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JUSTICE SYSTEM

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GOING FOR 10

HYDERABAD, SATURDAY, JANUARY 28, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



NADIYA, IVANA & YOGI
BABU ONBOARD FOR
MS DHONI'S
LET'S GET MARRIED

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NEW BLOOD TEST CAN DETECT ALZHEIMER'S 3.5 YRS BEFORE DIAGNOSIS

Scientists have developed a blood-based test that could be used to predict the risk of Alzheimer's disease up to 3.5 years before clinical diagnosis. The research, published in the journal Brain, supports the idea that components in the human blood can modulate the formation of new brain cells, a process termed neurogenesis. Neurogenesis occurs in an important part of the brain called the hippocampus that is involved in learning and memory. While Alzheimer's disease affects the formation of new brain cells in the hippocampus during the early stages of the disease, previous studies have only been able to study neurogenesis in its later stages through autopsies.

JUVENILE HELD FOR SNATCHING GROOM'S CURRENCY GARLAND

A 14-year-old boy was apprehended for allegedly snatching a groom's garland carrying currency notes worth Rs 1,64,500, police said on Friday. The incident happened in west Delhi's Mayapuri. The matter came to light on Wednesday when the groom's brother reported that a boy had snatched the groom's garland when he was about to sit on a horse for the wedding ceremony, police said. A case was registered under section 356 (Assault or criminal force in attempt to commit theft of property carried by a person) and 379 (theft) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and an investigation was undertaken, they said.

INFORMERS TAKE ENORMOUS RISK; REWARD THEM TO COME FORWARD: HC

Informers take enormous risks and the government's approach should not discourage them from coming forward with information, the Bombay High Court said recently, directing the Centre to pay reward to the widow of a man who had tipped Customs officials about smuggled diamonds worth nearly Rs 90 lakh in 1991. A division bench of Justices Nitin Jamdar and Abhay Ahuja in its order of January 5, which was made available later, noted that the objective behind offering a reward to informers is to aid the department in taking measures to safeguard the exchequer. The bench was hearing a petition filed by one Jayashree Dhavre, widow of Chandrakant Dhavre, seeking reward given to informers as per government policy.

'RICE-LOVING' JUMBO WREAKS HAVOC IN VILLAGE; DESTROYS RATION SHOP

A rice-loving wild tusker, which frequently strays into human settlements allegedly in search of the grain, destroyed a ration shop in an estate in this Kerala district in the early hours of Friday, villagers here complained. The rogue elephant, known as "Arikomban" among local people due its love for "ari" (rice), has been a nightmare for those in Santhanpara in this high range district for some time. "Ari" means rice and "komban" means tusker in local parlance. However, Wildlife officials said the shop is located in the traditional route of the jumbos and they are yet to confirm whether the same jumbo was raiding ration shops.

TS COMMITTED TO FARMERS; SO, THERE IS ZERO SUICIDE IN STATE

It's Mann ki baat, not Dhan ki baat

KCR promises to implement Kisan Bandhu across the country

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao gave a call to make India great. "Maharashtra tops in farmer suicides. Our heads hang in shame when we read such things. Is Maharashtra short of funds? Telangana is weaker than Maharashtra. But here we strengthened agriculture, brought about changes and stopped farmer suicides. Migration has stopped and they have returned home. Today the farmers of Telangana do not commit suicide and are living in honour. If this is possible in TS, why can't it be done in Maharashtra or Odisha? It is not about Dhan ki baat..it is Mann Ki Baat. There is no shortage of Dhan (money) but there is a dearth of commitment."

Former Odisha Chief Minister



Giridhar Gamang and other prominent leaders joined the BRS in the presence of BRS President Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao at the Telangana Bhavan in Hyderabad on Friday.

Stating that the BRS took up the slogan 'Ab Ki Bar Kisan Sarkar' KCR said, "Farmers of this country should learn

to wield the pen as well as the plough. Farmers should be elected as MLAs and MPs and go to legislative bodies."

KCR said that there should be a strong political commitment to bring about a qualitative change in the lives of people.

"Today, Telangana is moving forward on the path of progress by pro-

Giridhar Gamang and MLAs joins BRS

Former Odisha Chief Minister and nine-time MP Giridhar Gamang, his wife Hema, son Sishir and a dozen political and farmer leaders from Odisha joined the BRS in Hyderabad on Friday. Former Odisha Chief Minister Giridhar Gamang, Former MP Hema Gamang, Shishir Gamang, Shaurya Gamang, Odisha BJP State Yuva Morcha General Secretary Sneranjan Das, and the Koraput Parliamentary Constituency Party Congress Youth President joined the BRS. -P-2



viding water to every house, irrigation and electricity to every field. We are providing the same drinking water to the poor in Banjara Thandas and the rich living in Banjara Hills. When this is possible in Telangana why not in the country?" the CM said.

2

NABARD extends Rs 3,000 cr loan to TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Civil Supplies Corporation (TSCSCL) took a loan of Rs 3,000 crore from NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) on Friday.

TSCSCL Chairman Sardar Ravinder Singh said the loan was taken to make payments for grain purchased from farmers during the monsoon season. The decision was made during a board meeting of the Civil Supplies Corporation held through video conference.

A single tender was issued by Nabard for debt collection as per the directives of the Centre. Authorities revealed that all the loan proceeds

During the 2022 monsoon, the Civil Supplies Corporation purchased 64.12 crore tonnes of paddy worth Rs 13,189 cr from 9.65 lakh farmers.

were done in accordance with the loan limit norms approved by the state government.

During the 2022 monsoon, the Civil Supplies Corporation purchased 64.12 crore tonnes of paddy worth Rs 13,189 crore from 9.65 lakh farmers.

Chairman Sardar Ravinder Singh said that of the Rs 3,000 crore, up to Rs 500 crore has been paid to farmers, while the remaining amount will be used to repay short-term loans taken in the past.

BRS Parl Party meeting tomorrow

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A meeting of the BRS Parliamentary Party will be held under the chairmanship of BRS supreme Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao at 1 pm on January 29 at the Pragathi Bhavan. The meeting will start after lunch.

KCR will give direction to party MPs on the issues to be discussed in Parliament and the strategy to be followed.



AHOBILAM MUTT TEMPLE SC refuses to entertain plea against AP HC order on appointing EO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

"Let the religious people deal with it," the Supreme Court said on Friday while refusing to entertain a plea against an Andhra Pradesh High Court order holding that the state of Andhra Pradesh had no authority under law to appoint an executive officer to the Ahobilam mutt temple.

A bench of Justices S K Kaul and A S Oka said Andhra Pradesh has no authority, jurisdiction or entitlement under law to appoint an executive officer of the 'Sri Ahobilam Mutt Parampara Aadheena Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Devasthanam' (Ahobilam Mutt Temple).

2

GOs issued to fill 2,391 vacant posts in state

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government issued seven GOs on Friday to fill 2,391 vacant posts in the Education, Health and Public Relations departments.

Health and Finance Minister, Thanneeru Harish Rao announced that the recruitments will be done through the TSPSC (Telangana State Public Service Commission), MHSRB (Medical & Health Services Recruitment Board), and TREIRB (Telangana Residential Educational Institutions Recruitment Board). The posts in



the Information and Public Relations department will be filled through direct recruitment.

GO Ms: No: 11 mentions 1,499 posts in the education department, GO Ms: No: 12 mentions 63

vacant staff nurse posts, GO Ms. No:13 mentions 12 Junior Assistant posts, GO Ms. No:14 mentions 141 Junior Assistant posts,

2

93 in Education Dept

Telangana Government has issued a GO to fill 93 various categories of posts in the School Education Department. The GO release read Government has reviewed the status of direct recruitment vacancies in various categories under the control of Secretary, Telangana State Residential Educational Institutional Society. -PAGE:2

Ex-CJI bats for Sanskrit as official language

PNS ■ NAGPUR

Former Chief Justice of India Sharad Bobde on Friday batted for Sanskrit as the country's official language, including for use in courts, and said even the architect of the Constitution and eminent jurist BR Ambedkar had proposed it as per media reports from 1949.

He said Hindi and English are used as official languages in governance and courts as per law, while every chief justice receives representations seeking nod to introduce respective regional languages, which

is now a reality in the district level judiciary and some high courts.

Bobde was speaking at the Akhil Bhartiya Chhatra Samellan organised by Sanskrit Bharti.

At the level of the high court, the official language is English, though many HCs have had to allow applications, petitions and even documents in regional languages, he said.

"I don't think this issue (of official language) should remain unresolved. It has remained unresolved since 1949.

2

Large mammals shaped the evolution of humans in Africa

PNS ■ JOHANNESBURG

That humans originated in Africa is widely accepted. But it's not generally recognised how unique features of Africa's ecology were responsible for the crucial evolutionary transitions from forest-inhabiting fruit-eater to savanna-dwelling hunter.

These were founded on earth movements and aided physically by Africa's seasonal aridity, bedrock-derived soils and absence of barriers to movements between north and south.

These features promoted extensive savanna grasslands marked by erratic rainfall, regular fires and abundant numbers of diverse grazing and browsing animals. My lifelong studies have focused on the ecology of Africa's large herbivores and their effects on savanna vegetation. In his recent book, Norman Owen-



Smith, University of the Witwatersrand, by linking pre-existing threads together for the first time, explains how distinctive features

of these animals' ecology, founded on Africa's physical geography, enabled the adaptive changes that led ultimately to mod-

ern humans. What emerges is the realisation that this amazing evolutionary transformation could only have occurred in

Africa. This recognition emphasises the deep cultural legacy formed by Africa's large mammal heritage for all of humankind.

APE-MEN

Starting during the late Miocene, around 10 million years ago, a plume of molten magma, hot liquid material from deep inside the Earth, pushed eastern parts of Africa upward. This led to rifting of the Earth's crust, volcanic eruptions and soils enriched in mineral nutrients from the lava and ash. Grassy savannas spread and animals adapted increasingly to graze this vegetation component. Apes from that time were forced to spend less time up in trees and more time walking upright on two legs.

HOMO HABILIS

Around 2.8 million years ago, another lineage split off from the australopithecines, reversing the trend towards robust dentition. This lineage used stones chipped to serve as tools. These were used to scrape flesh from carcasses of animals killed by carnivores, and crack open long bones for their marrow content. This transition in ecology was sufficiently momentous to warrant a new generic name: Homo, specifically habilis ("handy-man").

HOMO ERECTUS

Several hundred thousand years of progressive advancements in upright walking and brain capacity led to the next major adaptive shift, exemplified by improvements in the design of stone tools. Stone cores became shaped on both sides to aid the processing of animal carcasses. This led to the emergence of Homo erectus around 1.8 million years ago. These early humans had become efficient hunters. Consequently, meat and bones became reliable food resources year-round.

HOMO SAPIENS

After 8,000,000 years ago, fluctuations in heat and aridity became more extreme in Africa. Finely crafted stone tools defined the transition into the Middle Stone Age, coupled with the emergence of modern Homo sapiens in Africa around 300 thousand years ago. But despite its hunting prowess Homo sapiens had declined to precarious numbers in Africa by around 1,30,000 years ago, following an especially severe ice age. Genetic evidence indicates that the entire human population across the continent shrank to fewer than 40,000 individuals, spread thinly from Morocco in the north to the Cape in the far south. One remnant survived by inhabiting caves along the southern Cape coast, exploiting marine resources.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Saptami: Jan 27 09:10 AM to Jan 28 08:43 AM
Ashtami: Jan 28 08:43 AM to Jan 29 09:05 AM
Nakshatram: Ashwini: Jan 27 06:36 PM to Jan 28 07:06 PM
Bharani: Jan 28 07:06 PM to Jan 29 08:21 AM
Rahukalam: 9:40 AM to 11:05 AM
Yamagandam: 1:53 PM to 3:17 PM
Variyam: 05:12 AM to 06:53 AM
Gulika: 6:52 AM to 8:16 AM
Amritakalam: 11:45 AM to 01:23 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:06 PM to 12:51 PM
HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 31°C
Humidity: 43%
Sunrise: 6:49 AM
Sunset: 6:09 PM
Updated: JANUARY 27, 2023 5:00 PM

Nizam is gone, but 'Nizamiyat' is still alive!

Although India attained freedom from the British rule following prolonged struggle and supreme sacrifices on August 15, 1947, it became a Republic on January 26, 1950, by adopting the Constitution drafted under the leadership of Bharat Ratna Dr BR Ambedkar. After millennia of rule by monarchs and autocrats, both Indian and foreign, 'We, the People of India', constituted India into a Republic and proclaimed ourselves to be supreme. There is no power higher than the 'People of India'. The heads of our Union and States - the President and the Governors, who represent this great country as the first citizen of the nation and respective states, are appointed by people through their representatives. We celebrate this supremacy of 'We the people' on January 26 every year. As

representatives of 'We the people', the First Citizens lead the grand celebrations and receive State honours. It is this majestic assertion of our supremacy that Telangana Chief Minister Kalvakuntla Chandrasekhar Rao belittled this January 26. Citing a deceitful and laughable excuse - the Covid threat - he downgraded the Republic Day celebrations to humiliate our state's first citizen and Governor, Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan personally. The Telangana High Court took no time to expose his subterfuge. It rightly questioned the KCR government why the same Covid threat was not a problem for the BRS party's launch meeting in Khammam, where lakhs of people were mobilised by the ruling party only a few days back. He even disregarded the spirit of the High Court's

KCR thinks he is the new Nizam of Telangana State. Our Chief Minister doesn't believe he needs to respect Constitutional institutions at any level in our three-tier governance structure. Be it the office of the Prime Minister at the Union level, the office of the Governor at the state level or panchayats and municipal bodies at the local level.

directions concerning these celebrations. The BRS government's utter disregard for institutions, traditions and conventions under the leadership of KCR is an insult to the public of our Republic. KCR brought disgrace to the people of Telangana by repeatedly denigrating constitutional institutions. Even though India overthrew the rule of the Nizams from Telangana way back in 1948, the people of Telangana are experiencing 'Nizamiyat' even today under KCR.

KCR thinks he is the new Nizam of Telangana State. Our Chief Minister doesn't believe he needs to respect Constitutional institutions at any level in our three-tier governance structure. Be it the office of the Prime Minister at the Union level, the office of the Governor at the state level or panchayats and municipal bodies at the local level. His contempt for Constitutional bodies is not limited to the Executive branch alone. It even extends to the Judiciary, a co-equal branch of the Indian State and the uphold-



KISHORE POREDDY

er of the rule of law and our Fundamental Rights.

The Telangana CM refuses to receive the Prime Minister on his visits to the state. He uses uncouth language against the PM at his press conferences. His administration has eviscerated the powers of the panchayats and municipalities and made them dummies.

His officers routinely disregard the Judiciary's orders; to the extent that the recently transferred Chief Secretary of the state had hundreds of contempt petitions pending against him in the courts. What's more, our CM's contempt is not limited to our democratic institutions alone. It extends to the traditions and conventions that have evolved over decades and oil the functioning of our democracy.

Three Chief Ministers were on stage at the Bharat Rashtra Samithi's launch meeting in Khammam. All of them had expressed misgivings about the institution of the Governor and its functioning either at the Khammam public meeting or on other occasions. In addition, almost all political parties have expressed disquiet at different times, including the Bharatiya Janata Party. But none of them had undermined

the dignity of this constitutional office as KCR did. Be it denying protocol to the Governor, or disregarding traditions and conventions like bypassing the Governor's address to joint sessions of the Legislature, and, worst of all, scaling down Republic Day celebrations to insult the Governor.

It's time KCR understands that he is where he is because of our Constitution. That he, too, occupies a Constitutional office. However much he dislikes the current Constitution and wants it to be replaced by one to his liking, he cannot disregard the current one, under which our state was formed, and he became its Chief Minister.

Independence Day and Republic Day are the two festivals that unite Indians of every religion, caste, creed, gender, region, and language.

These two occasions are beyond politics. No Telanganait could have imagined that petty leaders like KCR could abuse them to satiate their egos.

Since renaming the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) as Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), our Chief Minister has lost no opportunity to preach about the need for a 'gunatmaka maarpu' - qualitative change in our country's polity. Additionally, he claims to be the 'Desh ki neta' that India needs to bring about that qualitative change. But, going by his actions and not his words, this is one qualitative change is for the worse. Luckily, India is in no mood to encourage either him or his new national party, which lacks a sense of nationalism.

(The author is BJP TS spokesperson)

TS reports zero Covid-19 cases after 2 years

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana reported zero Covid-19 cases for the first time after the pandemic started.

In November 2022 there was a minimum of two cases and a maximum of 77 cases were reported. In December 2022 a minimum of five cases and a maximum of 16 cases were reported. On January 27, 2023, zero cases were reported. In Jan 2023 a minimum of zero cases and a maximum of 15 cases were reported.

Director of Health Dr G. Srinivas Rao said that this is the first time since the beginning of Covid-19 that zero cases were reported. The first Covid-19 confirmed case was reported on March 2, 2020, in Telangana. Currently, there are 19 cases under treatment.

Telangana witnessed 8,41,486 positive cases after March 2020. The state reported 4111 deaths. The number of tests conducted are 3.83 crore. The reports of 49 people are awaited as of Friday.

'Haath se haath jodo' getting tremendous response: Shabbir

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress leader Mohammed Ali Shabbir said that 'Haath Se Haath Jodo Abhiyan' was getting a tremendous response from people across the State.

About 50 activists of the BRS and the BJP of Kancherla village of Bhiknoor Mandal in Kamareddy district joined the Congress on Friday. Shabbir invited them to the Congress by offering them a 'Khandwa'.

Speaking to the media on Friday, Shabbir said the 'Haath Se Haath Jodo Abhiyan' would be a great success. He said the campaign has already been launched on a grand scale in Kamareddy on the 74th Republic Day on Thursday.

"During the two-month-long campaign, we will expose the failures of the BJP government at the Centre and the BRS government in Telangana. We will explain to the people how



they were deceived by Modi and KCR governments with their false promises and fake assurances. They failed to address the problems of unemployment and inflation and deceived people by creating an illusion of development," he said.

He said that a letter written by Congress leader Rahul

Gandhi and a 'charge sheet' against the BJP and BRS governments would be delivered to each household during the 'Haath Se Haath Jodo Abhiyan'.

"Telangana's politics has become too noisy due to the war of words between BRS and BJP leaders. Both parties are admitting lack of development in Telangana during the last eight years. But they are blaming each other for the same. People have realised that the tussle between the BRS and the BJP is fake and is only aimed at diverting public attention from the failures of their governments in the State and at the Centre. Therefore, people have decided to support the Congress in the next elections," he said.

Shabbir accused Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao of wasting time on politicking instead of focusing on governance.

"The Union Budget will be presented on February 1 and Telangana's budget will also be presented in the first week of February. Telangana has huge debts of over Rs 5,000 billion and it has no money to pay salaries on time. Instead of holding meetings with financial experts to explore ways to come out of the crisis, KCR is focused on expanding BRS. Even Finance Minister T. Harish Rao is busy attending party programmes. KCR did not hold a single meeting with Finance and other departments to discuss the budget. This approach will cause huge damage to Telangana," he said.

The Congress leader said the 'Haath Se Haath Jodo Abhiyan' would extend the reach of the Congress across Telangana as each party worker would visit every household in his area to expose the failures of the BRS and BJP governments.

Sanjay gives response to police notices

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The police issued notices to Telangana BJP President Bandi Sanjay Kumar's son Bandi Bhagiratha. Meanwhile, Dundigal police have intensified the investigation in case of an attack on a fellow student by Bhagiratha.

Recently Dundigal Police registered a case against Bandi Bhagiratha. Dundigal Police said that notices have been issued to Bhagiratha under Section 41.

Bhagiratha replied to the notices of the police saying that he would attend the police investigation whenever police asked him. Bhagiratha has

already appeared before the police once. Bhagiratha gave all the details he had to the police. Police said they will call again if necessary as part of the investigation.

The representatives of the varsity disciplinary committee filed a complaint with the police that Bandi Bhagiratha attacked a student named Shriram of Mahindra University. They stated in the complaint that the attack took place on the premises of the varsity campus. The varsity disciplinary committee revealed that the incident took place a few days ago.

Based on this complaint, Dundigal police registered a

Gurnath meets Revanth, may join Congress soon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC chief Revanth Reddy's meeting with senior BRS leader has become a political topic of discussion.

Revanth Reddy met senior BRS leader and former MLA Gurnath Reddy. Gurnath Reddy who was dissatisfied with BRS was invited to Congress by TPCC President Revanth Reddy.

It seems that along with Gurnath Reddy, Kodangal Municipal Chairman Muddappa will also join the Congress. Gurnath Reddy worked as an MLA 7 times. He played a key role in the victory of TRS in the last election as well.

New QR code to have colours, will hold more data, says Hara

PNS ■ GANDHINAGAR

Japanese engineer Masahiro Hara, known for inventing the ubiquitous 'QR code' nearly 30 years ago, announced on Friday that he is now working on a new version of the popular tracking system.

Unlike the present black and white QR code design, the new version will have more colours and may be rectangular in shape rather than current square pattern, said Hara while talking to reporters on the Karnavati University campus in Uvasad village of Gandhinagar district.

"I am in the process of invent-

ing a new QR code. It will take some time though. Unlike the current version, the new code system will have colours and it may be rectangular rather than the present square shape," said Hara, who was on his maiden trip to India.

The new QR (quick response) code will be designed in such a way that it will be able to store more information compared to the present design, he said.

Hara was invited by the university to address students as part of a three-day event, 'Ahmedabad Design Week 4.0', which began on Friday.

Hara invented the QR code in 1994 to track car parts while he was working for a Japanese company. It was developed as an alternative to the barcode system.

According to experts, the QR code can hold hundred times more information than a barcode because of its design.

While the system was primarily invented to cater to manufacturing and retail industries, the QR code system has found many uses today, such as for making UPI (Unified Payments Interface) payments, using smart phones or to track COVID-19 vaccination beneficiaries.

BRS done with I-PAC?

Continued from page 1

Sources said that early indications of disassociation with I-PAC reportedly began after Prashant Kishor. He started Jan Suraj Yatra when Chief Minister

K. Chandrasekar Rao met Nitish Kumar in Bihar. IPAC also reportedly had uncertainty over the National ambitions of BRS. However, there was no way for IPAC to reach out to higher-ups in the BRS.

Ex-CJI bats...

Continued from page 1

There are grave dangers of miscommunication in governance and administration of justice, though this is not the place to discuss," he said.

"Newspapers of September 11 of 1949 have reported that Dr Ambedkar initiated the move to have Sanskrit as the official language of the Union of India. Sanskrit vocabulary is common to a lot of our languages. I ask myself this question as to why Sanskrit cannot be the official language as Dr Ambedkar had proposed," he said.

The former CJI said introducing Sanskrit would not amount to introducing any religion, as 95 per cent of the language has nothing to do with any religion but deals with issues related to philosophy, law, science, literature, phonetics, architecture, astronomy etc.

It's Mann ki baat, not Dhan ki baat

Continued from page 1

KCR reiterated that If people elected the BRS to rule the country, 24-hour quality electricity will be supplied to the entire country in two years.

"Will give free electricity to agriculture and we will implement Kisan Bandhu for farmers all over the country and Dalit Bandhu for 20 lakh Dalit families every year. Like in Telangana, purified water will be provided all over the country. 83 crore acres of cultivable lands in the country will be provided irrigation," KCR said.

"Now the Centre is following the policy of socialization of losses and privatization of profits," KCR said.

"Why are Indian youth mov-

Giridhar Gamang and MLAs joins BRS

The BRS chief welcomed them into his party by presenting party scarves to them. "Odisha needs development, which is yet to start. Our BRS will contest in all the 147 MLA and 21 MP seats in the next election," Sishir Gamang told reporters before leaving for Hyderabad. Sources said the BRS will focus on southern Odisha, especially the Telugu-speaking border constituencies. The party will fight the next election with focus on farmers and tribals. KCR is expected to visit Odisha soon to launch the party's state unit. Meanwhile, the ruling Naveen Patnaik-led BJD and BJP said the BRS will have no impact in Odisha.

ing to the US? Why are they more interested in going to the US? Parents are hosting parties when their sons and daughters get a Green Card in the US. Why is this happening? What does this mean? If we understand this, we will know where

we are now. Why are people being cheated in India," KCR asked.

Stating that India's politics is about to undergo drastic changes, KCR said, "Parties are winning elections. Leaders are winning. But people are losing

after elections. People should win elections, not parties or leaders. Aiming for power, political conspirators are raising many slogans. They made tall promises. People know what happened next."

The CM said that in the name of caste and religion, political parties are creating discord. People are being divided.

"The Mahanadi in Odisha has water availability beyond needs. We are using only 25 to 30 per cent. The rest is flowing into the sea. Brahmani and Vaitarani rivers also flow along with Mahanadi. But there is no water to drink. Where is all this water going? Why is this water not coming into our houses as drinking water?" KCR said.

Veteran Telugu actress Jamuna...

Continued from page 1

In a career spanning four decades, she portrayed a variety of roles and acted with legendary actors of her time and other top actors of her time. Jamuna also acted in 11 Hindi films. She won the Filmfare award for best supporting actress for Milan (1967) starring Sunil Dutt and Nutan. It was a remake of the Telugu movie Mooga Manasulu (1964) which featured Jamuna along with Nageswara Rao and Savitri. Impressed by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, she joined the Congress in 1980 and was elected to the Lok Sabha from Rajahmundry in 1989, but quit politics after her defeat in 1991. She later joined the BJP and campaigned for the party during the late 1990s. KCR said that the passing away of Jamuna is a big loss to the film industry. The Chief Minister remembered Jamuna who acted in hundreds of films as a first-generation actress and emerged as Telugu's favourite star.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin	₹180
Without Skin	₹190
Broiler at Farm	₹140

EGG RATES ₹/100

VIJAYAWADA	529
HYDERABAD	527
VISAKHAPATNAM	525
RETAIL PRICE (IN VJAYAWADA)	₹5.29

SC refuses to entertain plea...

Continued from page 1

"Let the religious people handle this. In every case under Article 136 (special leave to appeal by the Supreme Court), we need not try to settle the law. Sorry," the bench told the lawyer appearing for the state that had challenged the high court order.

One petition before the high court stated that the Ahobilam temple, situated in Kurnool district of Andhra

Pradesh, has been under the control of Sri Ahobilam Mutt, which is based in Tamil Nadu, since time immemorial.

The state of Andhra Pradesh and others had challenged the October 13, 2022 high court order, which said the Ahobilam temple is an "integral and inseparable part of the Ahobilam Math, which was established as a part of propagation of Hindu religion and for rendering spir-

itual service for propagating Sri Vaishnavism".

The high court had said appointing an executive officer for the temple, which is a part of the Mutt, is violative of Article 26(d) of the Constitution as it affects the right of administration of Jeeyars/Mathadipathis.

The high court had passed the order on separate petitions questioning the appointment of an executive officer of the 'Devasthanam'.

GOs issued to fill 2,391 vacant...

Continued from page 1

GO Ms. No: 15 mentions 417 Junior Lecturer posts, GO Ms. No: 16 mentions 93 posts of trained graduate teachers and music-craft teachers, and GO Ms. No: 17 mentions 166 posts in the Information and Public Relations department. These posts will be filled by various recruitment boards.

The government reviewed the status of direct recruitment vacancies in various categories under the control of various

After due examination of the proposals furnished by the School Education Department in this regard, the actual requirement of personnel with reference to the activities and needs of the department and the overall financial implication, Government

welfare societies of the respective departments and examined their proposals.

Based on the actual requirement of personnel with reference to the activities and needs of the department and the

93 in Education Dept

accorded permission for filling 93 posts under the control of Secretary Telangana State Residential Educational Institutional Society. Further the Telangana Residential Educational Institutions

overall financial implication, the government accorded permission for filling the vacant posts.

The recruitment boards will take steps for direct recruitment to vacant posts permit-

Recruitment Board shall take steps for direct recruitment to the vacant posts by obtaining the requisite details, such as local cadre-wise vacancy position, roster points, qualifications, etc, from the Secretary and Head of Department concerned.

ted to be filled by obtaining the requisite details, such as local cadre-wise 2 vacancy position, roster points, qualifications, etc., from the concerned Secretary and Head of Department.

Top cops call for scientific probe under NDPS Acts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Top cops directed police officers to take up investigation in a scientific manner, such as establishing link from sources to destination as per procedure laid down in the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS), said the CID department.

This was discussed in a one-day training on NDPS Act and investigation procedure which was organized by ADGP, CID, on Friday for all units in Telangana.

Anjani Kumar, Director General of Police, Telangana State, inaugurated the programme and explained to participants the importance of getting conviction in the NDPS cases.

The DGP has mentioned specifically about Mohanlal case judgment of the Supreme Court related to drugs case.

The DGP said that strict action should be taken



against narcotics and psychotropic drugs cases which are creating havoc in the society.

He said that drug trafficking has become an organised crime among the youth as well as some sections of the society and should be investigated in a scientific manner to stop the distribution of drugs.

Anjani Kumar said that the Telangana government has been exemplary in implementing the Narcotics

Drugs and Psychotropics Act.

In the last year 2022 alone, cases were registered against 1,278 people who were smuggling drugs in the state, and out of them, PD Act cases were filed against 218 people.

In all, 152 people in 2021, 46 people in 2020, a total of 416 people in these three years were revealed to be under PD law.

He said that a total of 7,498 people have been

arrested in these three years.

They said that a total of 89,718 kg of ganja and 711 kg of other drugs were seized. In 2022, 842 cases were under investigation and 4,332 cases were pending trial, he added.

Additional DG Mahesh Bhagwat explained the sources of different types of drugs and the places of destination where they are transported. He said that Telangana is not a source of supply of drugs but only a destination.

He said that the Telangana police department is already dealing with drug trafficking very strictly.

Subject matter experts, resourcepersons in conducting training programmes Director of Revenue Intelligence

Investigation Division Superintendent A. Rangdan explained about prosecution with examples on investigation of drug related cases.



MLC Kavitha appointed as BSG chief

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha was appointed as the National Guides Commissioner of National Guides at the boy scouts organisation, Bharat Scouts and Guides (BSG) on Friday.

BSG India Director Raj Kumar Kaushik has officially announced that MLC Kavitha will serve as National Guides Commissioner for one year.

MLC Kavitha said that she will work to increase the participation of students across the country as scouts and guides. She has been serving as the State Chief Commissioner of Scouts and Guides since 2015, and has organised many service programmes through the scouts and guides.

TSRTC launches new under Rs 99 AM 2PM parcel services

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) has introduced a new express parcel service named AM 2 PM to provide faster service to the customers. The charge of the service is Rs 99. The customer who books before 12 noon will get the parcel to its destination by 9pm the same day and if it is booked between 12 noon and 9pm, it will be delivered the next day.

Managing Director VC Sajjanar said that the organisation has focused on alternative income along with passenger ticket income and as a part of that, pure water bottles have already been made available in the market along with the management of petrol stations and logistics.

He said that the benefits are coming through logistics (cargo) services and with the intention of providing those services to the customers more quickly and safely, the AM 2 PM service has been started. He said that these services have been made available in Telangana district centres including Hyderabad from



TSRTC Managing Director VC Sajjanar inaurating AM2PM parcel services in Hyderabad on Friday

Friday. It has been clarified that only one kg parcels will come under the scope of this service and their value should not exceed Rs 5,000.

He said that the TSRTC management has fixed the courier price of this express service at Rs 99. It is explained that these services can be availed in the form of cash and UPI payments.

It is stated that these services have been made available in 99 areas of Telangana. For complete details regarding Express Parcel Service customers can visit the official website of TSRTC Logistics Department.

Sajjanar also said that 37.21

lakh parcels have been delivered till December of this financial year and the company has earned an income of Rs 68 crore through them. He said that they have targeted Rs100 crore through cargo for this financial year. He reminded that at present 14,000 parcels are being delivered to the destinations by the logistics department and so far 1.7 crore parcels have been delivered. He said that the AM 2 PM express service will be extended to other states soon. It has been clarified that parcels weighing less than 5 kg will be delivered to Tirupati, Bengaluru, Kurnool, Vijayawada and other cities.

Call to use modern technology to reduce forest fires in State

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the recent decision of RM Dobriyal, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Head of Forest Force, asking the field level staff of the Forest Department to give high priority to fire prevention as summer approaches, Amrabad forests got their first awareness conference on forest fires.

The Telangana State Forest Department and the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF India) have jointly conducted awareness programmes on the dangers of forest fire. In the first phase, a conference was held on prevention of fire hazards for forest department officials and staff working at field level in Amrabad and Kawal Tiger Reserve.

Dr Jayashree Ratnam, speaker from National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru alerted forest officials to take steps and called out to use technology to reduce fire in forests.

In this conference, Dr Jayashree said that the area of



Forest Department team with speakers after a session on awareness towards reducing forest fire

Nallamala forest is called Mesic Savanna, which has trees and wide pastures and the environment here is in deciduous forests with low rainfall. It is stated that forest fire hazards are raging due to human intervention and natural causes.

"Although forest fires are dangerous, controlling burning in a limited area is useful for the forest. It is suggested that this will be useful in the development of new biological diversity in the forests. Instead of worrying about the fire itself, the forest officials should work in coordination to control

the fire step by step so that excessive damage can be avoided. The use of technology and modern machinery in the case of forest fires was discussed in the meeting," said Dr Jayashree.

She said that the people living in the villages and habitats near the forest should be alerted regularly. Passengers should be prevented from lighting cigarettes, throwing beedis and cooking on the roads while passing through the forests and they should be properly educated, she added.

TSHC calls for applications from master craftsmen

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Handicrafts Corporation (TSHC) has invited applications from master craftsmen for awards.

It is undertaking various promotional and welfare activities for the benefit of artisans of Telangana State. In order to give recognition to the talented artisans, the corporation gives awards every year.

The last date for submission of applications, complete in all respects, along with craft samples made by the applicant is April 30.

The artisans who wish to apply for the State Award 2022 are advised to intimate the office about commencement of work on the award piece, name of the item etc. so as to enable officers to visit the artisan's place of work during the course of production.

Establishment of MSMEs: Hyd ranks number one in TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana is forging ahead in the Micro-Small and Medium Scale Industries (MSME) sector. It is significant to note that nearly three lakh units out of 1.36-crore units registered in Udyam portal were from Telangana alone.

The MSMEs provide employment to at least 39 lakh in the state. The state government on one hand is creating infrastructural amenities for establishment of industries in the state and on the other, it is extending huge incentives to the MSME sector.

The government has been extending financial support to those who are interested in establishing the MSME units and also helping them to get loans from bankers.

According to statistics released by the state government, in all 2,97,724 MSMEs from Telangana were registered in Union government's portal Udyam

The following districts occupy first 10 positions in the establishment of MSMEs:		
District	Industries/businesses	No. of employed in them
Hyderabad	65,114	8,57,807
Rangareddy	37,818	4,68,532
Medchal-Malkajigiri	34,035	5,89,084
Nalgonda	15,077	1,05,371
Karimnagar	12,649	6,33,344
Nizamabad	12,246	74,063
Warangal	10,752	81,542
Mahabubnagar	8,937	88,330
Khammam	8,762	94,744
Sangareddy	8,675	1,92,880

providing employment to 39,51,941. A majority of the MSMEs are located in Hyderabad and its surrounding districts of Rangareddy, Medchal-Malkajigiri, Sangareddy and so on. While the maximum number of 65,114 MSMEs are located in Hyderabad district while Mulugu district figured at the other end of the spectrum with location of just 854 MSMEs.

The MSMEs in Hyderabad district provide employment to 8,57,807, while the units in Mulugu provide employment to 4,762 persons only.

The districts of Narayanakhet, Kumrambhim-Asifabad, Jayashankar-Bhupalapally, Jogulamba-Gadwal, Nirmal and some other districts, which are aloof from Hyderabad, are lagging behind in establishment of the MSMEs.

TechWish Group new facility launched

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TechWish Group has announced its expansion plans in India by setting up a state-of-the-art facility in Hyderabad.

This is a significant milestone, which is in-line with the TechWish Group's expansion plans of its group companies Antra, TechWish, Hogar Controls and Super Surfaces. The new office inauguration was done in the presence of chief guest M Stephen Ravindra, Commissioner of Police, Cyber Security and IG of Police, and I Ganapathi Reddy, Engineer-in-Chief (R&B), NH, CRF and Buildings, Vishnu Reddy, Founder and Chairman, TechWish Group and Naveen Yerragondou, CEO, Antra. The group has so far invested close to Rs 200 crore in the new office and is planning to invest further Rs 100 crore by 2024. The company is also planning to double its size to over 1000+ employees by 2024.

Scamster held, diamonds worth Rs 18 lakh seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad police arrested one inter-state attention-diversion offender who arranged a diamonds exchange and scammed the victims. The accused was booked under Cr. No 45/2023, U/s 420,379 IPC of PS Afzalgunj, Hyderabad and recovered 64 carats diamonds worth Rs 18,00,000 from him.

The accused is, Mohammed Ruhila (31) who runs a gem stones business at Alipura, Karnataka. The accused was previously involved in two other cases.

The police revealed that the accused lured diamond sellers by posing as a buyer. Upon seeing the diamonds packet, the accused agreed to purchase them and simply gave the diamonds pack-



et to the complainant's brother.

The victims later realised that the diamonds were not genuine.

Upon receiving the complaint, a team led by A. Satish, Detective Inspector of Police, Hyderabad with the help of CCTV footage and call detail analysis, identified the accused and immediately rushed to the Alipura, Gowribidanur Taluk, Chikkaballapur district, Karnataka and apprehended the accused within 24 hours and recovered the Intact property.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The 13th edition of Hyderabad Literary Festival (HLF) was launched on a grand scale at Vidyanarya High School on Friday. Hyderabad's only independent literary festival is being held offline after two years, attracting large numbers of bibliophiles, aesthetes, liberal and fine art enthusiasts. The event will continue on January 28 and 29.

The event was inaugurated by Konkani author Damodar Mauzo, German embassy deputy head Stephen Grabherr and Principal Secretary Jayesh Ranjan. The first day was filled with workshops, literary sessions and musical and poetry performances. Young artist collectives, book stores, performance artists and various food joints were set up to keep the young and adult visitors occupied at the event.

The three-day literary fest is set to focus on highlighting

OFFLINE COMEBACK AFTER TWO YEARS

13th edition of Hyd Literary Festival begins



The three-day literary fest is set to focus on highlighting Konkani as the chosen Indian language and host Germany as the guest nation. Various sessions on Konkani and German literature, culture, and art were showcased by award-winning writers and artists from all across the country and the world.

Konkani as the chosen Indian language and host Germany as the guest nation. Various sessions on Konkani and German literature, culture, and art were showcased by award-winning writers and artists from all across the country and the world.

Kishore, a student from St.

Mary's college said, "Visiting HLF for the first time has been a great experience, everything feels so calm, pleasant, surreal. All the stalls, lots of food, and the volunteers and delegates are so welcoming. We are surrounded by literature, culture and art."

Manaswini, from The

Nations Rock Beat, an artist collective based in Hyderabad, said "We have been performing at HLF for the 5th year now. We believe that we can influence the next generation with our work and try to push art beyond the boundaries. There are so many kids here trying to dance to our songs and that is a joy to me. We showcase 25 different kinds of art forms for the same reason as the Nations Rock Beat." Madhavi Sharma, Director of Food 4 Thought Foundation, said, "We are trying to rebuild reading habit among people, in both urban and rural areas. We have created a channel called Save endangered stories which has seven different categories of 15 mythological stories each and they were translated into 11 different languages. The stories were encoded into QR codes and presented on a tree where people can scan and they either read them or listen to the stories on a podcast."

Technology has the ability to propel lot of people: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Industries KT Rama Rao launched the IIIT silver jubilee talk series and reviewed research demos of some of IIITH's key projects in the areas of Robotics, Language technology, Computer vision, Sustainability of Smart Cities and Research start-ups.

As IIIT Hyderabad has entered the 25th year, it is hosting a Silver Jubilee talk series with thought leaders, industry captains and distinguished academia over the next 18 months. Rama Rao, in a fire-



side chat with IIIT-H students, faculty and key stakeholders, said that technology has the ability to propel a lot of people.

The Minister said, "Each time I am here, I learn so much and I go back with positive stories to narrate to the rest of the

world. As a Minister for Industries and Urban Development, I can tell you with firsthand experience that one need not be a technologist or enable coder or programmer to understand the impact of technology. I think Technology has become fundamental and governments understand how persuasive it has become, how effective it has become to tackle real world problems. The conversation I have with the CM of Telangana on technology innovations and institutions like IIITH, has only one question: what is useful for the

common man? We all need to realise the power we have because the population of youth also has increased. Technology has the ability to propel a lot of people as the fact remains India still remains a third world country. We also need to remind ourselves that the future is positive and upbeat unless we get out of our comfort zone and work for it," he added.

He further narrated the story of villagers in Telangana who have knowledge of technology in the agriculture field.

The event was also attended

by IIITH's Governing Council Chair Prof Raj Reddy, GC members Jayesh Ranjan, Ajit Rangnekar, Srinu Raju and R Chandrashekhara, IIITH's first Director Prof Narendra Ahuja, and Prof Limbadri (Chair of TS Council for Higher Education).

Established in 1998, IIITH has grown from strength to strength over the past 25 years with 27 research centres, over 100 faculty, the country's largest academic incubation centre and AI group, working towards taking research from lab to land with constructive social impact.

Call to screen BBC docu on Modi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

All India Youth Federation (AIYF) has asked the Telangana government to screen a BBC documentary which was banned by the Central government. The statement said BBC India has released a documentary titled India: The Modi Question, clearly exposing Narendra Modi's role in the 2002 Gujarat riots. This docu-

mentary should be screened widely in Telangana to show the true nature of Modi who became Prime Minister on the basis of religious politics and humiliated the country, said chief secretary K Dharmendra and Dr Wali Ullah Qadri, in a statement.

They alleged that Modi has destroyed the reputation of India in the international community.



Apoorva Rao takes charge as new SP

PNS ■ NALGONDA

K Apoorva Rao took charge as Nalgonda District Superintendent of police on Friday. Rema Rajeswari, who was Nalgonda District Superintendent of Police, was transferred and posted as Ramagundam city Police Commissioner. Special Branch Deputy Superintendent of Mogilaiah, Nalgonda Deputy Superintendent of Police Narasimha Reddy, Devarakonda Deputy Superintendent of Police Nageswar Rao, Miryalaguda Deputy Superintendent of Police Venakateswar Rao, Circle Inspectors and Sub-inspectors welcomed the new Superintendent of Police.

Bandi: No democracy in family-run political parties

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

Giving a call to ideology-driven leaders to return to the BJP Telangana BJP President Sanjay said that there is no democracy in family-based political parties. He said that it is only in the BJP that every party activist has a chance to become the Prime Minister and President. "BJP activists have the right to ask if I am wrong. Can there be such a situation in the BRS?" he said. He said the BJP should become the final destination for former MP Vijayashanthi. Addressing a programme arranged by the BJP at the State party office on Friday on the occasion of Vijayashanthi completing 25 years in politics, Sanjay said, "I am requesting those who left the BJP because of minor problems and due to ideological reasons to return. Let us all fight against KCR's dictatorship. Let's form a BJP government and bring democracy to Telangana." He said it is not common for people who came to politics from the film industry to continue in politics for 25

years. Cinema is a world of glamour. Criticism is more than praise in politics. It is a joy to see the Telangana activist complete 25 years of surviving all that. Vijayashanthi, who came back to the party despite leaving it under special circumstances, wants the BJP to be her final choice, he said. He said all BJP workers can aspire to be leaders. A chai wala became the Prime Minister and an Adivasi woman became the President. He said party workers have the right to question if I do anything wrong. If I don't fix it, there will be a chance to tell the high command.



Sanjay said that this situation does not exist in regional family-based parties. The leaders of family parties are from the family and ordinary workers don't even have the guts to challenge them, he said. He said in some states there are BJP activists who work with commitment even though they have not been in power for two generations. The BJP is the only party which has such activists. He said that Vijayashanthi fought for Telangana and that KCR came to power by duping people with his accent, language and gimmicks. But we will fight for achieving Telangana's ambition, he said.

New TSRTC buses flagged off

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Legislative Council Chairman Gutha Sukender Reddy and MLA Nallimothu Bhaskar Rao on Friday flagged off 21 new TSRTC buses at Miryalaguda bus station. Speaking on the occasion, Sukender Reddy expressed happiness over the TSRTC is now making profits. The TSRTC was at losses in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. The State government, after achieving Telangana State, paid special attention to the corporation and ensure that it made profits, he said. Agro Corporation chairman Tippanna Vijayasimha Reddy, Municipal Chairman T Bhargava and others were present.



Legislative Council Chairman Gutha Sukender Reddy and MLA Nallimothu Bhaskar Rao flagging off 21 new TSRTC buses at Miryalaguda bus station on Friday

25 students of JNV take ill due to suspected food poisoning



PNS ■ KHAMMAM

A total of 25 students took ill at Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV) at Palair under Kusumanchi mandal in the district on Friday. They suffered bouts of vomiting and complained of stomach pain. The students could have fallen ill due to suspected food poisoning. It was not yet known what led to the students falling ill in the school. The principal claimed that the students had taken ill after eating

food they brought from their homes. The students were sent to their native places during recent festival vacations. They brought some snacks from their homes while returning to school. The students could have taken ill after eating the snacks, the principal felt. The students, however, said that they had taken ill after eating the dinner on Thursday. Though they suffered from vomiting and complain of stomach pain, the school authorities ignore

them on Thursday night. A medical team was rushed to the school to treat the students after local MLA K Upender Reddy gave directions to the authorities. District Medical and Health Officer B Malathi said she had rushed to the school after learning about the incident. The incident sparked panic among parents. The district administration ordered an inquiry into the incident.

DEROGATORY REMARKS AGAINST GOVERNOR

BJP Mahila Morcha files police complaint against BRS MLC



BJP Mahila Morcha State unit president Geetha Murthy and others lodging a complaint with State Women Commission against BRS MLC P Kaushik Reddy in Hyderabad on Friday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP Mahila Morcha State unit has lodged a complaint with the State Women's Commission against BRS MLC Padi Kaushik Reddy, requesting it to take cognisance of his 'derogatory remarks' against Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan. The Mahila Morcha activists urged the Commission to take 'suitable action' against the MLC. BJP Mahila Morcha State unit president Geetha Murthy, in the complaint, termed the 'derogatory language' used by Kaushik Reddy against the Governor as reprehensible. They said MLC used 'obscene language against the Governor for delaying assent to the bills passed by the State Legislature. She said that the video which went viral on social media showed Kaushik Reddy uttering 'derogatory remarks' in Telugu targeting the Governor. "You (Governor) speak whatever you want and frustration can

be seen on your face and a smile too disappeared on your face. Today you are speaking, I am asking which constitution is the Governor following". KCR government is elected by the people, and all MLAs and MLCs have passed the

bill. He uttered derogatory remarks". She said that the Bharatiya Janata Party in general and Mahila Morcha in particular condemned the derogatory language used against the Governor. "As the Governor is the constitutional head and

the first citizen of the State, due respect should be given to the post and when the post is adorned by a lady, due respect has to be given while addressing her, the Mahila Morcha said. Meanwhile, BJP national executive Committee member Eatala Rajender said that January 26 is the day when the Constitution of India came into effect. It was shameful that the Telangana government had not organised Republic Day celebrations. "Insulting the Governor is tantamount to insulting the Constitution. KCR was not against the Governor system from the beginning. He met the first Governor several times. There were days when he bowed down and saluted the former Governor. But he insulted the women Governor.

Complaint against Kaushik Reddy filed in Jadcherla Police Station

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

BJP Mahila Yuva Morcha State executive member Vemula Jayasri on Friday took BRS MLC P Kaushik Reddy to task for making 'derogatory remarks' against Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan. The BJP Yuva Morcha activists, led by Jayasri, complained to the police at Jadcherla police station against Kaushik Reddy. She demanded that Kaushik Reddy tender an uncondi-

tional apology to the Governor. She urged the police to take stern action against the MLC. Addressing a media conference, she took objection to the MLC insulting the Governor. It amounted to insulting the Constitution. The BRS has no respect for women. The BRS leaders were making derogatory remarks against the Governor time and again, she said. The BRS has lost its sense of proportion, she said. She expressed the opinion

that the women in the State would rise in revolt against the ruling party and teach it a lesson. The State government had failed to organise Republic Day as per tradition. Apart from it, the ruling party leader attacked the Constitutional post of Governor. Municipality Floor leader Achugatla Anajaiah, BJP town unit president Narayana Yadav, party district unit vice-president Yadamma and others were present.

TPCC president Revanth challenges BRS leaders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Challenging BRS leaders, TPCC President Revanth Reddy said that Congress workers will not ask for votes in places where there are no Indiramma houses. You should not ask for votes where there are no double-bedroom houses, Revanth told BRS leaders.

As part of the Hath Se Hath Jodo Abhiyan programme, Congress leaders visited Maddur, Daultabad, Kothapalli, Gundumal and Kosgi Mandals in Kodangal constituency. Addressing party leaders and workers he said, "We will not ask for votes where there are no Indiramma houses and the BRS should not ask for votes if there are no double-bedroom houses. "I am challenging whether Drama Rao is ready for this," Revanth said. He also recalled that apart from the development that happened when he was MLA, what



has been done in Kodangal in these five years? He said that out of anger against him, KCR has put aside the Narayanpet lift irrigation scheme and unless the project is completed, there will not be any water supply to Kodangal. Revanth said that he did his best to help the people of Kodangal. Now the situation has changed in Kodangal. BRS leaders are collecting bribes in panchayats. During elections Harish Rao said that he will bring a junior college to Daulatabad

even by touching KCR's feet. And why is there no college here? Does KCR has no legs? KCR who promised to give water to Palamuru Ranga Reddy has not given anything to this area for eight years. Why did we not get Krishna water, railway line, and junior college? Is it the mistake of the people who voted for the BRS? Let's make Congress win and let's develop Kodangal. We will make Kodangal a revenue division after the Congress comes to power. Let's bring an engineering college to Kodangal, Revanth said. He said that KCR came to power twice by giving false promises like double bedroom house for the poor, three acres for Dalits, job per household, 12 per cent reservation for minorities and tribal people. He promised 'Bangaru Telangana' (Golden Telangana) but made it Bondalagadda Telangana (Land of the dead), Revanth said.

He said the BJP and the BRS are 'creating' hostility between castes, religions and regions. As part of Hath Se Hath Jodo Abhiyan programme, they visited Maddur, Daultabad, Kothapalli, Gundumal and Kosgi Mandals in Kodangal constituency. Addressed party workers, he said that people's lives were destroyed under the rule of Modi and KCR. Students and the unemployed are ending their lives everywhere. There is no safety for women and minorities under their rule. Rahul undertook the Bharat Jodo Yatra to unify the country. The AICC has called for a Haath Se Haath Jodo programme to bring Rahul's message to every heart and every home. He called upon party workers to spread the message of Rahul by handing out pamphlets to every house and sticking a Hath Se Hath Jodo sticker.

NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

Lokesh kickstarts 'Yuva Galam'

PNS ■ KUPPAM

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) national general secretary, Nara Lokesh, on Friday launched the 4,000 km-long marathon 'padayatra' 'Yuva Galam' at 11.03 am accompanied by party leaders and activists in large numbers. Lokesh offered special 'pujas' at the temple of Lord Varadaraja Swamy in Kuppam and also offered prayers at the local churches and masjids. He took the blessings of the elders. The party functionaries showered flowers on Lokesh wishing him all the best in his endeavour. TDP MLA from Hindpur Balakrishna, State president Atchannaidu, party politburo members, and thousands of party workers walked along Lokesh.



Women activists gave a grand welcome to Lokesh and the locals of Kuppam raised slogans like 'Chandranna Bidda (Son of Chandrababu) zindabad'. The Kuppam citizens expressed their complete solidarity with Lokesh and wished him a grand success. He visited Mecca Masjid at Lakshimpuram and later Hebrass House of Worship Church at Bapunagar where he offered prayers and took the blessings of the community elders.



Police personnel giving farewells to CP V Satyanarayana Karimnagar on Friday

Police Commissioner accorded grand farewell

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Minister for Civil Supplies Gangula Kamalakara on Friday exhorted the officials to render services to the poor. He advised the officials to win the hearts and minds of the people by providing justice to them. While participating in a farewell celebration to outgo-

ing Police Commissioner V Satyanarayana, the Minister praised the officer for his commitment and dedication to duty. The Minister welcomed the new Police Commissioner Subbarayudu. The police personnel accorded a grand farewell to the outgoing Police Commissioner

REINSTALLATION OF SIVA IDOLS

A festive atmosphere prevails over Paravathagiri

PNS ■ WARANGAL

As part of the reinstallation of the idol of Lord Siva at the historic temple in Parvathagiri, which dated back to the Kakatiya period, special pujas were organised. A festive atmosphere prevailed at the temple and the village. On Friday, on the second day of the installation, rituals like the Maha Lingarchana and Panchamruta Abhishekam were conducted with Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao along with his wife Usha taking part in the programme. In all, over 30,000 devotees hailing from Parvathagiri and its neighbouring villages and neighbouring Assembly

constituencies of Palakurti and Narsampeta and far-off places like Warangal and Hyderabad took part in the rituals. Prominent among those who were present at the celebrations were former Minister Tummalapudi Nageswara Rao, CMD of Tsgenco and Tstranco D Prabhakar Rao, MLC Takkella Ravinder Rao, Mulugu Zilla Parishad Chairman Kusuma Jagadish, MP Maloth Kavita, MLA Peddi Sudarshan Reddy, R and B Development Corporation Chairman Mettu Srinivas, Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Secretary Sandeep Kumar Sultania (along with his family members) had darshan of the deity at the Parvathagiri



Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao at historic temple at Parvathagiri on Friday

temple. Similarly, Mulugu and Janagoan District Collectors Krishna Aditya and Siva Lingaiah respec-

tively, former MP Nandamuri Harishna's daughter Suhansi and others visited the temple. Panchayat Raj Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao and MLA Aruri Ramesh provided food to the thronging public. They served food to the guests personally. Dayakar Rao, who visited the temple located in a picturesque location, provided two boats for the benefit of the devotees to go on a boating trip in a reservoir at the foot of Parvathagiri hill. The minister was seen mingling with all and accosting one and all speaking to them. Tollywood playback singer Madhupriya along with her troupe members entertained the guests by singing and dancing to various popular

songs. The traditional dances performed by children enthralled one and all. Finance Minister T Harish Rao, MLA Ramesh and many more prominent personalities, including MPs, MLAs, Chairmen of various corporations, local elected people's representatives and BRS leaders, are going to take part in the celebrations. Besides, a large number of devotees and villagers will take part in the programme. The people of Parvathagiri are in a jubilant mood with the re-installation of the deity at the 800-year-old historic Siva temple. The temple attained in Dayakar Rao's native village of Parvathagiri attained past glory during the BRS regime. The place reverberates with devotees chanting the names of the deity.

AP tops charts in friendly policing

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

AP DGP KV Rajendranath Reddy has said that Andhra Pradesh police has stood first in the top five states in terms of public trust, efficiency and honesty in the survey conducted by the Government of India (GoI) and private agencies. He said that it is a moment of pride for the Government of Andhra Pradesh and the Police department. He said various initiatives taken up last year by the AP Police department yielded the best results. DGP Rajendranath Reddy said that in the Public Trust category, AP grabbed the first place followed by Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Gujarat, and Delhi. In the

Efficiency category, Telugu States Andhra Pradesh and Telangana stood first and second respectively followed by Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, and Jharkhand. The DGP explained that in the Honesty category, Andhra Pradesh got first place followed by Uttarakhand, Telangana, Gujarat and Delhi. DGP Rajendranath Reddy said that the Union government conducted a DGPs conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah from January 20 to 22 in New Delhi, during which performances of the states were reviewed. The Union government ranks in the survey, he added.



INDIA CORNER

Court orders FIR against six cops for beating up man in Uttar Pradesh

A court in Shahjahanpur district in Uttar Pradesh has ordered the registration of an FIR against six police personnel for allegedly beating up a man and snatching money from him. The police personnel -- an inspector, three sub-inspectors and two constables -- are accused of beating up Venkatesh Mishra following an argument on the road in 2017. "Venkatesh Mishra was taken to a police station and beaten up. The policemen also took away Rs 5,000 from Mishra's pocket," his lawyer Avdesh Singh said. The police also booked Mishra in a case of attempt to murder and sent him to jail. Chief Judicial Magistrate A P Gautam on Tuesday ordered that a case be registered against police constables Ajay Chaudhary and Vijay Veer and sub-inspectors Prakash Singh, Balram Singh and Krantiveer Singh, and inspector D C Sharma under relevant sections of IPC, the lawyer said. Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Sanjay Kumar said on Friday that he had received information about the order of the court and appropriate action would be taken in the matter.



One dead, another rescued after two-storey building collapses

A 37-year-old man died, while another one was rescued after a two-storey commercial building collapsed in Bhiwandi town of Maharashtra's Thane district in the wee hours of Friday, officials said. The incident occurred around 3.30 am in Khadijar locality of the town, they said. "There were seven shops on the ground floor of the building, while the upper ones were occupied by commercial establishments. Soon after the structure collapsed, two fire brigade teams rushed to the spot and launched a rescue operation," an official of Nizampura police station said. The deceased, identified as Maji Vansari, was asleep inside the building when it collapsed. The victim died after getting trapped under the debris, he said. Another person, who also got trapped under the debris, was rescued. He did not suffer any injuries, fire brigade sources said. The age of the building and its condition could not be known immediately as civic officials were not available for comment.



College student held for threatening 14-year-old girl

A 17-year-old college student has been apprehended for allegedly stalking a girl he befriended on Instagram and pressuring her to send him nude photos with the threat of circulating her already available private pictures on social media, police said on Friday. It has also been alleged that the accused, who is pursuing his graduation from the School of Open Learning here, accosted her and demanded sexual favours. Upon checking the accused's phone, it was revealed that he was harassing other girls using the same modus operandi, police claimed. According to them, he had forced his parents to buy him an iPhone which he used to show off to these girls. The accused was apprehended on January 26. The matter came to light when the victim's father complained to police on January 25 that his 14-year-old daughter shared her photos and videos with someone through Instagram chats and he feared that those videos might get circulated.



INDUS WATERS TREATY

India issues notice to Pak seeking modifications

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has issued a notice to Pakistan for modification of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) in view of Islamabad's "intransigence" in the implementation of the pact, inked over six decades back for matters relating to cross-border rivers, government sources said on Friday.

The notice sent on January 25 through respective commissioners for Indus waters, is set to open up the process for making changes to the treaty that was inked on September 19, 1960, they said.

India and Pakistan signed the treaty after nine years of negotiations, with the World Bank being a signatory of the pact which sets out a mechanism for cooperation and information exchange between



the two sides on the use of waters of a number of cross-border rivers.

"The objective of the notice for modification is to provide Pakistan an opportunity to enter into intergovernmental negotiations within 90 days to rectify the material breach of IWT. This process would also update IWT to incorporate the lessons learned over the last

62 years," said a source.

It is learnt that India issued the notice in view of Pakistan's "intransigence" on a solution to the differences over the Kishenganga and Ratle Hydro Electric Projects. The notice was sent as per provisions of Article XII (3) of IWT.

India has always been a steadfast supporter and a responsible partner in imple-

menting IWT in letter and spirit, sources asserted.

"However, Pakistan's actions have adversely impinged on the provisions of IWT and their implementation, and forced India to issue an appropriate notice for modification of the pact," said another source.

In 2015, Pakistan requested the appointment of a neutral expert to examine its technical objections to India's Kishenganga and Ratle Hydro Electric Projects (HEPs).

In 2016, Pakistan unilaterally retracted this request and proposed that a Court of Arbitration adjudicate on its objections, the sources said.

They said this "unilateral action" by Pakistan is in contravention of the graded dispute settlement mechanism envisaged by Article IX of IWT.

Ex-Goa minister likens K'taka to Duryodhana

PNS ■ PANAJI

Former Goa minister and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Dayanand Mandrekar on Friday equated Karnataka's attitude on the Mahadayi river dispute with that of Duryodhana from the epic "Mahabharata", who refused to give any territory to the Pandavas and "bullied everyone".

The former water resources minister was addressing a gathering of former legislators on the Mahadayi water diversion issue, where Goa Assembly Speaker Ramesh Tawadkar was present.

"Goa and Karnataka are neighbours. In our village, we maintain good relationship with our neighbours as we rely on them in good and bad times," said Mandrekar, who was a minister in the Manohar Parrikar-led cabinet between 2012 and 2017.

'Await meeting of like-minded parties for Lok Sabha polls'

PNS ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Friday said he was "waiting" for a meeting of like-minded parties for the Lok Sabha polls next year once Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra' is complete.

The JD(U) leader, who has the Congress as a junior ally in Bihar, maintained that he viewed the yatra' as a niji' (internal) program of that party, but looked forward to a collaboration in Lok Sabha of all seven constituents of the Mahagathbandhan' (grand alliance).

The CM also said the JD(U) would not like to crackdown on its sulking parliamentary board chief Upendra Kushwaha, whose claim of the party becoming "weak" he rejected.

"I am waiting for the yatra to be over and for a meeting of parties (opposed to the BJP) to be convened. There, we shall



chalk out the strategy for the Lok Sabha polls which is, now, not far away," Kumar told reporters here.

A former NDA ally, Kumar made an abrupt exit in August last year following alleged attempts to split his party, evoking accusations from the BJP that he was betraying people's mandate to fulfil his own national ambitions.

Asked about Kushwaha, the JD(U) leader said, "He knew

that we had won only 43 seats in assembly polls. If things appeared so bleak to him, he should not have returned. He should remember that his return to the party fructified at my instance since many were not in favour of taking him back.

"Our membership drive has swollen the party ranks from less than 50 lakh to 75 lakh. Our tally fell in 2020 assembly polls since our then ally (BJP) did not support us at all."

The JD(U) had blamed its drubbing on a "conspiracy" hatched by the BJP, with the help of the then LJP chief Chirag Paswan, who fielded candidates in all seats the CM's party was contesting and gave tickets to many saffron party rebels.

"Kushwaha should remember that this party has given him a lot. He owes his past stints in assembly and Rajya Sabha, and current membership of the legislative council, to the JD(U)," Kumar added.

Indian economy yet to revive from disastrous effects of pandemic: CPM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Union Budget, the CPI(M) has alleged the Indian economy is yet to revive from the blow it was dealt with during the Covid pandemic and blamed the government for the way it was handled.

The party demanded that taxation and public expenditure be used to tilt distribution in the favour of the working masses, improve the incomes of farmers, generate employment, and attain improved health and educational outcomes.

The latest editorial of the party mouthpiece "People's Democracy" said the budget



for 2023-24 is to be presented before Parliament at a time when both Indian and world economies are facing a grim situation.

"Notwithstanding the tall claims of the (Narendra) Modi government, India's economy is yet to recover from the crippling effects of the Covid pandemic and the disastrous way in which it was handled by the Government of India..."

"India has to, however, be prepared for not merely a temporary world recession, but the possibility of a prolonged world capitalist crisis as the neoliberal 'globalisation' of the last few decades comes undone under the weight of its own contradictions," it said.

The editorial claimed that India's economic development has also reflected these contradictions with an agrarian crisis, wage stagnation and a growing problem of unemployment accompanying even phases of high growth, leading to intensive exploitation of the employed working class and a vast increase in inequality.

Called off walk today because 'police arrangements collapsed'

PNS ■ KHANABAL (J&K)

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday said he had to cancel his walk for the day because police arrangements by the Jammu and Kashmir administration "unfortunately completely collapsed".

Gandhi, who began his yatra from Banihal in Jammu region, crossed the Jawahar tunnel into the Valley in Qazigund in a bulletproof vehicle but could walk for barely 500 metres after that. He was asked by his security team to stop given the absence of police personnel to manage the large crowd that had gathered to receive him.

"Police personnel who were supposed to manage the crowd



were nowhere to be seen," the former Congress president told reporters here in a brief statement.

He was supposed to walk 11 km to Vessu before halting for the night at the Khanabal dak bungalow in Anantnag district.

"It's the Jammu and Kashmir administration's responsibility to provide security... I hope security will now be ensured for remaining days of the yatra. I don't know why it happened but tomorrow and day after tomorrow it should not happen," Gandhi said in the unscheduled meeting with reporters.

However, he did not take any questions, saying that interaction would be reserved for Sunday. "I had to call off my walk because I can't go against my security people," the Congress leader, who started his Bharat Jodo Yatra in Kanyakumari in September and ends it in Srinagar on January 30, said.

RTE Act: HC allows impleading Delhi govt, CBSE in plea

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Friday granted time to a petitioner to implead the Delhi government and the CBSE as parties to a petition challenging certain provisions of the Right to Education Act, 2009 for allegedly being arbitrary and irrational, and seeking introduction of a common syllabus and curriculum for students of classes 1 to 8 across the country.

A bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Yashwant Varma allowed the application to make the Delhi government, the Central Board of Secondary

Education (CBSE) and National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) parties to the petition and listed it for hearing on March 10.

The high court had earlier issued notices to the Union ministries of Education, Law and Justice and Home Affairs on the petition and asked them to respond.

The PIL said existence of sections 1(4) and 1(5) of the RTE Act and the absence of a common curriculum in mother tongue leads to the fostering and perpetuation of ignorance and delays the attainment of fundamental duties.

Punjab govt opens 400 Aam Aadmi clinics

PNS ■ AMRITSAR

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday launched 400 more 'Aam Aadmi' clinics in the state, calling the event here the fulfilment of another 'Kejriwal ki guarantee'.

The 400 new 'Aam Aadmi' clinics take the total number of these neighbourhood health centres in the state to 500.

Kejriwal, the AAP convenor and Delhi chief minister, said he was happy to note that the Punjab government opened 500 mohalla clinics in just 10 months.

"I am happy to say that

Bhagwant Mann has fulfilled one more 'Kejriwal ki guarantee' (Kejriwal's guarantee)," the AAP chief said while referring to the party's promises made to the people of Punjab in the run up to the 2022 assembly elections.

Five hundred mohalla clinics have been set up in Punjab and, in the time to come, more such facilities will come up, Kejriwal said.

Punjab Health Minister



Balbir Singh and AAP MP Raghav Chadha were also present at the event.

Kejriwal said all the party's "guarantees" would be fulfilled and asked the people of Punjab to "have patience" as he targeted the previous dispensations for "destroying" the system.

The AAP has already fulfilled its poll promise of 300 units of free electricity per month, the Delhi chief minister said. The Mann govern-

ment is taking action against corruption and will not spare anyone found to be involved in corrupt practices, he added.

Heaping praise on the Mann regime, Kejriwal said 26,000 government jobs had been provided in just the past 10 months and called it a "big thing".

Jobs here are being provided on the basis of merit, he asserted. Contractual employees are also being regularised, Kejriwal said.

On the education front, the Mann dispensation is sending 36 government school principals to Singapore for training, the Delhi chief minister added.

Help me get my 44-day wage: R-day spl invitee to PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A gardener by profession, Sukh Nandan, was among the special invitees to watch this year's Republic Day parade at the revamped Kartavya Path.

Several workers and labourers, engaged in the construction work of the Central Vista project and maintenance activities around the India Gate and along the Kartavya Path, were offered special passes to attend the parade.

They were allocated enclosure number 17 which was right opposite the saluting dais (on the other side of the Kartavya Path) where Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Droupadi Murmu among

other dignitaries were seated.

Nandan, who hails from the Niwari district of Madhya Pradesh, was delighted to share his experience of seeing the PM from such a close distance. He said he was thrilled when the PM went close to the enclosure and waved at them.

"I felt fortunate to be a part of the function. I had never thought that I would be chosen to be among the special guests," the 44-year-old said.

However, when asked what would he have asked the prime minister if given chance, he said, "My last contractor refused to pay wages for 44-day work. I will request PM Modi ji to help me get my wages."

Nandan has been working in the



horticulture department at the India Gate for the past two months. Earlier, he was employed at Andhra Bhawan under a contractor.

"He refused to pay my salary for 44

days of work. I have a copy of the attendance register which proves that I was present on those 44 days," Nandan, who lives in the makeshift tents near India Gate with his wife and two children, said.

"Despite that, the contractor is not ready to release my salary which I deserve. Now, I have also refused to return his brush cutter which I had kept. I have told him that unless he pays my dues, I will not return the brush cutter," he added.

The local bodies outsource various labour-intensive work to private contractors who hire labourers with a promise to pay at the rate fixed by the government.

Many a time these workers are sub-

jected to exploitation and are denied pay by the contractors on one pretext or the other. They can't take recourse under the legal system as they neither have the money nor the time and awareness to do that.

According to Nandan, the monthly wage for gardeners fixed by the local municipal bodies is Rs 14,586. "At this rate, my total dues stand at approximately Rs 21,000," he said, adding that the contractor had offered to pay Rs 6,000 only.

"Now he often threatens me of FIR for taking his brush cutter. I will really be grateful if I get any help from the government," Nandan said, heaping praise on his present contractor for timely payment.

Sangh Parivar treating minorities as 'enemies'

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has accused the Sangh Parivar of treating Muslims and Christians as 'enemies of the nation' and urged everyone to unite against such divisive actions, drawing sharp criticism from the BJP.

Vijayan said the Constitution, which was the

best weapon to fight against caste discrimination and religious hatred, was presently under attack.

The CM alleged the Sangh Parivar and the RSS have made it clear that their aim was to turn India into a 'Hindu rashtra'.

He also accused the party in power at the Centre of being followers of a political group which did not take part in the freedom struggle.

"They are attacking the very roots of our country, its democracy and the Constitution," he said while speaking after inaugurating the Constitution Protection

Conference and Secular Meet here on Thursday.

In his speech, Vijayan said that if the Constitution was destroyed, everything -- from an individual's dignity to the sovereignty of the country -- would be lost, he said.

Meanwhile, the BJP hit back, saying the CM has no moral right to utter a single word on the Constitution.

BJP state president K Surendran alleged that Vijayan does not give any importance to the Constitution and accused him of 'white-washing' extremist and terror groups.

The Kerala CM also alleged that besides the attacks on the Constitution, there were also attempts to rewrite history. Examples of the same that he mentioned were -- the terming of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination as a 'death' and the claims from certain quarters that B R Ambedkar was not one of the drafters of the Constitution.



Omar Abdullah joins Bharat Jodo Yatra from Banihal

PNS ■ BANIHAL (J&K)

NC leader Omar Abdullah Friday joined the Bharat Jodo Yatra here, saying that the Rahul Gandhi-led march is not being carried out for the image makeover of the Congress leader, but rather to change the situation and atmosphere of the country.

The former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir said he does not want to delve into Congress' stand on the revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

"The Bharat Jodo Yatra is not aimed at improving the image of Rahul Gandhi but for improving the situation in the country," the National Conference (NC) leader told reporters upon his arrival in

this highway town, 120 kilometres from Srinagar.

Abdullah said he joined the yatra as he was more concerned about the image of the country.

"We have not joined this for the image of an individual but for the image of the county," he said.

Nothing surprising

Delhi has decided to take on Islamabad over the latter's disregard for the Indus Waters Treaty

India has done the right thing by issuing a notice to Pakistan for modification of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT). The September 1960 treaty, which came into being after nine years of negotiations between the two countries, is generally seen as one of the most successful water-sharing pacts in the world, with the World Bank also being a signatory. The notice has been necessitated by Islamabad's "intransigence" on the implementation of the IWT. For the last five years, India has been trying to discuss and resolve the issue of India's Kishenganga and Ratle Hydro Electric Projects, but Pakistan has been stubborn, refusing to sort out the matter. India's position, as reported in the media, has always been clear: it wants implementation of IWT in letter and spirit, but Pakistan has been dillydallying. In 2015, it sought a neutral expert to examine its technical objections to the two hydel projects. But, a year later, it withdrew unilaterally and proposed adjudication by a Court of Arbitration. India objected to two simultaneous processes, an objection that the World Bank acknowledged in 2016. This is despite the fact that the IWT allows a mechanism to resolve such issues. The treaty gives control over the waters of the three "eastern rivers"—the Beas, Ravi, and Sutlej—to India and over the waters of the three "western rivers"—the Indus, Chenab, and Jhelum—to Pakistan. This gives India control over around 20 per cent of the total water carried by the Indus system, while the rest goes to Pakistan. Even over the western river waters, as per the IWT, India has the right to do limited irrigation and unlimited power generation, navigation, floating of property, fish culture, etc.

At the heart of the problem is Pakistan's deep-rooted hatred for India. Still smarting from the defeat in the 1971 Indo-Pak War and its dismemberment, it is determined to not give any concession to India. Even though it is obligatory for nations to extend the 'most favoured nation' (MFN) status to all members of the World Trade Organization, and India gave Pakistan the MFN status, Pakistan refused to reciprocate the gesture for two decades; and then India withdrew that. The reason: 'most favoured nation' translates as 'sabse pasandida mulk' into Urdu—something Pakistan's deep state and radicalised society would never allow. Even now, when the Pakistani rupee is in a free fall, the forex reserves are depleting fast, and the economy has all but crumbled, its generals and jihad-compliant politicians and public figures are unwilling to improve ties with India. Trade with India would surely help Pakistan, but such is the pightheadedness of the powers that be in Islamabad and Rawalpindi that they don't want to normalise ties with New Delhi. They can support terror groups, risking the wrath of the Financial Action Task Force or FATF, but can't strive to have better ties with India, even though that would be for its own good. Therefore, there is nothing surprising in Pakistan disrespecting the IWT.

PICTALK



Devotees take Goddess Saraswati's idol for immersion during 'Basant Panchami' celebrations in Patna PTI

Shadow boxing

Upliftment of the Dalits and OBCs should be the agenda, not creating gulf in the society

Yet another controversy is raging even as the one on 'Pathan' has not fully subsided. This time Swami Prasad Maurya, the OBC leader from Uttar Pradesh has reservations about Tulsidas' Ramcharitmanas which according to him spreads hate and has casteist slurs and so should be banned. Swami Prasad Maurya, who switched over to the Samajwadi Party before the 2022 UP Assembly elections, lost his seat in the UP assembly elections. His daughter though continues to be the BJP MP. His new party, however, has taken exception to his criticism of Ramcharitmanas and distanced itself from the statement. It is not the first time Ramcharitmanas has been criticized for casteist slurs or gender bias. In the past too the Epic has attracted criticism and serious debates have taken place on its content.

However, Maurya's statement does no good to either himself, his community, his party, or the society at large. Without going into the merit of his statement, one can deduce that it does not help to point figure at a 16th century writer and ask for a ban on a book that was written some 500 years back. A time span long enough to change the languages, contexts, nuances, and morality. Banning a book or expunging the portions does not make sense, it never has. All it does is to refresh the idea. India has a long list of banned books, plays, and films. Aubrey Menen's 'Rama Retold', was banned in 1955, and EV Ramasamy Periyar's book Ramayana Retold, was banned in 1969. Ideally speaking, a writer must not hurt the sentiments of the people but the downside is if the writers always write to conform to the prevailing norms, society would never change. Equally pathetic is the reaction of the people who would swear by Ramcharitmanas and would go to any extent to abusing and admonishing him publicly. A person has a right to differ in a civil way, if you do not agree do so in a civilized way not by calling names and demonizing the person. We have enough issues of import to talk about in public life that should get precedence over such shadow boxing matches. If Maurya wants to bring about a real change in the society, he would do well to take up issues of discrimination and mistreatment of Dalits and OBCs on priority rather than rake up issues that would only consolidate the caste lines.

Resetting India Egypt relations

Inviting President of Egypt as the chief guest at Republic day parade can usher in a new era in Indo Egyptian relations

President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt made an interesting choice as the Chief Guest for the 74th Republic Day Parade, a first-ever from an Arab country. The choice is loaded with geopolitical and strategic suggestions that are rooted in realpolitik and better senses. As mutual people of civilizations and historical engagements, the bilateral relationship has gone through intermittent ups and downs borne of compulsions of internal political posturing and 'bloc' pressures.

Jawaharlal Nehru and Gamal Abdel Nasser along with Tito, Nkrumah, and Sukarno had jointly floated the Non-Aligned Movement towards, "abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defense to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers." In the Indian context, shades of that thought exist in its modern course of 'strategic independence'. However, considerations of co-religiosity had ensured that Egypt stood firmly on the side of Pakistan in the 1965 and 1971 wars, as also, Pakistanis had supplied military wherewithal to the Egyptians in 1967 (Six-Day War) and 1973 (Yom Kippur War). As both were also Major Non-NATO allies, they had a 'bloc' gravitation.

Field Marshal Sisi (former General in the Egyptian Army) who had deposed a democratically elected government (Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood), presided over India's celebration of adopting its Constitution that coup-proofed the Indian narrative with civilian control over the military, was irony at its best. Sisi has supposedly 'won' 97% of popular votes cast after 'technicalities' had disallowed almost all opposition (after imprisoning 40,000 from the opposition). Sisi is an authoritarian from the old school of Hosni Mubarak (also Air Chief Marshal of the Egyptian Air Force) governance style, only more strident. Serendipitously, on Indian Republic Day he witnessed the real and the largest democracy in the world, at the march.

Wounded memories of



Military parades must have crossed Abdel Sisi's mind on 26th Jan in Delhi, as a young Captain in 1981, Sisi's Egypt was rocked by the assassination of President Anwar Sadat (also a former Soldier), also during a Military Parade. As part of marching contingents and weaponry display, an assassin party in one of the trucks towing an artillery piece had suddenly jumped out of formation and attacked the Presidential dais, fatally. Religious extremists from the radical Egyptian Islamic Jihad (also Egyptian Military personnel) were ostensibly upset with Anwar Sadat's secular and pacifist moorings and had therefore undertaken the attack. In Delhi's Republic Day parade, Sisi would have gathered a stark contrarian impression of a highly disciplined, apolitical, and constitutional Military.

Egypt was the fourth country to participate in India's Republic Day celebrations with its marching contingent. Tellingly three of the four foreign contingents to have ever participated had been from Muslim-dominated countries i.e., UAE, Bangladesh, and Egypt (France was fourth). Interestingly, immediately behind the marching Egyptian contingent were the illustrious 61st Cavalrysowars in bay-colored horses, who have had their tryst with an Egyptian

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FIELD MARSHAL
SISI (FORMER
GENERAL IN THE
EGYPTIAN ARMY)
WHO HAD
DEPOSED A
DEMOCRATICALLY
ELECTED
GOVERNMENT
(MOHAMED
MORSI OF THE
MUSLIM
BROTHERHOOD),
PRESIDED OVER
INDIA'S
CELEBRATION OF
ADOPTING ITS
CONSTITUTION

backdrop. Amalgamated from the various units of the Imperial Service State Forces of the former Indian Princely States, the DNA of 61st Cavalry harbours lancers from former 'States' of Jodhpur, Mysore, Patiala, etc., who took part in the last and most daringly successful cavalry charges in modern military history, at Haifa on 23rd September 1918. A German-led Ottoman expeditionary force was marching toward Egypt to seize the Suez Canal and was pitted against Egyptian Expeditionary Force and the township of Haifa was critical to defeating the Ottoman forces. 15th (Imperial Service) Cavalry Brigade composed of 'State' regiments from Princely 'States' of Jodhpur, Mysore, and Hyderabad was invoked for the near-impossible task against Ottoman forces with machine guns, etc..

Under the dashing Major Dalpat Singh Shekhawat of Jodhpur Lancers, Indian lancers had shocked the Ottomans with their fearlessness, daredevilry, and complete rout of Ottomans. 1350 German and Ottoman prisoners were taken, and eight Indian lives were lost (including Major Dalpat Singh, who was decorated with Military Cross, posthumously). The Egyptian Expeditionary Forces were greatly relieved and the Battle of Haifa became a turning point, thanks to the brava-

do of Indian Cavalry elements.

Times and circumstances have come a full circle and common threats beset both the ancient lands, albeit, with different governance structures. Abdel Sisi signed agreements with India to "strengthen defence cooperation" and "increase the exchange of counter-terrorism information and intelligence". For a nation that supported Pakistan in its wars with India, Cairo now explores procuring India's Tejas Light Combat Aircraft, Akash missile system, and DRDO's Smart Anti-Airfield Weapon (SAAW). This is a significant shift considering a bulk of Egyptian military hardware is also from China e.g., bombers, fighters, missile system, ships, submarines, drones, etc.. Whereas India's nemesis across the Line-of-Control (LOC) still harps on the rote and tiring record of co-religiosity, which is sounding trite and troublesome, even with Arab Sheikhdoms and for autocrats like Abdel Sisi who seek to protect themselves against religious puritanism e.g., Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. An indo-Egyptian framework is poised for a transformational reset.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HATH SE HAATH JODO

Sir — The Congress on Republic Day launched a nationwide 'Hath se Hath Jodo' campaign, under which it plans to reach out to people and make them aware of the "failures" of the Central government. Congress Party after the immense love received for the Bharat Jodo Yatra, they are sure that the Haath Se Haath Jodo campaign will also win everybody's hearts. The party workers will deliver a letter written by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and a "charge sheet" against the Central government to each household.

During the program which is scheduled to end on March 26, party workers will reach out to 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats, six lakh villages, and 10 lakh booths. In the letter, Rahul Gandhi wrote, "There is a palpable economic crisis brewing - joblessness among the youth, unbearable price rise, severe farm distress, and a complete corporate capture of the country's wealth".

One thing is for sure and we can call it the effect of Bharat Jodo Yatra. The congress worker today is brimming with confidence and taking up the BJP attacks head on. Which is really impressive as earlier the Congress workers were rather shy and apologetic about their role as a national party. Rahul Gandhi's 3,500 kilometer foot march has galvanized the foot soldiers of the congress who are now eager to prepare for the next general elections.

Gandhi wrote, "People are worried about losing their jobs, their incomes are falling further, and their dreams of a better future are shattering and there is a deep sense of hopelessness across the country. With this, it will be testing time for Congress Party's Haath Se Haath Jodo.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

A NATIONAL CAUSE

Sir — 15th of August and the 26th of January are national holiday and on these days everyone gets a holiday except defence forces and policemen. So on 26th January printing media offices are closed,

True Patriotism



Mahatma Gandhi did not attend the first Independence Day event at Red Fort, Delhi, on August 15, 1947. He was busy spreading peace and harmony in Kolkata (where communal clashes were going on). Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa lead simple lives without pomp and show, always serving others as individuals

and as a team too (without exploitation and harm). That is called real patriotism and humanity. Every human should emulate such good and angelic nature.

Please make republic day and Independence Day celebrations simple, inexpensive, and compulsory as E- Celebrations. People can stay at home and watch it on TV or computers and save themselves from the cold weather. Saved money to the exchequer can be given for the welfare measures of the poor. Also saved are pollution, and depleting petroleum fuel reserves, as the public need not travel all the way to the celebration point. The public too may give the money saved (on travel etc.) to PM's or CM's poor's welfare fund.

Sahasra Nivriti Vistlesha | Secunderabad

and on the next day we don't get newspapers. The field team of the newspapers does work on the 26th of January and the 15th of August. The offices are generally shut as it is a general holiday in the country. Some employees do work part-time to receive the field information and process it. This is for the online version of the newspapers.

News is a round the clock work. It does not stop any day be it a national holiday or religious festival. I don't quite understand why newspaper offices are closed on Republic day. Journalists work everyday to cover stories of national interest that people should know. So why they should not be doing so on the day of national importance? It is not logical. We know some journalists work hard on Independence and Republic Day to bring out the best for their readers. Some even carry special editions reminiscing the sacrifices of our forefathers. So in the national interest the newspaper offices must remain open in national interest.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

INSPIRING BUDGET

Sir — Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that this budget will be

inspiring, that is, it will take India forward and will be similar to the previous Budget 2023. However, the economic condition of the country is not looking good. Not only India's growth rate estimate for the financial year 2022-2023 has been reduced by many institutions, but the growth rate for the current financial year has also been reduced by RBI to 6.8 percent.

The forthcoming budget in its proclamations will also have to take into consideration the significant challenges predicted for the Indian economy due to the emergence of fears of global recession, and geo-political concerns like the Russia - Ukraine crisis.

The government should also focus on incentivizing or promoting technology in Budget 2023 to make India a talent hub for emerging technologies. Tax incentives for capital expenditure, capacity utilization, and use of new-age technology should be actively considered in this budget.

Ishika Asodiya | Ujjain

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

I share your commitment to working together for the success of India's G20 Presidency & 25th anniversary of the India-France Strategic Partnership. India and France together are a force for global good.



Prime Minister
— Narendra Modi

No backchannel talks between Pakistan and India.

Pakistan foreign minister
— Hina Rabbani Khar

Keeravani is a great composer. He was underrated. I believe, I don't know if it's true, that he wanted to quit music and retire in 2015 and that's exactly when his career started.



Music Composer
— AR Rehman

Keeping Players Inspired for All Three Formats is a Global Cricketing Issue.

Former South African cricketer
— AB De Villiers

Unity, Harmony, Equality, and Sovereignty — the pillars of our Constitution and the soul of our Republic.



Congress leader
— Rahul Gandhi

FIRST COLUMN

EXPECTATIONS OF HEALTHCARE SECTOR

Budget should rationalise import duty for the healthcare sector



ANURAG KASHYAP

The upcoming Budget is expected to create an enabling healthcare ecosystem with higher allocations and reforms pertaining to long-term credit facilities, a big push for public private partnership (PPP), and tax incentives and relief. High import duty on medical equipment is a major pain point for the hospital sector.

In the upcoming budget, hospitals seek relaxation on imported medical equipment, as they intend to procure state-of-the-art latest technology to treat patients and get the best medical outcome.

Over the years, the import of medical equipment has significantly increased. In 2021-22 imports went up by 41 per cent. As per the industry estimates, India imported medical equipment worth Rs 63,200 crore in 2021-22 compared to Rs 44, 708 crore in 2020-21. On the other hand, Indian equipment manufacturers seek a complete ban on the import of medical equipment or higher custom or import duty and other charges if not a complete ban. The industry has witnessed over 20 per cent hike in the cost of medical equipment import in the last two years.

It would take some more time for large hospitals to work on Indigenous medical equipment. Once Indian manufacturers match the global standards in terms of supply, range, and quality, big hospitals would be in a position to partner with them. Until that time, the government should restrict itself in making imports expensive with heavy duties.



The industry is always keen to be aligned with the 'Make in India' initiative or promote indigenous manufacturers. But, for big hospitals, it is more critical to maintain their global competitiveness. Hence, the sector would be expecting a reduction in import duties on medical equipment. Patients would be the ultimate winner. Currently, with heavy import duties on medical equipment, big hospitals' costs of operations significantly increased and they tend to pass on the burden to patients. So, heavy import duties on medical equipment come as a penalty for patients and must be rationalized.

Yet another pain point of the hospitals is pricing and delay in payments from Government schemes like CGHS and others. The segment would be expecting clear guidelines from the government.

The hospital segment expects a robust credit mechanism to overcome the shortage of funds. Long-term (15-20 years) credit facilities would significantly reduce the burden. Interest rate, tenure, and collateral are the major concerns.

The Government needs to impress upon the RBI to look at this pain point seriously for the sake of the financial health of the healthcare sector. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) on inputs increases the delivery cost by 18 per cent. And the providers do not get any input credit facility. Tax incentives for both existing and new healthcare projects are required. For new or green field projects a tax holiday period of 10 years, as given to Special Economic Zones and Tech Parks, would go a long way to transform the sector. It is strongly recommended that the government should create similar zones for hospitals and extend all the benefits including tax incentives.

This should not be limited to the hospital segment. Service providers, who are associated with hospitals, should also be included in such promotional schemes.

Overall, it is the right time to introduce some radical structural changes combined with the rationalization of taxes. The sector would keep its fingers crossed to see the government's measures and policy reforms.

So far, the government has shown its willingness to address the challenges of the sector and hopefully, this time Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman would walk some extra mile with regard to further strengthening the Indian Healthcare sector.

(The author is Director, Finance & Strategy, TR Life Sciences Private Limited)

Tech can expedite justice system

Use of artificial intelligence in Indian courts has the potential to significantly reduce the backlog of cases and fast track justice



PRASHANT TEWARI

The ongoing fight between the Government and the judiciary can have a significant impact on common citizens. It can lead to delays in the delivery of justice, as the judiciary may be overburdened by political considerations and government interference. This can result in citizens waiting for extended periods of time for their cases to be heard and resolved, leading to frustration and a lack of faith in the legal system.

Additionally, the Government and the judiciary may become preoccupied with their own power struggles, leading to a neglect of the needs and concerns of citizens. This can further erode trust in the legal system, and make it more difficult for citizens to access justice and have their rights protected.

The Indian legal system is facing a significant backlog of cases, resulting in delays in the delivery of justice. This is a major concern as it undermines the rule of law, and can lead to a lack of faith in the judiciary and the legal system as a whole.

One of the main reasons for the backlog of cases in the Indian courts is a shortage of judges. According to the National Judicial Data Grid, there are currently over 40 million pending cases in the Indian courts, while the sanctioned strength of judges is only around 20,000. This results in a large number of cases being assigned to each judge, leading to delays in the disposal of cases.

Additionally, the process of appointment of judges is often slow and bogged down by bureaucracy and political considerations, further exacerbating the shortage of judges. Another reason for the backlog of cases is the inefficient functioning of the courts.

The Indian court system is known for its slow pace, with cases often taking several years to be resolved. This is due to a number of factors, such as a lack of technology, inadequate infrastructure and resources, and a lack of training for court staff. Additionally, the legal process is often bogged down by delays and adjournments, further adding to the time it takes for cases to be resolved.

The backlog of cases also has a negative impact on the rights and access to justice for marginalised and vulnerable groups. For instance, the long delays in the disposal of cases can result in the denial of justice to victims of crimes, particularly women and children. Further, the long delays can also result in the release of the accused on bail, leading to the re-victimisation of the survivors of crimes.

The backlog of cases also has a significant economic impact, as delays in the disposal of cases can result in a loss of productivity and economic growth. The delays in the disposal of cases can also lead to a lack of faith in the legal system, which can discourage investments and economic growth.

GOVERNMENT AND JUDICIARY MAY BECOME PREOCCUPIED WITH THEIR OWN POWER STRUGGLES, LEADING TO A NEGLECT OF THE NEEDS AND CONCERNS OF CITIZENS. THIS CAN FURTHER ERODE TRUST IN THE LEGAL SYSTEM, AND MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR CITIZENS TO ACCESS JUSTICE

(The author is a public policy expert)



economic growth.

In short, the backlog of cases in the Indian courts is a major concern that undermines the rule of law and can lead to a lack of faith in the judiciary and the legal system as a whole. The backlog of cases is a result of a shortage of judges, inefficient functioning of the courts, and a lack of resources.

To address the problem of the backlog of cases, there is a need for systemic reforms in the Indian legal system, including increasing the number of judges, improving the infrastructure and resources available to the courts, and implementing technology to improve the efficiency of the courts.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to significantly reduce the backlog of cases in Indian courts. However, it is important to approach the implementation of AI in the legal system with caution and consideration of potential challenges and limitations.

One potential use of AI in the Indian courts is through the use of predictive analytics. Predictive analytics can be used to analyse patterns and trends in past case decisions, allowing judges and lawyers to make more informed decisions in current cases. This could potentially speed up the legal process and reduce the backlog of cases. However, it is important to ensure that the algorithms used for predictive analytics are unbiased and do not discriminate against certain groups of people.

Furthermore, the use of predictive analytics in the legal system raises concerns about transparency and accountability, as the decision-making process becomes less transparent and more reliant on complex algorithms.

Another potential use of AI in the Indian courts is through the use of automated document review. Automated document review can be used to quickly sort through large amounts of legal documents, allowing lawyers and judges to identify relevant information. However, it is important to ensure that the AI system is able to accurately identify relevant information and is not prone to errors or false positives.

Additionally, there is a risk that the use of automated document review could lead to job loss for court clerks and other legal professionals who currently perform this task manually. However, to mitigate this problem, there can be settled guidelines to be followed wherein the applications can be moved by trained bar council-approved lawyers and every judgment can be vetted by a trained judge to avoid error and technological shortcomings.

AI-powered chatbots can also be implemented in Indian courts especially in the district courts and rural areas to assist overburdened lower judicial staff with the legal process by providing information and guidance. This can help to reduce the workload of court staff and improve access to legal information for citizens. However, it is important to ensure that the chatbot is able to provide accurate and up-to-date information and is not prone to errors or misunderstandings.

Also, there is a risk that the use of chatbots could lead to a decrease in personal interactions and human empathy in the legal system.

In conclusion, the backlog in the Indian courts just cannot be handled by human intervention, there has to be either a divine or technological intervention required to significantly improve the justice system. The implementation of AI in the Indian courts has the potential to significantly reduce the backlog of cases and improve the efficiency of the legal system.

However, it is important to approach the implementation of AI with caution and consideration of potential challenges and limitations. This includes ensuring that AI systems are unbiased, transparent, and accountable and that the rights of citizens are protected. Additionally, it is important to consider the ethical implications of using AI in the legal system and to ensure that the use of AI does not lead to a decrease in personal interactions and human empathy in the legal system.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

WE'RE ALSO GIVING UKRAINE THE EQUIPMENT TO SUSTAIN THESE TANKS. THIS IS ABOUT HELPING UKRAINE. IT IS NOT AN OFFENSIVE THREAT TO RUSSIA. — US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN



IF THE US DECIDES TO SUPPLY TANKS, IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO JUSTIFY SUCH STEPS USING ARGUMENTS ABOUT 'DEFENSIVE WEAPONS'. — RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE US ANATOLY ANTONOV

Test of success of Bharat Jodo Yatra lies in polls

Journey to power in New Delhi may not be easy for the Opposition against a formidable, well-oiled machine of BJP

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra traversing so far through 10 states, reaching almost the last lap, has stirred the party back to the near centre-stage of Indian politics, with a spontaneous crowd responding to it.

The Yatra has evoked interest among the people with the possibility of the rise of a counter-saffron narrative, its avowed aim. It has given acceptance to Rahul Gandhi as a leader even by the BJP. Their top functionaries now accept he has arrived. But will the emerging Third Front at Khammam at Telangana chief minister KC Rao's rally dampen its effort?

Is the yatra a success? To an extent, it can draw many eminent persons from the society



SHIVAJI SARKAR

(The author is a senior journalist)

—the youth and children. His "T" shirt is a great draw and connects. It also shows that Congress can meticulously plan a 3500 kms march from Kanyakumari to Jammu and Kashmir, traversing through 12 states. In every state eminent social persons have been part of it despite severe derisive criticism from a curious or awed BJP and its parivar.

Some of the names include former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan, Mahatma Gandhi's grandson Tushar Gandhi, Shiv Sena leader Aditya Thackeray, NCP's Surpriya Sule, National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah, lawyer Prashant Bhushan, activist Harsh Mander, Bollywood actors, former RAW secretary and intelligence bureau ex-chief AS Dulat, actors Amol Palekar, Riya Sen, Sandhya Gokhale to Swara Bhaskar, singer Sunidhi Chauhan, IIT professors, former defence, police and other officials.

It was touted that though it might succeed in Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, the Yatra might not succeed in the limited areas of Delhi and UP. It surprisingly succeeded in the kisan belt of western UP, Haryana and Delhi the swelling crowds put the city out of gear.

Still the yatra is not beyond it. The best quote has come from Congress MP Shashi Tharoor. He said at a book launch in Kolkata that the Yatra has evoked a massive response. However, has noted: "Translating that into votes is the next challenge and does not follow automatically." That's the problem.

Rahul Gandhi may have sent a message of love but he has also been seen as "loveable" to the BJP as well. His barbs are soft and he has not yet been critical of the BJP's policies: economic, education, privatisation or simple seizure of 10-year-new cars, tractors or high tolls that make miseries deeper and inflation sharper or even for ballot paper voting.

How many of the nine states going to polls from February can win? Even in Tripura it has entered into an alliance with the CPI-M. Its presence is weak in Meghalaya, Nagaland or Mizoram. The battle will be tough in Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, MP and Rajasthan. It cannot go alone in Maharashtra, Bihar; it does not have an ally in West Bengal, Odisha. In most states, it has fledgling organisations, not a match against the BJP.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has done well to invite 21 like-minded parties to join the concluding Srinagar ceremony on January 30, Mahatma Gandhi martyr's day. That's where he left the chinks too by not inviting AAP, JD-S, BRS, BJD and Akali Dal.

The latest January 18 Khammam mega rally by Telangana chief Minister and BRS leader K C Rao brings out this weakness and finds presence of a number of them for the launch of a third front and himself as a possible PM.

Rao said, "The Congress and the BJP only indulge in verbal fights". It was attended by Samajwadi leader Akhilesh Yadav, Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan and CPI general secretary D Raja. How is it to be interpreted? Is it a rally for bargaining seat-sharing with the Congress or splintering its effort? How can the Left ally with Congress in one state and also form the Third Front?

Politics is becoming interesting and intriguing. It is being interpreted as a setback to Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar's effort to unite the opposition. There is apprehension that if KCR move succeeds it might dampen what the Congress is trying to achieve against the BJP.

Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee has yet to open her cards.

Most of these parties have splintered away from the Congress whether KCR's BRS or West Bengal's TMC or Andhra's YSR Congress. Even SP and RJD are wary of the rise of the Congress. They fear the minority Muslim votes shifting to the Congress.

The success of the yatra apart, the journey to power in New Delhi may not be easy for the Opposition against a formidable, well-oiled machine of BJP. The Khammam rally may be a new beginning of intense fisticuffs among the opposition ranks. Would it again be advantage BJP or Congress still has something up its sleeves to outshine the run up to 2024? The nation awaits the answer.

MONEY MATTERS

Hitachi Terminal Solutions India opens global cash recycling

Hitachi Terminal Solutions India on Friday inaugurated its global Cash Recycling Machines (CRM) manufacturing facility here, where it plans to employ more than 400 people in future. Spread over 1,08,000 square feet, it will enable the company to triple its current production capacity of 1,000 CRMs per month. The core engine of the CRMs (Cash Modules) are localised and will now be completely assembled in India with a high level of automation in this new facility, a company statement said. Hitachi Terminal Solutions India Private Ltd Managing Director Yoshihiro Nakatani said our estimate indicates that more than 1.1 million cash recycling machines have the capacity to be installed globally by 2024. "Hitachi Terminal Solutions India will continue its efforts for expanding its business ecosystem and developing solutions in India, to further augment the export of our products from India and thus contribute to the development of the Indian economy", he said.



Sensex, Nifty fall in early trade on selling in banking shares

Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty fell in early trade on Friday dragged down by banking shares and Reliance Industries along with continuous foreign fund outflows. The 30-share BSE benchmark tanked 578.19 points to 59,626.87 in initial trade. The broader NSE Nifty fell 144.7 points to 17,747.25. From the Sensex pack, ICICI Bank, HDFC, Axis Bank, State Bank of India, Reliance Industries, Kotak Mahindra Bank and HDFC Bank were among the major laggards. Tata Motors, ITC, Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Steel were among the winners. Elsewhere in Asia, equity markets in Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai were trading in the green, while Hong Kong quoted marginally lower. Markets in the US had ended higher on Thursday. Stock markets were closed on Thursday on account of Republic Day. International oil benchmark Brent crude edged up 0.38 per cent to USD 87.80 per barrel.



Commerce Ministry recommends imposing anti-dumping duty

The Commerce Ministry has the recommended imposition of anti-dumping duty on vinyl tiles coming from China and Taiwan for five years to guard domestic players from cheap imports from these countries. The Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) has recommended the duty on imports of 'Vinyl Tiles other than in roll or sheet form' from these countries after concluding in its probe that the product has been exported at dumped prices into India, which impacted the domestic industry. The Authority recommends imposition of the anti-dumping duty on the imports ... originating in or exported from the subject countries, for five years," the directorate has said in a notification. In the market parlance, the product is known as luxury vinyl tiles, or PVC flooring tiles. It mimics the appearance of the natural materials. It is used for covering the floors in the residential and the commercial buildings.



TRANSHIPMENT PORT

Govt to invite EoIs for Rs 41,000-cr project in Great Nicobar Island

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways will invite expressions of interest (EOI) from interested players for a Rs 41,000 crore international transshipment port project at Great Nicobar Island in the Bay of Bengal.

The ministry in a release on Friday said that the project is expected to be complete with an investment of Rs 41,000 crore (USD 5 billion), including investment from both government and PPP concessionaire. The EOI will be released on Saturday (January 28).

The proposed port in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands will have ultimate capacity to handle 16 million containers per year and in the first phase to be commissioned by 2028 at a cost of Rs 18,000 crore



will handle above 4 million containers.

Other projects planned around the transshipment port include airport, township and power plant, it added.

The project is located on the international trade route, with existing transshipment terminals

like Singapore, Klang and Colombo in proximity.

According to the statement, the project focuses on three key drivers which can result in making it a leading container transshipment port, i.e. strategic location in terms of proximity (40 nautical miles) with the international shipping

The ministry in a release on Friday said that the project is expected to be complete with an investment of Rs 41,000 crore (USD 5 billion), including investment from both government and PPP concessionaire

size for all types of vessels, from feeders to the large inter-continental carriers. Further, the proposed infrastructures facilities shall be such that the service levels and facilities match with that of the global top container transshipment terminals and neighbouring ports.

The proposed facility is envisaged to be developed in four phases.

The estimated cost for Phase 1 of the proposed transshipment port is around Rs 18,000 crore which includes the construction of breakwaters, dredging, reclamation, berths, storage areas, building and utilities, procurement and installation of equipment and development of port colony with core infrastructure is going to be developed with the government support.

trade route, availability of natural water depth of over 20m and carrying capacity of transshipment cargo from all the Ports in the proximity including Indian ports.

Holistic development of Islands aims to bridge the gaps in infrastructure and improve economic opportunity for rapid increase in

India's biopharma and diagnostic industry strategic assets: Mandaviya

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The medical emergency over the past few years due to the COVID-19 pandemic has seen India's biopharma and diagnostic industry prove to be strategic assets to meet the public health requirement not just domestically but globally, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Friday.

In his video address to the National Summit on Quality of Biologicals, organised here by the National Institute of Biologicals (NIB), the minister said biological drugs have emerged as a choice of therapy along with conventional chemical drugs.

The National Institute of Biologicals is playing a vital role in ensuring that only quality biological products reach the health system, thereby strengthening the prime minister's mission of ensuring quality health and wellness for all, he said.



The national summit will act as a platform to bring together stakeholders, regulatory authorities and academia for interaction on various aspects of quality assurance of biologicals

"The medical emergency over the past few years due to the COVID-19 pandemic has seen our biopharma and diagnostic industry prove to be strategic assets to meet the public health requirement not only of our country but globally, which has given meaning to the statement of universal brotherhood 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', that is, 'the whole world is one family,' he stated.

The national summit will act as a platform to bring together stakeholders, regulatory authorities and academia for interaction on various aspects

of quality assurance of biologicals. These interactions will spearhead capacity building, technology enhancement and development of newer biologicals for promoting and safeguarding public health contributing towards the government's mandate of "Healthy India".

Congratulating NIB for bringing multiple stakeholders in a single platform, the minister said the summit will provide a base for gap analysis in the currently prevalent quality assurance approaches in India.

Adani Group stocks continue to fall

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Adani group stocks continued to remain under pressure on Friday, falling up to 20 per cent in morning trade, after the US-based investment research firm Hindenburg Research made damaging allegations.

Shares of Adani Total Gas plummeted 19.65 per cent, Adani Transmission tumbled 19 per cent, Adani Green Energy plunged 15.50 per cent and Adani Enterprises tanked 6.19 per cent on the BSE.

Also, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone fell 5.31 per cent, Adani Wilmar dipped 5 per cent and Adani Power declined 4.99 per cent.

In the broader market, the 30-share BSE benchmark declined 537.91 points or 0.89 per cent to trade at 59,667.15.

The Adani Group on Thursday said it is examining legal options to take "punitive action" against Hindenburg Research for its "reckless" attempt to sabotage a



mega share sale at the conglomerate's flagship firm - a statement that the US activist investor responded by saying it stands by its report that alleged "brazen" market manipulation and accounting fraud by the group.

"The maliciously mischievous, unresearched report published by Hindenburg Research on January 24, 2023, has adversely affected the Adani Group, our shareholders and investors. The volatility in Indian stock markets created by the report is of great concern and has led to unwanted anguish for Indian citizens," Adani Group's lead head Jatin Jalundhwa said in a statement.

For Hindenburg Research, Adani Group is a disaster

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In 1937, a hydrogen-powered German airship flying into New Jersey caught fire and crashed, killing 35 passengers on board. It was sort of a man-made disaster as some 100 people were loaded on to a balloon filled with the most flammable material in the universe. The airship was named Hindenburg. Eight decades later, in 2017, a graduate of international business management from the University of Connecticut founded a 'forensic financial research' firm to specialise in spotting wrongdoings and frauds, or what it calls man-made disasters, at companies around the globe and take market bets against them. Founder Nathan (Nate) Anderson

named his firm Hindenburg Research. Last week, a report from Hindenburg Research on Indian tycoon Gautam Adani's business empire sparked a USD 51 billion sell-off in shares of his group companies, pushing him four places down on the world billionaire index. The report said that the Adani Group had "engaged in a brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme over the course of decades". The disclosure came just ahead of Adani Enterprises' Rs 20,000 crore open offer of shares to investors. Adani group has since rubbished the report as a "malicious combination of selective misinformation and stale, baseless and discredited allegations".

Govt gets multiple EoIs for privatising NMDC Steel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has received multiple preliminary bids for the privatisation of NMDC Steel Ltd (NSL), DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said on Friday.

Currently, the government holds a 60.79 per cent stake in NSL, which is the steel manufacturing facility of India's largest iron ore producer NMDC located in Nagarnar, Chhattisgarh.

NSL is up for privatisation with the government looking to sell 50.79 per cent of its shareholding, along with management control. The government had on December 1, 2022, invited preliminary bids or expressions of interest (EoI) for the strategic sale and the last date for putting in bids was

January 27.

"Multiple Expressions of Interest (EoI) received for the Strategic Disinvestment of NMDC Steel Ltd (NSL)," Pandey tweeted.

The transaction will now move to the second stage, he added.

In response to pre-bid queries received from interested bidders, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) had earlier this month said the Ministry of Corporate Affairs on October 6, 2022, approved the demerger of the steel manufacturing unit at Nagarnar from NMDC. The demerged entity would be NMDC Steel Ltd (NSL).

Subsequent to the demerger, shares of NSL will be listed on BSE, National

Stock Exchange of India Limited and Calcutta Stock Exchange.

As per current estimates, the targeted date for commissioning of the steel manufacturing plant NSL is March 31, DIPAM said.

NSL is expected to have a production capacity of 3 million tonne per annum (MTPA).

In October 2020, the CCEA gave its 'in-principle' approval to the demerger of the Nagarnar steel manufacturing unit from NMDC and strategic disinvestment of the result-

ing entity by selling the entire stake of the central government.



Patanjali Foods Q3 profits rises 15% to Rs 269 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Patanjali Foods Ltd, which is mainly into edible oil business, has posted a 15 per cent growth in its net profit to Rs 269.18 crore for the December quarter on better sales.

Its net profit stood at Rs 234.07 crore in the year-ago period, according to a regulatory filing.

Total income rose by 26 per cent to Rs 7,963.75 crore

during the quarter ended December 31, as compared to Rs 6,301.19 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year.

During the April-December period of this fiscal, nine-month period ended December 31, 2022, net profit increased to Rs 622.73 crore from Rs 571.87 crore a year ago, said Patanjali Foods, which is part of Baba Ramdev-led Patanjali Ayurved.

CBI books GTL for cheating, fraud

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has filed an FIR against telecom infrastructure major GTL for allegedly diverting a substantial portion of a Rs 4,760 crore loan availed from a consortium of banks led by IDBI Bank, officials said.

The agency has booked the company, unidentified directors, public officials and vendors under IPC sections related to criminal conspiracy, cheating and provisions of the Prevention of Corruption



The FIR has alleged GTL Limited was extending advances to vendors year on year without supply of material/ goods, and eventually these advances were provisioned

Act, following a preliminary enquiry which showed that GTL had fraudulently obtained various credit facilities from consortium of banks, they said.

According to the FIR, the company allegedly diverted or

siphoned off a majority of the loan amount in conspiracy with its vendors, unidentified bank officers, among others.

The FIR has alleged GTL Limited was extending advances to vendors year on year without supply of material/goods, and eventually these advances were provisioned.

"Various vendor companies were created and operated with the malafide intention of siphoning off the bank short term funds and other credit facilities in connivance with borrower i.e. GTL Limited," the FIR has alleged.

The IDBI Bank had conducted a special audit of the company in 2011 and raised the issue of suspicious transaction with the vendors.

Indian stock markets switch to T+1 settlement regime

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian stock markets on Friday achieved a complete transition to a shorter settlement cycle or T+1 regime, a move that will bring significant capital efficiencies to the investors and improve risk mitigation for the entire industry.

T+1 (trade plus one) means that market trade-related settlements will need to be cleared within one day of the actual transactions taking place. Earlier, trades on the Indian stock exchanges are settled in two working days after the transaction is done (T+2).

All trades from January 27

executed in any securities in the equity segment will be settled on a T+1 basis, the National Stock Exchange (NSE) said in a statement.

The journey to shortening the settlement cycle began on September 7, 2021, when capital markets regulator Sebi allowed stock exchanges to introduce the T+1 settlement cycle from January 1, 2022, on any of the securities available in the equity segment.

Following this, all the market infrastructure institutions - stock exchanges, clearing corporations and depositories -- jointly finalised the roadmap for the implementation of the T+1 settlement cycle in a



phased manner.

The first batch of securities transitioned to T+1 settlement on February 25, 2022, and

thereafter, every month a batch of around 500 securities transitioned to T+1 settlement.

From January 27, all securi-

ties -- equity shares including SME shares, exchange-traded funds (ETFs), Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs), Sovereign Gold Bond (SGB), Government Bonds and Corporate Bonds trading in the equity segment will now be settled only on T+1 basis.

Globally most stock exchanges in developed as well as emerging markets follow the T+2 settlement system.

"It's a great achievement for the Indian capital market. The achievement would not have been possible without the continuous guidance provided by Sebi and painstaking effort

taken by all MIIs (Market Infrastructure Institutions), particularly the clearing corporations, trading members, clearing members, custodians, and all other stakeholders in re-engineering the processes and crunching timelines to adapt to shorten the settlement cycle.

"The shortening of the settlement cycle to T+1 will bring in significant capital efficiencies to the investors and improve risk mitigation for the entire industry," NSE MD and CEO Ashishkumar Chauhan said.

The exchange said that achievement is significant considering the NSE size and scale of operations in the equity segment.

Young 'Shepreneur' redefining entrepreneurship in Hyderabad

K. RAMYA SREE

There is no denying the fact that women entrepreneurs are shaping the future of India. At present, India has 432 million working-age women and 13.5–15.7 million women-owned businesses that provide direct employment to 22–27 million people. Statistics have shown that the number of female business owners has increased by 114%.

No surprise that women have made an enormous effort to be present in the world of entrepreneurship. More young women are coming forward into the entrepreneurial world to bring about a change in society and its behavior. For this week's edition of Hyderabadond, we have with us K Manisha, who is here to prove the misconception that "experience leads you everywhere." She says young people are more talented and that with their ideas and thoughts, they can build their own empires.

The "shepreneur" launched her own fitness studio, "Hyki fitness studio" in Kondapur. Wondering

what's so special about it? It is a cutting-edge plush fitness studio where experience counts. In fact, it even attracted legendary cricketer Virat Kohli, who recently visited her studio for a shoot and was mesmerised by its aesthetics.

The 25-year-old speaking about her entrepreneurial journey, informed us, "I was doing my masters in luxury and branding abroad, and I happened to come to India in 2020 for a vacation, and unfortunately, COVID hit us, so I had to stay back. It was at the same time we moved from Jubilee Hills to Manikonda, and we couldn't find any great gym in the area. And it was getting difficult for me and my dad to travel to Jubilee Hills every day. So we decided to set up a home gym, however, a thought struck me: why not a fitness studio in Manikonda itself? It will help many people like me who are looking for experiential fitness studios. That's how Hyki happened."

Wondering what Hyki means? It is apparently a Japanese word that means wellness. It's a lifestyle-changing word.

True to its words, as you walk into Hyki you will be welcomed with



pleasing aesthetics, rich and plush, giving you a push to keep yourself fit. They have different sets for their clients every day. It is not a commercial gym.

"Empower young talent. Experience and old energies are things that do not interest me. I think young people are more talented and capable. I want to prove that young people are more talented, and sometimes with their ideas, if put in the right way, they can be successful too."

Manisha is a true-blooded Hyderabad, born here. And she believes that women entrepreneurs are well-supported in Hyderabad. She said, "I haven't come across anyone putting me down. People in Hyderabad are more courteous. I'm not sure if it's because my father is accompanying me or because of the lineage I receive, but everyone has been very nice so far. I think we are in an era where a lot of women are in this market, and there is a lot of support from the audience. They are very proud to see me, and I had people come to me and tell

me that they are inspired by me and motivated by what I do. Hyderabad is definitely taking me in the right sense."

She feels Hyderabad is an upcoming city, and the people's spending power has also increased. So Manisha is expecting growth in all sectors in Hyderabad. Having lived abroad, when she returned to Hyderabad, she was mesmerised by its growth, she said, "I love the vibrance of the city and its spaciousness."

She feels people here are very calm and down to earth, and that helps her stay calm and keep herself-grounded.

Manisha was once over 100 kilos, and now she is a role model in fitness. "People here in Hyderabad are becoming more aware and educated about fitness. The whole social media era has

been moving towards wellness lately. I am sure a lot of people are getting inspired and understanding the importance of fitness and well-being. However, Hyderabad is lacking in good trainers. Trainers are still despised as a profession. I think people are supposed to get educated, and they need to up their game. We need more passionate and creative people."

However, she is a hard-core fan of Biryani. She is not someone who would restrict food. "I don't restrict myself or my clients. Eat whatever you want but in limited quantities, and hit the gym the next day. The food scene in Hyderabad is amazing and growing. A lot of Asian tastes are coming here, and even I am planning to venture into the food scene in the coming months."

Manisha is the daughter of real estate bigwig Gopala Krishna. For her and the family, Hyderabad is everything that made them become who they are today. "My true home is Hyderabad. It's a place that gave me a platform and recognition for me and my family. It is the place where I grew up. This will always hold a special place in my heart. After Hyderabad, my second home is London."



No surprise to the fact that women have come out of their comfort zone and are making their mark in the entrepreneurial world. Today, for our weekly edition of Hyderabadond, we bring to you young 'Shepreneur' K. Manisha, who has turned into a fitness role model for many.

Soulful strings of sitar spreading mental peace

TEJAL SINHA

Mental health is one of the most discussed topics, be it in debates or in raising awareness. Of late, there have been several pieces of research that state that music can lessen the impact of depression and anxiety.

So, today we have with us Rishab Rikhiram Sharma, the brain behind 'Sitar for Mental Health', who found a way to bring peace to other people through the music that had given him so much. Hailing from a family of luthiers, Rishab was always surrounded by musical instruments, music, artists, and the whole culture. But at the same time he laughs out loud and recalls how he was not allowed to touch the Sitar, because his father had such reverence for the instruments. "My father used to always tell me "you have to learn it properly, or you're going to hurt yourself or break the instrument, so once you're of the age you can probably hold a Sitar (he giggles)." However, "he was fairly liberal with me playing the guitar, so I thought about Indian classical vocals first, and then I sort of moved towards western music and picked up the guitar. I thought it was cool to play, and I was very young at that time, so I got this fancy guitar at that time and got very good at it."

But, it was a broken Sitar that made his father realise his potential. How? He says, "My dad once received a broken shipment, a return shipment from a customer of Sitar. Broken instruments are never kept by my father. He always fixes them and keeps them for like donations or other purposes. He fixed the sitar and put it on the wall and I was just watching it. It was not too big or small. It was the right size for me as a 10 to 11-year-old kid. It was one of his own creations. I was just watching this Sitar for 2-3 days and finally built up the courage and asked him "Dad this sitar is already broken how much more can I break this (he laughs)" so can I just try my hands on



it and he was like "yeah sure go ahead". I was very surprised so I picked up the Sitar and figured out 'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Da Ni Sa' and in a few minutes I started playing some popular tunes and the song is on the Sitar. He was astonished and so surprised that I was playing all these tunes of the songs and he saw the potential in me and said "From tomorrow you're lessons begin."

Rishab is the youngest and final disciple of Pandit Ravi Shankar, which he says was his breakthrough, and it was after this that he began taking it even more seriously.

No surprise, music has been like a 'messiah' for many of us, be it while

In an exclusive chat with The Pioneer, Sitarist and mental health advocate Rishab Rikhiram Sharma, takes us through his melodic journey and how he is using his Sitar to bring out peace for other people.

being upset, happy, or having any other emotions. And, what could be better than listening to soulful music or a performance that in itself becomes a meditation for us. This, is what Rishab too aims to bring with

'Sitar for Mental Health'. "I used to always think about how I could use my Sitar and voice to create more noise about mental health and what a human being, in general, goes through. I should be thankful to my friends and support system, who pushed me and encouraged me to go to therapy and take care of myself. I want to be that for

other people, because sometimes you know you're not feeling well and want someone to help you out. So, that was my idea for raising awareness and destigmatizing talking about mental health: join forces with different people who share the same ethos and have shared the same ideology."

Mental health in the workplace is top of mind for everyone these days. While our understanding of mental health at work is evolving, as is the prevalence of poor mental health, it's worth revisiting the fundamentals. Supporting mental health in the workplace is no longer a nice-to-have but a necessity. Creating wellness solutions to help their employees thrive is the first step. By sharing his own experiences, the Sitarist virtuoso says, "I help my dad with the business. We have also employed people to work with me, and we have created this understanding about mental health. If someone is going through a difficult time, all you can do is be there for them and be understanding, welcoming, and a safe space for them. We have this understanding that if someone is going through something, it's completely fine if we take an off day, or even if they do not want to do anything, that's totally understandable. I understand what we go through, everyone has their own battles. As an employer, artist, or colleague, you can be there for them, and I can offer some Sitar music (he laughs) in my free time."

Youngsters these days have shown immense love and inclination towards Indian classical music. And, so, we wanted to know what the scene was in the sitar community, and he enthusiastically shares, "In India, I think there's this huge community of not just players but also listeners and appreciators of Sitar. These events and collaborations, I believe, have paved the way for many artists to pursue international collaborations and have simply placed Sitar on the map. There are communities not just in India but around the world. It really feels like one big family, and they always talk about "gharanas" and different schools of playing, how we do things differently and how I think of us as "gharanas". We've had all the gharanas under one group, and I feel our business ties all the "gharanas" and communities together, so I have never felt divided. Signing off the conversation with his biggest coping mechanism, he said, "It's been ever since I started playing sitar. Every time I had a bad day at school, I would just come home and practise it out and let my emotions flow and express them through my music."

Soundous Moufakir: I was asked to 'compromise' as a result of a big banner project

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Splitsvilla fame Soundous Moufakir always wanted to become an actress and now she has said it out loud! Where she hails from Morocco, acting is always looked upon as a great career choice from the time Nora Fatehi brought honour to the country. She has been roped in to play Roma in the movie *Continuity* made by Soorma filmmaker and she can't be more happier than this!

In an exclusive conversation with us, the bubbly actress says, "Born in Rabat, as soon as I turned eighteen, I moved to Paris to live an independent life. I was doing my masters in finance there! Our Nora Fatehi didn't just rouse a motivation in us Moroccans but artists worldwide. I took the leap of faith, resigned as a financial analyst, and booked my tickets to Bombay to be who I always wanted to be."

Endearing the audiences with her charming personality on *Splitsvilla* currently on air, showing how to stand up for friends — the debutant actress continues, "The reality television show *Splitsvilla* strengthened me mentally. I would love to be a part of Ekta Kapoor's upcoming season of *Lock Upp* too. Doing such shows on television is like getting yourself

Splitsvilla fame Soundous Moufakir is all set to make her acting debut with *Continuity*. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, she takes us through her forming days, standing up for her friends on *Splitsvilla*, and also makes a shocking revelation at the end.

tattooed, can never be undone what you show. I am not yet done with reality shows (she laughed)."

Ready with her debut film, she shares, "Initially I knew nobody here! I used to watch *Roadies* in Paris, can you imagine? As soon as I signed for these reality television shows: I didn't shy away from showing my bold personality, as I am. You can find me fighting like a courageous warrior everywhere, don't allow anyone else to speak on my behalf. This temperament was liked by the filmmaker and I was signed on. Shit-scared because I didn't know Hindi at all. I learned a cuss word to protect myself in this industry."

Ending the interview with a huge revelation, she revealed, "I was asked to "compromise" as a result of a big banner project and it will always be a haunting memory for me. Yes, I screamed a straightforward NO but what has changed after #metoo movement? I am not a desperate outsider that a casting agent can try to misuse me. It was so embarrassing for me here. We draw a boundary, can't men read it?"





Gautam Manghnani



Ahmed Habib and Aman Habib



Pavan Ladda



Jayashree and Palak



Ishwarya Vullingala

actress Ishwarya Vullingala, along with the presence of Habibs hair & beauty salon founders Habib Ahmed and Aman Habib, inaugurated its 11th store in the Telugu states at Nallagandla, Hyderabad.



Trishala



Manisha Kapur

The House of MBJ will be presenting the most exclusive collection of Jaipur's royal polki, diamond and gold jewellery at Taraash on January 30 and 31 at the Park Hyatt, Hyderabad.



Hasini Reddy



Sowkya



PHOTOS BY SV CHARY

Hyderabad-based agriculture biotech Startup Telluris Biotech received the Biochemical Classification from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

ARCHIE



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

1 Air-holes in your nose
6 Become larger
7 A spider's trap
9 Speaks
11 The body's pump
12 Uncles' wives
13 Took away illegally
16 Hot coals left from a fire
18 Meat from a cow
19 Unexpectedly, without warning

DOWN

4 Topic
5 A chopping tool
8 An insect that flutters by
10 Baby cats
14 Sea
15 Second-hand
17 A month

SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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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.

Self-esteem thy name is Jamuna



B.RAJESWARA PRASAD

Veteran actress Jamuna, who passed away on Friday, as one of the pantheons of Telugu cinema, always prized self-esteem and was a picture of self-confidence throughout her career. Great and versatile actress, Jamuna relied solely on her individual accomplishments and never carried favour of industry legends to remain in circulation by following industry-induced compulsions. With the demise of Jamuna, the golden era of Telugu film industry has effectively ended.

The enduring greatness of Jamuna lies in the fact that she did not confine herself to film-dom as an actor and director, but took active part in social activities with a stint in politics as well when she was elected to the Lok Sabha.

Although the cine journey of Jamuna started with *Puttillu*, she got recognition with the multi-starrer *Missamma*. Thereafter, she never looked back and went on to give many hit movies. Against the backdrop of NTR and ANR refusing to act with her, Jamuna did not lose her courage and in fact that rejection gave her the requisite dose self-confidence that sustained her throughout her career. She did not hesitate to pair with newcomers of the period like Krishna and Krishnam Raju. It is a different matter that she gave a push to their career. She was also not reluctant to act with

Chalam and Ramakrishna, who were virtually non-entities then. She was among the actresses who considered acting to be divinely ordained and performed her role perfectly, irrespective of the popularity of the hero, whoever it may be. She was part of the industry's evergreen classics like *Missamma* and *Gundamma Katha* in which she paired with ANR, while Savitri paired with NTR. The last star of the studded movies left us, leaving behind a great and stupendous three-decade-long career.

Generally a heroine's career gets a boost when she acts with a big hero. But in her career, Jamuna gave life to many heros. She proved to be a role model for many actresses by exhibiting her artistic skills in the portrayal of diverse roles that required heavy dose of emotional content. She got into the skin of characters like Satyabhama, Rani Malani Devi, and Janaki. These three characters brought to light her innate acting skills. Then again we saw her mirroring naïveté as Gowri in *Mooga Manasulu*. After Savitri, it was Jamuna who was considered for many roles that required heavy emotion content. Few actresses can match her in versatility. Jamuna gave life to many roles that will always remain role models. Like Savitri, she has a permanent place in the annals of film history with her remarkable body of work.

In Jamuna's departure the Telugu film industry has lost its sheen further.

From films to politics — a journey on her own

K. RAMYA SREE

Actress Jamuna made her debut into the film industry in 1953 with the film *Puttillu*. In 1953, Dr. Garikipati Raja Rao of the Indian People's Theatre Association, saw her stage show *Maa Bhoomi* and offered her a role in his film *Puttillu*. She rose to fame after appearing in LV Prasad's *Missamma* (1955). It did not even take her a span of three years to become a household name in the southern states. After *Missamma*, there was no looking back for the actress. She then went on to appear in over 200 films, including *Sri Krishna Tulabharam*, *Sampoorna Ramayanam*, *Pandanti Kapuram*, *Bhookailas*, *Mooga Manasulu*, *Ramudu Bheemudu* and many other super hit films.

Jamuna whose real name was Jana Bai, was popularly known as Satyabhama because of the mythical films that she was part of. She began performing in stage plays at an early age, during her school days itself before transitioning to film. Her mother taught her vocal music and harmonium.

Not just Telugu cinema, she gained immense craze and popularity in all southern Indian cinema. While the majority of her films were in Telugu, she also worked in Tamil, Kannada, and Hindi. She received the Filmfare Award for her performance in

the Hindi film *Milan*. In 1972, she won Filmfare Special Award - South for *Pandanti Kapuram*.

Furthermore, she acted in 11 other Hindi films. She was last seen in *Ammamma Gari Manavadu* in 2021. She was also the recipient of Tamil Nadu State Film Honorary Award, NTR National Award, and Padmabhushan Dr. B. Soroja Devi National Award.

She was called the perfect pair opposite NTR and ANR. And all their movies were a super hit of those times.

Even in real life she was a hyperactive person. Even at the age of 70, Jamuna was seen dancing to one of her songs and the video went viral in no time with netizens heaping praises for the actresses' work.

the late 1990s.

She is the mother of Telugu Artist Association, which she founded about 25 years ago. She has been providing humanitarian services to the movie association members ever since.

JAMUNA WAS VERY LIBERAL

Having been born into a family who are very progressive, Jamuna was a very liberal person throughout her life. She was born to a Brahmin father Nippani Srinivasa Rao and a Vyssa mother Kowsalya Devi in Hampi in 1936. Her parents had an inter caste marriage even before independence that led to her having a progressive upbringing at home.

Not just acting, she was also trained in classical music and dance.

In many interviews Jamuna confessed that late actress Savitri was like her elder sister, who showed her the way in the industry and guided her whenever needed.

Jamuna's parents wanted her to marry a well-read intellect and they were in the look out for IAS and IPS officers. But she married a Zoology professor J Ramana Rao and the couple had two children — J Sravanthi, who is now a renowned painter and her son Vamsi, who is a Media Studies Professor in San Francisco.



Several Tollywood celebrities poured in their deepest condolences As a bubbly mischievous girl, fiery sister-in-law, homemaker and above all. As the on-screen Satyabhama of Telugu people, Jamuna garu is unforgettable. My homage to the departed soul.

- Nandamuri Balakrishna

For almost 30 years she reigned over the silver screen. Prayers for her soul.

- NTR Jr

Although her mother tongue was Kannada, she conquered the hearts of Telugu audiences with her performances in several Telugu hit movies.

- Chiranjeevi

Senior actress and former Lok Sabha member Jamuna's death is sad. She has left an indelible impression as Satyabhama in the mythological movies. My condolences to her family.

- Pawan Kalyan

Saddened to hear about the demise of Jamuna garu . Will fondly remember her for her immense contribution to the industry.

- Mahesh Babu

Jamuna Garu. One of most beautiful woman with a childlike heart, a legend in Telugu cinema. Will miss her dearly.

- Vishnu Manchu

Saddened by the passing of legendary actress #Jamuna garu. Will fondly remember her for all her iconic roles and her immense contribution to the industry. My condolences to her family and loved ones.

- K Raghavendra Rao

Heart broken to hear about the

demise of Jamuna garu . Condolences to the family , near & dear . Her contribution in the era of classical telugu cinema can never be forgotten . May her soul rest in peace. Om Shanthi.

- Allu Arjun

Heart broken to hear about the demise of Jamuna garu . Condolences to the family , near & dear . Her contribution in the era of classical telugu cinema can never be forgotten . May her soul rest in peace. Om Shanthi.

- Sudheer Babu

Saddened to hear the demise of legendary actress #Jamuna garu, May her soul rest in peace.

- Ananya Nagalla

Shocked to hear about the demise of legendary actress #Jamuna Garu. May her soul rest in peace. Sending my deepest condolences to her near and dear..om shanti

- Nithiin

One of the most impactful actors in the golden age of south cinema, Smt. Jamuna garu. Rest in peace.

- BVS Ravi

#Jamuna garu will be remembered forever for all those iconic roles she outlived.

- Gopichand Malineni

We lost a gem! My heart goes out to Shrivanthi and Koozu. We will miss you amma. Thank you for being what you are!

- Lakshmi Manchu

The story of a legend came to an end. She stood as an inspiration to all of our new generation artists. We will cherish you forever #Jamuna garu. My condolences to her family and dearest ones.Om Shanti

- Sai Dharam Tej

SOME OF HER POPULAR MOVIES INCLUDE

PUTTILLU (1952)
IDDARU PELLALU (1954)
DONGA RAMUDU (1955)
MISSAMMA (1955)
TENALI RAMAKRISHNA (1956)
CHIRANJEEVULU (1956)

MUDDU BIDDA (1956)
BHAGYA REKHA (1957)
JALSA RAYUDU (1960)
GUNDAMMA KATHA (1962)
MANCHI MANISHI (1964)
MOOGA MANASULU (1964)

RAMUDU BHEEMUDU (1964)
SRI KRISHNA TULABHARAM (1965)
LETA MANASULU (1966)
CHADARANGAM (1967)
POOLA RANGADU (1967)
PANDANTI KAPURAM (1972)

Ranjith Jayakodi: I am influenced by International films

The 'good friends' duo Sundeep Kishan and Ranjith Jayakodi are all set to woo the audience with their upcoming film *Michael*. Not even a week left for its release in theaters, director Ranjith in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, opened up about how the casting for the film was done, *Michael* being a visually rich film, and more.

K. RAMYA SREE

Michael, starring Sundeep Kishan, has sparked a lot of interest since its trailer debuted recently. The pan-India film, directed by Ranjith Jayakodi, is gearing up for a grand theatrical release on February 3.

The film has a star cast including Vijay Sethupathi, Varalakshmi Sarath Kumar, Divyansha Kaushik, Varun Sandesh, and Gautham Menon, adding more weight to the film.

This is the third film for director Ranjith, a Chennai native. The director revealed that it was Sundeep Kishan who first initiated working with him. "Sundeep was impressed after watching my second film, and he called me up about the same. Since then, we have been good friends. However, during the second lockdown, he suddenly said, "Let's make a movie together." He was keen on doing an action movie, and at the same time I was also writing the script for *Michael*. That's how *Michael* happened to us," said the director, who clarified that *Michael* is not just an action film, it has period drama, action, romance, and much more.

"The film is set in three periods: 1970s, 80s and 90s. It is a beautiful love story with a gangster backdrop," added Ranjith.

Interestingly, this film will see *Happy Days* fame Varun Sandesh in a negative role for the first time, and



the director informs us that it was Sundeep who proposed to cast Varun in this film. He said, "When I wrote the story, I had another actor in mind for that role. Sundeep was the one who asked me to check out Varun as his face will be fresh for the role. Since Varun had a lover boy image among the audience, I wanted him to give a screen test, and Varun took it very sportively and immediately agreed to the screen test. He had the same energy that an actor has while he auditions for his first film. I could feel Varun's enthusiasm, and he surprised me with his acting."

Furthermore, he said that he wanted

ed a pan-Indian star for one of the roles, and since Vijay Sethupathi is his best friend with whom he did his first film, he could convince Vijay easily, and the actor liked the script very much.

Star cast aside, if you have watched the trailer, you will surely know how visually rich this film is. "The plot itself dictates the type of visuals that should be used. The lighting and frames are chosen to complement the tale. My prior films' camera technique was also unique. *Michael* has visuals by Kiran Kaushik. Who would have guessed that this was his first film as a DVP? He did an outstanding job. In terms of filmmaking style, I am influenced by international films. Before I go on set, I focus on the tone of the picture," said the director, who is confident that the visuals in this film will get a good response.

It seems like *Michael* is a film that is being brought to the audience by a group of good friends. While the director already confessed that Sundeep and Vijay are his good friends, the music director of the film, Sam CS, is also his good friend. He came on board to provide some spine-chilling music for the film, and that too even more cautiously because this is his good friend's movie.

Bharat Choudhary and Pushkur Ram Mohan Rao are jointly producing this film, with Narayan Das and K Narang as the presenters.



‘It’s very contemporary the way we shot the show’

Shahid Kapoor is all set to make his digital debut with Prime Video's upcoming crime thriller, *Farzi*. Created by Raj & DK, who are known for their edgy thrillers, the series has already piqued the interest of the audience. As the fans await for the collaboration to create magic on the screen, the lead actor recently opened up about his experience of working with the director duo.

Talking about working with Raj & DK, actor Shahid Kapoor shares, "They really allow the actors to come out and express themselves and sometimes they are really worried with what we are doing with the shots.. But they let you do what you want to do and I felt very free. I also feel that this show has been made in a very fluid manner. It's very contemporary the way we shot the show, the way the characters have been written and developed allows every actor to really dig-in deep because there is enough meat there if you really go looking hard for it and it's very democratic. I think they let everybody bring what they feel and then they kind of final it together to make it what they feel is right. I had a lot of fun. I think they felt very nervous like what's up with him but I was having a great time."

Packed with signature humour, director Raj & DK's *Farzi* is an eight-episode crime thriller. The series revolves around Sunny, a small-time con artist, who finds himself pulled into the dark while planning the perfect con. However, a ferocious and unconventional task force officer has made it his mission to rid the country of the threat he represents.

The series also features an ensemble cast including talented actors Vijay Sethupathi, Raashii Khanna, Kay Kay Menon, Bhuvan Arora, Regina Cassandra, and Amol Palekar in pivotal roles. Produced by D2R Films, *Farzi* will stream in India and across 240 countries and territories starting 10th February 2023.



Nadiya, Ivana & Yogi Babu onboard for MS Dhoni's *Let's Get Married*

Former Indian skipper and star cricketer MS Dhoni is turning producer with his newly launched production company Dhoni Entertainment (DEPL) banner and has now announced the title of his first Tamil film.

The highly-anticipated film, which will star Harish Kalyan, Ivana, Nadia Moidu, and comedian Yogi Babu, is titled *LGM - Let's Get Married*, and will be directed by debutant Ramesh Thamilmani. The upcoming film is touted to be a family entertainer and has been con-

ceptualised by Dhoni's wife, Sakshi Singh Dhoni, who is also serving as the Managing Director of Dhoni Entertainment.

Announcing the title of Dhoni Entertainment's debut production venture in Tamil, a motion poster for *LGM - Let's Get Married* has also been released. The film also includes a talented technical team onboard among whom include cinematographer Viswajith Odukkathil, who is known for his work in Malayalam films like *Hridayam*, *Mukundan*

Unni Associates, and *Gold*, while Pradeep E. Ragav of *Kathakali*, *Tik Tik Tik*, *Comali*, and *Love Today* fame is handling the editing.

Talking about the great bond Dhoni has shared with the people of Tamil Nadu over the years, Dhoni Entertainment (DEPL) in a press release said, "Reinforcing this extra special relationship further, Dhoni Entertainment will be producing its first film in Tamil, a family entertainer conceptualized by Sakshi Singh Dhoni, MD of Dhoni Entertainment."

NOVAK IS GOING FOR 10

Djoker's perfect record in Melbourne Park semifinals continues on Friday as he booked a 10th tilt at Australian Open glory

AP ■ MELBOURNE

A rampant Novak Djokovic surged into a 10th Australian Open final on Friday to close in on a record-equalling 22nd Grand Slam crown, with only Stefanos Tsitsipas now standing in his way.

The Serbian fourth seed overcame an early wobble to romp past unseeded American Tommy Paul 7-5, 6-1, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena in style.

Another title on Sunday will move him alongside Rafael Nadal with 22 Slam wins and see the 35-year-old return to world number one for the first time since last June.

Djokovic played the clash without father Srdjan courtside after he was filmed posing with a man holding a Russian flag featuring Vladimir Putin's face following his son's quarter-final win on Wednesday.

The incident sparked a backlash from Ukraine and led to calls for Djokovic's father to be banned from the tournament.

Srdjan issued a statement ahead of the semi-final saying he would stay away, insisting he "wishes only for peace" and never wanted to cause "disruption".

There was an empty seat next to his mother Dijana during the match.

"I'm really thankful that I have enough gas in my legs to be able to play at this level on one of the biggest tennis courts in the world," said Djokovic, who is now 11-0 for the season and into a 33rd Grand Slam final.

"Of course, I'm not as fresh



as the beginning of the tournament but we put in a lot of hours in the off-season on fitness in order to be in a good condition to play best of five (sets).

"I know what's expected of me, I've been in this situation so many times in my career. Experience helps also," he added of being in another final.

The win extended his unbeaten streak at the Australian Open to 27 matches to claim sole ownership of the Open-era record at Melbourne Park ahead of Andre Agassi.

Djokovic had never played Paul before and said he was wary of a "very explosive, very dynamic player", with the American

initially refusing to go quietly.

The Serb, a hot favourite, attacked his opponent's straight away for an early break, then broke again when the 35th-ranked Paul fired a forehand long to race 5-1 in front.

A run-in with the umpire over using his towel between points seemed to rattle Djokovic

and he was broken twice in a row as Paul came surging back to 5-5.

Djokovic regrouped to hold serve and break again and take the set in 59 minutes.

After that wobble, it was all business, despite clutching his strapped hamstring several times, romping through the

next two sets with minimal resistance.

He will meet Tsitsipas next after the Greek battled into his first Australian final and only second at a Grand Slam.

In the previous one, at Roland Garros in 2021, he fell to Djokovic in five sets after holding a 2-0 lead.



Tsitsipas in dreamland after reaching maiden Australian Open final

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Stefanos Tsitsipas said he was living the dream after reaching the Australian Open final on Friday for a first time and standing on the cusp of becoming world number one.

The Greek third seed showed grit to defeat Russia's Karen Khachanov and set up a final against either nine-time Melbourne champion Novak Djokovic.

The 18th-seeded Khachanov threatened a comeback after saving two match points to force the semi-final into a fourth set, before Tsitsipas triumphed 7-6 (7/2), 6-4, 6-7 (6/8), 6-3.

Tsitsipas can top the world rankings if he wins his first Grand Slam crown on Sunday.

"I dreamed as a kid to play in this court against the best players in the world," Tsitsipas told a sunny Rod Laver Arena after winning an Australian

Open semi-final at the fourth attempt.

"So I'm happy with the fight I put out there today. I feel blessed, blessed that I'm able to play tennis at this level.

"I've been wanting for many years now to put Greek tennis on the map."

At 24, Tsitsipas is the youngest man to reach the Australian Open final since a 23-year-old Djokovic in 2011.

Tsitsipas has thrived in Melbourne throughout his career, after bursting on the scene at the 2019 event as a 20-year-old when he dethroned defending champion Roger Federer in the last 16.

He went on to reach the semi-finals that year and again in 2021 and 2022, falling one match short on each occasion.

A Grand Slam crown has remained elusive, with his runner-up showing at Roland Garros in 2021 his best result so far, falling to Djokovic in five sets after holding a 2-0 lead.



Sabalenka, Rybakina promise power-packed final

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Two of the biggest hitters in women's tennis go toe-to-toe when Aryna Sabalenka and Elena Rybakina clash in Saturday's Australian Open final in Melbourne.

Belarusian fifth seed Sabalenka is in the form of her life and on the brink of a maiden Grand Slam crown.

The 24-year-old comes into the showpiece under the Rod Laver Arena lights on a 10-match unbeaten streak in Australia, having won the Adelaide International and is yet to drop a set in 2023.

She has defeated Wimbledon champion Rybakina in all of their three previous meetings.

Rybakina, 23, has coolly moved through the draw, unfazed by the snub of her opening match being shunted out to the wilderness of Melbourne Park's Court 13.

The Russian-born player, who now represents Kazakhstan, has accounted for three Grand Slam champions on her way to the final, including world number one Iga Swiatek.

Jelena Ostapenko and Victoria Azarenka followed on the back of Rybakina's dominant serve, which has smacked down 45 aces so far, more than any other.

Rybakina's graceful power appears effortless at times, emanating from clean ball-striking and immaculate timing. Sabalenka is more brutal, her muscles generating spin and driving the ball through the court.

It is a trait Sabalenka has always possessed but was often stymied by her fractious nerves.

But not this year as she finally won a Slam semi-final at the

fourth attempt against the unseeded Pole Magda Linette.

Sabalenka has turned it around by working tirelessly last year with her coaches, a sports psychologist and a biomechanical specialist.

"I was trying to do less screaming after some bad points or some errors," Sabalenka said. "I was just trying to hold myself, stay calm, just think about the next point."

"I'm still screaming 'Cmon!' and all that stuff. Just less negative emotions."

Sabalenka is now so confident of handling her emotions — demonstrated as she smoothly fought back from 2-0 down in the first set against Linette — that she has dispensed with her sports psychologist.

Rybakina, the 22nd seed, will be full of confidence heading into her second major final in the past seven months.

She's lost only one set during the Australian Open fortnight, and that was against last year's runner-up Danielle Collins.

But if her first serve deserts her, Rybakina can come under pressure, as happened against the combative Azarenka in the semi-finals when she was broken three times.

But she is more than just a big serve and has enough all-court game to ward off most danger — her wide reach and ability to hit winners off both wings enabling her to get out of trouble.

With one major victory already achieved, Rybakina believes the experience will give her an edge.

"Everything was new at Wimbledon," Rybakina said. "Now I more or less understand what to expect."

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Trailblazing Indian tennis star Sania Mirza capped off her glorious Grand Slam career with a runners-up finish alongside 'best friend' Rohan Bopanna in the Australian Open mixed doubles final here on Friday.

Pairing up with her first-ever mixed doubles partner Bopanna, the unseeded Indian duo went down 6-7(2), 2-6 to the Brazilian pair of Luisa Stefani and Rafael Mataos in the final at the Rod Laver Arena.

"If I cry, these are happy tears. That's just a disclaimer. I'm still going to play a couple of more tournaments but my journey of my professional career started in Melbourne," an emotional Sania said as she struggled to hold back tears.

"Rohan was my first-ever mixed doubles partner when I was 14 and we won the nationals, it was 22 year ago and I couldn't think of a better person, he's my best friend and one of my best partners to finish my career," Sania said, thanking Bopanna, who has one French Open mixed doubles title to his credit.

The 36-year-old, who earlier announced that the WTA event in Dubai next month will be her swansong, is India's most accomplished woman tennis player, having won six Grand Slam title, including three mixed doubles trophies.

She had won the the mixed doubles titles at the 2009



Australian Open and the 2012 French Open with Mahesh Bhupathi and the 2014 US Open with Brazilian Bruno Soares.

The Rod Laver Arena has been a happy hunting ground for the Hyderabad. She has a women's doubles and mixed doubles title each and has finished runner up four times at the Australian Open.

"It started in 2005 when I played Serena Williams in the third round as an 18-year-old

and that was scarily enough 18 years ago. I have had the privilege to come back here again and again, win some tournaments here and play some great finals amongst you all.

"Rod Laver Arena has really been special in my life and I couldn't think of a better arena to finish my career at in a Grand Slam," Sania said.

The presence of her son Ishaan, alongside family and friends made the occasion sweeter.

"I never thought I'd be able to play in front of my child in a Grand Slam final, so it's truly special for me, to have my four-year-old here and my parents here, and Rohan's wife, my trainers, my family in Australia who made me feel like home away from home."

"Cara Black who is my best friend and one of my first partners, it's been truly special I wouldn't be able to achieve anything without you all," Sania said.

Real defeat Atletico to reach Copa del Rey semis

AP ■ MADRID

Karim Benzema and Vinicius Junior's extra-time strikes earned Real Madrid a 3-1 win over rivals Atletico Madrid on Thursday to reach the Copa del Rey semi-finals.

The Brazilian winger's goal was a particularly sweet one for him after a crude effigy with his shirt on was hung from a bridge near Real Madrid's training ground before the game.

The spiky, gripping derby clash turned against Diego Simeone's side in the additional period when defender Stefan Savic was sent off. Atletico took the lead through Alvaro Morata after 19 minutes but Rodrygo's sensational slam run past three defenders and slick finish pulled Madrid level with 11 minutes remaining.

After Savic's 99th minute red card, Benzema tucked home from Marco Asensio's pass and Vinicius netted at the death to send Los Blancos through to the

final four for the first time since 2019. "Today we had a very difficult game but with the character and the players that we have, we were able to turn it around," Benzema told Teledeporte.

"Suffering is not good -- we have to score the goals earlier." The build-up to the derby was tainted by the Vinicius effigy being strung up overnight, which the club described as "a disgusting act of racism, xenophobia and hatred."

"(Vinicius) really wanted to play and he had a very good game," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti told a news conference.

"I think the goal was his reward for his great work. What happened is very regrettable." Madrid fans had planned to sing Vinicius' name in support in the 20th minute, matching his shirt number, but were stunned into silence by Morata's goal moments before.

Atletico, hitting their best form of the season, conjured a



brilliant move to break the deadlock, with Morata tapping home after Koke's dink allowed Nahuel Molina to stroke a first-time cross to the back post.

Madrid improved significantly after the break and Rodrygo levelled with 11 minutes to go with his jinking solo effort and subtle near-post finish, taking the clash to extra-time.

Atletico defender Savic foolishly handed Madrid the edge when he was sent off for two yellow cards in two minutes.

With an extra man Madrid capitalised, Benzema striking lethally after 104 minutes when Vinicius miskicked Marco Asensio's cross and the ball travelled through to the striker.

Madrid, who last won the Copa del Rey in 2014, kept Atletico at bay in the final 15 minutes before Vinicius dribbled through and fired home to clinch the victory — celebrating with a now customary dance routine.

Despite their improving performances, the rest of Atletico's season is looking barren, given they were eliminated from European football and are 13 points behind La Liga leaders Barcelona, having played a game more.

"We are out of Europe and now the cup, the team has the second half of the season ahead of them to try and qualify for the Champions League, that's the objective the club needs," said Simeone, who cast some doubt on his future.

The Argentine coach has been at the club since 2011 and has a contract until 2024.

"After that, calmly, we will look at what is convenient for everyone," he continued. "Being at Atletico gives me enormous joy, I will give 1000 percent until the day that I leave."

Earlier Athletic Bilbao won 3-1 at Valencia to join record 31-time winners Barcelona and Osasuna in Monday's semi-final draw.