PTI when asked about his expectations.

"He wasn't playing regularly before surgery and when you are making a comeback in white



ball, the first thing that's at the back of your mind is 'I don't want to get hit'.

"So it's like striking a balance as you are naturally dealing with a lot of insecurities. It's a test of mental fortitude," said Harbhajan, who saw Kuldeep from close quarters at KKR nets.

But Kuldeep has the skills and the 'Turbanator' expects that he can get a few early wickets and make it a different ball-game.

"Let me make it clear. If he gets a couple of early wickets, he will be a different bowler but things may not go as per plan. It might take some time for him to get back the rhythm.

"My only suggestion would be that stick with him since you have shown conviction based on

his past performances and give him enough time and confidence. He is a man who can deliver the goods for India," said the holder of 700-plus international wickets.

The national selectors made an exception for him as he is one of the rare cricketers who is coming back without having to prove his match-fitness as there is no domestic cricket at the moment.

The rub of green finally seems to be going Kuldeep's way after enduring rough times as his exclusion from the playing XI wasn't always a cricketering one during the earlier regime of Virat Kohli and Ravi Shastri.

Call it India's bare spin cupboard and injuries or poor form of some elite spinners.

## England first team to reach U-19 World Cup semifinals

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND

**J**acob Bethell's blistering batting display helped England advance to the semi-finals of the ICC U-19 World Cup with a six-wicket win over South Africa here.

Bethell was one of the bowlers to restrict South Africa to 209 all out before hitting 88 to see England set up a clash with either Sri Lanka or Afghanistan.

South Africa endured a slow start having won the toss and chosen to bat, their first boundary came off the final ball of the fourth over, before Joshua Boyden dismissed Valentine Kitime off the next delivery.

Boyden would claim his 12th wicket of the tournament to send the other opener Ethan-John Cunningham back to the hutch and reduce South Africa to 21 for two.

Dewald Brevis and Gerhardus Maree combined to steady the South African ship, adding 55 runs to the total before Bethell dismissed Maree.

Brevis remained a familiar stronghold for South Africa as he brought up his fourth fifty-plus score in a row even-



tually falling just short of a century on 97.

His dismissal brought about a batting collapse for South Africa as three wickets fell for one run as the batters went in search of boundaries, but only found the grateful hands of fielders with

Rehan Ahmed claiming figures of four for 48.

The final-wicket partnership of Matthew Boast and Asakhe Tsaka frustrated England adding 40 runs as South Africa ended on 209 all out.

Bethell came out all guns blazing in

England's chase, hitting the fourth fastest half-century of U19 World Cup history, reaching fifty off just 20 balls, as the Young Lions went at over 10 an over.

George Thomas was a delighted onlooker at the non-striker's end only

moving into double figures in the tenth over, before smacking a six to bring up England's hundred.

South Africa finally struck as Bethell went for one heave too many but not before he had put on 88 from 42 deliveries to place England as overwhelming favourites.

That tag was backed up by good partnerships in the top order, before William Luxton came in at five to strike 47 from 41 balls and get England into the semi-finals with a six.

Zimbabwe, West Indies win in the Plate competition

Matthew Welch's 78 helped Zimbabwe set Scotland a tricky chase of 249 in their Plate quarterfinal.

Scotland were unable to build partnerships as they slumped to 140 all out to see Zimbabwe advance to meet Ireland. They will be joined in the semi-finals by hosts West Indies who were too good for Papua New Guinea in a 169-run win. The West Indies will now face the United Arab Emirates, while Papua New Guinea are set to take on Uganda in the Plate play-offs.

## ICC unveils NFT in partnership with 'FanCraze'

PTI ■ DUBAI

**T**he International Cricket Council on Thursday released 'ICC Cricetos', the official range of digital (NFT) collectibles, in partnership with FanCraze.

Cricetos enables fans to collect and trade their own slice of cricket history from a range of ICC events.

Featuring 75 unforgettable moments from the 2015 and 2019 editions of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup, fans can start their Cricetos collection with one of three packs: a Base Pack, a Booster Pack and a Hotshots Pack.

Fans that have reserved a pack will be the first to have the chance to own NFTs of some of the most talked-about shots, catches and wickets in international cricket.

The roster of collectibles will continue to grow and will include classic plays from past ICC Men's and Women's events as well as iconic moments created at future events.

The number of Cricetos vary by pack-type and Cricetos will vary in their rarity across four tiers: Common, Rare, Epic and Legendary with Common Cricetos being the most minted whilst Legendary will be the rarest.

Finn Bradshaw, ICC Head of Digital said: "We are so excited to drop our first packs of Cricetos today which is a unique opportunity for fans to own and be part of historic moments in cricket. Cricetos will be a digital record of those moments cricket fans love, and enable them to collect these legendary video highlights. "This Beta launch is our first step into the cricket metaverse and those lucky enough to be part of it can start their Cricetos collection today and shortly start growing it by trading on the peer-to-peer marketplace through our partners FanCraze before we move to a full launch in the near future."

Some of the digital collectibles include Glenn Maxwell whipping one over square leg for a boundary against Sri Lanka, Hardik Pandya smashing Mohammad Amir through the covers at Old Trafford in 2019 and Joe Root drilling one over long-on in the World Cup 2019.

Alongside MS Dhoni and Steve Smith moments, a Lasith Malinga yorker from the ICC Men's World Cup 2019 can be found.

Other NFT products of 2019 edition include David Warner executing a checked lofted drive down the ground for six at the 2019, KL Rahul lofting Akhila Dhananjaya over long-off for a six and AB de Villiers showing his 360-degree range against Andre Russell.

