

ANALYSIS 7
SPREAD OF UNDIGNIFIED
TERMS INTO POLITICS

MONEY 8
IND-RA SLASHES FY23 GDP
FORECAST TO 7-7.2%

SPORTS 12
RCB FOLD
KKR FOR 128

HYDERABAD, THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



CHIRANJEEVI TO
GRACE MISHAN
IMPOSSIBLE
PRE-RELEASE EVENT

Page 11

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WHO: COVID DEATHS JUMP BY 40%, BUT CASES FALLING GLOBALLY

The number of people killed by the coronavirus surged by more than 40% last week, likely due to changes in how COVID-19 deaths were reported across the Americas and by newly adjusted figures from India, according to a World Health Organisation report released Wednesday. In its latest weekly report on the pandemic, the UN health agency said the number of new coronavirus cases fell everywhere, including in WHO's Western Pacific region, where they had been rising since December. About 10 million new COVID-19 infections and more than 45,000 deaths were reported worldwide over the past week, following a 23% drop in fatalities the week before.

OVER 1.58 LAKH TWO-WHEELER ROAD ACCIDENTS OCCURRED IN 2020

As many as 1,58,964 two-wheeler road accidents occurred in 2020, causing 56,873 deaths, Parliament was informed on Wednesday. In a written reply to the Rajya Sabha, Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said that as many as 56,136 people were killed in road accidents due to two-wheeler accidents in 2019, while the total number of accidents involving bikes stood at 1,67,184. To prevent road accidents, he said, the road ministry has formulated a multi-pronged strategy to address the issue of road safety based on education, engineering (both of roads and vehicles), enforcement and emergency care.

PAK PM IMRAN KHAN LOSES MAJORITY AFTER KEY ALLY SIDES WITH OPPN

Pakistan's embattled Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday effectively lost majority in Parliament after a key partner of the ruling coalition joined the ranks of the Opposition, which has tabled a no-confidence motion against his government in the National Assembly. The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), a key ally of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-led coalition government, with its seven members announced that it has parted ways with the government during a joint press conference of the opposition parties here.

NON-LINKING OF PAN WITH AADHAAR TO ATTRACT PENALTY OF RS 500-1,000

Taxpayers not linking PAN with Aadhaar by March 31 would be required to pay a penalty ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000, the income tax department has said. The last date for linking Permanent Account Number (PAN) with biometric Aadhaar is March 31, 2022. Not adhering to the deadline will lead to PAN becoming inactive. In a notification, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said delayed intimation of Aadhaar will attract a late fee of Rs 500 in cases where it is linked within the next 3 months or by June 30, 2022. Thereafter, Rs 1,000 would have to be paid by taxpayers as penalty.

Won't buy boiled rice

Centre clears its stand on the procurement of rice from states

NAVEENA GHANATE
HYDERABAD

The Union government on Wednesday clarified that it will not procure parboiled rice. Union Minister Sadhvi Nirajan Jyoti said in the Lok Sabha: "Due to burgeoning stock level of parboiled rice in central pool, it was informed to the States that FCI will not be in position to accept parboiled rice during the Kharif Marketing Season (KMS) 2021-22. However, States can procure parboiled rice for consumption within the State".

The Minister said: "In the last few years, procurement of parboiled rice in the deficit parboiled-consuming states like Jharkhand, Kerala & Tamil Nadu has increased resulting in lesser movement of parboiled rice from surplus to deficit states". After meeting State's requirement for

The Minister said: 'In the last few years, procurement of parboiled rice in the deficit parboiled-consuming states like Jharkhand, Kerala & Tamil Nadu has increased resulting in lesser movement of parboiled rice from surplus to deficit states'



State-wise details of the par boiled rice procured by the FCI from the years Kharif Marketing Season (KMS) 2015-16 to 2020-21.

State	2015-16	2020-2021
Telangana	6.05LMT	47.49LMT
Odisha	14.24LMT	17.74LMT
Chattisgarh	11.92LMT	15.95LMT
Andhra Pradesh	2.93LMT	4.29LMT
Jharkhand	0.95LMT	1.08LMT

Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and other welfare schemes, only the excess/surplus stocks procured by the State Government /its agencies are

handed over to the Food Corporation of India (FCI) in the central pool in the form of raw rice or parboiled rice to meet the overall consumption requirement of the

country in terms of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Government of India and the Decentralized Procurement (DCP) states.

Bonanza for central staff

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday hiked Dearness Allowance (DA) and Dearness Relief (DR) by 3 per cent to 34 per cent to compensate for the price rise, benefitting over 1.16 crore central government employees and pensioners.

The additional instalment will be effective from January 1, 2022, said an official release after the Cabinet meeting.

"The Union Cabinet...has given its approval to release an additional instalment of DA to central government employees and DR to pensioners w.e.f. January 1, 2022, representing an increase of 3 per cent over the existing rate of 31 per cent of the Basic Pay/Pension, to compensate for price rise," an official statement said. The increase is in accordance with the accepted formula, which is based on the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission, it added.

TRS moves motion for caste census in LS

Party members walk out as Speaker rejects the motion

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Rashtra Samiti party on Wednesday moved a motion for suspension of rules to discuss caste census in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. The MPs belonging to the party demanded that the Central government immediately start caste census and revise the reservations for various castes accordingly.

However, the motion was rejected, after which the TRS MPs staged a walkout from Parliament.

TRS MP K Keshav Rao said that caste census was crucial for ensuring social justice in the country. He said, "The TRS government is committed to ensuring social justice and 35 per cent of jobs had been provided to OBCs in certain areas. A look at the employees' data will reveal that OBCs comprise less than 10 per cent of the entire government



employees in the country. If caste census was taken up with utmost sincerity and transparency, the governments could take up recruitment accordingly and ensure social justice for all." TRS Lok Sabha floor leader Nama Nageswara Rao said that they were reminding the Centre of its promise. Caste census was nothing new as it was conducted way back in 1931 itself, he added.

REGULARISATION OF ENCROACHMENTS State receives 1.47 lakh applications

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government received a record number of 1,47,268 applications until Wednesday for regularization of encroachments on government land. As many as 87,520 applications were under GO 58 and another 59,748 applications under GO 59. The last date for applications is Thursday -March 31.

In February the State government gave one more opportunity to citizens under GO 58 and GO 59 to regularise encroachments on government lands. The GOs 58 and 59 were issued on December 30, 2014.

The State government has started receiving applications for reg-



ularization of unauthorized occupations for dwelling units up to 125 sq.yards in the case of below poverty line (BPL) families, free of cost, under G.O.Ms.No.58.

New school timings from today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Director of Education has issued orders revising school timings in view of summer. Accordingly, schools will function from 8-00 am to 11.30 am from March 31 to April 6. The order stated that in continuation of the orders issued for commencement of half-day schools, it has been decided to reduce the timings of half day schools from 31st March to 6th April 2022, in view of the heat wave forecast.

The schools i.e. Primary, Upper Primary and High Schools under all managements i.e. Govt., Govt. Aided and Private Managements shall function from 8:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M and mid-day meals shall be provided before 11:30 A.M. from 31st March to 6th April 2022.

TRS focuses on temple development

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TRS government is focussing on the development of Hindu temples in the State.

After Yadadri, Endowments Minister declared that funds have been sanctioned for the development of Vemulawada, Basara, Kaleswaram and Kondagattu Temples.

On Wednesday, Ministers were seen taking stock of temple renovations at multiple locations.

Minister Indra Karan Reddy was at the Sri Mahalakshmi Venkateswara Swamy Temple, a famous shrine located in the Kodangal Municipality, for the inauguration of a kalyana mandapa, which was constructed at a



cost of Rs 50 lakh. Minister Gangula Kamalakar took stock of the TTD Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Karimnagar which he plans to get completed in 1.5 years. The TRS is very keen on this temple, as the party believes that they have to prove that they are better than BJP's Bandi Sanjay.

TSRTC not forcing staff to take VRS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TSRTC is not forcing employees to take voluntary retirement, Managing Director V.C. Sajjanar said here on Wednesday. He said that around 2,000 employees have registered their names for the Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS). "The TSRTC will work out a package after registering their names under the scheme. After completing the VRS process, TSRTC will fill up the vacancies," said Sajjanar.

Domestic power tariff hiked in AP

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

The Andhra Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (ERC) on Wednesday issued the Retail Tariff Order for 2022-23, taxing the domestic power consumers rather heavily while sparing other sectors from the hike.

Overall, according to the ERC, the power tariff hike would impact over 170 lakh consumers, "benefiting 20.76 lakh consumers from any kind of tariff hike."

The tariff hike ranges from 45 paise to Rs 1.57 per unit in six different slabs only for domestic consumption.

South Central Railway to operate special trains to clear Ugadi rush

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:
Tithi: Chaturdashi: Mar 30 01:19 PM to Mar 31 12:22 PM
Amavasya: Mar 31 12:22 PM to Apr 01 11:54 AM

Nakshatram:

Purva Bhadrapada: Mar 30 10:48 AM to Mar 31 10:30 AM
Uttara Bhadrapada: Mar 31 10:30 AM to Apr 01 10:40 AM

Rahukalam:

1:51 PM to 3:23 PM
Yamagandam: 6:15 AM to 7:46 AM
Varjyam: 08:10 PM to 09:47 PM
Gulika: 9:17 AM to 10:49 AM
Amritakalam: None
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:56 AM to 12:44 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: sunny
Temp: 38°C
Humidity: 28%
Sunrise: 6:15 AM
Sunset: 6:25 PM
Updated: March 30, 2022 5:00 PM

KTR mocks power holiday in Gujarat

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

IT and Municipal Administration Minister K T Rama Rao on Wednesday took to Twitter and mocked the model of governance in Gujarat, which has announced power holiday for industry. KTR said in his tweet, "Power holiday for industry in the state of Gujarat where powerful people come from!! Double engine or Trouble engine?".

As per the order he shared from Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Ltd, they declared staggered power holiday for LT and HT connections for each district. The Gujarat gov-



ernment is facing farmers' ire over erratic supply of electricity and it was raised in the legislature also.

Severe heatwave persists in Delhi, no respite in sight

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Parts of Delhi sweltered under a severe heatwave on Wednesday with the maximum temperature crossing the 41-degree mark at three places, the India Meteorological Department said. Severe heatwave conditions are likely to persist on Thursday as well.

IMD officials said a prolonged dry spell has led to "severe" hot weather conditions in northwest India. "The heatwave spell over northwest, central and west India is likely to continue for the next four to five days."

Neera Cafe at Necklace Road

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Excise and Tourism Minister V. Srinivas Goud on Wednesday inspected the progress in the construction work of 'Neera Cafe' on Necklace Road in Hyderabad.

He said that for the first time in India, the TS government is building a Neera Cafe on Necklace Road at a cost of Rs 25 crore.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister V. Srinivas Goud said that as per the directions of the CM the government is trying to bring back the lost glory of handicrafts which were facing obsolescence in a way no other state in the country has done.

Toddy tapper communities are being organised to ensure the wel-



Minister Srinivas Goud at the Neera Cafe construction point on the Necklace Road

fare of workers. He also added that steps are being taken to provide gratia in case a toddy tapper dies accidentally.

"We are also setting up water pro-

duction centres in Yadadri at Nandanam village, Sansthan Narayanapuram zone survey village,

Real estate prices to go up by 10-15% in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the increase in the cost of construction due to the Russia-Ukraine war, real estate experts say that prices will go up in Hyderabad.

G. Ram Reddy, the Vice President of the Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Association of India (Credai) said, "Petrol and diesel prices are going up every day. Property prices will go up by a minimum of 10 per cent to 15 per cent. Steel prices which were Rs 40,000 to Rs 45,000 a tonne have touched Rs 90,000, cement prices also went up, aluminium prices increased by 50 per cent. This will lead to a hike in property prices too."



He was speaking at the launch of the residential project ARK Samyak at Bachupally on Wednesday.

"Nationwide, the real estate scene

is not so great in other cities. Demonetisation was followed by GST, RERA, Covid and the hike in steel prices. Every time we think the

market is reviving something or the other occurs. Fortunately, Hyderabad is still in good shape due to the environment here," he said. Ram Reddy said the prices are definitely painful for builders but nobody has stopped construction due to that in Hyderabad.

"Once construction stops, reviving it is difficult. Builders have lot of commitments. If we stop a project, remobilising is a big challenge. Projects won't stop but there will be a slowdown as the prices of steel have gone up to Rs 90,000 a tonne. Some might want to slow down hoping that prices will come down.

AP MAHESH BANK HACKING CASE 4 Nigerians among 23 held so far

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As many as 23 people, including four Nigerians, were arrested so far in connection with the swindling of Rs 12.48 crore from the AP Mahesh Co-Operative Urban Bank here after hackers entered the bank's system through phishing mails, police said on Wednesday.

On January 24 this year, a case was registered regarding the fraud done by some unknown hackers by altering the balance in four accounts and transferring it into 115 different accounts across India. Cyber forensics concluded that the hackers entered the system of the AP Mahesh Co-Operative



Urban Bank through (by sending over 200) phishing mails containing a remote access trojan (RAT) sent to the employees of the bank during November 2021, Hyderabad Police Commissioner CV Anand said.

Govt has no money to hire medical staff for regular service: HRDA

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government on Wednesday issued a notification for filling up the posts of Assistant Professors in various medical specialties and the posts of Civil Assistant Surgeons at the Government Medical College and General Hospital in Siddipet. The appointments will be on contract.

The notification was issued despite the CM declaring that the hiring of staff on contract will be stopped and that direct recruitments will be conducted.

Speaking to 'The Pioneer',



Dr Jahangir, the VP of Healthcare Reforms Development Association (HRDA) said, "The real reason

behind this notification is that the government does not have the money to hire medical staff for regular appointments. This

is happening not only in Siddipet but in other government hospitals too. After covid the government has been utilizing the services of medical staff by hiring them on contract and terminating them after the contract ends. This has ended regular recruitments. If the government goes for regular recruitments, they will have to pay salaries regularly while they can withhold the salaries of contract staffers. Most of the contract workers have not been paid salaries in the last 3 to 4 months. If any-body questions this the government terminates their contract immediately."

Dr Jahangir also said that the government does not have money to hire regular staff. If the government hires an Assistant Professor for regular service, after two years they will have to promote them to Associate Professor, again after 2 to 3 years promote them as Professors. This will cost them money whereas with contract staff they do not have to do anything. They can simply dismiss the staff once the contract ends, the doctor said.

When 'The Pioneer' tried to get in touch with the Director of Medical Education on the matter nobody was available.

MRM to organise Iftar, Eid Milan events to promote harmony

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Muslim Rashtriya Manch (MRM), an organisation inspired by the RSS, would organise Iftars during the coming holy month of Ramadan and Eid Milan events after that in Telangana and neighbouring AP by inviting people from different sections of society to promote harmony and brotherhood.

Though the Iftar and Eid Milan events used to be organised earlier by the MRM, but it is for the first time that they

would be organised throughout the holy month and subsequently, MRM's convener for southern states M A Sattar told PTI here on Wednesday.

MRM's patron and RSS leader Indresh Kumar has suggested that people from various sections of society be invited for the events and an exchange of views can take place, leading to promotion of harmony, he said. The events would be organised across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh with focus on Hyderabad and Vijayawada, he added.

Bonanza for central staff

Continued from page 1

The combined impact on the exchequer on account of both Dearness Allowance and Dearness Relief will be Rs 9,544.50 crore per annum.

This will benefit about 47.68 lakh central government employees and 68.62 lakh pensioners, the release said.

In October last year, the Cabinet had hiked the two allowances by 3 per cent to 31 per cent. It was effective from July 1, 2021.

State receives 1.47 lakh applications

Continued from page 1

It is also receiving applications for regularization and transfer of rights on payment basis for both residential and non-residential purposes under G.O.Ms.No.59, in unobjectionable government lands, ULC lands, and lands owned by various departments, corporations and institutions.

As per the government, "In respect of applications under G.O.Ms.No.59, deposit of 12.5% of the total payable amount as first instalment is not required at the time of filing application. However,

an amount of Rs.1000/- shall be paid as non-refundable processing fee by the applicant at the time of filing application".

Those seeking regularisation of encroached lands should submit applications along with proof of identity - Aadhaar Card; proof of possession - registered document/property tax receipt/ electricity bill receipt/water bill receipt/any other proof to establish possession (building construction permission from local body) and photograph of the premises relating to the application.

BJP wants to win polls on basis of ideology: Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP wants to fight and win polls everywhere on basis of its ideology, programmes, leadership's popularity and performance of the government, and not by unleashing violence against rivals, Home Minister Amit Shah said on Wednesday.

Replying to the debate over the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2022, in Lok Sabha, Shah said the BJP wants to form government everywhere and that is why it fights polls.

"Why did you go to Goa, why are you going to Tripura. You have the right to go, I don't say don't go, every party must



go with their ideology, programmes, performance to all places, this is the beauty of democracy," Shah said in an apparent response to remarks made by TMC MP Saugata Roy.

Only those who are afraid of losing power can have an objection to it, not the proponents of democracy, he added.

Rajnath to attend diamond jubilee fete of Chetak helicopter

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will be the chief guest at a conclave to be organised here on April 2 to commemorate the diamond jubilee of Chetak helicopter in the country's Armed Forces.

The conclave is being organised by the Air Force Station, Hakimpet, here, under the aegis of Indian Air Force and Training Command, IAF.

The conclave is to be attended by the Chief of the Air Staff V R Chaudhari, senior retired and serving officers of the helicopter stream from the three services, and officials of Ministry of Defence, Indian Coast Guard.

TRS focuses on temple development

Continued from page 1

Minister KT Rama Rao recently said that Gangula brought the TTD Temple to Karimnagar and not Sanjay who walks around with tall claims of being a Hindu.

On Wednesday, Minister Gangula said that the TTD Temple would be constructed on a plot measuring around 10 acres. On Wednesday, Minister KT Rama Rao highlighted the Tweet of Erik Solheim, the President of the Green Belt and Road Institute, on the Yadadri Temple. Erik had said that the temple is an architectural wonder. Meanwhile, Endowments Minister Indra Karan Reddy said that Chief Minister K. Chandrababhanu is allocating funds for the development of temples across the State.

He said detailed plans are

TSRTC not forcing staff to take VRS

Continued from page 1

On Wednesday, the TSRTC launched 100 mini-buses from Hyderabad to Yadadri. TSRTC Chairman Bajireddy Govardhan and Managing Director V.C. Sajjanar flagged off the buses on Wednesday from the Uppal Bus Stand. The bus service was launched keeping in view the large number of devotees visiting the recently reopened Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy at Yadadri in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district. The temple was reopened on Monday after construction and renovation that lasted around five years. Sajjanar said that 104 buses will be operated every day to Yadadri from Uppal and the Jubilee Bus Stand (JBS). The ticket charge is Rs 100 from JBS and Rs 75 from Uppal.

being launched for the development of temples as per KCR's directions.

"Billions are being spent on the development and renovation of temples. Efforts have been made for the development of several temples in the last seven

years. The Yadadri Temple was rebuilt magnificently. Along with the development of temples, better facilities are also being provided to devotees," Indrakaran said. He added that no government had funded temples so much in the past.

4 Nigerians among 23 held so far

Continued from page 1

Once the mails are opened and clicked upon, the RAT gets embedded in the computer of the bank. Through the RAT software, the hackers got access to the computers of the bank. Since all the systems in the bank are interconnected, the hackers were remotely able to access the core banking server of the bank and during January this year they altered the balance in the four accounts, police said.

Through Internet Banking from the four accounts, RTGS/NEFT transactions were made, and the amount was transferred into 115 different bank accounts of different banks and from there into 398 different bank accounts. Most of the beneficiary accounts were in Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala and seven North-Eastern States and the money was later withdrawn

from 938 ATMs all over India, the police said.

Though, Cyber Crime Police succeeded in freezing an amount of Rs 2,08,55,536 before they were withdrawn from ATMs besides an amount of Rs 1,08,48,990 was refunded/returned to the AP Mahesh Co-Operative Urban Bank because of the incorrect beneficiary details, they said.

As part of the probe, special teams were formed and sent to different parts of the country to nab the suspects, the Hyderabad police chief said.

IP logs for the Internet Banking of the four bank accounts were obtained and it was found that the IP addresses were proxies with locations in USA/Canada/Romania, the top official said adding the hackers used VPN services of a Bihar-based company and from them, the Proxy IPs were allocated to the persons from the UK.

During the investigations so far, a total of 23 people,

including four Nigerians (one of them was arrested today), who were involved and part of the conspiracy have been arrested, Anand said.

Explaining on the modus operandi, the Police Commissioner said the whole operation runs in various modules independent of each other, the hackers, the handlers of accounts opened for the hacking and the handlers of the beneficiary accounts.

The three modules coordinate with each other and enable the hacking and transfer money, he said.

Investigation so far revealed the hackers, and the main kingpins are located outside India, most likely in the UK and Nigeria, and the amount withdrawn was transferred to Nigeria, most likely through hawala or crypto currencies, police said.

Police further said an amount to the tune of Rs 58 lakh was so far spent towards investigation into the case.

KTR mocks power holiday...

Continued from page 1

According to the order, there would be staggering of power supply for Gandhinagar, Valsad, Navsari on Monday. For Ahmedabad, Sabarkantha, Panchmahal, Dahod, Mahisagar and Arvalli it will be on Tuesday. Rajkot and Morbi will have staggered day on Wednesday. Mahesana, Banaskantha, Amreli, Surendranagar and Dang will have Thursday as stagger day. Friday will be a stagger day for Kheda, Bharuch, Narmada, Porbandar, Bhavnagar, Jamnagar, Junagadh, Gir Somnath and Dwaraka. Saturday for Kutch and Sunday for Patan, Vadodara, Anand, Tapi, Surat and Chhota Udepur districts.

Gujarat's electricity generation costs had gone up significantly due to the Russia-Ukraine war and the rise in coal prices; yet, the resultant financial burden had been borne by the state government and not passed on to citizens, Gujarat state energy minister Kanubhai Desai told the Assembly on Tuesday, as per PTI.

Domestic power tariff hiked...

Continued from page 1

The power tariff hike triggered protests by opposition parties in the state, which demanded an immediate rollback.

The ERC called it "rationalisation of the tariff structure" by merging all three existing groups in the domestic category into one group under telescopic billing system.

It said the three state-owned power distribution companies (Discoms) would be left with a deficit of Rs 10,045.61 crore even after enhancing tariff for domestic users.

Consequent to the hike that would come into effect from April 1, 2022, the discoms would net an additional revenue of Rs 1,400 crore, the ERC said. The three Discoms projected an aggregate revenue requirement of Rs 45,398.66 crore for the 2022-23 financial year. The state government agreed to extend a subsidy of Rs 11,123.21 crore to the Discoms, with Rs 9,513 crore of it going towards free power to the agriculture sector alone.

"The Discoms are in a dire financial situation with their combined losses standing at a whopping Rs 28,000 crore.

The Commission has come to the conclusion that the Discoms are no longer in a position to sustain their operations unless the tariffs for retail supply are increased," ERC Chairman Justice (Retd.) C V Nagarajuna Reddy said.

The Commission, he added, has examined the possibility of increasing tariff for other categories of consumers (like industrial and commercial) "by sparing the poor and middle-class domestic consumers."

"These categories of consumers (industrial and commercial) are already saddled with high tariffs. Any further increase is highly unsustainable for them," Justice Nagarajuna Reddy noted.

He pointed out that there has been no increase in the domestic power tariff in the 0-50 units slab in the last two decades. Even in other slabs, the tariffs were last revised in the year 2013-14.

The enhanced tariffs were "relatively at a reasonable level" compared to many other states, he added.

Decrying the power tariff hike for domestic consumers, the main opposition Telugu Desam Party came down heavily on Chief Minister Y S Jagan

Mohan Reddy for ditching the people yet again by going back on his promise.

"Jagan does the reverse of whatever he promises. By abnormally increasing the power tariff, Jagan gave a massive shock to people," TDP general secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh lashed out.

Lokesh posted a video clip on Twitter of Jagan Mohan Reddy's remarks on power tariff, when he was leader of opposition, to expose how the latter cheated the people upon becoming Chief Minister.

He demanded that the tariff hike be rescinded forthwith. Jana Sena political affairs committee chairman Nadendra Manohar said by voting for 'fan' (YSRC's election symbol), people were now sadly left in a position where they could not even run a fan in their homes.

"In the name of welfare, the Jagan regime has pushed AP into darkness. The power tariff hike will be an unbearable burden on the common people," Manohar told reporters in Rajamahendravaram.

The former Speaker pointed out that unofficial power cuts had become the order of the day across the state for the past six months.

Don't delay 5G rollout

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing concern over high spectrum price, a Parliamentary Panel on Wednesday asked the government to pay due attention to the issues raised by telecom operators and take steps for early rollout of the 5G services.

The Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology, chaired by Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor, in its report expressed concern about the 5G rollout delay that will deprive the country of taking advantage of various benefits of 5G when other countries of the world have made noticeable progress in the deployment of the technology.

"It is high time that 5G should be rolled out in India in some specific Use Cases, however, the Committee do not see any progress in that direction. The Committee, therefore, reiterates that the Department need to review all their policies relating to 5G so that the country is not left behind in the race for 5G," the panel said in the report.

Real estate Prices to go up by 10-15%...

Continued from page 1

Some builders are deferring projects, to see if prices will come down. If we quote high prices customers are not ready to buy. There is a segment who are in wait and watch mode," he said.

He said that the hike in prices has had a psychological impact. "The government increased stamp duty and then there was a revision of property values. Even now there is a difference between selling prices and government values. If a buyer had to pay Rs 1 lakh earlier now he has to pay Rs 2 lakh to Rs 2.5 lakh. This has a psychological impact on buyers as the hike came in just six months," he said.

Severe heatwave persists in Delhi...

Continued from page 1

"The absence of a weather system and the presence of an anti-cyclone over Rajasthan and adjoining Pakistan have been pushing hot winds across North and Central India. March is going to end on a hotter note with no respite till the beginning of April," said Mahesh Palawat, vice president, Meteorology and Climate Change, Skymet Weather.

Light winds and dry weather will once again increase temperatures over northwest India leading to heatwave conditions, he said.

"While we expect a heatwave to hit parts of central and northwest India by the end of March, it was not expected so early in the season.

"But I would also not be surprised as we have been witnessing a gradual rise in day temperatures for the last few years. Record-breaking maximum temperatures are now here to stay with the rise in global mean temperatures," he said.

Both rural and urban populations are vulnerable to heat-related mortality. Individuals with lower degrees of education and socio-economic status, the elderly and those living in communities with less green space are more susceptible to heat-related mortality.

The capital had recorded a maximum temperature of 40.1 degrees Celsius on March 30 last year. The all-time highest maximum temperature in this month (40.6 degrees Celsius) was recorded on March 31, 1945.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹279
Without Skin	₹299
Broiler at Farm	₹156

EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	384
VIJAYAWADA	394
VISAKHAPATNAM	400
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹3.84

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Water Board officials told to ensure drinking water supply

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The MD of the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, Danakishore, has directed Board officials to take effective measures to ensure drinking water supply in the city without any problems during summer.

The MD conducted a review meeting with officials at the HMWSSB headquarters in Khairatabad on Wednesday on the management of the drinking water supply and the sewerage network in the city during the month of Ramadan.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that with the onset of summer, authorities should pay special attention to water supply. He directed officials to provide additional tankers and filling stations if required.

"As of Wednesday, we are delivering 98 per cent of our tanker bookings regularly," he said.

Modernization works



should be undertaken soon as the Singur and Manjira transmission lines are being slung. Alternative arrangements should be made for water supply while the works are in progress. The MD ordered to supply water by tankers free if there is a shutdown to execute work anywhere.

Authorities have been instructed to supply water by tankers to mosques if neces-

sary during Ramadan.

The MD said jetting machines should be made available to solve problems immediately. O&M executives must be told to be proactive in addressing public complaints about drinking water and sewerage issues on social media, he added.

A decision was taken to decentralize the central store to ensure that there is no delay in

the delivery of water to the city, pipes for new construction works, manhole covers, valves and other equipment. At present, there are sub-store divisions in Khairatabad, Central Store Division, Hydernagar and Gosham Hall.

The MD said that the authorities should set up more stores in the Sainikpuri and Saheb Nagar areas of the city for facilitating the delivery of goods. Safety measures such as fencing should be provided along with CCTV cameras in areas where new stores are set up, he said.

He also said that the Board was supplying fresh water free of cost through tankers to 'Chalivendras' being set up in the city during summer.

He urged NGOs setting up the Chalivendram and other organizations to contact Board GMs to get free water.

The meeting was attended by Technical Director Ravi Kumar, Directors of Operations Ajmira Krishna and Swamy Tadith.

Deadline for discount on traffic challans extended April 15

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Home Minister Mohammad Mahmood Ali has said that the concession period on pending challans from March 1 to 31 has been extended for another 15 days. He said 2.40 crore challans worth Rs 840 crore were cleared across the State. The public has taken advantage of the opportunity and paid Rs 250 crore so far. Nearly 52 per cent of motor vehicle owners across the State had made use of the opportunity.

He said the response to the decision taken by the Chief Minister across the State was "extraordinary" and many requests were made to extend the opportunity. He said the decision was taken in view of the financial hardship suffered by the poor and middle class people due to coronavirus pandemic for the last two years.

The Home Minister said those who have not yet been able to pay their challans should take advantage of the opportunity.

108 ambulances serve 4 lakh patients in one year: Harish

The Minister for Health expressed his thanks to IndusInd Bank for donating ambulances

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Health T Harish Rao on Wednesday launched two ambulances at the Indian Institute of Family Welfare at Vengal Rao Nagar here. The ambulances were donated by IndusInd bank as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative. The bank has agreed to provide eight more ambulances soon.

Speaking at the event, Harish Rao said that the State government was continuously expanding 108 ambulance services. The 108 ambulance service in the last one year extended free emergency healthcare facilities to over 4 lakh patients across the State. Apart from 430 emergency 108 ambulances, the government launched 50 b bike ambulances too. The bike ambulances are exclusively deployed in tribal regions falling under



Minister for Health T Harish Rao flagging off a new 108 ambulance in Hyderabad on Wednesday

Integrated Tribal Agency (ITDA) and the densely populated urban regions in Hyderabad, Medchal and Rangareddy district, Harish Rao said. The 108 ambulances handle 750 emergency cases every month in tribal areas. The bike ambulances provided services to 19,000 patients between April 2021 and

February 2022 and the special emergency ambulance services under Amma Vodi scheme provided transport service to 38 lakh pregnant women, the Minister pointed out.

Minister for Animal Husbandry Talasani Srinivas Yadav said the Bank has also agreed to provide eight more emergency ambulances.

CP stresses need to provide education to migrant labourers

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI

Pixelstat has donated school uniforms to 30 children studying in a Marathi-medium worksite school in Keesara.

Speaking on the occasion, Rachakonda Police Commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat appreciated the efforts made Mahesh Motka and his TI team for handing over the school uniform to the children on behalf of Pixelstat.

The initiative taken by the voluntary organisation was a sequel to the 'Operation Smile' being conducted by the Rachakonda police to eradicate child labour. He stressed the need to provide education to children whose parents were working in units like brick kilns. He further said that the education is the best



Rachakonda Police Commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat distributing school uniforms to children in Keesara on Wednesday

gift that can be given to the children. He expressed concern over the children of the migrant labourers being deprived of education while their parents were working in brick kilns.

The children, who were pursuing studies in worksite schools, would get promotion to a higher class when they returned to the places of their origin and joined the regular schools, he said.



Rachakonda Police Commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat at the launching of CCTV cameras at Nacharam in Hyderabad on Wednesday

115 CCTV cameras installed in Nacharam area

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI

Rachakonda Police Commissioner Mahesh M Bhagwat on Wednesday launched 115 community CCTV cameras. The CCTV cameras were provided by Technip FMC and Karthikeya Nagar Welfare Association at Noma gardens in Nacharam area. The Technip FMC had supplied 65 CCTV cameras under the corporate social responsibility (CSR). Karthikeya Nagar Welfare Association provided 50

CCTVs. The cost of 115 CCTV cameras was Rs 29 lakh. The CCTV cameras were installed to prevent crime against women and children in Nacharam area. Nacharam area has many crime hotspots and gender offence hotspots and black spots, according to police. The State government promoted the mission to install CCTV cameras.

Addressing the media, the Police Commissioner felt that the Nacharam, industrial area, required more CCTVs as women employees are working in night shifts.

IAF to celebrate diamond jubilee of Chetak helicopter

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Chetak helicopter in the inventory of Indian Armed Forces has completed 60 years of service to the nation. A conclave will be organised on April 2 by the Air Force Statin Hakimpet under the aegis of Indian Air Force (IAF) and Training Command.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will be the chief guest for the conclave, scheduled to be held at the National Industrial Security Academy Convention Centre, Secunderabad. The Chief of the Air Staff, senior retired and serving officers of the helicopter stream from the three services and officials of Ministry of Defence, Indian Coast Guard and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited will attend.

Bhoiguda timber shops install fire fighting gear

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Nearly 15 to 20 timber shops in Bhoiguda have installed fire safety devices after the massive fire in a scrap godown on March 23 that killed 11 people. The fire broke out in the scrap godown mainly due to lack of fire safety measures.

After that incident, many timber shop owners near the Bhoiguda fire accident site have installed fire safety devices to prevent fire accidents.

The owners of the timber shops say that they have brought fire fighting cylinders costing Rs 1,850 each to prevent fire accidents. Meanwhile, 'The Pioneer' found that almost every store had three fire fighting cylinders and some had water tanks also to tackle fires. "A day after the fire incident in Bhoiguda, we brought fire extinguisher cylin-

ders from the fire department. We do not want fires in our shops. Now almost all shops have been alerted about fire safety precautions," said Raju, the owner of Raju Timber Shop in New Bhoiguda.

After the Bhoiguda fire, the fire department and the Hyderabad city police conducted inspections and warned all timber shops near the spot to take fire safety precautions. Anil, the owner of a timber shop, said a day after the incident they had bought a fire extinguisher cylinder for Rs 1,850 and other fire fighting equipment like a fire water tank from fire department officials. "Fires are not new to us in this area. Most of them occurred due to lack of maintenance and negligence. However, most timber shops have taken fire safety precautions after the huge fire accident last week," Raju added.

OU presents a deficit Budget

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Osmania University on Wednesday presented a deficit budget of Rs 37.56 crore to the Academic Senate and sought additional block grants from the government.

The estimated expenditure stood at Rs 746.32 crore against the available budget of Rs 708.76 crore. The university said that out of the total budget, Rs 406.53 crore (about 54%) was spent on salaries for teaching and non-teaching staff, Rs 285 crore (about 38.2%) was paid towards pensions and Rs 54.79 crore (about 7.8%) went towards contingencies and loans to employees. The government of Telangana sanctioned a block grant of Rs 418.06 crore for the year 2022-23. This is an enhancement of about 18% from last year. The university has also adopted and implemented the 1st PRC 2020 to non-teaching and time scale employees and the arrears were released.

South Central Railway to operate special trains to clear Ugadi rush

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

To clear the extra festive rush during Ugadi, the South Central Railway will run six special trains during the festival season to connect various destinations.

Train No. 07593 Kakinada-Secunderabad special train will leave Kakinada at 8:45 pm on March 31 and reach Secunderabad next day at 7:10 am.

Train No. 07594 Secunderabad-Kakinada special train will leave Secunderabad at 8:45 pm on Friday and reach Kakinada at 8:40 am next day.

These special trains will stop at Samalkot, Rajahmundry, Nidadavolu, Tanuku, Bhimavaram Town, Akividu, Kaikaluru, Gudivada, Rayanapadu, Kondapalli, Khammam, Warangal, and Kazipet stations in both the directions.

Train No. 07595 Kakinada-Tirupati special train will leave



Kakinada at 9 pm on April 2 and reach Tirupati at 7.30 am next day. This special train will stop at Samalkot, Rajahmundry, Eluru, Vijayawada, Ongole, Nellore, Gudur, and Renigunta stations. Train No. 07596 Tirupati-Secunderabad special train will leave Tirupati at 7.50 pm on April 3 and reach Secunderabad at 9 am next day. This special train will stop at Renigunta, Gudur, Nellore, Ongole, Chirala, Tenali, Guntur, Sattenapalli, Miryalaguda, and Nalgonda

stations. Train No. 07591 Guntur-Hubli special train will leave Guntur at 4.30 pm on April 3 and reach Hubli at 7.10 am on April 4. Train No. 07592 Hubli-Guntur special train will leave Hubli at 9.25 am on April 4 and reach Guntur at 12.30 am on April 5. These special trains will stop at Narasaraopet, Vinukonda, Donakonda, Markapur Rd, Giddalur, Nandyal, Dhone, Guntakal, Bellary, Hospet, Munirabad, Koppal, and Gadag stations in both the directions.

Cyberabad Police Commissioner opens sports meet

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Cyberabad Police Commissioner Stephen Raveendra inaugurated the fourth Annual Sports and Games Meet-2022 on Wednesday.

The meet organised by the Cyberabad Police is being held at the Parade Grounds.

The meet started with the Police Commissioner hoisting the flag and a colourful march-past by the participants.

The Chief Organising Secretary, Cyberabad Police Commissioner Stephen Raveendra, welcomed the dignitaries and the participants.

Speaking on the occasion the Police Commissioner said that sports help police personnel to get a break from the stress they undergo while carrying out duties.

He appealed to all the sportsmen to stick to the sportsman's spirit and to take victories and defeats positively. Sports help to improve friendship and provide a



Cyberabad Police Commissioner Stephen Raveendra interacting with policemen at sports meet in Hyderabad on Wednesday

chance to meet and get to know new faces in the force. We should keep in mind that physical and mental fitness is very important for all police personnel, he said. One should show the enthusiasm for sports in day-to-day life too to ensure fitness, he added. The inaugural function was attended by Joint Police Commissioner

Avinash Mohanty, Crimes DCP Kalmeshwar Shingenavar, Madhapur DCP Shilpavalli, Shamshabad DCP Jagadishwar Reddy, Balanagar DCP Sundeep, CAR Hq. ADCP Riyaz-Ul-Haq, ADCPs, ACPs, Chief Accounts Officer Chandrakala, Chief Administration Officer Geetha, Superintendents, and others.

The Chief Organising Secretary, Cyberabad Police Commissioner Stephen Raveendra, welcomed the dignitaries and the participants.

Dayakar Rao launches Stree Nidhi digital payments platform

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao has presented a cheque for Rs 50 crore to the State government relief fund on behalf of Stree Nidhi.

He also unveiled the annual report of the organisation, launched online payments system to ensure faster payments by Stree Nidhi, monitored digital payments system. He also launched e-sign services of the bank.

Lighting a lamp to mark the inauguration of the ninth annual general body meeting of Stree Nidhi at Prof Jayashankar Agriculture University auditorium here on Wednesday, he congratulated women members of the Stree Nidhi, SERP and MEPMA authorities and employees for

grooming Stree Nidhi wonderfully under the leadership of Chief Minister K Chandrababhu Naidu.

He greeted all those who are involved - from State level to the grassroots level - in financially strengthening Stree Nidhi and Women's Self-Help Groups by linking them to Stree Nidhi on the occasion of the ninth annual general body meeting.

He appreciated SHG women for increasing Stree Nidhi turnover to Rs 5,300 crore with the initial turnover of Rs 32 crore 10 years ago. So far, 26.92 lakh SHG members of over 3.97 lakh women's thrift groups received so far Rs 14,339 crore as loans. During the current fiscal year the Stree Nidhi bank extended Rs 3,000 crore as loans to SHGs, which is apparently beyond the reach of the commercial banks,



Minister for Panchayat Raj launching Stree Nidhi at Jayashankar Agriculture University in Hyderabad on Wednesday

he analysed. Prior to statehood of Telangana - i.e. till March 2014 - the loans advanced were limited to only Rs 742 crore. However, in new state of Telangana Rs 14,339 crore was advanced as loans to the SHGs, which is Rs 13,596 crore more than what was advanced in united state of AP. He lauded

the efforts made by the CM KCR in this regard. About 40 years ago, when he entered politics, women even did not venture out. First and foremost, Bala Vikas united women. He recalled he relating it to NTR, the then CM of AP. During NTR regime, DWCRA groups have commenced. Under the leadership of CM

KCR, women are going to banks and transacting financial transactions. Amidst loud cheers from women present in the auditorium, he said that the women have been leading a life with self-respect achieving economic self-reliance.

Earlier, when women needed money they used to request their spouses to get money to meet their needs. Now the trend reversed - husbands requesting their spouses for money. If money is given to women, the money would remain safe. Moreover, women will not wink an eye if the family runs into debts. Come what may, they endeavour to repay the loan. They have the policy of live and let live, he analysed. Banks are coming forward to give loans to SHG women without any guarantee. The banks have been giving loans on the base of their

track record. Women are free from water problems and power problems now. Palle Pragati programme of the state government has transformed villages. Women are going to towns and cities only for the purpose of education. The CM has been getting government schools transformed with Rs 7000 crore under Manavooru-Manabadi. The CM has been developing educational and medical facilities on priority basis, he said.

He wanted women to grow financially by producing goods and services and thereby providing employment to many. So, he wanted it to take it as a challenge and set an example for other women to follow.

The government will release funds to SHGs under Abhyasa Hastam programme and also pensions to them.

Maula Ali Kaman to regain its past glory

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Municipal Administration and Urban Development Special Chief Secretary Arvind Kumar on Wednesday said that Maula Ali Kaman, built in 1578 during the regime of Qutb Shahi, is being restored. Minister for Municipal Administration K T Rama Rao was hailed as a step forward. A citizen, Krishna, took to twitter and said that many officials talked about the restoration of the monument for years, but you have done it within no time.



INDIA CORNER

UP: Class 12 English exam cancelled in 24 districts after paper leak

The Class 12 English exam of the Uttar Pradesh school board was cancelled in 24 districts on Wednesday after the question paper was leaked, prompting CM Yogi Adityanath to order invoking the stringent National Security Act in the case. The Ballia police have detained 11 people for questioning, a senior official said. The CM also ordered the Special Task Force (STF) of the Uttar Pradesh Police to probe the case. An official has also been suspended. Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar said the Ballia DM and SP got information on Wednesday morning that the second shift paper has been leaked. The exam was to be held at 2 pm. "It appears the English question paper of Class 12 was leaked in Ballia. The matter is being looked into and strict action will be taken against the guilty," UP Secondary Education Minister Gulab Devi said.



Oppn raises issue of inflation in U'khand Assembly

The opposition came down heavily on the government in the Uttarakhand assembly on Wednesday on the issue of rising prices with Congress legislators saying free rations do not mean anything if inflation is not controlled. "Inflation has made the life of people miserable. The government is looting with both hands. It is strange that at a time when crude oil prices have gone down drastically in the international market, petrol and diesel prices have crossed Rs 100 and Rs 90 (a litre) respectively," Congress MLA from Chakrata, Pritam Singh, said. The Congress-led UPA had kept petrol and diesel prices under control in 2014 even when crude oil price in the international market was USD 132 a barrel, he claimed. "How will the common man survive?" Singh asked. Bajpur MLA Yashpal Arya said it was unfortunate that despite the inflation rate touching the skies, there was not even a word on the issue in the Governor's address to the House.



Nepal among most recipients of ITEC programmes, says India's envoy

Nepal has been one of the most active participants and recipients of various training programmes under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC), said Indian Ambassador to Nepal during the ITEC Day celebration here. The 57th ITEC Day was celebrated by the Embassy of India in Kathmandu on Tuesday, with Nepal's Education Minister Devendra Poudel being the chief guest at the event hosted by Indian Ambassador Vinay M. Kwatra. Gen. Prabhuram Sharma, Chief of Army Staff, Nepali Army was also present on the occasion. Highlighting that Nepal had been one of the most active participants and recipients of various training programmes under ITEC, Kwatra on Tuesday said that in 57 years of its existence, more than 200,000 people world-wide had directly benefited, while thousands of Nepali citizens have been trained under tailor-made ITEC courses designed to meet the specific demands in the last 15 years.



Doval holds talks with German security adviser

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and NSA Ajit Doval on Wednesday held separate talks with visiting German Security and Foreign Policy Adviser Jens Plotner covering the geo-political turmoil triggered by the conflict in Ukraine as well as key bilateral issues. Plotner is on a day-long visit to India following which he will travel to Japan. "Good to see Foreign and Security Policy Advisor to German Chancellor Jens Plotner this afternoon. Understandably, our conversation focused around the Ukraine situation," Jaishankar tweeted. Ahead of the talks, Plotner told reporters that the world must understand the geopolit-



ical consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and that it will have larger consequences if not checked. The German official said his country was looking for an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine and that he is in India to share his government's perspective on the crisis. Plotner also pressed for ensuring the impact of Western sanctions on Russia and described the Russian action as "blatant and unprovoked" violations of international norms and rules. On Doval's talks with Plotner, official sources said the NSA emphasised India's consistent approach for peaceful

settlement of disputes in line with international law and commitment to respect territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states. They said the two sides discussed a wide range of bilateral issues as well as major global developments, including in their respective regions. The visit by the Security and Foreign Policy Adviser to the German Chancellor comes at a time when several other high-level foreign dignitaries are visiting India for consultations on the Ukraine crisis as well as other regional and multilateral issues. "The two sides reaffirmed the strength and resilience of the strategic partnership between the two countries and the immense potential that it holds for mutual benefit," said a source.

Goa CM presents first Budget after polls with no new taxes

PNS ■ PANAJI

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Wednesday presented a Rs 24,467.40 crore Budget with no additional taxes while putting stress on plugging revenue leakages. The Budget was presented in English and Konkani by the chief minister who was sworn in on Monday after the BJP under his leadership retained power in the Assembly elections. His government's focus was stopping revenue losses instead of levying new taxes, he said. The Gross State Domestic Product of Goa for 2022-23 was estimated at Rs 91,416.98 crore, a growth of 7.07 per cent, Sawant said. The growth rate of Gross Value Added (GVA) was estimated at 4.73 per cent for the primary sector, 6.52 per cent for the secondary sector and 9.66 per cent for the tertiary sector. Goa's per capita income at current prices continues to be among highest in the country at Rs 5.80 lakh, Sawant said. The Budget also announced a Voluntary Retirement Scheme for government servants, the details of which would be made public later.

Concern over illegal wildlife trade through Indian airports

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Over 70,000 native and exotic wild animals, including their body parts or derivatives (weighing around 4000kg) were trafficked through 18 Indian airports between 2011-2020, according to a latest study conducted by a global wildlife trade monitoring network. The study released on Wednesday by TRAFFIC - a leading non-governmental organisation working globally on trade in wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development-- found that traffickers are exploiting the growth of the aviation sector to move illegal wildlife products across India and its international borders. TRAFFIC said it's "HIGH FLYING: Insight into wildlife trafficking through India's airports" analysis found the trafficking of over 70,000 native and exotic wild animals, including their body parts or derivatives (weighing around 4000kg) in 141 wildlife seizure incidents at 18 Indian airports between 2011-2020". To help end wildlife trafficking through India's airports, a new and one of its kind project by TRAFFIC, India Office UN



Environment Programme, WWF-India, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, Government of India has been launched at National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes & Narcotics (NACIN), it said. It said 46 per cent of seizures were reptiles, including the Vulnerable Indian Star Tortoise, in which traffickers clearly disregard the international rules prohibiting its trade to protect the species. The study has found that Chennai International Airport in Tamil Nadu recorded the highest number of wildlife seizure incidents (36.1 per cent of total cases), followed by Chhatrapati Shivaji Interna-

Heat wave in parts of Bengal over next two days

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Heat wave conditions are likely to prevail at one or two places in some districts of south Bengal over the next two days, the Met department said here on Wednesday. Bankura recorded the maximum day temperature on Wednesday at 40 degree Celsius. The weatherman said that one or two places in the districts of Jhargram, Purulia, Paschim Medinipur and Bankura will be experiencing heat wave. Kolkata, during the day, recorded the maximum temperature at 33.9 degree Celsius and a minimum of 26.8 degree Celsius, it said.

Rajya Sabha to bid farewell to 72 retiring members

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha will bid farewell to 72 members who are retiring and Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will speak in the house on Thursday. Leader of the House Piyush Goyal and Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge will also speak and bid farewell to these 72 members, including seven nominated members. Naidu on Wednesday announced in the House that Zero Hour and Question Hour will not be taken up so as to enable the leaders and members speak on the occasion. Sources said will host a dinner Thursday for all



the members of Rajya Sabha at his official residence, where mementos will be presented to the 72 retiring members and another 19 who retired earlier who could not receive the mementos. At the dinner, about six Rajya Sabha members will showcase their cultur-

tal talent, the sources said. While TMC's Santanu Sen will strum the guitar, his party colleague Dola Sen will present Rabindra Sangeet, the sources said, adding DMK's Tiruchi Siva will sing a Tamil song and BJP's Roopa Ganguly a Hindi song.

2 cops among five more sacked for terror links

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir administration on Wednesday sacked police constable Tawseef Ahmed Mir, who has been accused of actively working for Hizbul Mujahideen and trying to kill two of his colleagues, and four more employees for alleged links with terror groups. The Union Territory administration terminated the services of the employees following a recommendation of a designated committee constituted under Article 311 (2) (c) of the Constitution that allows dismissal without an inquiry in the interest of the security of the



State. The number of employees sacked using the special provisions has gone up to 34 since last year. Under this provision, the sacked employees can only approach the High Court with their plea. The committee comprising officials from police and state home department was constituted to identify and weed out government employees who have terror links and

are working as overground workers (OGW) for such outfits. According to the official order, it has been learnt that Mir's father was a terrorist of the Al-Jihad outfit and he was killed during an encounter in 1997. Mir subsequently joined the police force but covertly started working for terror outfit Hizb Ul Mujahideen and over the years he became close to several of its terror commanders. He also allegedly provided logistics to five terrorists in Shopian district and in June 2017, he along with terror associates tried to kill an SPO. He also allegedly tried to kill a police constable in Shopian.

Assam govt for district-wise definition of religious minority: Himanta Biswa

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said the state government is in favour of defining minority status to religious groups district-wise, instead of the existing norm of a nationwide declaration of minorities. Sarma informed the Assembly that the state government will try to be a party to an ongoing case at the Supreme Court filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay seeking directions for framing of guidelines to identify minorities at the state level. "The government of Assam favours that minority definition should be changed district wise. However, it is under consideration of the Supreme Court and we will wait for the judgement," he said. Sarma said that the central government is also in favour of defining the minorities district and block-wise, considering their economic, educational, gender and other social parameters. He said the Centre recently submitted an affidavit before the Supreme Court in the case filed by Ashwini Kumar



Upadhyay stating that state governments can declare any religious or linguistic community, including Hindus, as a minority within the said state. The chief minister asserted that there is no definition of religious or linguistic minority in the Constitution, but it only spoke about the rights of the two forms of minorities. Accepting Congress MLA Rakibul Hussain's proposal that the state government should be a party to the case in the apex court, Sarma said he has spoken to Union Home Minister Amit Shah about this on Tuesday. "I will try to make the government of Assam a party to the Ashwini

HC: Has Guv sent all files or Perarivalan's alone?

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Wednesday directed the Tamil Nadu government to ascertain and inform it as to whether the TN Governor had forwarded the 2018 state cabinet recommendations on release of all the seven convicts in former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi assassination to the President or selectively in respect of A G Perarivalan alone. The first bench of Chief Justice M N Bhandari and Justice D Bharatha Chakravarthy gave a direction to this effect orally when Nalini Sriharan's petition seeking the court to order her release even without the consent of the Governor came up for further hearing, today. Nalini is one of the seven convicts in the case, the others being Murugan, Santhan, A G Perarivalan, Robert Payas, Ravichandran and Jaya Kumar. The bench also wondered again as to how the High Court can entertain Nalini's plea. This is so, especially when her earlier pleas seeking a direction to the Governor to countersign the Cabinet's recommendation, were rejected repeatedly, the bench added.

No move to make verification mandatory

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government does not intend to make social media users' verification mandatory in view of the privacy issue, Minister of State for Electronic and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar told Lok Sabha on Wednesday. To ensure that internet is open, safe, trusted and accountable to all users, the government notified the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules in February last year, he said during the Question Hour. "And we will continue to expand the scope of those



kinds of rule to ensure that internet is safe and trusted," he added. He was replying to questions from members of

the Congress and DMK. Sharing concerns raised by Congress member Abdul Khaleque, the minister said the internet and technology have empowered people and transformed their lives and governance, being "a platform for good", but user harm, criminality and fake news type of issues are also on the rise. "I empathise with what you are saying but our approach is not to make it (verification of the users) mandatory," he said. He asserted that the provisions made in the new IT rules are "effectively" to deal with the issues of safety and trust

online, and misuse of social media leading to law and order problems in the country. According to the rules, an intermediary is required to identify the first originator of information for the purposes of investigation, prevention, prosecution of an offence related to the sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the State, or incitement of an offence, he said. "This matter is sub-judice today because WhatsApp has challenged it in the Delhi High Court," he said. The government has defended the provision in the court "very robustly," he asserted.

Birbhum killings: BJP team claims "mafia rule" in Bengal, Mamata says its report will interfere with CBI probe

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A BJP fact-finding team Wednesday submitted its report to party chief JP Nadda on the recent massacre of nine people in West Bengal's Birbhum, claiming "mafia rule" prevailed in the state with the connivance of police and political leadership, provoking sharp reaction from Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who said the report will "weaken and interfere" with the CBI probe in the case. The BJP team, including four former IPS officers, demanded central intervention for restoration of the "collapsed" law and order situation



in the state. The party had constituted a five-member team in the aftermath of the violence in Bogtui village in Birbhum district, where eight people were burnt alive, while one more succumbed to the injuries a week later, after a mob set some houses ablaze allegedly in retaliation for the killing of a ruling TMC leader Bhadu Sheikh on March 21.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Captive rights

There is a need for disciplining jail inmates, with humaneness

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday asked the Director General (Prisons) to find ways of handling prisoners in the Capital's jails better to reduce violence and encourage discipline. The court's query followed a plea hearing about the use of excessive force while disciplining errant prisoners. The officer told the court that instances of violence occur when the lodgings of hardened criminals are shifted or when they are questioned upon recovery of banned items, such as mobile phones, weapons and even drugs, from them. The Director Prisons will assist the court with a lengthier explanation on May 20, the next date of hearing in the case. Reforming the prison system in the national Capital — anywhere in the country for that matter — is akin to searching for the Holy Grail. There are 16 jails in Delhi. All are overcrowded and understaffed. The living conditions, standard of hygiene, availability of healthy diet and exercise are questionable. Lack of legal aid, overstay of undertrials or prisoners completing their terms and gangster-ism among inmates add to the problems. The overworked and underpaid employees are hardly in a mood to be human and civil. They are rarely trained to treat the prison as a centre for rehabilitation. Prisons, in the eyes of most jailors, are where convicts come to get punished. The AAP Government told the High Court in 2019 that it had implemented a brand new jail manual in the Delhi jails. The fact that the same court heard Tuesday's plea three years later says a lot about the impact of the manual.



The United Nations in a 2019 report said that overcrowding in jails and violent, or excessive, or illegal use of force by jail officials to instil discipline contributes to increasing levels of violence. Excessive use of solitary confinement rarely makes the inmates obedient. Accountability for excesses by jail staff is low or non-existent. What purpose does a jail manual serve? A report of the Thailand Institute of Justice, 'Global prison trends 2020', said: "A prison service's tasks include ensuring safety and security and organising everyday life in prison, ensuring treatment which does not infringe the human dignity of prisoners, offering meaningful occupational activities, interventions, thus preparing them for release and reintegration into society." The tasks can be executed if the jail staff is educated, professionally trained and well paid with regular work hours. It is rare to see a jail official satisfied with the job. Many allegedly collude, play caste politics, encourage snitching and insider trading. We need a higher level of training in routine prison and prisoner management, criminology, law, social work and rehabilitation support. Otherwise, as the Delhi High Court said to the Bihar authorities in June 2021: "... it is because of these actions that people are avoiding extradition into our country. They go and say 'look this is what happens in Indian prisons. People get beaten up. Don't send me there'."

Initially, Jayalithaa was guided by MGR though she proved her mettle fast. Around this time, VK Sasikala, the wife of an assistant PRO of the Tamil Nadu Government, entered her life. Since then, there was no looking back for Sasikala, a matriculate, who became Jaya's live-in partner in Veda Nilayam, Amma's sprawling bungalow in Chennai's Poes Garden. Though Jayalithaa suffered a humiliating defeat in the 1996 Assembly election, she staged a miraculous comeback in the 2001 and 2011 elections that saw the uprooting of the DMK. The 2014 Lok Sabha election was the icing on the cake as the AIADMK won 37 of the 39 seats in Tamil Nadu. Jaya also led her party to victory in the 2016 Assembly election but she had lost health and energy by then. With her demise, the AIADMK's golden era came to an end.

The golden jubilee pangs of AIADMK

Fifty years after coming into existence, the party founded by MGR and deftly helmed by Jayalalithaa for years stands at a nervous crossroads



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

In one of his works, Victor Hugo said 40 is the old age of youth while 50 is the youth of old age. Had he been alive today, Hugo would have been perplexed with the goings-on in the AIADMK, founded in 1972 by late MG Ramachandran (he rose to power in 1977 and remained the Chief Minister till his death in 1987) and strengthened by J Jayalalithaa. The party leadership, cadre and activists are likely suffering from dementia. The AIADMK is facing an unprecedented leadership crisis since Jayalalithaa passed away in 2016. After MGR's demise, a churning process saw Jayalalithaa, a heart-throb of South Indian movie fans, emerging as the AIADMK's undisputed leader and staying *numero uno* till she breathed her last on December 5, 2016.

Initially, Jayalalithaa was guided by MGR though she proved her mettle fast. Around this time, VK Sasikala, the wife of an assistant PRO of the Tamil Nadu Government, entered her life. Since then, there was no looking back for Sasikala, a matriculate, who became Jaya's live-in partner in Veda Nilayam, Amma's sprawling bungalow in Chennai's Poes Garden. Though Jayalithaa suffered a humiliating defeat in the 1996 Assembly election, she staged a miraculous comeback in the 2001 and 2011 elections that saw the uprooting of the DMK. The 2014 Lok Sabha election was the icing on the cake as the AIADMK won 37 of the 39 seats in Tamil Nadu. Jaya also led her party to victory in the 2016 Assembly election but she had lost health and energy by then. With her demise, the AIADMK's golden era came to an end.

O Panneerselvam, who was sworn in the Chief Minister in the wee hours of December 6, was dethroned by a coterie led by Sasikala and her nephews who had usurped control of Veda Nilayam during the intervening night of December 5 and 6, 2016. Sasikala and her entire family had been thrown out of Veda Nilayam in October 2011 by Jayalalithaa, who told the party cadres not to have any



contact with the clan. But Sasikala was readmitted to Poes Garden in April 2012 after declaring that she was interested only in serving her Akka (Jaya) and would not enter politics. Her nephew TTV Dhinakaran, who too had been ousted from Veda Nilayam in 2011, managed to "infiltrate" the bungalow after Jaya's demise. Sasikala appointed him the deputy general secretary, a post hitherto unheard of in the party.

By December 2016, Sasikala was elevated as the AIADMK's acting general secretary. The then Lok Sabha Deputy Speaker Thambi Durai openly lobbied for Sasikala's elevation as general secretary. Within weeks of her taking over as party supremo, Durai demanded her appointment as the Chief Minister. After that, things moved very fast. By the first week of February 2017, a special session of the AIADMK legislature party unanimously elected Sasikala as the CM. The swearing-in ceremony was scheduled for February 15 when lightning struck in the form of a Supreme Court order upholding the Karnataka Special Court's verdict convicting Sasikala, her nephew Sudhakaran and



JAYA ALSO LED HER PARTY TO VICTORY IN THE 2016 ASSEMBLY ELECTION BUT SHE HAD LOST HEALTH AND ENERGY BY THEN. WITH HER DEMISE, THE AIADMK'S GOLDEN ERA CAME TO AN END

cousin Ilavarasi to four years' rigorous imprisonment in a disproportionate income case. The day she was to swear in as CM, Chinnamma was on her way to Parappana Agrahara Central Jail after entrusting Edappadi Palaniswami with the Chief Minister's job.

Palaniswami started off in style but Dhinakaran began calling the shots. His mission was to get elected from (Jaya's) RK Nagar constituency, pull down Palaniswami and become the CM. With Sasikala in jail, Palaniswami made use of his contacts in BJP to tame Panneerselvam, who reluctantly accepted the deputy chief ministership. A general council meeting in September 2017 eased out Sasikala and Dhinakaran from the party. Dhinakaran launched an outfit, Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam, and is still struggling to get a foothold in State politics. In 2021, the AIADMK was defeated by the DMK-led alliance but the victory margin was not really impressive.

Panneerselvam is annoyed with Palaniswami for not making him Leader of the Opposition. Chief Minister Stalin is doing all he can to hasten the disintegration. Palaniswami's trusted colleagues (all belonging to

Gounder community) are being raided by the authorities. Panneerselvam and Sasikala, both hailing from the powerful Thevar community, are cosying up in spite of the former having declared a Dharma Yudh against her in February 2017. The question is whether Sasikala has the guts to become the leader of a party which owes its existence to MGR and Jayalalithaa? Apart from her not-so-noble back-room manoeuvrings, Sasikala is yet to establish her credentials as a leader. The DMK would love to see the disintegration of the AIADMK: If it splits vertically, Stalin would be the sole beneficiary.

Panneerselvam was twice selected as the CM by Jaya because of his servility. Even his close associates say OPS has no leadership qualities unlike Palaniswami who gave the DMK a mighty scare. The golden jubilee year is turning out to be a critical phase for the AIADMK. Sasikala, Panneerselvam and Dhinakaran do not fit the bill though there is a glimmer of hope in EPS. May lord Muruga save the AIADMK!

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

PICTALK



A view from the soon-to-be-inaugurated viewing deck, at Girgaum Chowpatty in Mumbai

PTI

Anarchists

The CPI(M) Govt speaks in two voices: Seeking investments but striking work

Kerala has done it yet again! While the rest of the country largely ignored the 48-hour pan-India general strike called by the Left-affiliated trade unions against the "anti-people policies" of the Narendra Modi Government at the Centre, the State ruled by the CPI(M)-led LDF Government was totally shut down for two full days. Bandhs and hartals are nothing new to Kerala. The CPI(M) calls for bandhs at the drop of a hat and, without stretching the argument, there is a general strike once every month on an average. The seriousness of general strikes has been lost long back as common citizens have started asking the organisers of these shutdowns to call for 'people-friendly' bandhs. If a bandh is held either on Monday or Friday, people would get an extended weekend to 'enjoy' the occasion with a social gathering! One of the reasons cited by big-time investors for keeping away from Kerala is the frequent general strikes ordered by the Left parties in the State. Though nature has bestowed Kerala with water and clean environment, industrialists are wary of setting up units here because of militant trade unions and their propensity to disrupt work.



The high-handed behaviour of the head-load workers is forcing entrepreneurs to shut down businesses and leave for other States. Though the Kerala High Court on Monday questioned the constitutional validity of Government officials joining the general strike and ordered the administration to declare *dies non* (no work, no pay), the party bosses came out into the open by Tuesday warning the judiciary not to step into political domain. MV Jayarajan, a prominent CPI(M) leader, had to serve a month-long jail sentence for describing the judges as "idiots who live in glasshouses" following a court verdict that general strikes were against humanity. The party commissars claim that the general strike was called against privatisation and disinvestment being carried out by the Centre. But this is nothing new as the process was set into motion in 1991 when PV Narasimha Rao was the Prime Minister. Interestingly, the CPI(M)'s recent State conference at Kochi adopted a unanimous resolution that private investment was the only option for the State's economic development. It also wanted to improve the ease of doing business and welcome foreign and private universities to set up centres of excellence in the State. Will the real CPI(M) please stand up?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NATIONAL STRIKE FOR A REASON

Sir — The two-day strike by all major trade unions including bank/ insurance employees has a specific purpose, which cannot be defamed just like that. The issues are definitely important such as privatising public sector institutions, banks and other sensitive industries. If privatisation is the only solution for preventing losses in the PSUs, why were so many private sector institutions closed and few private sector banks merged earlier; the Government had to even infuse funds in some institutions? Basically it was due to the fraudsters who cheated the banks. No doubt, the Government can get funds by disinvestment but then it will be laying a green carpet for more fraudsters.

This is a very important issue that the bankers are raising in addition to revising the bank retirees' pensions not revised since decades. After all, every person knows how the public sector banks care for poor/middle class small savers even in remotest corners of the country unlike the private sector which focuses only on 'class clientele' in urban/semi-urban centres. Ultimately, it should be realised that it is only small people/middle class people who provide funds for banks and not rich people, who only use them.

Katuri DP Rao | Hyderabad

NEED FOR POLITICS WITH DECENCY

Sir — The kind of developments that were seen in West Bengal in the last few days have been inscribed on the psyche of the nation's people and from all these developments the public has come to know that there is no need of leaders like Mamata Banerjee (Didi) in politics. Mamata is continuously strangling democracy to maintain her power. First, eight people were burnt alive and then the Opposition leaders were assaulted in the Assembly; can all this be said to be part of a plan of the Opposition? The way TMC leaders get their votes cast in Bengal, is not hidden from anyone.

The thumping majority in the Bengal Assembly was not achieved on the strength of democracy, it was the result

Govt must check high prices



The Government has started increasing petrol and diesel prices on a daily basis, lifting the unannounced freeze ahead of the recent Assembly elections. The price of petrol was raised by ₹4 a litre and diesel by ₹4.10 a litre in the last week. A cylinder of cooking gas weighing 14.2 kg costs ₹950 after the current price increase. Prices are said to be market-driven but "market" here means the ruling Government, though the administered pricing mechanism has long been dispensed with. It is incorrect to argue

that Oil Marketing Companies are in the red or make puny profits, or petroleum products are subsidised. In fact, the IOC's profits surged from ₹10,022 crore in FY 2013-14 to ₹29,716 crore in FY 2020-21.

The corporate tax and dividends paid to the Government have remained consistent at around ₹17,000 crore per year. Refiners in the private sector make copious profits at such high prices. The ruling BJP thinks the favourable results in the elections are carte blanche to toy with fuel prices. It believes that by widening the Hindu-Muslim divide, adding to the insecurity of the common man and creating a class of *Jaabharthis* with a few kg of free rations, it can neutralise the pain and anger over price rise, unemployment and poverty. So long as this situation exists, already high prices, constant rising prices in the future and higher taxes are inevitable.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

of the muscle power of TMC leaders. On the strength of this huge majority, Didi is trying to become an alternative to Modi in the country's national politics, bypassing the Congress. But the current events shattered her dreams. Her action plan will improve the tarnished image, there is doubt about it. Mamata Didi will have to stop the muscle power and mouth of her leaders, only then the public will be able to stand with her.

Rajender Kumar Sharma | Rewari

REHABILITATE UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Sir — Now that everything has been razed to the ground in Ukraine because of the bloody and mindless Russian attacks, the right time has come to rehabilitate all those Ukrainians who have migrated to the neighbouring countries as refugees. The pain of migrating to foreign soil cannot be explained in words. Even things like relocation (happening everywhere in the world personally and professionally) will be a tough road for humans. In my native areas of

Tamil Nadu, people have usually been relocating and migrating to various parts of India, not to mention foreign countries, for the sake of their families and profession.

Likewise, one can understand the plight of the poor Ukrainians. Despite a helping hand from various neighbouring European nations, it is still a long road ahead involving all the practical complexities. For this, the UN, tech giants like Google and Yahoo, and the international media houses must come forward to highlight their concerns/plight (especially children's) through proper means and channels. Food, medical and financial assistance should be sent to them. Then, sending these refugees back home once the war is over should be the first priority. After all, being on foreign soil is not only difficult but also poses serious challenges.

PS Saravana Durai | Andheri (West)

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

If there's a mentality of violence in society, it should be opposed.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi

There will be a debate on the no-confidence motion on March 31; voting on April 3.



Pak Interior Minister — Sheikh Rashid

I'd like to publicly apologise to you, Chris. I was out of line. I was wrong.



Actor — Will Smith

When (Hardik) Pandya bowls, he's twice the player he is. He's a match-winner.



Former India coach — Ravi Shastri

The Govt is setting up a global market intelligence network to boost India's exports.



Union Minister — Narayan Rane



FIRST COLUMN OUSTER OF RUSSIA FROM THE WTO

The World Trade Organisation members' demand is easier said than done



PK VASUDEVA

Majority of the 164 members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have requested the multinational organisation to oust Russia from WTO for launching a devastating attack on Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also wants Russia suspended from WTO as that would make it far more difficult for Russian goods and services to compete in the global market. Russia has responded to Ukraine's call for its ouster by saying that WTO members "should refrain from discussing in the WTO issues and events, which are out of the scope of the WTO", and arguing that WTO rules do not permit its suspension. This may become the newest front in the world's unprecedented economic response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. There are precedents, though not within the WTO. Mercosur, the South American trading bloc, suspended Paraguay in 2012 and Venezuela in 2017 - in both cases over



failure to maintain democratic order. The US House of Representatives is exploring legislation that would "take the first step to deny Russia access to the World Trade Organization." But would such a manoeuvre be legal under WTO rules? It's hard to formally expel Russia - but individual WTO members could probably break off preferential trade relations.

The WTO agreements neither include a provision explicitly authorizing expulsion, nor do they establish criteria, such as maintaining democratic order, that might provide grounds for suspension. There is, though, a complex process that might be used to expel Russia from the WTO, according to James Bachcus, a former member of the WTO's Appellate Body, as quoted by the western media. Article X of the WTO agreements allows WTO members to adopt amendments that "alter the rights and obligations" of members if they are accepted by two-thirds of the WTO membership (and meet certain other criteria). Initially, these changes apply only to countries that accept them. However, by a three-fourths vote, WTO members can set a time frame for holdout members to accept the amendment, withdraw from the WTO or get the other members' permission to remain. Withholding that permission from a member that refused to accept an amendment would have the same result as expelling that member. This procedure could be used to expel Russia directly - or to establish specific conditions, such as the invasion of another WTO member, under which a member could be expelled or suspended. While theoretically possible, this is unlikely to succeed. To be sure, 141 members of the United Nations voted to condemn the invasion. If that many countries in the 164-member global trading framework voted to expel Russia, it would amount to 86 percent - easily clearing both the two-thirds and three-quarters voting thresholds. But it is unlikely that so many countries would vote to change the rules. Why? Doing so would establish a precedent that a supermajority of the WTO membership can penalize members for policy decisions they dislike, outside of the WTO's usual dispute settlement process. Fears like this explain why WTO members generally make decisions by consensus. Consensus decision-making means that even one objection - say, from Russia - would stop the amendment from passing. Even if WTO members do not act collectively to suspend or expel Russia, they can act individually to effectively remove Russia's WTO privileges. Ukraine and Canada have already done so. The European Union is considering similar measures. In fact, such actions are allowed under the national security exceptions in the WTO Agreements. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) - the main WTO agreement governing trade in goods - allows measures that a WTO member "considers necessary for the protection of its essential security interests taken in time of war or other emergency in international relations."

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

Spread of undignified terms into politics

How would those who do not have the dignity of speech be able to run the country in general, and the system in particular?



RAJENDRA PRASAD GUPTA

In the past few decades, the use of disparaging words seems to have become an accepted norm in Indian politics. Indecent remarks are often hurled on the basis of caste, religion, and region. Women are often subject to vituperative expressions used by so-called 'honourable' people engaged in amplifying their politics. These politicians are not worried about the impact of these inappropriate comments on the masses in the long run.

Talking about Bihar, after Lalu Yadav came into politics and legitimized the use of indecent language, other leaders also started using derogatory and unparliamentary words without accountability. This malaise has now reached the Parliament and Legislative Assemblies. There is indeed a provision to remove such expression from the "record" but in the age of 24x7 media coverage, the damage is often done before corrective measures are initiated.

On 24 October 2021, Lalu Yadav called Bhakta Charan Das, the Bihar in charge of Congress, as 'Bhakchonhar Das'. Before this as well, he has often courted similar controversies. For example, he used such expression against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the then National President of BJP Amit Shah at a Samajwadi party rally in Rae Bareilly on February 21, 2017, which cannot be discussed in a civilized society.

On January 10, 2017, he said that former BJP MP Sakshi Maharaj should be sent to jail under the Goondas Act, describing him as a 'lafandar'. He called Giriraj Singh a 'mental case'. On December 18, 2016 he compared the demonization with the sterilization of Congress times. In October 2015, in the Dadri incident, he referred to Hindus as 'beef-eaters'. In January 2017, Anil Vij was referred to as India's 'unworthy son'. In January 2017 itself, he talked about colouring Vinay Katiyar with 'tikuli' and 'Sindoor' (vermillion). On March 26, 2017, when the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath ordered that the CM's residence be washed with Ganga water, Lalu called him out by referring to him as an 'opposer of the backward castes' and 'Anti-Muslim'. Lalu Yadav has made controversial statements on BJP MP Hema Malini as well. The word 'Burbak' always remains on his tongue. Lalu Yadav has maintained this attitude with journalists as well. In June 2017, he used words like "de denge do mukka, nachkegirjaoge" (will punch you twice and you will fall dancing) in response to questions asked by journalists.

Women have also been victims of the inappropriate speeches of these politicians. In this country of 'Yatra Naryastu Pujyante, Ramante 'Tatra Devta', how will these leaders, who use such abusive language towards women, give respect and rights to women? While being the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh,



BY ACCEPTING THESE UNACCEPTABLE AND CONTROVERSIAL SPEECHES OF POLITICIANS, THEIR SUCCESSORS ALSO USE SIMILAR ABUSIVE WORDS ON A DAILY BASIS. SUCH CONTROVERSIAL STATEMENTS REFLECT THE REALITY OF THESE LEADERS. THE LANGUAGE OF A PERSON IS A REFLECTION OF HIS PERSONALITY

(The writer is the Vice-president of BJP in Bihar and a member of the Bihar legislative council. The views expressed are personal.)



Mulayam Singh Yadav had said in 2014 on the allegation of rape against youth that "boys make mistakes, they cannot be hanged for this. In July 2013, Congress leader Digvijay Singh called Meenakshi Natarajan, a woman MP from Mandasaur, 'a hundred takatanchmaal' at a rally in Madhya Pradesh. Senior Congress leader Kamal Nath called cabinet minister Imarti Devi an 'item'. Many such indecent remarks on women tarnish the women's safety and dignity perceived by these leaders.

Apart from Lalu Yadav, the names of Uddhav Thackeray, Mamata Banerjee, Akhilesh Yadav, Mayawati, Digvijay Singh, Kapil Sibal, Kamal Nath, Mani Shankar Aiyar, Shashi Tharoor, Imran Masood, Sonia Gandhi are also notable in these cases. Mani Shankar Aiyar on December 7, 2017, called Modi a 'neechaadami'. Priyanka Gandhi also accused Modi of engaging in 'lowly politics'. During the Gujarat Assembly elections in 2007, Sonia Gandhi even called Modi a 'maut ka saudagar' or a merchant of death. Mamata Banerjee had described Amit Shah and Narendra Modi as 'goons of Delhi' in her rally in Dakshin Dinajpur on April 22, 2021. Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said on July 18, 2018, that 'Hinduism is being 'Talibanised'. Uddhav Thackeray had also spo-

ken of hitting Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with slippers in 2018. He also called Rahul Gandhi a 'stupid' leader and talked about beating Mani Shankar Aiyar with shoes. In Jammu and Kashmir's National Conference, MLA Javed Rana had insulted the national flag by saying, if the Article 35A was revoked from the State of Jammu and Kashmir and an attempt at removing Article 370 is made, then there would be no sign of the Indian flag in Jammu and Kashmir.

By accepting these unacceptable and controversial speeches of politicians, their successors also use similar abusive words on a daily basis. Such controversial statements reflect the reality of these leaders. It is said, "If you want to know about someone, let them speak." The language of a person is a reflection of his personality. How would those who do not have the dignity of speech be able to run the system?

There have also been such leaders in the country who have always maintained their linguistic dignity, which led the public to hold them in high esteem. Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan launched a nationwide movement in 1974, but he never seemed agitated, he spoke in a very simple and serious manner. Due to this the movement became a massively consequential movement.

Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee also used to oppose his opponents with decency. His witty mannerisms are well known. With his own style, he used to answer the opposition. Ram Manohar Lohia, George Fernandes, L.K. Advani were among such politicians who ruled the hearts of the people with their controlled speeches, and the people in turn regarded them with equal respect. Political debates do not require verbal firefights but need to be listened to and answered with restraint.

A good leader is one who works for the progress of the nation with social harmony. It is better to be regarded by the public for work done for the welfare of society, than by becoming the apple of the eyes of a particular class by making controversial remarks. The fame gained by such work is also permanent and hailed through ages.

Politics is not going to survive on the basis of provocative speeches. Advances in technology have made information more accessible. Now the public knows who is going to do the work, who is a talker and who is going to give provocative speeches. People know who their hero is. Therefore, instead of controversial rhetoric, adopting the politics of good deeds and conduct will be beneficial for society and the country.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

TIME AND AGAIN, THE BJP TRIES TO ATTACK THE FEDERAL STRUCTURE OF THIS COUNTRY.
— WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER
MAMATA BANERJEE



THE CHIEF MINISTER'S ALLEGATIONS OF THE BJP USING CENTRAL AGENCIES ARE NOTHING NEW.
— WEST BENGAL BJP SPOKESPERSON
SAMIK BHATTACHARYA

Beyond Omicron: Will there be more variants?

There are reasons to believe that India might soon be heading towards an endemic phase unless another variant shows up

After the emergence of the Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 infections at the beginning of 2022, the decline in cases, thanks to the mild nature of Omicron, has got everyone asking - what's next and when is the next blow going to arrive?

Ever since the pandemic began in 2020, humans have oscillated between deadly pandemic surges and retreats. If the good news is that cases are going down rapidly with many countries allowing their citizens to step outside with their masks on, there is, however, a caveat, that things might change in the coming days. Here are a few possible scenarios:

It is no rocket science that as long as the SARS-CoV-2 virus is around, it will continue to evolve and a straightfor-



KAMAL NARAYAN OMER

(The writer is CEO, IHW Council. The views expressed are personal.)

ward answer to the question is, yes. In the coming days, we could see new variants emerging. However, there is no way to ascertain when a new variant will become dominant. It is also impossible to predict whether a new variant will spread rapidly just like the Alpha and Delta variants or will be mild in nature like Omicron. Researchers around the world have been tracking a host of related sub-variants that are jockeying for dominance and we have to adopt a wait-and-watch policy to know everything.

What was once believed to be a rumour for many has turned out to be real. A potential new variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, by the name "Deltacron", is around the corner. In fact, the new combination of the virus has already



been identified in France, the Netherlands, Denmark, and the United States. Interestingly, scientists have found out that this new hybrid variant combines the spike protein from the Omicron variant and the 'body' of the Delta variant.

Can this hybrid virus have the potential to cause severe infection? It is indeed too early to make a presumption. The World Health Organization has also said testing remains criti-

cal to understand the very nature and severity of this hybrid virus.

India is currently witnessing a record dip in daily infections resulting from the Omicron variant. This has brought a huge relief to everyone, from the doctors to the common citizens. India battled a lethal second wave in 2021 caused by the Delta variant, and the third wave occurring from the Omicron variant had also

resulted in a record number of cases as well.

However, many renowned virologists and scientists have claimed that India may not see a possible fourth wave, despite a warning issued by a group of experts at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, that the country could be in the grips of a fourth wave, starting from the month of June. With a record decline in cases and the recovery rate standing at close to 99 percent, there are reasons to believe that India might soon be heading towards an endemic phase unless another variant shows up.

That said, we must not be cavalier in our approach whatsoever. To ensure we are well on track to tackle another wave if there is one, the Three 'T's' in the form of Testing, Tracking, and

Treating will be extremely crucial in handling any future outbreaks.

It needs no detailed explanation to describe the roles played by vaccines to protect us from this deadly virus. Getting vaccinated against Covid-19 does not only lowers the chances of the rampant spread of this virus that causes disease but also helps in preventing serious illness and death to people. A similar argument can be made in cases of booster doses. The higher antibody levels from the booster doses seem to make the average person unlikely to get sick from the Coronavirus. For instance, the booster shots of mRNA coronavirus vaccines are said to increase antibodies by about 10 times.

A point in case is the equally historic role played by the

Indian Government to ensure millions of citizens remain safe and get access to life-saving vaccines. For instance, the country, thanks to the assiduousness of the government, has registered more than 1.8 billion vaccine doses since its vaccination drive kicked off in January 2021. India being the second-most populated nation on earth, the Indian model of an immensely successful vaccination drive must serve as a perfect example for many developed and developing countries across the world. Similarly, the government has also rolled out booster or precaution doses for fully vaccinated healthcare workers, frontline workers, and senior citizens over the age group of 60+ years. After all, we must remember that vaccines do not save lives, but vaccination does.

Ind-Ra slashes FY23 GDP forecast to 7-7.2%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India Ratings has lowered its GDP growth forecast for FY23 to 7-7.2 per cent, from 7.6 per cent earlier citing the rising uncertainty over Russia-Ukraine war and the resultant dampening of consumer sentiment.

Since the duration of the war continues to be uncertain, in the first scenario crude oil prices could remain elevated for three months, and in the second case for six months, Ind-Ra said.

If crude prices remain high for three months, FY23 GDP could grow by 7.2 per cent, in case it lasts longer, then growth will be 7 per cent, down from 7.6 per cent projected earlier, its chief economist Devendra Pant and principal economist Sunil Kumar Sinha said on Wednesday.

They said the size of the economy in FY23 will be 10.6 per cent and 10.8 per cent lower than the FY23 GDP trend value in these two scenarios, respectively.

On Tuesday, Ica had also pencilled in a similar rate of



growth for the economy.

Noting that consumption demand, as measured by private final consumption expenditure, has been subdued in FY22, despite sales of select consumer durables showing signs of revival during the festive season, the report doubts the same to pick up or remain where it is now given the rising inflation worries and so is household sentiments on non-essential/discretionary spending which continue to be subdued.

Consumer sentiment is likely to witness a further dent due to the Ukraine war leading to rising commodity prices/consumer inflation.

Ind-Ra expects private consumption spends to grow at 8.1 per cent and 8 per cent in scenario 1 and 2, respectively, in FY23, as against its earlier projection of 9.4 per cent.

Similarly, investment demand, as measured by the gross fixed capital formation, is the second-largest component (27.1 per cent) of GDP from the demand side. Private capex by large corporates, which has been down and out over the past several years, has shown some promise lately in view of the rollout of the production-linked incentive scheme and increased manufacturing sector capacity utilisation driven

by higher exports.

However, they expect the surge in commodity prices and disruptions in global supply chain caused by the Ukraine war to take a toll on sentiments and it's likely this capex may get deferred till more clarity emerges with respect to the conflict.

However, government capex is unlikely to be dented. By scaling up the capex to GDP ratio for FY22 to 2.6 per cent, according to the revised estimate from the budgeted 2.5 per cent for FY23, the government has been showing its resolve to do the heavy lifting, they said, and believe that the overall gross fixed capital formation growth will not be impacted much and will grow at 8.8 per cent in both the scenarios in FY23, which is 10 basis points (bps) higher than their January forecast.

On the inflation front, they warn that a 10 per cent rise in oil prices without factoring in currency depreciation, is expected to push up retail inflation by 42 bps and wholesale inflation by 104 bps.

FII stock ownership plunges to 19.9%, value down to \$582 bn YTD

PNS ■ MUMBAI,

After the record USD 23 billion of additional investments in the domestic equities in FY21, foreign funds have massively slashed their fresh exposure to the country to USD 3.7 billion in FY22, also pairing down their holdings in NSE500 to 19.9 per cent or worth USD 582 billion, down from their peak of 21.4 per cent, shows a brokerage report.

During the current fiscal till early this week, the cumulative FPI outflows touched a record USD 14.6 billion of which March alone saw them taking out as much as USD 5.4 billion, while February saw another record pullout to the tune of USD 4.7 billion, according to an analysis by Wall Street brokerage Bank of America Securities India.

FPI holdings value stood at USD 582 billion as of March 15, 2022 (down from USD 667 billion in September 2021 peak), of which, IT (15 per cent, up 87 bps), energy (15.5 per cent, up 44 bps), healthcare (4.9 per cent, up 22 bps) saw higher allocation.

On the other hand, allocation to financials was down 107 bps to 31.5 per cent, discretionary down by 49 bps to 9.1 per cent.

Cabinet clears Rs 6,062 cr World Bank-assisted programme for MSMEs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a World Bank-assisted Rs 6,062 crore funding programme for the small and medium businesses to help improve their access to market and credit.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the Rs 6,062.45 crore or USD 808 million 'Raising and Accelerating MSM Performance' (RAMP) for the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), an official release said. RAMP will commence in FY23, it said.

Of the total outlay under the programme, Rs 3,750 crore (USD 500 million) will come from World Bank loan, and the remaining Rs 2,312.45 crore will be funded by the central government. RAMP will work under the Ministry of MSME (MoMSME) towards resilience and recovery interventions after the coronavirus disease. "The programme aims at improving access to market and credit, strengthening institutions and governance at the Centre and state, improving Centre-state linkages and partnerships, addressing issues of delayed payments and greening of MSMEs. In addition to building



the MoMSME's capacity at the national level, the RAMP programme will seek to scale up implementation capacity and MSME coverage in states," the release said.

The government formulated and proposed RAMP for strengthening MSMEs in line with the recommendations of the UK Sinha committee, KV Kamath committee and the Economic Advisory Council of the Prime Minister (EAC-PM).

RAMP programme with impacts across the country will directly or indirectly benefit all 6.3 crore enterprises under the MSME category.

A total of 5,55,000 MSMEs are specifically targeted for enhanced performance. In addition, expansion of target market to include service sectors and increase of about 70,500 women MSMEs is envisaged, the release

said. RAMP has identified two result areas after preliminary missions and studies, first is to strengthen institutions and governance of the MSME programme and second is to support market access, firm capabilities and access to finance.

"Funds would flow through RAMP into the ministry's budget against Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs) to support ongoing MoMSME programmes, focusing on improving market access and competitiveness." The disbursement of funds from the World Bank towards RAMP would be made on fulfilling DLIs such as implementing the national MSME reform agenda, accelerating MSME sector Centre-state collaboration, enhancing effectiveness of Technology Upgradation Scheme (CLCS-TUS).

MONEY MATTERS

Pandemic-related stress on unsecured loan assets over: HDFC Bank

The country's largest private sector lender HDFC Bank on Wednesday said the elevated stress on unsecured loan assets noticed during the COVID-19 pandemic is over, and the bank is upbeat about the segment now.

The unsecured lending book for the bank includes credit cards and personal loans. According to HDFC Bank's chief head for consumer finance Parag Rao, the next two years present an interesting opportunity to grow in the segment, which is otherwise considered a bit risky. Acknowledging that his bank also witnessed some elevation in asset quality woes from the unsecured segment during the pandemic, Rao clarified that the same was never at worrying levels. "A large portion of the issues of the pandemic are gone," he said, adding that customers seeking loans now are relatively better from the risk perspective. Developments in the overall economy, where consumption is growing, make this a 'good phase', and the bank looks at it as a good time to grow in this segment over the next 18-24 months. Speaking at the launch of a co-branded credit card in association with retailer Shoppers Stop, Rao said the bank is targeting to increase the contribution of co-branded cards in its business over the medium term. In terms of spends, it is targeting to almost double the share from co-branded cards to up to 30 per cent in the next three years from the present 15 per cent.

Honda India Power forays into marine outboard business

Honda India Power Products on Wednesday announced its foray into the marine outboard business and aims to corner around 10 per cent market share in the 4-stroke engine segment in the first three years. From April, the company will introduce Honda 4-stroke marine outboard motors range for boat operators targeting various government agencies engaged in maritime security, coast guard, taxi boat services for passengers and tourists, and fishermen engaged in commercial fishing in sea and inland river systems. These motors are priced between Rs 1.8 lakh for 6 hp and Rs 23 lakh for 250 hp.

BioNTech's quarterly profit soars on COVID-19 vaccine demand

PNS ■ BERLIN

BioNTech, the German pharmaceutical company that teamed with Pfizer to develop the first widely used COVID-19 vaccine, on Wednesday reported strong quarterly earnings growth on pandemic-fueled demand.

The company posted net profit of nearly 3.2 billion euros (3.6 billion) for the final three months of 2021, up from 367 million euros in the same period the previous year. Earnings per share rose to 12.18 euros from 1.43 euros a year ago. Quarterly revenue rose to 5.5 billion euros from 345.4 million euros previously. "Our 2021 COVID-19 vaccine revenues were significantly influenced by the extraordinary circumstances of the ongoing pandemic, Chief Financial Officer Jens Holstein said in a press release.

Vaccinations with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, marketed as Comirnaty, started in December 2020. BioNTech,



based in the city of Mainz near Frankfurt, said about 2.6 billion doses of the vaccine had been delivered last year.

Heavy demand for the vaccine also helped Pfizer report healthy quarterly earnings last month. BioNTech said it has signed orders for 2.4 billion more doses so far this year, which it expects will earn the company 13 billion to 17 billion euros in revenue.

The company, which has said it will pour windfall profits from the mRNA-based coronavirus vaccine back into

developing other drugs to fight cancer and other diseases, plans to boost its spending on research and development this year by half, to between 1.4 billion and 1.5 billion euros.

BioNTech said it's proposing a special cash dividend of 2 euros per share and will also buy back up to 1.5 billion in shares because "we would like to share our successes with shareholders".

For the full year, the company posted net profit of 10.3 billion euros on 19 billion in revenue.

Karnataka Bank raises Rs 300 cr through bonds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Private sector lender Karnataka Bank on Wednesday said it has raised Rs 300 crore by issuing bonds on private placement basis.

The committee of directors of board of the bank, at its meeting held on March 30, 2022, has approved the allotment of unsecured, subordinated, redeemable non-convertible, fully paid-up Basel III compliant Tier II bonds, aggregating up to Rs 300 crore on private placement basis to the successful bidders, the bank said in a regulatory filing. To comply with Basel-III capital regulations, banks globally need to improve and strengthen their capital planning processes.

These norms are being implemented to mitigate concerns on potential stresses on asset quality and consequential impact on performance and profitability of banks.

Sebi issues timelines for rebalancing portfolios of mutual fund schemes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Wednesday came out with timelines for rebalancing of portfolios of mutual fund schemes in order to bring uniformity.

Issuing a circular, the watchdog said the rebalancing period will be applicable in the event of deviation from mandated asset allocation mentioned in the Scheme Information Document (SID) due to passive breaches.

Passive breaches are generally that have not arisen due to omission and commission of Asset Management Companies (AMCs).

The mandated rebalancing period for all mutual fund schemes, except Index Funds and Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs) is 30 business days.

In case, the rebalancing is not done within the mandated timelines, justification in writing, including details of efforts taken to rebalance the portfolio should be placed before the investment committee concerned. The committee

can extend the timelines up to 60 business days from the date of completion of mandated rebalancing period.

According to Sebi, if the portfolio of schemes is not rebalanced within the extended timelines, then the AMCs would not be permitted to launch any new scheme till the time the portfolio is rebalanced. They would also be disallowed from levying exit load, if any, on the investors exiting such schemes.

AMCs are required to report the deviation to trustees concerned at each stage.



CredAble disburses Rs 22,500 cr working capital loans in FY22

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Working capital loan facilitating platform for small and medium businesses CredAble disbursed record USD 3 billion (Rs 22,500 crore) during the financial year 2021-22, and expects to double the amount in next fiscal on more customer acquisitions and high demand for short-term business loans, co-founder and CEO Nirav Choksi said.

The company said it disbursed a record USD 3 billion working capital loans to 1,50,000 cash-strapped small businesses in the last 12 months.

The credit disbursement

comes at a time when the MSME sector, which contributes 40 per cent to India's total exports, continues to find itself in financial distress with only 16 per cent of them being eligible for formal credit, the company said.

"We saw growth coming in primarily from two perspectives. One, we added a lot of new customers, and we also saw several new banks adopting to the platform as a platform of choice. Both of these factors helped significantly ramp up the platform."

"Very importantly, we launched a new platform for upscale focussed around small businesses.

V-Guard on expansion mode; expects 60% revenue from non-southern regions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

V-Guard Industries plans to expand in northern, eastern and western regions of the country as it aims to garner over 60 per cent revenue from these regions in the next five-six years, a senior company official said on Wednesday.

Currently, these regions contribute around 42 per cent of the business of the company, which is into manufacturing consumer electrical and electronic goods.

The Kerala-based company is also investing in manufacturing and is setting up new plants in Uttarakhand, Sikkim,



and Hyderabad. It is investing more than Rs 400 crore over a period from 2019 to 2024.

The company is expanding its product portfolio and also enhancing its distribution foot-

prints, Chief Operating officer of V-Guard Industries Ramachandran Venkataraman said.

"North, east and west contribute around 42 per cent of our business. Our focus would be to grow around 60 per cent in the next five-six years," Venkataraman said on the sidelines of a conference.

V-Guard Industries' revenue for FY21 stood at Rs 2,699 crore.

When asked about the current fiscal, Venkataraman said, "YTD (year-to-date) from April to December, we have been growing about 30-31 per cent."

Axis Bank buys Citi's India retail business for Rs 12,325 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US bank Citigroup on Wednesday announced sale of its Indian consumer banking businesses, including credit cards, retail banking, wealth management and consumer loans, to private lender Axis Bank for Rs 12,325 crore, as part of its plans to exit retail operations in 13 markets. The deal, which is expected to close in the first half of the 2023 calendar year, will include the transfer of about 3,600 Citi employees to Axis. The sale excludes Citi's institutional client businesses in India, it said.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that the share certificates (Nos) 106642, 106647, 106678, 106790, 106791, 106825, 106826, 106844, 106845, 106860, 106861, 107107, 107145, 107146, 107225, 107257, 107263, 107265, 107266, 107267, 107268, 107269, 107270, 107271, 107272, 107273, 107274, 107275, 107276, 107277, 107278, 107279, 107280, 107281, 107282, 107283, 107284, 107285, 107286, 107287, 107288, 107289, 107290, 107291, 107292, 107293, 107294, 107295, 107296, 107297, 107298, 107299, 107300, 107301, 107302, 107303, 107304, 107305, 107306, 107307, 107308, 107309, 107310, 107311, 107312, 107313, 107314, 107315, 107316, 107317, 107318, 107319, 107320, 107321, 107322, 107323, 107324, 107325, 107326, 107327, 107328, 107329, 107330, 107331, 107332, 107333, 107334, 107335, 107336, 107337, 107338, 107339, 107340, 107341, 107342, 107343, 107344, 107345, 107346, 107347, 107348, 107349, 107350, 107351, 107352, 107353, 107354, 107355, 107356, 107357, 107358, 107359, 107360, 107361, 107362, 107363, 107364, 107365, 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Moms turning their passion into profession

K. RAMYA SREE

We live in a society where married women often are told things like: 'Your life is dedicated to your husband now', 'You might have to give up on your dreams and passions now since you have a baby' or 'You have to quit your job after the baby'. But, hey! you know what! "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams". Finding your voice is not easy, especially for women who are mothers. This process is made much more difficult because society frequently prevents them from voicing their opinions and stops them from following their passion. However, things are changing for good today. Today's women are capable of standing up for themselves and their rights. *The Pioneer* converses with a few moms, who share their views on turning their passion into their profession.

"Isn't your perfect job one that marries your passion into your profession? It is an elusive task, to say the least! Now add being a mother to this equation and it can all get a bit overwhelming at times! However, my advice would be to always put your inner happiness and peace first. By working on something you are passionate about, you will find

something that I had always wanted — working on something that I love and that I am proud of. Not having any training in the writing or publishing fields, there was a lot of learning and many speed-bumps along the way, but I believe that as I went through the highs and lows, I allowed myself to grow as a poet and as an individual. My advice to all mothers who want to step out of their comfort zone and chase their dreams would be to believe in themselves. The job

Rashmi Parekh, debutante poetess, and author of the book *Inscape Lost Words Found*



limitless excitement and motivation while also being a wonderful role model for your children. For me writing poetry was always a way to express my thoughts and feelings. It is something I have done for many years and when I decided to publish some of my poems, I did it with a whole lot of support from my family and friends. It was an emotional journey and helped me realize that by giving my words wings, I had achieved

may or may not be glamorous, and you may even feel guilty when you need to prioritise work over home some of the time, but if you remain intellectually and emotionally satisfied with your profession, you acknowledge your individuality as a working woman and a loving mother. If you are willing to put in 'the sweat and the tears' to achieve what you are passionate about, the world is your oyster!"



Radhika Iyer, Founder of Raa Foundation & Anahata Organics

Radhika is a yogini, mountaineer, and Philanthropist. She tells us, "My passion for finding earth-based solutions to modern living came from my own experience of self-healing in the Himalayas. Turning that into a profession required building a drive to learn, invest, research and work in the field. As a mother, it required upgrading and advancing my time management and emotional skills. Primarily, identify the reason for taking your passion project to the next level — Does it offer a unique solution? Is it practical to implement currently? What if you don't get positive results soon? Can you build a community that will believe in your vision and mission?"



If the answer to these questions is yes, it is important to map out a holistic plan for your home and work. As women, we are able to multitask, plan beforehand and pay attention to detail, which are important skills in running a business and being a mother. You can consider flexible working conditions, use your family network for support, practice self-care and engage in mindful activities with your children to optimize your time. It is very important to be present since your time is precious you cannot waste it by worrying about things out of your control."

"Once you become a mother your responsibilities increase and you have to try and maintain a work-life balance where you need to give your undivided attention to your children and family. Being the founder of a co-working space like WorkLoft I have realized that including, sharing, and gaining assistance with your team really helps. Through all these years of working, I have realised that communication is the key to any success in the professional and personal world hence my one big suggestion to career-oriented mothers would be to organise, plan and communicate well to turn your profession that you enjoy and be passionate about it too."



Soha Parekh, Founder of WorkLoft



Early evaluation is essential

With the cases of breast cancer rising increasingly in India as compared to the western countries, it's evident that we need to take care of our breasts similar to the way we look after other organs of the body. According to the World Health Organization, in 2018, approximately 627,000 women died from breast cancer globally — that is approximately 15 per cent of all cancer deaths among women.

So, a breast lump is no doubt a serious condition and could be the initial symptom of breast cancer. But at the same time, it is important to remember that all breast lumps are not cancerous. Particularly in younger women, breast lumps may be an indicator of a benign condition.

However, one should get it evaluated by a doctor if you feel a new lump or if the breast tissue feels different from the regular texture, says Dr Anjali Kumar Sr Consultant Gynaecologist & Obstetrician and Founder at Maitri Woman's Health.

How does breast tissue normally feel?

Our breasts are a combination of tissues which vary in texture and consistency. These may be fatty, glandular and connective tissue. During a woman's menstrual cycle, the texture & consistency of these tissues may also change thereby making the breast tender. Breast tissues also undergo modifications with age.

When to see the doctor?

You find a new breast lump or thickening that feels different from the surrounding tissue. There is a change in the size, shape or appearance of the breast. Breast pain stays for a longer time i.e. more than one menstru-

al cycle. There is some change in the skin near the breast, such as itching, redness, scaling or puckering.

The nipple has become little inverted or there is abnormal discharge from the nipple.

Procedures to evaluate a breast lump.

Your doctor might ask you to get some tests done in order to confirm the diagnosis of the breast lump. These include:

- Mammogram
- Breast Ultrasound
- Breast MRI
- Breast Biopsy
- Follow-up after breast lump evaluation is essential

If the breast lump isn't cancerous, your doctor will decide whether you need short-term monitoring with clinical breast exams or repeat breast imaging. You may have to see the doctor again in two to three months. The doctor will monitor again if there have been changes in your breast.

If the diagnosis is in question or the clinical breast exam and the mammogram show areas of suspicion, but the biopsy reveals benign tissue — you'll be referred to a surgeon or other specialist for further consultation.

If the breast lump is cancerous, you'll work with your doctor to create a treatment plan. The stage and type of breast cancer will decide the further treatment procedure. Generally, surgery is performed if the lump is proven to be cancer. The surgeon before performing the surgery will explain appropriate surgical options and provide you with the information necessary to make this decision. You may have several consultations with other physicians for additional treatment, including radiation therapy and chemotherapy or hormone therapy.

Give your new-born a wonderful gift, a suitable name

Becoming parents is valuable to human ethics; it is a new chapter in a couple's life that every individual wants to experience at least once in their lifetime. Having a baby makes a couple's bond stronger, fills their lives with happiness, and makes it exciting. However, it is a drive of emotions; no one can exactly express the joy of being a parent, and the happiness is indescribable.

As a parent, every individual wants to provide their child with all the best things in the world, from the best education to the best clothes, from the best sacraments to the best lifestyle. So, as a parent, an individual tries to give their child as much as they can, not out of responsibility but out of love and care, with the mindset of investing in something they have created and for its betterment.

But between all this, we tend to forget the most precious gift, the gift that is generally neglected, and we don't think it is essential; yet, I am talking about the gift of name.

Naming a child appropriately is crucial because it is an investment for your child's future; it is something with which your baby is going to spend the rest of their life. "Name" is a person's shadow that remains by their side even after death.

Astro Numerology is a beautiful gift of nature to humankind for the selection of names, and one should leverage the beautiful gift of nature to invest in the bright future of their new-born.

Myths associated with the naming of new-born

We can see the zodiac sign of the new born and select a first letter and name our new-born.

Each letter of a human name is equally important, and each letter, the sounds associated with it, and their numerical numbers assigned based on the principles of yantra science and numerology should be given careful consideration.

The first letter of the new-born's name should be based on their zodiac sign.

Even in astrology, there are many methods to suggest the first letter of a name, and suggesting based on your zodiac sign is one of them. Hence, blindly following this may fail in many cases as well. The name initial should be advised based on in-depth horoscope analysis and numerological parameters as well.

It is just a name; we can name it whatever we want.

Fact: It is more than a name; it is an identity, and it is one of the first identities that we will give to a child.

The name of the child and the date of birth form a strong connection with each other and impact the personality and life events of the child in the future.

Furthermore, a name is something by

which the majority of people will know. Just imagine 1000 people who know you. A significant portion (80-85%) will know you by your name only. This is the mighty significance of the name in our lives.

DIY tips to name a new-born

- Leverage the beauty of both astrology and numerology to gift a name to your child that secures the future of your new-born.
- Every letter of the name and its associated numbers, elements, and sounds has its own impact, so carefully consider every relevant
- Once finalized, make sure it is embedded into the subconscious mind of the new-born by continuous writing, speaking, and listening.
- Do not address your new-born with a name that is not aligned with their date of birth.
- Life is like a two-wheeler; it will be a balanced one only if the birth date and time stay in alignment with your name.



(The writer, Sidharth S Kumar, is the founder of NumroVani, Astro Numerologist, Spiritual Business & Personalized Wellness Coach)

what's brewing?



● Priyanka

A BLOCKBUSTER EVENING

To celebrate the launch of their flagship brand, BlockBuster beer, American Brew Crafts Pvt. Ltd. hosted a fun-filled evening for food connoisseurs and a few guests. The event was attended by prominent personalities and influencers in the city. The guests had a gala time with engaging conversations over lovely drinks, great music, and scrumptious food.

● Paridhi

● Divya

● Arthy



● Kin and Rachel

● Tanusha

● Srikanth

● Tanusree

PARTY



● Sneha

MEET AND TALK

At the Park Hyatt, Hyderabad, the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Southern Region and Bengal Global Business Summit, hosted an interactive session with the government of West Bengal led by Rajiv Sinha, chairman, WBIIDC.

● Shahid Mohd Abdul, IAS

● Rajiv Sinha



● Banarjee

● Vishaya and Thrishuni

● Rishika

Photos by SV Charly



Xiaomi India announced the opening of a new Company Owned and Company Operated (COCO) Mi Home in Hyderabad. Located in Dilshuknagar, the new Mi Home has been designed with contemporary interiors and futuristic touch, providing Xiaomi fans and customers an opportunity to experience, explore, and buy all Xiaomi India products under one roof. Renowned actor Priyanka Jawalkar joined Xiaomi India at the inauguration of the new future tech store, taking the excitement a notch higher.

FUN

ARCHIE



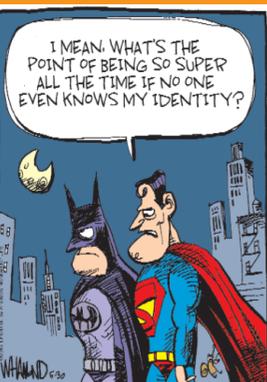
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



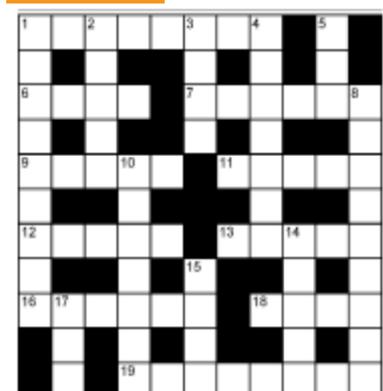
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



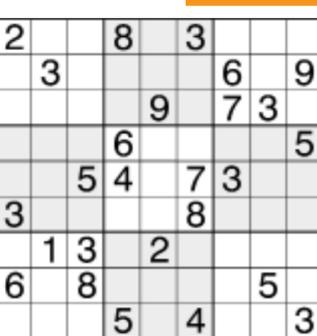
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution
 8 4 2 9 1 5 3 7 6
 5 9 6 7 3 2 8 4 1
 1 7 3 8 6 4 5 9 2
 3 6 4 2 5 9 7 1 8
 2 8 1 4 7 3 9 6 5
 9 5 7 6 8 1 4 2 3
 4 1 5 3 2 7 6 8 9
 6 2 9 5 4 8 1 3 7
 7 3 8 1 9 6 2 5 4

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

- 1 Sick people in hospital
- 6 A feeling that makes you scratch
- 7 Ran after trying to catch
- 9 One of your five senses
- 11 Pimples on the face
- 12 Requires
- 13 Opposite of winner
- 16 Attend classes here
- 18 Young child
- 19 Studied closely
- 4 Wash your hair with this
- 5 Frozen water
- 8 Smashed to pieces
- 10 This turns into a frog
- 14 The country of the Spanish
- 15 A biting insect
- 17 A popular pet

DOWN

- 1 See these at an art gallery
- 2 Small nails for carpets
- 3 Pleasant



GINGER MEGGS



Macherla Niyojakavargam has intense action sequences

In his next release, *Macherla Niyojakavargam*, Nithiin is playing the role of an IAS officer named Siddharth Reddy, who takes his first charge as collector of Guntur district in his next release, *Macherla Niyojakavargam*. MS Raja Shekhar Reddy is directing this mass action entertainer, while Sudhakar Reddy and Nikitha Reddy are bankrolling it for Sreshth Movies in association with Aditya Movies & Entertainments. Rajkumar Akella presents the movie. On Wednesday, it's Nithiin's birthday, and on the occasion, the makers have launched the first attack (teaser) of the

movie. The teaser doesn't show the plotline or other content of the movie, but it shows an intense action block on Nithiin and some goons. Actually, the goons who look like beasts with tiger paint on their bodies and faces enter the carnival to eradicate Nithiin. But the macho man counterattacks them, like a lion chasing deer. The action sequence choreographed by Venkat Master is wonderfully designed, as it shows the mass and action side of Nithiin. Nithiin was simply superb in the role, and he looked massy with the getup of a full moustache and trimmed beard. Going by the teaser, the film will have some intense action sequences. Prasad

Murella's camera work is top notch, while Mahati Swara Sagar brings intensity to the video with his terrific background score. As we can see in the teaser, *Macherla Niyojakavargam* will arrive grandly worldwide in theatres on July 8. Krithi Shetty and Catherine Tresa star opposite Nithiin in the film, which is billed as a pucca mass and commercial entertainer with political overtones. Mamidala Thirupathi has provided the dialogues, and Sahi Suresh is the art director. Kotagiri Venkateswara Rao is the editor.



The Ghost wraps up Dubai schedule

King Akkineni Nagarjuna is presently starring in a high-octane action entertainer called *The Ghost*, under the direction of creative director Praveen Sattaru. Sonal Chauhan is playing the leading lady opposite Nagarjuna in the film. Meanwhile, the team has completed a crucial shooting schedule in Dubai. This schedule included some intense stunt sequences, important scenes, and a romantic song made on lavish and grand scale. In terms of its visuals, locations, top-notch technicalities, and other grandeur, *The Ghost* is going to offer a holistic experience of movie watching to movie buffs. In particular, the action sequence set in the desert will be the major highlight of all the stunt sequences in the movie. As we can see from these posters, both Nagarjuna and Sonal Chauhan will be seen as Interpol officers in the movie.



The *Ghost* also features Gul Panag and Anikha Surendran in important roles. Narayan Das K Narang, Puskur Ram Mohan Rao, and Sharrath Marar are producing the film with Sree Venkateshwara Cinemas LLP

and Northstar Entertainment Banners. As for the other technical crew, Mukesh G cranks the camera, while Brahma Kadali is the art director, and Robin Subbu and Nabha Master are the stunt directors.

Ranga Ranga Vaibhavanga releasing on July 1



Vaishnav Tej's next *Ranga Ranga Vaibhavanga*, starring Ketika Sharma, is headed for a grand theatrical release. The film is said to be a romantic comedy entertainer that will connect with the audience. The film will open in theatres on July 1. "To witness their beautiful journey, we have to head to the theatres near us on July 1st, 2022," announced the makers on Wednesday. *Ranga Ranga Vaibhavanga*, who had previously directed the Tamil remake of Arjun Reddy and Aditya Varma, is directing *Ranga Ranga Vaibhavanga*, while SVCC, the production company, is bankrolling the film. It has music by superstar Devi Sri Prasad. In the movie, Vaishnav Tej and Ketika Sharma will play the characters of Rishi and Radha, respectively. They will be playing a young romantic couple at a college.



Chiranjeevi to grace Mishan Impossible pre-release event

Taapsee Pannu's upcoming movie *Mishan Impossible* will be graced by Megastar Chiranjeevi at the pre-release event. The makers of *Mishan Impossible* have arranged for a gala pre-release event in Hyderabad, which will have Chiranjeevi as the chief guest. Niranjan Reddy, who is one of the producers of Chiranjeevi's

Acharya, is also a producer of *Mishan Impossible* as well. So, the producer, who shares a good rapport with the megastar, seems to have invited him to the event. The crime comedy titled *Mishan Impossible*, starring Taapsee Pannu in a 45-minute role is directed by Swaroop RSJ. Three perky kids trying to trace the underworld don Dawood Ibrahim land

them in trouble, which will be depicted in the movie. Slated for its release on April 1, *Mishan Impossible* has already caught the attention of all, as the trailer released by the team has captivated all. Ravinder Vijay, Hareesh Paredi, Rishab Shetty, Suhaas, and others will be seen in pivotal roles, while Naveen Polishetty of *Jathi Rathnalu* fame has lent his voice to the movie.

Upasana bags CSR award from NATHEALTH

Upasana Kamineni Konidela, Vice Chairperson of Apollo Hospitals Foundation, received the reputed NATHealth CSR Award 2022 for their Total Health initiative, which focuses on deeper engagement with rural communities for better health outcomes. This recognition is inspired by Upasana's grandfather (Founder Chairman of Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd.) — Dr. Prathap C. Reddy's vision of womb to tomb care and rural development through a health lens. "I am delighted to have received the reputed NATHEALTH CSR Award 2022 for our Total Health project. This recognition takes us back to Thatha's vision of womb-to-tomb care through a community healthcare lens," tweeted Upasana.



KGF: Chapter 2: Metaverse to be launched soon as KGFVerse

As the Yash-starrer *KGF: Chapter 2* is inching towards its release, the makers have planned to publicise the movie in a distinctive manner. The producers took to social media to announce the *KGF* metaverse, which is titled *KGFVerse*. As per the makers, the makers will release the metaverse for *KGF: Chapter 2*, which will offer people the chance to create their own avatars. With multiple, distinctive avatars, the users will be able to explore the world of *KGF*. Users can make use of this chance from April 7 to April 7. "The metaverse will soon be Rocky's world. Get ready for a grand entry on April 7th. Offer Closes Soon," the makers wrote. This unique promotion strategy is expected to amplify the existing buzz around Prashanth Neel's directorial. *KGF-Chapter 2* is the sequel to *KGF*, one of the biggest hits in the history

of Kannada cinema. Originally made in Kannada, the movie *KGF: Chapter 2* is to be released

in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, and Hindi languages. In the movie, veteran

actor Sanjay Dutt is to be seen in a terrific role, while Raveena Tandon has a significant role as well.



IPL is the best league in the world and with every teammate of yours you get to learn a lot about the game, so I am loving picking the brains of Shikhar Dhawan

—BHANUKA RAJAPAKSA

RCB fold KKR for 128



PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Sri Lankan leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga snapped four wickets as Kolkata Knight Riders produced a disappointing batting effort to be bowled out for 128 by Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Indian Premier League here on Wednesday.

Hasaranga lived up to his Rs 10.75 crore price tag as he returned with four wickets for 20 runs in his quota of four overs.

The 24-year-old was ably supported by the pace trio of Akash Deep (3/45), Harshal Patel (2/11) and Mohammed Siraj (1/25) after RCB

opted to bowl after winning the toss.

KKR batters, on the other hand, paid the price for going for shots too many despite losing wickets at regular intervals at DY Patil Stadium here. The two-time former champions lost six wickets for 57 runs to slip from 44 for 3 to 101 for 9 in 14.3 overs.

Andre Russell was the highest scorer for KKR with a 18-ball 25, while Umesh Yadav (18) and Varun Chakravarthy (10) added 27 runs for the last wicket, the highest partnership for KKR, to provide some respectability to the total.

Venkatesh Iyer was the first to be dismissed with Akash Deep striking

on his first delivery, while Ajinkya Rahane's shaky start ended when he was holed out in the fifth over off Siraj as KKR slipped to 32 for 2.

Nitish Rana produced a first-ball six, disposed a low full toss across point, but Akash Deep had the last laugh with David Willey producing a stunning catch to send him back to the pavilion.

With KKR reaching 44 for 3 in the first six overs, it was time for skipper Shreyas Iyer to go as he paid the price for an irresponsible shot, hitting straight to Du Plessis at long-on off Hasaranga.

Despite the match situation, West

pointstable

PO.	TEAM	M	W	L	NR	Pts	NRR
1.	RR	1	1	0	0	2	3.050
2.	DC	1	1	0	0	2	0.914
3.	PBKS	1	1	0	0	2	0.697
4.	KKR	1	1	0	0	2	0.639
5.	GT	1	1	0	0	2	0.286
6.	LSG	1	0	1	0	0	-0.286
7.	CSK	1	0	1	0	0	-0.639
8.	RCB	1	0	1	0	0	-0.697
9.	MI	1	0	1	0	0	-0.914
10.	SRH	1	0	1	0	0	-3.050

boundarymeter

4s	151
6s	85

Indies all-rounder Sunil Narine decided to play his shots and lofted Akash Deep over mid-off before top-edging him for a maximum.

However, he didn't last long and ended up giving an easy catch to point fielder off Hasaranga, who dealt another blow in the next delivery, knocking the stumps of Sheldon Jackson with a ripping googly as KKR slumped to 67 for 6 in 9 overs.

Sam Billings, who survived an LBW appeal in his first ball, slammed a six before making his way back to the hut with a miscued pull which was comfortably held by Kohli at long-on.

Big-hitting West Indies all-rounder Russell smashed three sixes and a four in his 18-ball 25 before edging Harshal Patel to Dinesh Karthik.

Tim Southee then mistimed one from Hasaranga to Du Plessis at long-on.

Varun and Umesh hit a couple of fours before the latter was cleaned up by Akash Deep.

CSK, LSG seek improvement in top-order batting

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Chennai Super Kings will welcome the return of star all-rounder Moeen Ali as they eye a much improved batting performance in the IPL clash against Lucknow Super Giants here on Thursday.

Both the teams come into the game after a loss in their respective opening matches. A common factor in their defeats were the failure of the top-order and they would be looking to correct that at the Brabourne Stadium.

It is still very early days in the two-month long IPL but the toss is already playing a significant role in the game's outcome. With the second innings dew in mind, teams are preferring to put the opposition in.

The losses for CSK and LSG came after batting first at the Wankhede. Conditions are not expected to be very different at the nearby CCI ground with heavy dew likely to set in the second half of the game.

Lucknow skipper KL Rahul and star opener Quinton De Kock had a forgettable outing on Monday and they would be keen to get some runs under their belt. Rahul needs to lead from the front with the IPL presenting a big test for his captaincy

Lucknow vs Chennai
Live from 7:30 pm IST
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

Seasoned campaigner Manish Pandey and Evin Lewis, who is a hard-hitting batter, on their day can take any attack to cleaners, had a forgettable outing and the team management would hope that they come to the party.

Lucknow would be pleased that their middle-order comprising Deepak Hooda, debutant Ayush Badoni and Krunal Pandya clicked when their top-order collapsed and the trio would again need

responsibility. But it was the Lucknow bowling, which would need to quickly forget the hammering they received at the hands of Gujarat. While pacer Dushmantha Chameera was right on the money, co-pacer Avesh Khan leaked 33 runs in 3.4 overs.

Also the role of spin trio of Ravi Bishnoi, Hooda and Krunal, could decide the match's fate.

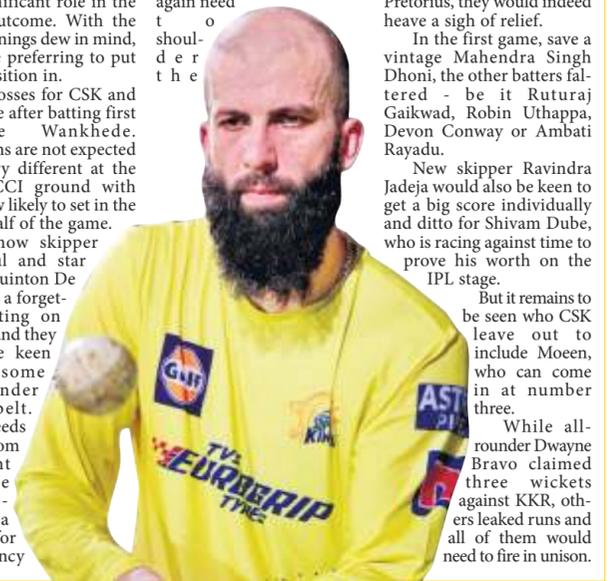
CSK would also look to put up a much better show with the bat after they managed only 131 in the first game. With Moeen Ali, a pinch-hitter available for selection alongside Dwaine Pretorius, they would indeed heave a sigh of relief.

In the first game, save a vintage Mahendra Singh Dhoni, the other batters faltered - be it Ruturaj Gaikwad, Robin Uthappa, Devon Conway or Ambati Rayudu.

New skipper Ravindra Jadeja would also be keen to get a big score individually and ditto for Shivam Dube, who is racing against time to prove his worth on the IPL stage.

But it remains to be seen who CSK leave out to include Moeen, who can come in at number three.

While all-rounder Dwayne Bravo claimed three wickets against KKR, others leaked runs and all of them would need to fire in unison.



Injured Marsh to link up with Delhi squad



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Injured all-rounder Mitchell Marsh will link up with his IPL franchise Delhi Capitals and continue his recovery in India after being ruled out of Australia's remaining limited overs series against Pakistan.

The 30-year-old, who was bought for ₹6.5 crore by the Capitals in the IPL auction last month, had injured his hip flexor during a high-intensity fielding drill on Sunday.

He had subsequently missed the first ODI, which Australia won by 88 runs in Lahore on Tuesday.

Marsh will now manage his recovery under the guidance of physiotherapist Patrick Farhart, who has been with the Capitals since the 2020 IPL

season.

"Marsh will travel to India to link with the Delhi Capitals squad where former Australian and current New South Wales physiotherapist Pat Farhart will manage his recovery following an isolation period," Cricket Australia said in a statement on Wednesday.

"Being able to focus on my recovery without the travel and isolation break is the best approach. I am disappointed to miss the Pakistan series but look forward to re-joining the Australian squad for our next tour," Marsh said.

Marsh was originally going to miss the Capitals' first three games as he was a part of the Australian limited overs team for the series against Australia.



Rohit, Kohli slip; Ashwin rises in Test rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

India skipper Rohit Sharma and veteran batter Virat Kohli moved down a rung each to be placed 8th and 10th, respectively, in the latest ICC Test rankings released on Wednesday.

Rohit, who continued to remain the top-ranked Indian in the batters' chart, moved down a place to 8th. He has 754 points, while Kohli, who has 742 rating points moved to the 10th position.

Ravindra Jadeja retained the top position among all-rounders, while Ravichandran Ashwin displaced West Indies' Jason Holder to be second. Ashwin and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah continued to hold on to their second and fourth positions, respectively, in the bowlers' chart.

In the ODI rankings, Kohli remained static on second while Rohit climbed up a place to fourth.

Rajapaksa seeks meeting with Kohli to take tips on fitness

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Skills "come first" for S/Bhanuka Rajapaksa but the Sri Lankan batter has realised that survival in modern-day cricket is not possible without attaining required fitness standards.

Dropped from the national team over fitness issues, Rajapaksa now wants to have a conversation with a supremely-fit Virat Kohli, who he calls the 'Cristiano Ronaldo of cricket'.

Being part of the Indian Premier League (IPL), the 30-year-old Lankan can have that opportunity to meet the former India skipper and hopefully turn the tide having endured a dramatic start to year 2022.

The 30-year-old announced his international retirement this January and withdrew it a week later on the insistence of authorities. However, he still missed the plane to India due to the same fitness issues, last month.

Rajapaksa is sure that the two-month long stint with Punjab Kings would benefit his game immensely and take his fitness to the next level.

"IPL is the best league in the world and with every teammate of yours you get to learn a lot about the game, so I am loving picking the brains of Shikhar Dhawan. I get along very well with Mayank Agarwal as we played U-19 together," Rajapaksa said.

"Outside of the team Virat Kohli is always someone I could speak to and get some advice on fitness. He's at another different level

when it comes to fitness.

"To me, he is the Cristiano Ronaldo of cricket for sure. The work he puts in you can obviously see the results. You can compare him to anyone when it comes fitness or even skills wise. He plays so hard and you can learn a lot by talking to him," he said.

On the 'fitness versus skills' debate, Rajapaksa has a clear view.

"As a player you need your fitness but it could be different from person to person. For me, of course, skill comes first. And then the fitness, but if you are not fit enough you definitely can't perform."

"I'm actually working hard on my fitness. Whenever I get a free day I hit the gym early in the morning. That there are some fitness requirements to represent the country and with fitness, my international career would be longer."

"I'm hoping to play for the next three to four years at least and do the best for the country because after my resignation I had to withdraw it back because I had a couple of conversations with the technical committee and the Sports Minister as well. They wanted me to reconsider my retirement and I decided to withdraw it," he said.

Rajapaksa feels he is now doing "all the right things" as he looks to extend his international career by at least three to four years.

Healy heroics lead Aussies into World Cup final



AP ■ WELLINGTON

A double-century opening stand carried tournament favourites Australia to a commanding 157-run win over the West Indies on Wednesday and a place in the Women's World Cup final.

Australia dominated their rain-shortened semi-final in Wellington from the outset, built around a 216-run stand -- the highest of the tournament -- between experienced openers Alyssa Healy and Rachael Haynes.

An imposing score of 305 for three off a reduced 45 overs was never threatened by the West Indies, who succumbed for 148 in the 37th over.

The six-time champions Australia are unbeaten at the 50-over tournament and will face either South Africa or 2017 winners England in the final in Christchurch on Sunday.

Play started nearly two hours late because of misty rain and Healy, in particular, struggled for timing in the early stages after Australia were sent in on a damp Basin Reserve pitch.

She accelerated as the sun came out, posting 129 off 107 balls to register a fourth ODI century and fell four runs short of her career-best score.

The wicketkeeper-batter used her feet to excellent effect against the spin-based

Caribbean attack, smashing 17 fours and a six.

She didn't hit a boundary until the 12th over but said Haynes had reminded her to remain patient.

"I hope I've learned my lesson by now, that it doesn't necessarily have to happen all at once," Healy said. "I love batting with Rach, she's a calming influence."

Haynes compiled 85 off 100 balls while the late runs came via unbeaten knocks from captain Meg Lanning (26) and Beth Mooney (43).

It was a disappointing performance from the sixth-ranked West Indies, who were loose in the field, dropping a handful of chances, and they struggled for momentum with the bat.

Captain Stefanie Taylor was their top scorer with a careful 48, but she lacked support after top-order pair Deandra Dottin and Hayley Matthews both departed for 34.

Their hopes weren't helped by injuries suffered in the field to bowlers Chinelle Henry and Anisa Mohammed, with neither able to bat, meaning Australia needed to take only eight wickets.

The second semi-final pits defending champions England against second-ranked South Africa in Christchurch on Thursday, a repeat of the 2017 last-four thriller that was decided in the final over.

Celebrities pay tribute to Warne at service

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

An eclectic array of celebrities including singer Elton John, golfing legend Greg Norman and champion surfer Kelly Slater paid tribute on Wednesday to their friend, former Australian cricketer Shane Warne, at a star-studded state memorial service.

More than 50,000 mourners chanted their hero's nickname "Warne" at the outset of the service at the Melbourne Cricket Ground as they used to do when he took to the pitch for a match.

It was his hometown pitch where he cemented his sporting legend in 2006 by becoming the first bowler in the world to take 700 Test wickets.

Warne's death at a Thai resort of a suspected heart attack on March 4 at the age of 52



made headlines around the world.

The pain was felt far beyond the cricket world. Tributes came from the fields of music, acting, business, golf, politics, surfing, comedy, poker and others.

Elton John dedicated a rendition of "Don't Let the Sun Go

Down on Me" to Warne's children - Brooke, Summer and Jackson - who were among the crowd that included Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

John and fellow British musicians Ed Sheeran, Robbie Williams and Coldplay front-man Chris Martin appeared on

a large screen via video. So too did Australian singers (and sisters) Kylie and Dannii Minogue.

Martin played "Eulogy," a piano piece that he composed for the occasion. In another video, Martin apologised for not attending the memorial in person. Sheeran described Warne as "such a great bloke."

Australian-born former champion golfer Greg Norman recalled Warne's passion, energy and enthusiasm for life.

Some knew Warne as one of the all-time great spin bowlers. Others knew him as the dapper one-time fiancé of glamorous British film star and model Elizabeth Hurley.

"It seems too cruel that all the people who loved him will never have another Lion hug," Hurley posted on social media in a tribute to the former lover she called Lionheart after his

death.

She did not take part in Wednesday's service.

Former English cricket team captain Nasser Hussain and former West Indies team captain Brian Lara also spoke at the service.

Warne's love life and off-field indiscretions were often fodder for tabloid journalists. But his determination to be his authentic, flawed and irreverent self endeared him to his friends and fans alike.

A statue of Warne outside the cricket ground became a focus of public grief. Tributes left at the statue included beer bottles and cigarette packets.

It was a nod to how Warne once described himself in words repeated at his service by his father, Keith Warne: "I smoked, I drank and I played a little cricket."