

sunday pioneer

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Iraqis see signs of hope
20 years
after US invasion P: 9



QUOTE OF THE DAY
the pioneer

TSPSC has done recruitment transparently and did highest recruitments in the country. In the past, there have been many accusations against APPSC but TSPSC has done recruitment for more than 30000 jobs so far and not a single allegation has been received. blunders of two individuals in TSPSC have brought the entire system into disrepute

- Minister K T Rama Rao

DON'T MISS...

Farmers jubilant as Kaleswaram...

The spectacle of Godavari water from the Kaleswaram Project is finding its way into the Ranganayaka Sagar project and from there to Pedda Vagu at Nangunur before it empties itself into Maneru Reservoir after wetting parched lands in several villages en route has been unveiled. The objective of the Telangana movement is getting fulfilled if the Godavari water is coursing in every village is any indication. Normally, the ...

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Cheques given to film award ...

Cheques given to several winners of Assam State Film awards have bounced, landing the state government in an embarrassing position. The awards were conferred on Monday. On Friday, nine cheques given to eight winners were returned by the bank when presented for clearance. "I deposited the cheque on Friday and got a call from the bank that it got bounced. Immediately I called the organisers, who said that there was insufficient balance," Aparajita Pujari said...

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Startup failure gradually ...

Asserting that the rate of failure of startups in the country is slowly declining, Director General of Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) Arvind Kumar said there is a need to create more awareness about what the government is doing to promote startups. Talking to PTI, Kumar said awareness campaign is very much required amongst the youth about startups. "I go to a number of engineering colleges, they don't know anything about startups, they don't know about STPI, they don't know anything about what the country and ...

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Exoplanets could harbour life in ...

"Terminator zones" on distant exoplanets, or zones where the "day" side of the planet meets the "night" side, could potentially harbour extraterrestrial life, according to a new study. Astronomers from University of California, Irvine (UCI), US, describe "terminator" as the dividing line between the day and night sides of the planet, which have one side that always faces its star and one side that is always dark. Terminator zones could exist in that "just right" temperature zone between too hot and too cold, they said in ...

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OBTUSE ANGLE



Radical preacher Amritpal on the run as Punjab launches major crackdown

CHANDIGARH: The Punjab government on Saturday launched a major crackdown against radical Sikh preacher and Khalistan sympathiser Amritpal Singh, with police arresting 78 members of an outfit headed by him, officials said. The elusive preacher himself, however, gave the police a slip and escaped their dragnet when his cavalcade was intercepted in Jalandhar district, even as authorities stepped up security at several places and suspended internet and SMS services in the state till Sunday noon. The police said it has launched a "massive state-wide cordon and search operations (CASO)" in the state against elements of the 'Waris Punjab De' (WPD),

headed by Singh, against whom several criminal cases had been registered. During the operation, a total of 78 persons have been arrested so far, while, several others have been detained for questioning, it said. Amritpal Singh and others are on the run and a massive manhunt has been launched to nab them, a police spokesperson said. The police action came a day ahead of the start of Amritpal Singh's 'Khalsa Wahir' - a religious procession - from Muktsar district. A heavy deployment of security forces had been made near village Jallapur Khara in Amritsar, the native place of Amritpal Singh, for the operation. Speaking to reporters, his father Tarsem

Singh said he was not aware whether his son has been arrested or not. Singh said he cooperated with the police who came to his house and carried out a search operation. He called the police action 'unjustified' and said his son was wearing the youth off drugs. Why the police were not acting against criminals and those involved in drugs, he asked. Some supporters of 'Waris Punjab De' chief shared some videos on social media claiming that policemen were chasing them. A video also showed Amritpal sitting in a vehicle and one of his aides could be heard saying policemen were after 'Bhai saab' (Amritpal).

'Paper leak is individuals' failure'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Government of Telangana will not spare the two suspended employees of the Telangana State Public Service (TSPSC) and those behind them in the question paper leak case, IT Minister K.T. Rama Rao declared on Saturday. "It's not the failure of the system or institution. It is because of the mistake of two individuals that lakhs of youth are facing difficulties. We are working on how to rectify and ensure that such a thing does not happen in the future. We are consulting experts and will bring whatever reforms are required," he said.

Reiterating that one of the accused was an active worker of the BJP, KTR once again requested the Director-General of Police (DGP) to investigate if there was any conspiracy to defame the government and provoke youth.

KTR said, "My humble appeal is please donot ascribe fault of the two to the entire institution of TSPSC. Pursuit of excellence and scope for improvement is always there in TSPSC - in making it fool-proof, use technolo-

KTR SPEAKS OUT

It is mistake of two persons, and not of institution

Why should I resign? How is the IT Department related?



We will give free coaching material for all four exams

Reading rooms will be open 24*7; free food will be provided

'Am I responsible for every computer in the state just because I am an IT Minister?'

It is not aspirants' mistakes; they need not pay fees again

gies better. It is a constant pursuit we'll do it. This is just Day 1." The Minister

called upon people who had qualified to have a big heart and understand that

MLC ELECTION RESULTS

SNCRN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

The MLC election results for the graduates' and teachers' constituencies are ringing danger bells for the ruling parties of both Telugu states.

In Telangana, the BJP which is aiming for power in the next Assembly elections has given a shock to the ruling BRS by winning the MLC seat from the teachers' constituency.

In Andhra Pradesh, the main opposition TDP, which has a lot of hopes about reviving its past glory in the Assembly elections has surprised the ruling YSR Congress by winning two MLC seats from graduates' constituencies. These results indicated dissatisfaction among some sections.

In Telangana, the BRS is hoping to win 100 seats out of the 119. At the same time in Andhra Pradesh the YSR Congress is aiming to win 175 Assembly seats with the slogan 'why not 175'.

But the MLC election result indicates that it is not easy for both the ruling parties to achieve their targets. Both the BRS and the YSR Congress depend on weaker sections for retaining power. There is some dissatisfaction among the educated and the upper class against the ruling parties of Telangana and AP. In the MLC elections, these sections expressed their bitterness.

In Andhra Pradesh, the YSR Congress is surprised by the results in graduates' constituencies.

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy is projecting Visakhapatnam

as the administrative capital as per the three capitals formula. But the TDP and other parties are opposing this.

The YSR Congress hopes that its decision on Visakhapatnam will give it an advantage in north coastal districts. But against the expectations of the YSR Congress in the north coastal graduates' MLC constituency the TDP won the seat.

In the same way the Rayalaseema region from where Chief Minister Jagan Mohan

Reddy hails supported the YSR Congress. But here also the TDP won one MLC seat from the graduates' constituency.

Voters in these MLC elections belong only to some specific groups. But if the same situation continues it may spread to other groups also.

Both the BRS and the YSR Congress hope that their welfare schemes for the poor will bring them victory in Assembly elections. But the results of the MLC elections indicate that the ruling parties in both the Telugu states must take corrective measures before the Assembly elections to get the support of the masses. The BRS and the YSR Congress swept MLC elections in the MLAs' quota and local bodies' quota elections respectively. But the voters in these elections belong to the ruling parties and have nothing to do with the general public.

In the graduates' and teachers' MLCs constituencies all voters do not belong to ruling parties and there they faced defeat.

ED files caveat on Kavitha's petition in Supreme Court

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a caveat in the Supreme Court regarding the Delhi liquor scam.

In the caveat, the ED said that no unilateral orders should be given in the case filed by MLC Kavitha. The ED asked the court to take a decision only after hearing their arguments. The ED requested the Supreme Court not to issue any orders without hearing their arguments.

Govt hikes pay for SERP employees

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TS government announced a hike in the pay scales of all employees of the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty employees (SERP) on Saturday.

Sandeep Kumar Sultania, Principal Secretary, State Panchayat Raj, Rural Development Department issued a government order (GO Ms. No: 11) declaring a hike 1 the pay for 3,978 employees, effective from April 1, 2023. SERP employees thanked the authorities for granting a raise after 23 years.

Health Minister Harish Rao said, "As promised by Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao in the Assembly, I am happy to inform you about the orders issued on the pay scales for SERP employees, field, ministerial and supporting staff

TSERC asks consumers, DISCOMS to save electricity

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With Telangana's power distribution companies (DISCOMs) procuring electricity at a higher price which has led to an increase in the overall electricity bills for all consumers, the Telangana State Electricity Regulatory Commission requested people to save power.

The DISCOMs of Telangana have been procuring power from various sources at a higher price by paying Rs 12 per KWH during peak hours from other states, thermal power plants and renewable energy sources.



The ERC said, "This has resulted in an increase in the cost of power, which is eventually passed on to consumers who are already struggling to make both ends meet due to the corona pandemic. The higher cost of

power has been attributed to a variety of factors including rising fuel prices, the use of expensive power generation tech and an increase in the demand for electricity." This has created a significant burden on consumers. The government has expressed concern over the issue and has called for increased awareness among consumers to save electricity, particularly in government offices. Energy conservation is the need of the hour, and consumers must reduce their electricity consumption to ease the burden on their pockets.



and Mandal Samakhya Community Coordinators. A long standing complaint of SERP employees has been solved."

The pay scale for the post of Mandal Samakhya Community Coordinators (MSCCS) has been increased to Rs 19,000 to 58,850, Mandal Samakhya Community Coordinators (Mandal Representatives and Divisional

Representative) to Rs 19,000 to Rs 58,850, Mandal Bookkeepers to Rs 22,240-Rs 67,300, Community Coordinators to Rs 24,280-Rs 72,854, Asst. Project Managers to Rs 32,810-Rs 96,890, District Project Managers to Rs 42,300-Rs 1,15,270, Project Managers to Rs 51,320-Rs 1,27,310, Drivers to Rs 22,900-Rs 69,150, Office Subordinate (OA) to Rs 19,000-Rs 58,850, and for Administration Assistant or Secretaries to Rs 24,280-Rs 72,850.

The GO also prescribed a fixed tenure for employees and ordered that no new employee can be hired without the government's permission. The notice also said that existing benefits like ESI and EPF shall continue without change.

The new pay scales will create an additional burden of Rs 58 crore per year on the government.

'I stand by my comments' Sanjay appears before TSCW

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP President Bandi Sanjay Kumar appeared before the Telangana State Commission for Women (TSCW) on Saturday and gave an explanation regarding the notices issued to him in connection with the comments he had made against BRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha on March 8. Sanjay had said, "Will the ED kiss Kavitha instead of arresting her if she had committed an offence?"

'Collegium best system we have'

Developed for appointment of judges: CJI Chandrachud

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Not every system is perfect but this is the best system available, Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud said on Saturday while defending the Collegium system of judges appointing judges, a major bone of contention between the government and judiciary.



Speaking at the India Today Conclave, 2023, the CJI said judiciary has to be protected from outside influences if it has to be independent.

"Not every system is perfect but this is the best system we have developed. But the object was to protect the independence of the judiciary, which is a cardinal value.

CM reviews TSPSC paper leak issue

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao on Saturday conducted a high-level review on issues concerning leak of TSPSC examination question papers. TSPSC Chairman Janardhan Reddy went to Pragathi Bhavan and met the Chief Minister in this regard. Ministers KTR, Harish Rao, along with Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari, and other high officials participated in the

meeting. Available information about paper leakage issue, conduct of examinations and further action were reportedly discussed. It may be mentioned here that in view of the leak of certain question papers, it has been announced that Group 1 prelims, AE, DAO etc. exams have been cancelled. These examinations will be conducted again. In this context, the government has focused on the next activity.

There is public outrage and a lot of criticism coming from opposition parties and students' unions on this matter. They say it is not enough to cancel the exams; those behind the leaks should be brought to book and handed severe punishment. The meeting reportedly discussed how to deal with the next examinations and reassure candidates that henceforth the examinations would be conducted in a fool-proof and transparent manner.

Trump says he'll be arrested soon

PNS ■ NEW YORK

Donald Trump said in a social media post that he will be arrested on Tuesday as a New York prosecutor is eyeing charges in a case examining hush money paid to women who alleged sexual encounters with the former president. Trump said in a post on his Truth Social network early on Saturday that "illegal leaks" from the Manhattan district attorney's office indicate that "THE FAR and AWAY LEADING REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE and FORMER

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, WILL BE ARRESTED ON TUESDAY OF NEXT WEEK." Trump urged his followers in New York have been making security preparations for the possibility that Trump could be indicted. There has been no public announcement of any time frame for the grand jury's secret work in the case, including any potential vote on whether to indict the ex-president. (AP)

Sack Ministers, TSPSC board members, says Bhatti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

CLP leader Bhatti Vikramarka called for the immediate resignation of all concerned Ministers and the TSPSC board after the leakage of TSPSC questions papers. He also demanded that the TSPSC should refund the fees paid by candidates who took the exams and compensate them for their agony. Bhatti Vikramarka, who is conducting a People's March in the Khanapur constituency of Adilabad district as part of the 'Haath Se Haath Jodo' Yatra on Saturday said that ministers, the TSPSC Chairman and all board members must resign. "We achieved statehood for Telangana to provide jobs.

Unfortunately, the BRS government is not doing that. Job notifications were issued after a long time. But the leak of question papers has shattered the unemployed," he said. Bhatti said the TSPSC has cancelled exams whose question papers had leaked and had assured to re-conduct them. But it also needs to refund the expenses candidates incurred. "Every applicant must have spent thousands. Therefore, a minimum amount must be paid to all candidates," he said. Bhatti also blamed the BRS government for the suicide of jobless Chitikena Naveen Kumar (32) of Siricilla town. He demanded that the government should pay a compensation of Rs 1 crore to Naveen's

family. The third day of the "People's March" by Bhatti Vikramarka continued from Kondapur in Sirikonda Mandal to Dasnapur in Indraveli Mandal on Saturday. Bhatti said that many irrigation projects in the area, including the Chikmun and Triveni Sangam, had been left incomplete. He said the Chikmun project, with an ayacut of 12,000 acres, was almost completed by the Congress government. Similarly, the Triveni Sangamana's reservoir and other works were completed. He said that even after nine years, the BRS government failed to dig canals for the two projects.

CMO officer had hand in TSPSC leak: Sanjay

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP president Bandi Sanjay Kumar demanded that the state government should give the unemployed a compensation of Rs 1 lakh each in view of the cancellation of TSPSC exams. Otherwise, an unemployment march along the lines of the Million March would be conducted, Sanjay warned. He said that the CM's son KT Ramarao should be sacked and that the hand of a CMO officer is clearly visible in the TSPSC question paper leak and that his role was seen in Singareni Colliery appointments too. Sanjay said that if facts are to come out an inquiry will have to be conducted by a sitting HC Judge.

BJP committed to categorisation of SC reservations

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP SC Morcha president MP Lal Singh Arya said that the BJP is committed to the categorization of SC reservations. He said that they had also passed political resolutions at the BJP state executive meetings regarding this.

He said that the Telangana BJP unit had also participated in the Categorization of SC Reservations. The BJP SC Morcha's leadership is also extending support to the resolution passed by the State BJP Executive Committee, Lal Singh added.

Hurt by success of India's democracy and institutions, some people attacking it: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the success of India's democracy and its institutions is hurting some people and that is why they are attacking it, remarks that came amid the BJP's intense attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his criticism of the state of democracy in India. Speaking at the India Today conclave, Modi said India has shown the world that democracy can deliver and also took a swipe at various opposition parties for rallying around over the action of different probe agencies against their leaders in cases of alleged corruption. While scams running into lakhs of crores of rupees used to make the headlines earlier, now the coming together of the corrupt scared over the action in corruption cases makes news, he added.



The prime minister lauded the strength of the country's various institutions which, he noted, have led to increasing participation of people in elections, successful conduct of many polls during the COVID-19, strong economy and banking system amid a global crisis, and the administration of more than 220 crore vaccine doses against the coronavirus. "Whatever India is achieving today, it is due to the power of our democracy, the power of our institutions," he said.

"It seems to me that this success is hurting some people and that is why they are attacking our democracy and institutions," he said. When the country is full of confidence and resolve, and intellectuals of the world are optimistic about India, talk of pessimism, showing the country in poor light and hurting the morale of the country also takes place, he said. "When something auspicious is happening, there is a tradition to apply 'kaala tika', so when so many auspicious things are happening, some people have taken the responsibility to apply this 'kaala tika'," Modi said, without naming anyone. His remarks came amid a political slugfest over Rahul Gandhi's remarks during his recent visit to the UK, with the BJP accusing him of maligning India on foreign soil and seeking foreign intervention.

VH asks Jagan, APSCW to take action against Ramgopal Varma

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Senior Telangana Congress leader V. Hanumantha Rao has written to Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, the Andhra Pradesh State Commission for Women (APSCW) and the AP Governor seeking action against Tollywood director Ramgopal Varma for making 'inappropriate' comments against women. He requested APSCW to file a case against Ramgopal Varma suo moto. Addressing the media at Gandhi Bhavan on Saturday, VH said that Ramgopal Varma's language is not proper. While addressing students of Nagarjuna University a few days ago, Ramgopal Varma had given a call to students to 'eat,

MP Magunta skips ED summons

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP MP Magunta Sreenivasulu Reddy who was asked to appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday skipped citing family members' ill health, according to reports. The Ongole MP was to appear before the probe agency in Delhi at 11 am on Saturday. Now the agency will issue a summons to the MP with a fresh date. MP Srinivasulu Reddy was asked to appear before the agency in Delhi on Saturday as the agency wants to confront him with another accused Arun Ramchandra Pillai, who represented the alleged South Group,

and other facts in the case. Earlier on February 11, the MP's son Raghav Magunta was arrested by the ED. The ED has alleged that Raghav Magunta through his father Magunta Sreenivasulu Reddy was instrumental in forming a partnership with other businessmen and politicians, which is now known as an alleged "South Group", to form partnership for entering Delhi's liquor business. As per the statements by various persons, the ED claims that Magunta Sreenivasulu Reddy called a meeting with his associates and expressed his interest in the liquor trade in Delhi and Raghav will handle all operations.

Arun Ramchandra Pillai, who represented the alleged South Group, and other facts in the case. Earlier on February 11, the MP's son Raghav Magunta was arrested by the ED.

‘Paper leak is individuals’ ...

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"I am Minister for Information Technology but does that mean I am responsible for every computer in the state," he asked. The accused employees of TSPSC had committed theft of question papers from a computer in a confidential section of the Commission and shared the same with the other accused for Rs 10 lakh. KTR appealed to opposition parties not to play with the lives of the youth by instigating them against the government for their narrow political interests. "The boys are sensitive, and they are upset as they have to write the exams again. I request the opposition not to provoke them," he said. The Minister appealed to the youth to understand the efforts being made by the government to allay any doubts by reconducting the examinations. TSPSC had been working in a transparent manner during the last nine years due to various measures taken by the government, he said. Unfortunately, a mistake of two individuals had brought bad name to the entire

institution. TSPSC has done recruitment transparently and did highest recruitments in the country. In the past, there have been many accusations against APPSC but TSPSC has done recruitment for more than 30000 jobs so far and not a single allegation has been received. blunders of two individuals in TSPSC have brought the entire system into disrepute. He assured aggrieved youth that the government would not spare Praveen Kumar and Rajasekhara Reddy or whoever may be behind them. The Special Investigation Team (SIT) is conducting an impartial probe and stringent action would be taken against those found involved, he said. The Minister alleged that Rajasekhara Reddy was an active worker of the BJP and had been appealing to people to support the BJP. He displayed photographs of the contract employee of TSPSC with certain BJP leaders. "If such a person is caught in the case, it raises many doubts. The police will investigate if there is a conspiracy behind this.

They will find out if there is a criminal motive to defame the government and provoke youth. Who is behind this, be it from the BJP, Congress or BRS, there is no question of sparing them," he said. KTR claimed that when TSPSC was issuing notifications for recruitments in the government departments, BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar was calling it a conspiracy. The BJP leader had alleged that the government was keeping youth busy with exams thus not allowing them to come to the BJP. KTR announced that the government had decided to provide free coaching material to candidates preparing for re-examinations. He said the coaching material for all four exams would be available online free. Study circles for SCs, STs, BCs, minorities and the poor among upper castes would be strengthened across the state. The reading rooms in all districts would remain open round-the-clock to enable students to prepare for the examinations. They will be provided free study material and food, he said.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Eleven TDP MLAs were suspended from the House for the fourth consecutive day by Assembly Speaker Tammineni Sitaram on Saturday for one day. The House proceedings started with question hour. soon after the question hour began, the TDP legislators proposed an adjournment motion to discuss details of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's visit to Delhi. The opposition leaders stated that many times the CM visits Delhi but the purpose of the visit and details were kept confidential. The TDP members demanded what was the actual purpose of the CM's visit to Delhi and surrounded the speaker's podium demanding to reveal the details of CM Jagan's visit to Delhi. They

wanted to know whether the visit was for the welfare of the state or for personal benefit. Placards were displayed showing how much funds were brought for the Polavaram project. They also raised slogans about whether Special Status was brought to AP. TDP members insisted on a discussion on adjournment resolution on CM's Delhi visit. However, Legislative Affairs Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy clarified that giving such an adjournment resolution is against the traditions of the House. Buggana said that the opposition members are wasting the time of the House. He recalled that in the past Chandrababu Naidu had been to Delhi 35 times but no discussion took place on it. The TDP members raised slogans and barged towards

the speaker's podium and raised slogans, tore the copies of the agenda and threw them at the speaker. The Speaker asked the House to take some decision regarding this issue. Buggana Rajendranath said that the opposition members are intentionally creating trouble and wasting the time of the house. He requested the speaker to keep the house in order and continue the question hour. Minister Dadishelli Raja requested the speaker to take action against the opposition members. The TDP members continued to protest and sought to know if the CM's visit to Delhi was for the interests of the State or for self-interest. Intervening in the matter, Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy proposed the resolution to suspend the

opposition members. Speaker Tammineni Sitaram expressed his anger saying the behaviour of TDP members in the House was objectionable and claimed that the opposition is irresponsible. He said that he has been entrusted with great responsibility and he is patient due to those responsibilities. He said that he did not want to be tainted in history. The Speaker suspended the TDP members for one day. The speaker suspended the TDP members for the day are B Ashok, K Atchannaidu, Adireddy Bhavani, Nimmakayala Chinaraajappa, Ganababu, Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu, Mantena Ramaraju, Gottipati Ravi Kumar, Yeluru Sambashiva Rao, Dola Bala Veeranjaneva Swamy, and Gadde Rammohan Rao.

‘I stand by ...

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Later, speaking to the media, Sanjay said that he did not make any comments insulting anyone. "I had just quoted a Telangana Telugu adage and I gave a two-page explanation to the TSCW stating that I stick to my comments," he said. However, the BRS gave a leak stating that the TSCW had expressed anger over Sanjay making 'inappropriate' comments against Kavitha. The leak also said that the TSCW had probed Sanjay for two and a half hours. The BRS leak said the TSCW had warned Sanjay after showing him videos of his comments on different occasions and had asked him not to repeat such comments. The leak also said that there is a chance that the TSCW may summon Sanjay again. The BRS leak said that the TSCW had warned Sanjay that stringent action will be taken against him if he made such comments again. But Sanjay released a note on Saturday night making it clear that there is no truth in the campaign on social media and the general media that the TSCW was angry with him. He said that there is nothing wrong if leaked facts help society but leaks that damage the image of a person should not be given. "I don't think the TSCW gave this leak. But the TSCW has to give an explanation regarding this. I respect the TSCW as it is an independent constitutional body. I appeared before the TSCW hoping that good signals will go to the people. I gave a written reply to all the notices issued by the TSCW to me. The TSCW recorded my statement. I answered all the questions asked by the Women's Commission in a cordial atmosphere," Sanjay said.

BRS plans extensive ...

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"We have designed a calendar showing all our activities to reach people belonging to all sections. BRS leaders and cadres will immediately take up these activities and build connections with the people. Athmeeya Sammelans will be organised till April 20 in all divisions. Unlike regular political meetings, these interactions will be conducted like family meetings in a joyful atmosphere," Dr Dasoju Sravan said. After division-level meetings, constituency-level meetings will be held on April 25. Many activities are also lined up for grandly celebrating BRS Formation Day on April 27. Sravan stressed that not just BRS leaders and cadres but the

entire Telangana people will have reason to cheer in the next three to four months, as several historical initiatives are all set to be launched. He said that for the first time in the country's history, a 124-ft Dr BR Ambedkar Statue will be unveiled and will be followed by a public meeting at the NTR Stadium. "KCR has constructed a never-before kind Secretariat which will be opened on April 30. Such is the vision of KCR that the new Secretariat named after Dr BR Ambedkar will last for the next 200 years leaving an indelible mark on Telangana's culture and history. Remembering Telangana martyrs, a memorial for them will be unveiled on June 1. As all these activities are being

held in quick succession, BRS leaders and cadres will be actively involved in taking these initiatives to the people and in galvanising Telangana society with regular programmes in the next four to five months," added Dr Dasoju Sravan. We must explain all the development programmes implemented by KCR so far and how schemes like Dalit Bandhu have benefitted people, said Sravan. Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi, Deputy Mayor Srilatha Reddy, MLC MS Prabhakar, MLC Vani Devi, Gajjala Nagesh, Kattela Srinivas Yadav, former MLC Srinivas Reddy, Sai Kiran Yadav, Azam Ali, Vipray, Sridhar Reddy, Bharat and others attended the meeting.

ED files caveat...

Continued on Page 1

A hearing on Kavitha's petition will be held in the Supreme Court on March 24. Along with hearing the arguments of the ED, the court will also hear the arguments of Kavitha's lawyer. With the caveat petition filed, the Supreme Court will now hear the arguments of both Kavitha and the ED. Kavitha filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the ED summoning her. Kavitha had absented herself from ED questioning on March 16. The ED has issued a notice to Kavitha to appear before it for investigation on March 20. The ED rejected Kavitha's request to postpone the questioning till the hearing on her petition in the Supreme Court on March 24.

TSERC asks consumers, DISCOMS to save electricity

Continued on Page 1

The Telangana State Electricity Regulatory Commission said that consumers must be more aware of their electricity usage and take steps to save power. This can include simple measures like turning off lights and appliances when not in use, using energy-efficient appliances and natural light, using appliances efficiently, insulating homes, using programmable thermostats, planting trees and reducing air conditioning. In addition, the government and DISCOMS can take steps to increase the use of renewable energy which is generally more cost-effective in the long run. This can include the installation of solar panels, wind turbines, and other renewable energy sources. This will help save power and help DISCOMS to reduce their overall power purchase costs. "It is also important for consumers to be aware of their rights and responsibilities as electricity consumers. They can file complaints with DISCOMS if they believe that they are being overcharged or if they experience any other issues related to electricity supply. They can also file a complaint with TSERC," Ranga Rao said.

Heavy rains, hail lash Hyderabad city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad witnessed heavy rains and hail on Saturday evening. A red alert was issued for the entire city and residents were advised to stay indoors. Heavy rains and hail lashed Malakpet, LB Nagar, Kapra, Secunderabad, Nampally, Rajender Nagar, Charminar, Tolichowki, Kondapur, Miyapur, Kukatpally and Quthbullapur. Traffic came to a halt in many areas of the city due to water logging and there were power outages across the city.

The TSDPS said that from March 18 to 24 isolated to scattered light or moderate thunderstorms and hailstorms are expected in most Telangana districts till March 20. After that, the weather will be dry during the remaining days of the week.

Due to clouds and thunderstorms maximum temperatures are likely to fall 3oC to 4oC during the next three days and after that, it will gradually increase by 2oC to 3oC. Maximum temperatures are



expected to range from 33oC to 37oC while minimum temperatures will be around 18oC to 22oC.

A trough and trough/wind discontinuity now extends from interior Tamil Nadu to central Madhya Pradesh across Rayalaseema, Telangana and Vidarbha 900 metres above

sea level.

The TSDPS said that heavy rains were recorded at some places in Khammam and Mahbubabad districts on March 17. Light to moderate rainfall was recorded at some places in Adilabad and Kumuram Bheem districts on March 15 and 16 and at many

places in all districts on March 17. The overall rainfall deviation is 258 per cent. Maximum temperatures ranged from 34oC to 37oC, while minimum temperatures ranged from 17oC to 19oC in northern districts and from 19oC to 22oC in southern and central districts.

Action against colleges offering unrecognised courses demanded

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Healthcare Reforms Doctors Association (HRDA) addressed a letter to Telangana Paramedical Board and Medical Council (TSMC) to take the necessary action by filing criminal cases against paramedical institutions, medical colleges and hospitals for offering unrecognised courses.

The HRDA president, Dr Mahesh, in the letter, said "We, the members of HRDA, hereby bring to your notice that institute by name AVS Paramedical Institute, AVS Electrophathy Medical College and Hospital, AVS Academy operating from Nizamabad, Nirmal, Warangal and Hyderabad and SADHU Hospital in Kacheguda are offering unrecognised courses to quacks like CMS and Electrophathy Homeopathy by saying they can practice allopathy and unrecognised Electrophathy."

The doctors sought the board to impose a ban on those who pursued an unrecognised course to practise unless any legislation or Act by the State or Central governments recognised them.



The HRDA members requested the board to initiate criminal proceedings against the institutions and shut them with immediate effect

They said that the High Court of Telangana affirmed it in its orders in WRIT-C Nos 7698/2012, 25016/2021 and WP(PIL) 286/2017 respectively affirmed the same."

Electro-homoeopathy or electrophathy is the fifth system of the medicinal system. It is a completely plant-based system of herbal medicine in which the remedies work by purifying the lymph and blood

systems of the body. The AVS group of the institute has been allegedly offering a Bachelor's degree in Electrophathy Medicine and Surgery (BEMS), and a doctor of Electrophathy medicine (MD-EH).

The HRDA members requested the board to initiate criminal proceedings against the institutions and shut them with immediate effect.

Sridhar appointed NMDC Chairman

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Nadimetla Sridhar has been appointed as the Chairman of the National Minerals Development Corporation Limited (NMDC).

The Department of Personnel, Training and Public Enterprises Selection Board of the Centre recommended the appointment of Sridhar as the NMDC Chairman. Currently he is working as the CMD of Singareni Collieries.

Sridhar is a 1997 batch IAS officer. He has served in various posts in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Sridhar joined as Rajahmundry Sub Collector. He later became Utnur ITDA PO and Kakinada Ports Director. Later, he was the collector of Anantapur, Krishna, Warangal and Ranga Reddy districts.

He was also Special Secretary in the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's Office for three years and three months.

After the formation of Telangana, he has been serving as the CMD of Singareni Collieries in Telangana from January 1, 2015.

TS-based firm to invest Rs 260 cr for making speciality steel

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Ministry of Steel, the Government of India, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Mahalakshmi Profiles Pvt Ltd (MPL Group), a Hyderabad-based firm, on Saturday. The MPL group is set to invest Rs 260 crore for speciality steel production, with a capacity of 250,000 tonnes per annum in Medak Dist in Telangana, under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme.

The ceremonial function for the exchange of MoU with companies selected under the PLI Scheme for Specialty Steel was held in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi on Saturday. The MoU was exchanged in the presence of Jyotiraditya Scindia, Union Minister of Steel and Minister of State (MoS) for Steel

Faggan Singh Kulaste and other officials of the steel ministry.

The Mahalakshmi Profiles Pvt Ltd (MPL Group) chalked out plans to invest an amount of Rs 260 crore to produce coated or plated products of metallic and Non-metallic alloys, with a capacity of 250,000 tonnes per annum by commissioning its new mega project in the year 2024-25 at its site near Kallakal village Manoharabad Mandal, Medak District, Telangana State.

Vinod Kumar Agarwal, Managing Director and Hitesh Kumar Agarwal (CEO) were present on behalf of the MPL Group and exchanged the MoU with the Minister. Vinod Agarwal of MPL Group said that it is a proud moment for MPL group to be representing the

state of Telangana at the PLI scheme for the steel sector. He said that the project will also give impetus to speciality steel manufacturing in the country replacing expensive imports.

Production-linked Incentive (PLI) is an initiative of the Government of India for steel producers to encourage them to produce speciality steel in India. The company disclosed this, according to a press note on Saturday. The National Steel Policy of the Government of India (GOI) aims at achieving 300 million tonnes (MT) of crude steel-making capacity by the year 2030-31. To meet this target the Government of India has devised a unique Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Steel Producers to encourage them to produce Specialty steels in India.

TS Police arrest 43 in child pornography cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana police arrested 43 in connection with child pornography cases. A State-level review meeting of Cybercrime cases registered in different police stations in the State was conducted by the Additional Director General of Police, Crime Investigation Department, Mahesh M Bhagwat. Tiplines primarily include uploading and wide circulation of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM). A total of 31 cases were reviewed which were at various stages of the investigation. A total of 43 arrests were made so far. A total of 21 arrests were made in 10 cases after the review was conducted. Also, as many as 22 arrests in 16 cases were made by the time of review. A total of 13 new cases were registered after the review. As of today, a total of 44 cases were registered based on Tiplines. Out of which 34 cases are under investigation and 8 (PT) cases were charged and are under trial.

The ADG, and CID, during the review, instructed all IOs to expedite the investigation and to give top priority to CSAM Cases and secure conviction. ADG and CID appreciated the IOs who ensured speedy arrests and filed charge sheets in CSAM cases. They are online tips about the circulation of CSAM (Child Sexual Abuse Material) that are furnished to State CID by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB). The CID analysed these Tiplines and forwarded the same to jurisdictional police for registering FIRs. Such cases are reviewed regularly by the CID for their progress.

Uploading of pornography material on social media and its circulation attracts section IT Act Sec 66 (E), 67 (A), 67 (B), IT Act 2000 - 2008 and Sec 13 r/w POCSO Act 2012, IPC 354 (C) and punishment of up to 1 to 3 years plus fine for the first conviction, 3 to 7 years plus fine for second or subsequent conviction thereon.

Deceased in Swapnalok complex hail from different villages

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The six people, who died in a fire at a multi-storey commercial complex in Secunderabad here, had come from different villages and towns of Telangana in the hope of a brighter future.

The victims, all in their early 20s, were employees of a private company which had its office in the complex, officials said.

They were found unconscious by fire fighters in one of the rooms of their office and rushed to a hospital. But they were declared dead and the reason for their death was asphyxia, an official said on Friday, a day after the incident. The victims, including women, belonged to Warangal, Mahabubabad and Khammam districts of Telangana.

Officials told to complete Mana Badi-Mana Basti works

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Animal Husbandry Talasani Srinivas Yadav directed officials to complete Mana Badi-Mana Basti works during the summer holidays. He also said that a meeting would be held with the officials of the Electricity Department not to disconnect power. The Minister addressed a meeting at Keshav Memorial School of Narayangudda.

"The Electricity Department officials are asked not to stop power supply to the government schools with non-payment of electricity dues and orders would be issued soon. As schools would be closed for summer vacation from March 24, the work must be completed by May 15."

The officials were asked to coordinate with the officials of the Electricity Department. "As long as the students are at their homes, parents take care of their children. After com-



Minister for Animal Husbandry Talasani Srinivas Yadav Speaking at Mana Basti Mana Badi programme

ing to school till they go back home, teachers must treat students as their children."

Previous governments never focused on the development of public schools. After the formation of Telangana State, Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao launched a massive programme to give a facelift to the government schools.

He explained that in the Mana Basti-Mana Badi programme principals need to supervise them.

It is suggested to monitor the quality and implementation.

1,000-year-old temple found in neglected state at Chilkur

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 1,000-year old temple was found in a dilapidated state at Chilkur, said E Sivanagireddy, Archaeologist of Hyderabad.

The temple built of stone in Rashtrakuta style of temple architecture was found in a neglected state at the most famous Visa Balaji temple town Chilkur under Moinabad mandal in Rangareddy district. t said Sivanagireddy.

During his exploration conducted in and around Chilkur village, as part of the awareness programme Preserve Heritage for posterity launched by Pleach India Foundation, he noticed many sculptures scattered at the entrance of the village and a dilapidated structure inside the tank bund datable to the period between 9th and 10th centuries CE.

At the entrance of the vil-

lage is a two-pillar Mandapam built along the tank bund in a neglected state and are beautiful sculptures of a seated lady devotee with folded hands and Bhairava in standing posture representing the Kalyani Chalukyan style of art (11th century CE), Nagadevathe and two Hero stones near the Pochamma temple, and an attractive sculpture of Surya broken into two pieces lying at the rear side of the Siva temple located inside the village.

He further added that the door frames, pillars, architectural designs and art motifs on the sikhara, Sivalinga and the bull sculpture inside the Siva temple represent the Rashtrakuta style created by the Chalukyas of Vemulawada based on the inscription and the Jaina idols shifted from Chilkur village which is now on display at the Khajana Building Museum, Golconda.

Guv's dig at TS govt on TSPSC question paper leak

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan has indirectly raised the Telangana State Public Service Commission question paper leakage during the speech at the convocation Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University convocation.

"It is indeed happy to attend the convocation. Parents, institutions and government will provide opportunities but one student must use his or her capability to make oneself happy.

My request is the student must succeed for themselves because it is disheartening to see that young students are committing suicide, please enjoy the learning whatever may be the situation."

Narrating one of her teach-



ing day's conversations the Governor said, "Ten years ago there was a lighter moment in my class. As I was instructing students tomorrow is your exam and if you all have any doubts ask me then one of them stood up asking, Madam where are the question papers printed, this was a joke earlier but it has

become reality now. We must face all the challenges and students must put in all their efforts."

The students are receiving the degrees because of the sacrifices of the parents, and family members and a thank you every day is essential.

"You all are students of technology and technology is advancing with research or innovations every day and students must be that alert in competing with it.

In my conversation with one student, he said that in exams we can sit for three hours without a mobile phone. This tells us that technology is occupying all the time," she added.

She also said how useful her Doctor profession is in serving society while she travels for her work.

Kanti Velugu camps screened 80,67,243 people so far

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A total of 80,67,243 have been screened at the second phase of the State's Kanti Velugu eye camps. With the aim of avoidable blindness-free Telangana, the State government has distributed free reading glasses to 13,70,296 people. The authorities believe that the new Arogya Mahila programme, launched for women's health-care, will also make its mark as Telangana's flagship health-care Initiative.

The Kanti Velugu eye camps set up across 1,500 places in Telangana have proved a success. Beneficiaries expressed happiness that thousands of rupees are being saved for poor and middle-class families by getting free treatment at government medical centres.

The programme was started on January 19 under the aegis of the Medical, Health

and Family Welfare Department, and is set to happen for 100 days, until June 15, 2023. In accordance with targets set by the government, the Kanti Velugu camps are being vigorously implemented throughout the state with advance plans, continuous monitoring, daily reviews, analysis, video conferences and meetings, correcting the deficiencies from time to time.

The camps revealed crucial data on the visual health of Telangana. It was found that the most common condition is short sightedness, called myopia, especially among people over the age of 40. Cataracts were found among people over 50 of age. Reading glasses were provided immediately, along with vitamin A, D and B complex tablets. Those who need surgical intervention would be referred to the hospital for treatment.



Techie dies by suicide at Chandanagar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A software engineer allegedly committed suicide at Chananagar on March 17. The incident came to light on Saturday.

The deceased was identified as Akhil (28). He worked at a software firm t Gachchibowli. He was a resident of Sadashivpet. He hired a room at a lodge in Chandnagar and committed suicide by hanging

In purported to be a suicide note, the software engineer said that he had take the extreme step because his girlfriend stopped talking to him.

Sabitha reviews steps for SSC examination

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Education Sabitha Indra Reddy on Saturday reviewed 10th class examination arrangements, scheduled to II begin on April 3.

Sabitha Indra Reddy directed the officials to ensure smoother conduct of examinations. Hall tickets for students will be made available online from March 24 and will also be sent to schools, she said.

The Minister stated that 4,94,600 have registered for examinations across the State and 2,652 examination centres have been set up. She said that



Minister for Education Sabitha Indra Reddy reviewing arrangements of SSC examinations with officials in Hyderabad on Saturday

the arrangements would be reviewed through video conference with District Education Officers, the Collectors of respective districts and other concerned officials soon. From April 3 to 13, examinations will be conducted from 9.30 am to

12.30 pm every day.

Education Department Secretary Vakati Karuna, School Education Director Sree Devasena, and Government Examination Department Director Krishna Rao participated in the meeting.

Bharat Gaurav train from Telugu states hits track

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The first Bharat Gaurav tourist train originating from two Telugu states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh commenced its journey from Secunderabad railway station here on Saturday.

Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager, South Central Railways (SCR), handed over the welcome kits to the passengers in the presence of Rajni Hasija, Chairman and Managing Director, IRCTC, and other senior railway officials, an SCR release said.

A festive atmosphere prevailed at the station with the passengers being accorded a traditional welcome and



Kuchipudi dancers evoking the cultural heritage of the two Telugu states.

Called "Punya Kshetra Yatra:

Puri Kasi Ayodhya", the train is being operated by Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC).

IRCTC provides end-to-end services for pilgrims travelling by train.

It includes all travel facilities (including both rails as well as road transport), accommodation facilities, catering arrangements (Morning Tea, Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner both On-Board and Off-Board), services of professional and friendly tour escorts, Security on the train (including CCTV Cameras installed in all Coaches), Public announcement facility in all coaches, Travel insurance and presence of IRCTC Tour Managers throughout the travel for assistance.

The tour involves visiting historical places in Puri,

Konark, Gaya, Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Prayagraj over a period of 8 nights and 9 days.

Arun Kumar Jain said the train offers a unique opportunity for pilgrims to visit these culturally prominent places without the hassle of planning individual itinerary items.

He also said Bharat Gaurav trains will give a major fillip to tourism in the country, while also fulfilling the desire of the tourists in the most convenient manner.

Rajni Hasija, CMD, IRCTC stated that the whole tour itinerary has been planned to keep in mind the significance of the places along with tourists' interest, the release added.

BRS claims credit for PM Mitra Textile Park

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS said that Minister KT Rama Rao is credited with the achievement of bringing the Mega Textile Park to Telangana.

L. Ramana, a Member of the Legislative Council, said that he is happy to note that the Central Government has approved the demand of the Telangana government and granted funds to the Kakatiya mega textile park which the state government is building.

In a statement on the sanctioning of the Mega Textile Park in Telangana, he said that because the Chief Minister's son, State Industries Minister KTR himself oversees the handloom textile department, the Telangana Textile Apparel (T-TAP) policy has been brought specifically for the textile industry and incentives are being given to aspiring entrepreneurs.

"Kalvakuntla Taraka Rama Rao personally met the Union Ministers of Textile Department and Finance Department from the time of the formation of the state till now and appealed to the



Telangana state for Mega Textile Park several times through letters, but the Central Government did not respond.

Telangana government decided to set up the Kakatiya Mega Textile Park in place of the closed Azamzahi mill as their responsibility, collected 1,200 acres in Warangal district and set up a park and took steps to set up an internationally known textile maker in the state."

Apart from this, he

expressed happiness that many domestic industries are showing interest in setting up industries in Telangana state as part of their business expansion.

He said that due to the welfare schemes implemented in Telangana and the employment opportunities in the textile industry, weavers who migrated earlier are coming back to the state, and there are opportunities for many more to come here.

KTR, who tried many times

to get funds from the Central Government for the mega textile park being set up by the state government, he said that he is happy as the Prime Minister himself has announced that funds for the mega textile park have been finally paid off.

But they demanded immediate cancellation of the 5 per cent GST levied by the central government on handwoven garments. He asked GST to support the development of handloom artisans by sanctioning handloom clusters.

He said that a Indian Institute of Handloom Technology should be granted to Telangana and that the abolished handloom board should be brought back.

"Although the Central Government took steps to stop development, KTR made efforts by setting up mini textile parks at many places in the state and bringing back migrant workers to lead a dignified life through the weaving profession. Those who are in the weaving profession are advised to use the welfare schemes of the state government," Ramana said.

Revanth to hold protest demanding KTR's dismissal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC President Revanth Reddy is going to stage a 'Nirudyoga Nirasana Deeksha' at the Gandhari mandal headquarters in Yellareddy Assembly constituency from 10 am to 5 pm on Sunday demanding that the government should dismiss IT Minister KT Ramarao from the Cabinet and order an inquiry by the CBI or by a sitting HC Judge into the TSPSC question paper leak.

He said that he will meet the Governor on March 21 and explain developments in the TSPSC question paper leak case.

He said that KTR's PA is also facing allegations in connection with TSPSC leak as 100 persons from the Malaya mandal of Karimnagar district scored more than 100 marks.

Addressing the media at Kamareddy on Saturday, Revanth asked KTR to reveal why he attended a review meeting conducted by Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao when he had no connection with the TSPSC.

The BRS is now stating that only two persons were responsible for the TSPSC leak. The



"KTR has been speaking like this whenever a leak takes place. In 2015, the Singareni question paper leaked. In 2016, EAMCET question paper leaked. EAMCET candidates wrote the examination thrice that year"

BRS has been saying that the second person responsible for the leak is a BJP activist.

"KTR has been speaking like this whenever a leak takes place. In 2015, the Singareni question paper leaked. In 2016, EAMCET question paper leaked. EAMCET candidates wrote the examination thrice that year. In 2017, the Singareni question paper leaked again. In 2019, the evaluation of Intermediate answer papers got derailed. The evaluation of Intermediate answer papers was entrusted to

Globerina, which had no experience in that resulting in 23 students committing suicide. Madhusudhan Reddy, who questioned Globarena, was raided by ACB and jailed," Revanth recalled.

He asked KTR why he is addressing the media instead of Education Minister Sabitha? Why didn't the government ask SIT officials to attend the review meeting?

He said the government had not yet probed nine individuals although the police had arrested them.

BJP protests against recruitment scam, demands BRS Govt to step down

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Demanding the BRS government to step down for its failure to conduct the TSPSC recruitment tests efficiently, the BJP activists on Saturday consigned an effigy of the government at Subhas Chandra Bose statue in the town.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, District president of BJP Kankanala Sridhar Reddy blamed the BRS government for the loss to the unemployed. He demanded the state government to pay compensation to each and every unemployed person who sustained loss due to the omissions and commissions of the state government. He demanded immediate release of BJP leaders who were taken into custody fighting on behalf of the unemployed and placing Minister KTR under suspension. BJP Kisan Morcha national executive member Goli Madhusudhan Reddy, BJP floor leader in the civic body Bandaru Prasad, BJP district vice president Dasoju Yadagirachary, BJP district general secretary Nimmala Rajasekhar Reddy, BJP Town president M Nageswar Rao and other functionaries of the party took part in the protest programmes.

‘Congress will address people’s grievances if voted to power’

PNS ■ MAHABUB NAGAR

Mahabubnagar District Congress Committee president G Madhusudhan Reddy on Saturday assured the people that the Congress party would address the grievances of people immediately after coming to power. The welfare of the people is the topmost priority of the Congress party, he said.

The DCC president, along with the party leaders and activists, conducted Hath-se-Hath jodo yatra in 32 and 33 wards in the limits of the Municipality in the town.

Conducting a door-to-door campaign, Madhusudhan Reddy explained to the people the party's ideology. The BRS government cheated the people on the promise of double-bedroom houses, he said.

Madhusudhan Reddy said the BJP-led Central government has been pursuing anti-people policies. He highlighted rising prices of essential



Mahabubnagar District Congress Committee leaders on Hath-se-Hath Jodo yatra in Mahabubnagar town on Saturday

commodities and an increase in the price of fuel and cooking gas.

He expressed confidence that the Congress party would come to power in the ensuing elections. He repeated the party promises that the Congress party if voted to power, would slash the price of

the cooking gas cylinder to Rs 500 and Rs 5 lakh financial aid to enable the poor to construct houses on their own plots.

TPCC general secretary Sanjiv Mudiraj, senior party leaders Chandra Kumar Goud, District Mahila Congress president Vasntha and others were present.

City Police Chief holds meeting with chit organisers

PNS ■ WARANGAL

City Police Commissioner AV Ranganath on Saturday held a meeting with organisers of chit fund companies and asked them to make payments to the subscribers on the scheduled date.

As the police receive a number of complaints from people on omissions and commissions of chit fund companies, the city police chief convened a meeting with chit organisers.

Before the commencement of the meeting, he gathered information about how many chit fund firms are yet to clear their payments to the customers and how many firms paid the amount following lodging a complaint with the police by the subscribers. First, he gathered information about the chit firms that owed huge sums to the subscribers and elicited reasons for the delay from them. He asked Chit Fund firms to furnish a statement of the amount payable to



Warangal Police Commissioner A V Ranganath holding a meeting with the organisers of chit fund companies in Warangal on Saturday

customers and the amount receivable from them to the police authorities. He said that another meeting with them would be scheduled next Tuesday to render justice to victims of Chit Fund companies. The list of subscription defaulters to chit funds would be placed on the Warangal police commissionerate website. He asked the Chit fund companies to give accurate information so that the police would respond to complaints of chit subscribers other than those who had figured in the list.

Col Vinay Reddy cremated with full military honours

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Minister for Energy G Jagadish Reddy on Saturday paid his last respects to Colonel Vinay Bhanu Reddy, who died in an Army helicopter crash in Arunachal Pradesh on Thursday.

The mortal remains of Col Reddy were cremated with full military honours at his native village of Bommalamaram in the Bhongir-Yadadri district on Saturday. Jagadish Reddy took



initiative in getting the body cremated.

Government Whip Sunita Mahender Reddy, ZP Chairman Alimineti Sandeep



Minister for Energy G Jagadish Reddy and others paying their last respect to Colonel Vinay Bhanu Reddy at Bommalamaram in Bhongir-Yadadri district on Saturday

Farmers jubilant as Kaleswaram waters reach PeddaVagu at Nangunoor

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

The spectacle of Godavari water from the Kaleswaram Project is finding its way into the Ranganayaka Sagar project and from there to Pedda Vagu at Nangunur before it empties itself into Maneru Reservoir after wetting parched lands in several villages en route has been unveiled.

The objective of the Telangana movement is getting fulfilled if the Godavari water is coursing in every village is any indication.

Normally, the Pedda Vagu in Nangunur gets filled only when it rained heavily. But,



Kaleswaram waters filling the Pedda Vagu should be described as a record of sorts.

The farmers are in a jubilant mood to express gratitude to CM K Chandrashekhara Rao who brought Godavari waters to their fields. Even in hot summer, Godavari water reached Pedda Vagu in Nangunoor village. The region, which faced difficulties for want of assured

irrigation facility, is benefiting from the foresight of CM KCR and Minister T Harish Rao who executed Ghatpur, Akkenapalli check-dams. In Nangunoor mandal, there are nine check-dams on Pedda Vagu.

The Peddolla Bavi Check-Dam, the fifth in the series of nine, is overflowing its sluices. As the Chouta Cheruvu in Nagarajupalli is overflowing its sluices the excess water is getting deposited at the mouth of the Peddolla Bavi check-dam. Once this fifth check dam gets filled, the surplus water fills four more irrigating at least 5000 acres under their ayacut.

CMRF cheques distributed to 42 beneficiaries

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Minister for Prohibition and Excise V Srinivas Goud has declared that the need to take patients to Hyderabad in case of emergencies has been averted with all medical services being made accessible to people in the town. He expressed his gratitude to Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao for providing medical services to people in the town.

He distributed CMRF cheques worth Rs 31.05 lakh to 42 beneficiaries at his camp office on Friday.

Addressing the beneficiaries, he said that there was no one to pay attention to the

development of Mahabubnagar before statehood to Telangana. However, in the new state of Telangana, the situation underwent a sea change.

During the pandemic situation, the general hospital here started oxygen production, and ICU beds and emergency services have been added to the hospital. The general hospital offers all kinds of treatment to patients, he said exhorting people to make good use of the amenities at the hospital.

People should compare the medical services in the past at the hospital vis-à-vis the modern medical and health services on offer.

He noted that the 1000-bed



Minister for Excise V Srinivas Goud distributing CMRF cheques to beneficiaries

super speciality hospital which is under construction at the site of the old collectorate at a whopping cost of Rs 500 crore offers modern treatment facilities like cancer screening and heart transplantation. The

medical and health services that are offered by Gandhi Hospital, Osmania Hospital and the NIMS will be provided locally, he compared.

He said that continuous welfare and development pro-

grammes will be implemented for the benefit of the poor. The Government facilitates LOC for patients to enable them to undergo treatment in private hospitals. He offered his support to the people in case of medical emergencies even at odd hours. The people are urged to contact him directly or through elected people's representatives in case of requirement of medical emergencies, he said.

He appealed to the people to identify who is instrumental in the development of the district and who is opposing it.

He said that major industries like Amar Raja are going to be set up in Mahabubnagar.

Is Jana Sena’s ‘saffron’ honeymoon over?

MARTHI SUBRAMANYAM
■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan's veiled indication that his party will align with the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in the future put the BJP leaders in a dilemma.

Pawan Kalyan, addressing the Jana Sena Party's 10th Formation Day meeting in Machilipatnam on March 14, announced his party would do exactly what the people wish. A JSP leader dubbed the announcement an indication of ending ties with the BJP and aligning with the TDP.

The JSP leaders feel that the AP BJP leaders' proximity with the ruling party forced Pawan Kalyan to decide to part ways with the saffron party. JSP leaders said that Pawan Kalyan has been waiting for a long time to get a route

map from the BJP high command on how to proceed in AP but he has not received that to date. JSP leaders recalled that Pawan Kalyan said that had the BJP leaders cooperated with him, the JSP-BJP alliance would have emerged as a strong force in AP.

But the BJP leaders dashed his hopes by maintaining proximity with the YSRCP. The BJP high command assured Pawan Kalyan of opposing the shifting capital city from Amaravati to Visakhapatnam but the AP BJP leaders did not show that much interest. Pawan Kalyan is also angry at four BJP leaders for their closeness to the YSRCP.

Moreover, the BJP high command agreed to the proposal of Pawan Kalyan to take out a long march opposing the shifting of the capital city to Visakhapatnam but later it changed its mind.

Posters against Kavitha appear in Hyd as poster war continues

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The poster/flexes war is continuing in Hyderabad city. A few days ago unidentified persons pasted posters across Hyderabad saying, "Post British Rule–Present BJP Rule," "Democracy in Crisis...Mahatma Save India..." with #ByeByeModi.

Hyderabad also witnessed another poster stating "BL Santhosh Missing," "Most Wanted" with photos of BJP General Secretary BL Santhosh.

But on Saturday, Hyderabad witnessed wall posters pasted by unknown persons against BRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha stating, "Management Quota...Liquor! Waata." Hyderabad also witnessed wall posters stating "Kavitha ante Padyam Anukun tira...Le...Madyam." KCR Films'

"Kalvakuntla Dongala Muta," Story, Screenplay, Dialogues and Direction by KCR, "Kavithakka Neeku Kaavali Saaraa Dnadalo 33 per cent Waata–Daanikosame Aduguthunnavu 33 per cent Mahila Reservation Ata," "Telangana Prajala Sommu Dochukuni Delhilo Kavithakka Chesthundi Donga Saaraa Danda."

These posters appeared on Begumpet Metro Rail pillars on Saturday. People who were passing by watched the posters curiously. The pillars are in Begumpet Police Station limits and near Secunderabad PG College.

Coming to know about the posters, the police rushed to the spot and removed them. The police said they will take action against the persons responsible after examining CCTV cameras in the area.

First year Inter student attempts suicide in Bhainsa

PNS ■ NIRMAL

An Intermediate

first year student, identified as Srikant, attempted to commit suicide in Bhainsa town in the Nirmal district on Saturday. His condition is stated to be stable.

According to police, the student attempted to commit suicide by consuming pesticide. He was rushed Bhainsa Area Hospital. The student hailed from Brahmangaon village under Mudhole mandal in the district. Srikant is pursuing an Intermediate first year vocational course in a junior college in Bhainsa town. He reportedly resorted to the attempt to commit suicide after his parents refused to give him money to attend a marriage function.

BJP asks KCR to take responsibility for TSPSC paper leak, quit

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP National Executive Committee Member Huzurabad MLA Eatala Rajender has asked Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao to resign taking responsibility for the TSPSC leak.

Eatala demanded that the government should order a probe by a sitting HC Judge and punish those responsible for the leak.

He also demanded that the government should conduct the exams that were cancelled by the government immediately.

He also demanded the government to give a grant of Rs 1 lakh to every candidate preparing for TSPSC exams.

The BJP task force team members Eatala Rajender, DK Aruna, Bura Narsaiah Goud, Marri Shashidhar Reddy, N. Ramchander Rao, Vittal, newly elected MLC AVN Reddy and others met the Governor and submitted a memorandum on Saturday.

Later, speaking to the media, Eatala demanded that the TSPSC Chairman and members should resign immediately.

He said how the government is working could be known after the leakage of the four exam question papers.

He asked the Chief Minister to explain whether the leak was a wilful one or an accident.

INDIA CORNER

PhD scholar from Tamil Nadu arrested for raping children

The CBI has arrested a 35-year-old PhD scholar from Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu for allegedly raping children, officials said Saturday. The agency had registered a case against the accused for allegedly creating and circulating child sexual abuse material in electronic form, they said. The CBI had found child sexual abuse images and videos from the Interpol database. Its further analysis using digital forensic tools gave the location of the incident to the Thanjavur district. The agency conducted searches at the premises of the accused which led to the recovery of incriminating electronic gadgets, officials said. It was alleged that the accused was sexually abusing a child for the last four years whose nude videos and photographs were uploaded on his Google account. It was further alleged that the accused forced two minors (a male and a female) to perform sexual acts on them as well as on other minors, including a girl, the officials said.



Kerala sanctions Rs 10 cr assistance to earthquake-hit Turkiye

The Kerala government on Saturday said it has sanctioned Rs 10 crore as financial assistance to Turkiye, which was battered by a massive earthquake recently. State Finance Minister K N Balagopal said the money was granted to support the people of that country and the External Affairs Ministry had given permission to hand over the amount to Turkiye the other day. The Rs 10 crore-financial assistance was announced in the state budget presented on February 8. "The earthquake in Turkiye, which had shocked the consciousness of the world, claimed tens of thousands of lives and left lakhs of people destitute," the minister noted. People from all over the world came forward to help the quake victims, he said and recalled the support the southern state had received from around the globe when it was devastated by natural calamities some years ago. The earthquake had killed thousands of people and flattened several numbers of buildings in Turkiye and neighbouring Syria last month.



Class 12th Bengal board question paper appears on social media

Reported images of two pages of Life Science question paper of the class 12 state board examination surfaced on WhatsApp on Saturday, over two and half hours after the commencement of the test. The West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education, which conducts the exam, said this could not be termed a paper leak and described it as an act of mischief. Council President Chiranjib Bhattacharya said some vested interests must have circulated the image of the question paper long after it had begun, when it was almost nearing close. "If the images are circulated two and half hours after the exam started, what is the big deal? Candidates can leave the exam hall by that time and if anyone clicks a pic of two pages outside the venue and circulates them on social media, that does not in any way reflect on the conduct of the exams," Bhattacharya said. He appealed to the 'mischief mongers' to desist from such 'childish pranks' and help smoothly conduct the ongoing exams in the interest of every candidate.



Millets can tackle challenges of global food security: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said millets can help tackle challenges of global food security as well as diseases arising from bad food habits as he exhorted farm scientists to work towards increasing the share of nutri-cereals in the national food basket from the current 5-6 per cent only.

Addressing the gathering after inaugurating the Global Millets (Shree Anna) Conference', Modi noted that many states have included millets in their PDS system and suggested that other states follow suit.

He also called for including the super food in the mid-day meal so that children can get proper nutrition.

The prime minister also stressed that India wants to share its agricultural practices with the world and learn from experiences from other countries.

He also made a strong pitch



for developing a stable supply chain for these super food from field to market and from one country to another.

The prime minister also unveiled a customised postal stamp and Rs 75 currency coin to mark International Year of Millets celebrated this year.

Hyderabad-based ICAR-Indian Institute of Millets Research was also declared as a Centre of Excellence.

Speaking about the food

security challenges faced by the world, Modi said: "We are aware that the world today is facing two types of challenges. On one hand, there is a Global South which is concerned about food security for the poor, on the other hand there is Global North where diseases related to food habits is becoming a serious problem."

"On one side, there is a challenge of food security and on the other side the problem of food habit. Both sides have

expressed concern about heavy use of chemicals in farming. Shree Anna provides solutions for all such challenges," he said.

Millet is a common term to categorise small-seeded grasses that are often termed nutri-cereals and includes Sorghum (Jowar), Pearl Millet (Bajra), Finger Millet (Ragi), Little Millet (Kutki), Foxtail Millet (Kakun), Proso Millet (Cheena), Barnyard Millet (Sawa), Kodo Millet (Kodon) and other millets.

Modi informed the foreign delegates present at the event about India's branding initiatives for millets as India now calls millets 'Shree Anna'.

He elaborated that Shree Anna is not limited to just food or farming. Those acquainted with the Indian tradition will understand the importance of prefixing 'Shree' before anything. "Shree Anna is becoming a medium of holistic development in India. It is linked with 'gaon' as well as 'garib' (Village and the poor)".

Maha: Farmers call off long march to Mumbai

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Protesting farmers and tribals, who were on their way to Mumbai from Nashik district of Maharashtra, called off their long march on Saturday with their demands being taken into consideration in the state legislature and ground-level officials receiving orders to execute the government's orders, a CPI(M) MLA said.

The march had started from Dindori town, located around 195 km away from Mumbai, on March 12 demanding relief of Rs 600 per quintal to onion growers hit by price crash, 12-hour uninterrupted power supply to farmers, and waiver of farm loans.

They had reached Thane district's Vasind town, around 80 km from Mumbai.

On Friday, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde told the Assembly that onion cultivators will be given a financial relief of Rs 350 a quintal and appealed to them to call off the protest.

It remains "very fragile": EAM on LAC situation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh remained "very fragile" and is "quite dangerous" in military assessment because of close deployments of troops of both sides in some pockets though substantial progress has been made in the disengagement process in many areas, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday.

Jaishankar also said that he and former Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi had reached an in-principle agreement in September 2020 on how to resolve the issue and that it is for China to deliver on what was agreed to.

In an interactive session at the India Today conclave, the external affairs minister also made it clear that the relationship between the two countries can not return to normal until "these problems" are sorted out.

The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in a standoff for the past three years at cer-



tain friction points in eastern Ladakh even as the two sides completed disengagement of troops from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks.

"This is a very, I would say, challenging and abnormal phase in our ties with China. Why I say that is because from 1988 when Rajiv Gandhi went there till 2020 the understanding was that peace and tranquility on the border would be maintained," Jaishankar said.

The external affairs minister also referred to agreements between the two sides to not bring large forces to the border, adding a "very specific" set

of understandings and even protocols were put in place on the handling of various situations.

Jaishankar said the Chinese violated the agreements in 2020 and the consequences were seen in the Galwan Valley and other areas as well.

"We have deployed our troops, we have stood our ground and the situation to my mind still remains very fragile because there are places where our deployments are very close up and in military assessment, actually therefore, quite dangerous," he said.

"Now we have made substantial progress when it comes to disengagement in many areas. There are many areas where we have ongoing discussions. It is a painstaking job and we will do that," he said.

"We have made it very clear to the Chinese that we cannot have a breach of peace and tranquility, you can't violate agreements and then want the rest of the relationship to continue as though nothing happened. That's just not tenable," Jaishankar added.



Superstar Rajinikanth meets Uddhav Thackeray

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Superstar Rajinikanth on Saturday met Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray at his residence in suburban Mumbai.

A party leader said it was a courtesy visit as the veteran actor has been an ardent supporter of the late Bal Thackeray, founder of Shiv Sena.

"It was a non-political meeting between Rajinikanth and Uddhav Thackeray," he said.

Thackeray's wife Rashmi and sons Aadiya and Tejas welcomed the actor at their residence 'Matoshree' in suburban Bandra.

Aadiya Thackeray, a former minister and sitting MLA, tweeted a picture of his family welcoming Rajinikanth with a bouquet and a shawl.

"An absolute delight to have Shri Rajinikanth ji at Matoshree once again," Aadiya tweeted.

MINISTER TO STRIKING WORKERS Join duty by 6.00 pm or face dismissal

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh's energy minister AK Sharma on Saturday issued a stern warning to the striking electricity department employees to join their duties by 6.00 pm, or face dismissal. Services of 1,332 contractual employees have already been terminated, he said.

Speaking to reporters here, Sharma said, "A decision has been taken to initiate action against 22 persons from the department under the E S M A (Essential Services Maintenance Act). Apart from this, instructions have also been issued to lodge FIR against those who are damaging the government property, and obstructing others from discharging duties. FIR has been registered against 29 persons in this regard."

"Services of 1,332 contractual employees have been terminated. I once again request all the contractual employees to resume their duties by 6.00 pm, otherwise they will be dismissed from service tonight," he said.

He added that the outsourcing companies have been told to recruit new people to

replace the dismissed employees.

"A list of people who have passed from the ITI, polytechnics and engineering colleges should be prepared to be hired as apprentices. A decision will be taken later (whether to continue their service or not)," he said.

Meanwhile, Shailendra Dubey, the convener of Vidyut Karmacharis Sanyukt



Sangharsh Samiti, a union of electricity department employees, said that there are 70,000 contractual employees in the electricity department. "The Obra Thermal Power Plant has come to a standstill. All the five units of 200 megawatt each at Obra Thermal Power Plant have shut down. The (electricity) production of Obra is zero," Dubey claimed, adding, the protest has led to a massive disruption in electricity supply in some parts of the state.

Sharma said that efforts are on to have a dialogue with the protesting employees. The employees however have sought Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's intervention to end the "atmosphere of confrontation".

Be wary of narratives that threaten india's integrity

PNS ■ KOCHI

Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur on Saturday urged the media fraternity in the country to remain cautious and desist from giving its space to narratives that threaten the nation's integrity.

Unsubstantiated and illogical opinions, delivered freely from within or abroad, could not destroy the democratic nature of the country, he added.

His remarks came against the backdrop of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's statement in London that democracy in the country was under "brutal attack", besides the controversial documentary on Gujarat riots by BBC.

"I urge the media fraternity to remain cautious and desist from giving its space intentionally or unintentionally to such voices and narratives that have the potential to threaten the integrity of India," he said.

Thakur was speaking while



participating as a special guest at the valedictory ceremony of the centenary celebrations of eminent Malayalam daily "Mathrubhumi". He said there is a proverb that states facts are

JAIRAM RAMESH ON PARL LOGJAM

Oppn's JPC demand 'non-negotiable

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Saturday said he does not see a "middle path" to end the logjam in Parliament as the Opposition's demand for a JPC probe into the Adani issue was "non-negotiable" and the question of an apology over Rahul Gandhi's remarks in the UK does not arise.

In an interview with PTI, Ramesh said the government is rattled by 16 Opposition parties coming together to demand a joint parliamentary probe into the Adani issue and is resorting to a "3D orchestrated campaign -- distort, defame and divert". The former Union minister also hit out at BJP MP Nishikant Dubey's efforts to seek termina-



tion of Rahul Gandhi's membership of Lok Sabha over his remarks in the UK, saying all this was "intimidation" and part of efforts to distract from the real issues.

The remarks by the Congress general secretary in-charge communications comes amid the logjam in Parliament over Gandhi's remarks during his recent trip to the UK, with both

houses failing to transact any significant business on the first five days of the budget session's second half. Also on Friday, Home Minister Amit Shah said the current logjam in Parliament can be resolved if the Opposition comes forward for talks and that the government will go "two steps ahead" if the Opposition takes "two steps forward". Asked if there is any chance of finding a middle path to break the current logjam in Parliament with the BJP sticking to its demand of Rahul Gandhi's apology and Congress seeking a JPC probe into the Adani issue, Ramesh said, "I don't see any middle path because our demand for a JPC is non-negotiable and the question of an apology does not arise."

Cheques given to film award winners bounce

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Cheques given to several winners of Assam State Film awards have bounced, landing the state government in an embarrassing position.

The awards were conferred on Monday.

On Friday, nine cheques given to eight winners were returned by the bank when presented for clearance.

"I deposited the cheque on Friday and got a call from the bank that it got bounced. Immediately I called the organisers, who said that there was insufficient balance," Aparajita Pujari said.

Pujari had won the award for Best Writing in Cinema for 2018.

Sources said cheques handed over to other prominent film personalities like Amrit Pritam (Sound Design), Debajit Changmai (Sound Mixing), Pranjal Deka (Direction), Debajit Gayan (Sound Design and Mixing) and Benjamin Daimary (Acting) also bounced.

The state film awards ceremony is organised by the

Assam State Film Finance & Development Corporation (ASFDDC). The cheques are signed by the Director of Cultural Affairs.

Cultural Affairs Minister Bimal Borah asked his officials to conduct an enquiry immediately.

The organisers called Pujari on Saturday and asked her to deposit the cheque again.

"They have said it will be cleared this time," she said.

An official of ASFDDC said, "The cheques got bounced due to a technical reason. Cheques

worth Rs 18 lakh were cleared on the first day, but nine cheques of eight persons bounced on the second day."

The problem has been corrected and all the eight people have been individually informed on Saturday to deposit their cheques, he added.

Controversy had marred the Awards after it came to light that Nahid Afrin, who was conferred the best female playback singer award, was given the recognition for a song she had not sung.



‘Nashik can become a hub for making defence equipment’

PNS ■ NASHIK

Nashik in Maharashtra can become a defence equipment manufacturing hub as it has companies like the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited or HAL, said Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari here on Saturday.

In his inaugural address of Know Your Army', a two-day arms and equipment exhibition of the Indian Army, Gadkari cited the example of the Multi-Model International Passenger and Cargo Hub Airport in Nagpur (MIHAN) and said Nashik has a similar potential.

"Rafale aircraft are being

manufactured at MIHAN in Nagpur. As many as 450 engineers from engineering colleges in the area have got jobs there. The Falcon jet aircraft will also be manufactured there soon As many as 1,200 parts of Airbus and Boeing are manufactured there," he said.

Nashik also has a plant of HAL, the state-owned aerospace and defence company, and other defence manufacturing units and training facilities at Deolali, Gadkari said.

"All these will give scope for defence manufacturing here. It will create new jobs in Nashik, help exports grow and these equipment will be used for the



protection of our country," he said.

India used to import modern weapons but the Make in India programme under Prime

Minister Narendra Modi has changed the dynamics, according to him.

"I am happy today that the Dhanush gun made by our

defence department is standing with the Bofors gun made by Sweden. It is much more capable than the Bofors and our people have succeeded in making it," said the minister. India now exports defence equipment, he said.

Lauding the 'Know Your Army' programme, he said it will provide citizens, including students, with an opportunity to know more about the force and its equipment.

Researches being done in the defence sector in the country will create new jobs, he said. "Since our industries are making equipment more capable than those we import, our

nation has become strong and no country will dare look at us in the eye. Our Army, Navy and Air Force have made great contributions to this," he said Gadkari.

Lt Gen S Harimohan Iyer, AVSM, Commandant School of Artillery, delivered the introductory address.

"Nashik and Maharashtra is a land of brave people... As many as 5,603 Agniveers are getting training here and most of the weapons displayed here are made in India. The Indian Army has made the a big contribution to the Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives," he said.

Treat customer as God: MoS Finance to banks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Calling for further improvement in banking services, Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat K Karad urged banks to treat their customers as God.

Banks should focus on improving their customer service and work towards reducing pain points, Karad said while addressing a Customer Meet programme organised by Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) earlier this week.

At the same time, he asked customers to be responsive and prompt in repayment of loans so that banks are financially healthy.

With regard to Kisan Credit Card (KCC), he urged banks, including BoM for expanding the reach of KCC scheme to more farmers and ensure time-bound saturation.

The banking industry needs to serve small and marginal farmers, youth and women agripreneurs and act as catalyst for growth, he said.



India has now become the fifth largest economy in the world and is aiming to be a USD 5 trillion economy under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said.

Addressing the gathering, BoM Managing Director A S Rajeev said, "The bank in its constant endeavour is focussed on creating an ecosystem with thrust on digitization, ready to bring in desirable changes in line with the evolving technology, economy and needs of

customers."

"So far we have brought in a voyage of transformation with notable digitization measures. We are taking sensible measures to create a highly customer-centric ecosystem with an array of most competitive products and services. Our expanding branch network across the country, with bouquets of services is sharpening our business pitch," he said.

Besides customers, the event was graced by members of

He asked customers to be responsive and prompt in repayment of loans so that banks are financially healthy.

BoM board, Zonal Manager Chitra Datar, Deputy General Manager, Govt. Business Cell Nayana Sahasrabudhe and other senior officials.

Karad praised BoM for being number one on various key financial parameters and the way it has transformed itself from a bank under Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework to one of the best performing lenders.

Out of 25 key parameters, he said, BoM has been top ranker in 20-22 indicators.

PM Gati Shakti: 156 critical infra gap projects identified

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 156 critical infrastructure gaps to ports and for movement of bulk commodities such as coal, cement, fertilizers and foodgrains, have been identified for intervention under the PM Gati Shakti initiative, an official statement said on Saturday.

The PM Gati Shakti programme was launched by the government on 13th October 2021.

So far, 44 Network Planning Group meetings held at the central level, wherein 66 major infrastructure projects worth Rs Rs 5 lakh crore, have been evaluated, the commerce and industry ministry said. The Network Planning Group (NPG) is constituted under the initiative.

"156 critical infrastructure gaps to ports and for movement of bulk commodities such as coal, cement, fertilizers and foodgrains, have been identified for intervention," it said.

Packaging industry growing at 15-17%, can generate jobs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The packaging industry is growing at 15-17 per cent and the sector has the potential to create employment opportunities in the country, industry experts said.

The experts also called for the promotion of domestic players and setting up the packaging industry in every district on the lines of the one district one product initiative to create jobs at the local level.

"Presently, the demand for packaging of all things has increased a lot and there is a lot of scope for employment in this sector," Prof Tanveer Alam, Director of the Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP) Delhi, said at the Asian Packaging Congress here on Saturday.

The event was organised by the Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP), an autonomous body under the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry, a release said.

The packaging business in the world is worth USD 79 billion and has a growth rate of



15-17 per cent, Alam said.

Industry experts opined that to boost the industry, packaging units should be set up in every district on the lines of one district one product scheme so that employment can be generated, a statement said.

Different types of packaging like glass, metal, paper and others are being adopted for each type of product, the

expert said.

Recently, an MoU has also been signed with the Government of Uttar Pradesh and this product has already been launched in 15 districts of UP, IIP said.

Experts said that the packaging industry can also help bring agricultural products to the market which will increase farmers' income and cut farm production losses.

Modi, Hasina inaugurate Rs 377-cr diesel pipeline to Bangladesh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bangladesh premier Sheikh Hasina on Saturday inaugurated a Rs 377-crore pipeline to transport diesel from India to northern Bangladesh, cutting cost and reducing carbon footprint.

The pipeline will start a new chapter in India-Bangladesh relations, Modi said at the inauguration.

Currently, diesel is supplied to Bangladesh through a 512-km rail route. The 131.5-km pipeline will supply up to 1 million tonnes per annum of diesel from Numaligarh in Assam to

Bangladesh.

This would not just help save on transportation costs but also reduce the carbon footprint of moving the fuel, Modi said.

The construction of the pipeline project started in 2018. It is the first cross-border energy pipeline between the two neighbours. Of the total cost of Rs 377 crore of the project, the Rs 285 crore cost of Bangladesh section of the pipeline has been borne by the government of India under grant assistance.

The IBEP will be transporting 1 million tonnes per annum (MMTPA) of diesel to seven districts in Northern Bangladesh.

Startup failure gradually reducing in India

More awareness needed: STPI DG

PNS ■ PANAJI

Asserting that the rate of failure of startups in the country is slowly declining, Director General of Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) Arvind Kumar said there is a need to create more awareness about what the government is doing to promote startups.

Talking to PTI, Kumar said awareness campaign is very much required amongst the youth about startups.

"I go to a number of engineering colleges, they don't

know anything about startups, they don't know about STPI, they don't know anything about what the country and government is doing," he commented.

The STPI DG was in Goa to address the Future Tech Leadership Forum Goa 2023 on Saturday organised by the stakeholders in the state's IT industry.

Kumar said there should be a subject on entrepreneurship for students in 12th standard

where the product cycle should be explained and they should be made job producers and not job seekers.

He said STPI's directors are going to various colleges and giving lectures to youngsters about startups and also how to get funds for that.

"I think awareness is happening but it has to be accelerated," Kumar added.

He said though they have

not done any study on the failure of startups, there are studies which claim that the rate in India is one against ten.

"Failure is a part of startup ecosystem not just in India but also in the developed part of the world. Our country has just started the journey of startups, so naturally we will fail more, compared to those countries which have started ten years back," he said.

Talking about Centres of Entrepreneurship (COE) created by STPI, Kumar said such initiatives are working to reduce the failure rate.



Guyana offers 200 acres of land for millets production

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Guyana President Mohamed Irfaan Ali on Saturday said his country has offered 200 acres of land for exclusive production of millets, and India in exchange will provide technology support to enhance the production.

In his video message for Global Millets Conference held here, Irfaan Ali said millets have the potential to be a game changer by ensuring greater food security across the world.

Guyana, a South American country, has identified produc-



tion of millets as having great potential in enhancing national and regional food security. By 2025, the country aims to reduce its food import bill, and

millets is an ideal solution to increase self sufficiency, he said.

"Guyana looks forward in strengthening its cooperation with India. ...In pursuit of this ambition, Guyana has offered 200 acres of land for exclusive production of millets and India in turn will provide technology and technical support for enhancing the farm production and productivity of this wonder food," he said.

Irfaan Ali said millets are not only an affordable and nutritious option, but this group of crops is also resilient to climate change vagaries.

MG Motor India to supply 100 vehicles to WTiCabs India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

MG Motor India on Saturday said it has bagged an order to supply 100 units of its various models to WTiCabs India.

The fleet of 100 vehicles, including Hector and ZS EV, will be used for the rent-a-car division of WTiCabs India.

"Our partnership will further make MG vehicles more accessible to SUV and EV enthusiasts in India. We are deeply grateful to WTiCabs for having chosen the MG Hector and ZS EV as their choice of vehicle for their business," MG Motor India Senior Director Sales Rakesh Sidana said in a statement.



Forex kitty down by US\$ 2.39 bn to US\$ 560 bn

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The country's forex reserves fell by USD 2.39 billion to a three-month low of USD 560.003 billion for the week to March 10, the Reserve Bank said in its latest weekly data release.

In the week to March 3, the reserves rose by USD 1.46 billion and stood at USD 562.40 billion.

On an annualised basis, the RBI said, the reserves are down by USD 47.31 billion during the week under review while on a fiscal year basis, the same plunged by USD 62.23 billion.

With this erosion, the forex kitty is at the lowest since early-December, according to the weekly statistical supplement released by the RBI on Friday.

The loss in the reserves is

due to the revaluation of the foreign currency assets, which are the largest component of the forex kitty, to the tune of USD 2.2 billion to USD 494.86 billion for the week to March 10.

On a year-on-year basis, the value of foreign currency assets fell by USD 45.86 billion and from a fiscal year perspective, they lost USD 59.49 billion.

Expressed in dollar terms, foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of the non-US units like the euro, the pound and the yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

The reserve losses are primarily due to the RBI selling dollars to stem the rupee volatility in the spot and forwards market to prevent runaway moves in the exchange rate.

India never halted trade ties with Pak

PNS ■ ISLAMABAD

India never halted trade relations with Pakistan and wants to move towards normalising business ties, a senior Indian diplomat here has said, stressing that today's diplomacy focuses on tourism, trade and technology because "money speaks its own language".

Suresh Kumar, India's Deputy High Commissioner to Pakistan made these remarks on Friday while speaking at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), the Dawn newspaper reported.

"India always wants better relations with Pakistan because we cannot change our geography," he said.

"We want to move towards normal relations with Pakistan. We also didn't stop



trade with Pakistan, as it was Pakistan that did it," he said.

"It would be better to see how we can change our problems and situations," Kumar said.

In 2019, Pakistan suspended bilateral trade with India and expelled its High

Commissioner in Islamabad after New Delhi revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

India has been maintaining that it desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan while insisting that the onus is on Islamabad to create an environment that is free of terror and hostility for such an engagement.

The trade with Pakistan stood at USD 329.26 million in 2020-21 and USD 830.58 million in 2019-20, the data showed.

He agreed that the number of visas issued by the Indian embassy to Pakistanis dropped during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, he insisted that the number has now increased, as 30,000 visas were being issued every year, which he said was "a huge number".

Right taxation, regulation will boost gaming hub: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The online gaming sector is a rapidly growing industry that has potential of contributing significantly to the country's goal of becoming a USD 1 trillion digital economy, generating substantial employment, and fostering innovation, a report said.

Regulation of online gaming will not only open up economic opportunities but also address various social issues, a report titled 'Online Gaming in India: The Taxation Quandary' by Primus Partners said.

Announcements in Union Budget 2023-24 are positive for the sector as it has addressed the persistent ask to incorporate the offset of losses in the

calculation of gains from online games for income tax, it said.

A pertinent issue relating to the implementation mechanism proposed in the Union Budget for TDS (Tax Deducted at Source) on online games has been highlighted in the report.

"The issue has arisen due to amendments to section 194B under which online gaming is currently covered from April 1, 2023 and the separate provision on online gaming i.e section 194BA coming into force from July 1, 2023, leading to an anomaly," it said.

It would be ideal to streamline the applicability of the amendments for "online game" and establish a singular effective date of April 1, 2023, it said, adding, alternatively, the current



tax regime could be continued for the period between April 1, 2023 to June 30, 2023, to eliminate any discrepancies in interpretation.

The recurrent developments will also lead to higher costs for the

industry resulting in unnecessary expenses that will be difficult to bear for several smaller and mid-size gaming companies, the report said.

On the GST front, the report said evidence from countries where the sector has developed to show the GGR (Gross Gaming Revenue) tax model enables the industry to flourish.

"Levying GST on the total face value would be a departure from established practices, besides making the sector unviable. The recent changes in TDS on income from the prize pool in online gaming without any threshold should be considered by the GST Council," it said.

Online gaming is a rapidly growing

industry which is expected to grow at a CAGR of around 27 per cent over the next five years in India, it said, adding, the sector holds a huge potential to boost India's GDP and is anticipated to be a significant job generator, with the ability to add more than 1 million jobs by 2030.

"A robust and enabling regulatory framework for a dynamic sector like online gaming would ensure a responsible, transparent and safe environment for all," said Primus Partners India CEO Nilaya Varma.

The online gaming sector holds tremendous potential if it is encouraged with the right regulatory support from the government and a growth-friendly tax regime, he added.

MONEY MATTERS

IFFCO and Coromandel to make Nano DAP for 3 years



Fertiliser cooperative major IFFCO and Coromandel International Ltd (CIL) will manufacture Nano DAP for a period of three years. A notification in this regard was issued on March 2, Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilisers Bhagwanth Khuba said in his written reply to the Lok Sabha on Friday. Di Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) is the second most widely consumed fertiliser after urea in the country. The minister further said IFFCO has informed that it is setting up a Nano DAP plant at its Kalol unit, Gujarat with a production capacity of 2 lakh bottles of 500 ml per day. "Nano DAP will be available in the market across the country after commencement of commercial production," he added. On its benefits, the minister shared that preliminary field trials were conducted by IFFCO and CIL on select crops in select institutes of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). The report has indicated that with the use of Nano DAP as seed treatment and foliar application, there is a possibility of saving of granular DAP (Di Ammonium Phosphate) conventionally applied, he said.

SJVN Green Energy bags 200 MW solar project in Maha



State-owned SJVN on Saturday said its green energy subsidiary has bagged a 200MW solar project entailing an investment of Rs 1,000 crore in Maharashtra. "Wholly-owned subsidiary of the company...SJVN Green Energy Ltd (SGEL) received a Letter of Award from Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (MSEDCL) for 200 MW solar power project to be developed anywhere in Maharashtra," a BSE filing stated. The project shall be constructed in a period of 18 months which shall be reckoned from the date of signing of PPA (power purchase agreement) with MSEDCL. Tentative cost of construction / development of this project shall be around Rs 1,000 crore, it stated. The project is expected to generate 455.52 MU (million units) in the first year and the cumulative energy generation over a period of 25 years would be about 10,480.82 MU. Commissioning of this project is expected to reduce 5,13,560 tonne of carbon emission and would contribute towards government mission of 500 GW renewable capacity by 2030.

TVS Industrial and Logistics on aggressive expansion plan



The TVS Industrial and Logistics Park (ILP) has drawn up plans to strengthen footprint in 30 more cities by 2027, a top official said on Saturday. The company currently has presence in 11 locations across the country. The TVS ILP would be investing about Rs 1,500 crore under its expansion drive, chief operating officer R Manikandan told reporters. As part of its expansion plans, he said five of the warehouses would be in Tamil Nadu including one in Coimbatore. The company was working on various projects in Vijayawada, Vishakhapatnam, Guwahati, Siliguri, Ranchi and Raipur among others.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
TENDER NOTIFICATION No. 123 & 124/2022-23
Name of work: CC road & Other works. Estimate Amount/ECV: Rs. 570.00 Lakhs.
Start Date / Last Date & Time for Receipt of Bids: 20.03.2023/ 01.00 PM; 27.03.2023/ 01.15 PM. Name & Address, Officer Cell No.: Sd/- P Satya Narayana Executive Engineer, GHMC, Moosapet Circle - 23, Cell. 9989930362. For further details can be seen at e-procurement @ www.tender.e-procurement.gov.in Sd/- Executive Engineer R.O.No: 13485-PV/LADVT/1/2022-23, Dt. 18.03.2023 GHMC, Moosapet Division-23

SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LTD.
Operation, Central Circle, Gr. Hyderabad.
TENDER NOTIFICATION No. 123 & 124/2022-23.
Sealed tenders are invited from Registered contractors of TSPDCOL having relevant experience in respect of (1) T.S. No. 123/22-23 for Construction of cash counter for Gollonda section office at 33/11 KV Gollonda Substation in Medhapatnam Division in Central Circle, Hyderabad. and Sealed tenders are invited from Registered contractors of TSPDCOL having relevant experience in respect of (2) T.S. No. 124/22-23 Reserved for SC Category for Construction of cash counter rooms at 33/11 Colony Santoshnagar Medhapatnam Section in Medhapatnam Division in Central Circle. Hyderabad above works to be taken up urgently. Sale of tender specifications from: 18.03.2023 to 23.03.2023 up to 17:30 Hrs. Last date for receipt of sealed tenders: 24.03.2023 up to 15:00 Hrs. Date of opening of tender: 24.03.2023 at 10:30 AM. All information can be had from www.tspdcopower.com or the undersigned. Ph: 2343117273. Sd/- Superintending Engineer, R.O.No: 13485-PV/LADVT/1/2022-23, Dt. 18.03.2023 Operation, Central Circle, Hyderabad.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
Public Health and Municipal Engineering Department
Name of the work: (1) E. N. S. J. P. H. & M. E. Dept. Development of Infrastructure at Government School in Nazamabad, Rangareddy, Medchal Districts under Mana Ooru Mana Badi, Vikuracharam in Medchal and Various Developmental works (2 work reserved) in, Medak, Sadasipet, Ramayampet, Banowada Municipality under TUDIC loan assistance Total Cost: Rs. 1072.66 Lakhs. Closing Date: 29.03.2023 @ 04.30 PM. For details visit https://tender.telangana.gov.in. Contact No: 040-23325849, 9154299724. Sd/- Superintending Engineer (PH), West Circle, Hyderabad
DPR No.: MITC-DPCL-Agency/Asst/1/2022-23

“There was not one true thing said in this video”
— Bella Hadid denies anonymous TikTok claims about drug use



FEAR AND RISKS

More and more countries are banning TikTok citing data security risks. Should users be worried that the app will be wiped off their phones, writes HALELUYA HADERO

TikTok is once again fending off claims that its Chinese parent company, ByteDance, would share user data from its popular video-sharing app with the Chinese government, or push propaganda and misinformation on its behalf.

China’s Foreign Ministry on Wednesday accused the United States itself of spreading disinformation about TikTok’s potential security risks following a report in the Wall Street Journal that the Committee on Foreign Investment in the US — part of the Treasury Department — was threatening a US ban on the app unless its Chinese owners divest their stake.

So are the data security risks real? And should users be worried that the TikTok app will be wiped off their phones?

WHAT ARE THE CONCERNS ABOUT TIKTOK?

Both the FBI and the Federal Communications Commission have warned that ByteDance could share TikTok user data — such as browsing history, location and biometric identifiers — with China’s authoritarian government.

A law implemented by China in 2017 requires companies to give the government any personal data relevant to the country’s national security. There’s no evidence that TikTok has turned over such data, but fears abound due to the vast amount of user data it, like other social media companies, collects.

Concerns around TikTok were heightened in December when ByteDance said it fired four employees who accessed data on two journalists from BuzzFeed News and The Financial Times while attempting to track down the source of a leaked report about the company.

HOW IS THE US RESPONDING?

White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby declined to comment when asked Thursday to address the Chinese foreign ministry’s comments about

TikTok, citing the review being conducted by the Committee on Foreign Investment.

Kirby also could not confirm that the administration sent TikTok a letter warning that the US government may ban the application if its Chinese owners don’t sell its stake but added, “we have legitimate national security concerns with respect to data integrity that we need to observe.”

In 2020, then-President Donald Trump and his administration sought to force ByteDance to sell off its US assets and ban TikTok from app stores. Courts blocked the effort, and President Joe Biden rescinded Trump’s orders but ordered an in-depth study of the issue. A planned sale of TikTok’s US assets was also shelved as the Biden administration negotiated a deal with TikTok that would address some of the national security concerns.

In Congress, US Sens. Richard Blumenthal and Jerry Moran, a Democrat and a Republican, wrote a letter in February to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen urging the Committee on Foreign Investment panel, which she chairs, to “swiftly conclude its investigation and impose strict structural restrictions” between TikTok’s American operations and ByteDance, including potentially separating the companies.

At the same time, lawmakers have introduced measures that would expand the Biden administration’s authority to enact a national ban on TikTok. The White House has already backed a Senate proposal that has bipartisan support.

HOW HAS TIKTOK ALREADY BEEN RESTRICTED?

On Thursday, British authorities said they are banning TikTok on government-issued phones on security grounds, following similar moves by the European Union’s executive branch, which temporarily banned TikTok from employee phones. Denmark and Canada have also announced efforts to block it on government-issued phones.

Last month, the White House said



THERE’S NO EVIDENCE THAT TIKTOK HAS TURNED OVER SUCH DATA, BUT FEARS AROUND DUE TO THE VAST AMOUNT OF USER DATA IT, LIKE OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES, COLLECTS.

it would give US federal agencies 30 days to delete TikTok from all government-issued mobile devices. Congress, the US armed forces and more than half of US states had already banned the app.

WHAT DOES TIKTOK SAY?

TikTok spokesperson Maureen Shanahan said the company was already answering security concerns through “transparent, US-based protection of US user data and systems, with robust third-party monitoring, vetting, and verification.”

In June, TikTok said it would route all data from US users to servers controlled by Oracle, the Silicon Valley company it chose as its US tech partner in 2020 in an effort to avoid a nationwide ban. But it is storing backups of the data in its own servers in the US and Singapore. The company said it expects to delete US user data from its own servers, but it has not provided a timeline as to when that would occur.

TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew is set to testify next week before the House Energy and Commerce Committee about the company’s privacy and data-security practices, as well as its relationship with the Chinese government.

Meanwhile, TikTok’s parent company ByteDance has been trying to position itself as more of an international company — and less of a Chinese company that was founded in Beijing in 2012 by its current chief executive Liang Rubo and others.

Theo Bertram, TikTok’s vice president of policy in Europe, said in a Tweet Thursday that ByteDance “is not a Chinese company.” Bertram said its ownership consists of 60% by global investors, 20% employees and 20% founders. Its leaders are based in cities like Singapore, New York, Beijing and other metropolitan areas.

ARE THE SECURITY RISKS LEGITIMATE?

It depends on who you ask. Some tech privacy advocates say

while the potential abuse of privacy by the Chinese government is concerning, other tech companies have data-harvesting business practices that also exploit user information.

“If policy makers want to protect Americans from surveillance, they should advocate for a basic privacy law that bans all companies from collecting so much sensitive data about us in the first place, rather than engaging in what amounts to xenophobic showboating that does exactly nothing to protect anyone,” said Evan Greer, director of the nonprofit advocacy group Fight for the Future.

Karim Farhat, a researcher with the Internet Governance Project at Georgia Tech, said a TikTok sale would be “completely irrelevant to any of the alleged ‘national security’ threats” and go against “every free market principle and norm” of the state department’s internet freedom principles.

Others say there is legitimate reason for concern.

People who use TikTok might think they’re not doing anything that would be of interest to a foreign government, but that’s not always the case, said Anton Dahbura, executive director of the Johns Hopkins University Information Security Institute. Important information about the United States is not strictly limited to nuclear power plants or military facilities; it extends to other sectors, such as food processing, the finance industry and universities, Dahbura said.

IS THERE PRECEDENCE FOR BANNING TECH COMPANIES?

Last year, the US banned the sale of communications equipment made by Chinese companies Huawei and ZTE, citing risks to national security. But banning the sale of items could be more easily done than banning an app, which is accessed through the web.

Such a move might also go to the courts on grounds that it might violate the First Amendment as some civil liberties groups have argued.

Associated Press

China appeals for fair treatment

China appealed Friday to other governments to treat its companies fairly after Britain and New Zealand joined the United States in restricting use of TikTok due to fears the Chinese-owned short video service might be a security risk.

Governments are worried TikTok’s owner, ByteDance, might give browsing history or other data about users to China’s government or promote propaganda and disinformation.

“We call on the countries concerned to recognize the objective facts, effectively respect the market economy” and provide “a non-discriminatory environment” for all companies, said foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin.

TikTok is one focus of conflicts between China and other governments over technology and security that are disrupting processor chip, smartphone and other industries.

Legislators and employees in New Zealand’s Parliament will be prohibited from having TikTok’s app on phones, the government said Friday. Britain announced a ban Thursday on TikTok on all government phones.

India has banned TikTok and dozens of other Chinese apps, including the WeChat message service, on security and privacy grounds.

The United States also has imposed restrictions on access by Chinese companies to processor chip and other technology on security and human rights grounds.

The Chinese government accused Washington of spreading false information about TikTok following a report by The Wall Street Journal that US authorities were considering a ban if ByteDance doesn’t sell the company.

The ruling Communist Party blocks most internet users in China from seeing TikTok and thousands of social media and other websites. ByteDance operates a sister short-video service, Douyin, that can be seen in China.

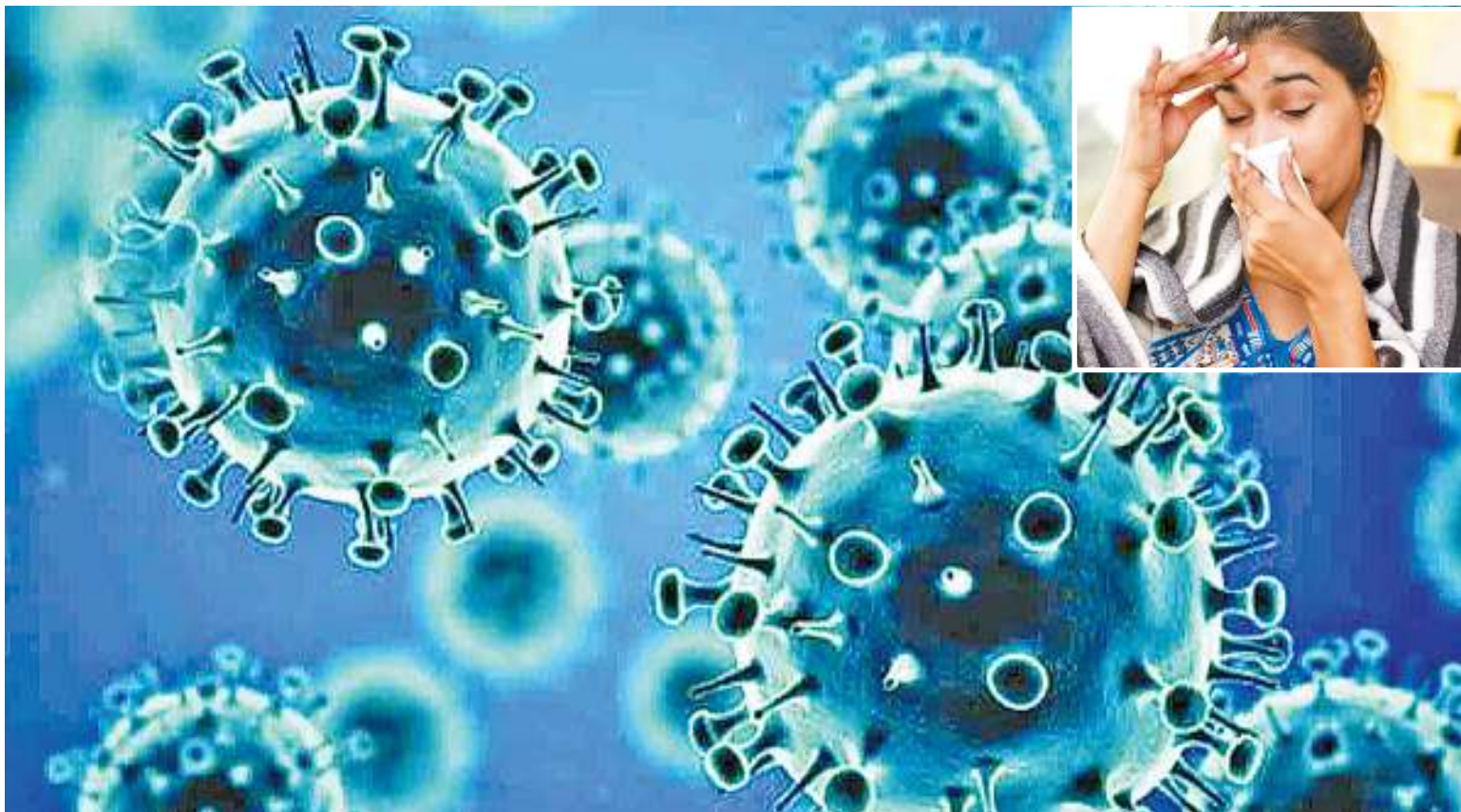
H3N2: PRECAUTION IS THE KEY

Amid a spurt in cases of the H3N2 virus in the country, one more death has been reported, this time from Gurugram in Haryana. This takes the total number of fatalities to three. Adequate rest, simple home-cooked fresh food, and proper hydration are advised for recuperation at home, doctors tell **THE HEALTH PIONEER**

The health experts said that the first sign of influenza virus is usually a high fever, which begins about four to five days after exposure to the virus and lasts 10 to 15 days. A runny nose, a cough, red and watery eyes, and facial swelling can develop in the initial stage. They added that people at higher risk of developing complications include children younger than 5 years, people 65 years and older, pregnant people, and people with certain long-term health conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, weakened immune systems, and neurological or neuro-developmental problems.

Dr Jugal Kishore Director Professor and Head of Department of Community at Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi said that precaution is a key word. It is crucial to avoid crowded places, travel only if necessary, practice good hand and respiratory hygiene, and seek medical advice if symptoms persist for more than two days.

"There is a surge of H3N2 cases in the region now, but the severity of such cases is less.



Some people with co-morbidities are getting hospitalised as they are in the high-risk zone. People need to wear masks and take precaution," Dr Rajiva Gupta, a consultant at the internal medicine department of CK Birla Hospital said.

The World Health Organisation, too, recommends that the most effective way to prevent infection with any virus is to get vaccinated and follow prevention measures: "Maintaining at least a 1-metre distance from others, wearing a well-fitted mask when keeping your distance is not possible, avoiding crowded and poorly ventilated places and settings, opening windows and doors to keep rooms well ventilated and cleaning your hands frequently." It also advises that people should follow the advice "of your local authorities on getting influenza and Covid-19 vaccines."

Dr. Raman Kumar, physician from Noida said that H3N2 influenza is a respiratory virus which transmits in the same fashion as the Covid virus. The precautions are also the same and should be diligently followed.

GOING AYURVEDA WAY



DR RP PARASHER
CMO (Ayurveda), MCD

As per Ayurveda, a state of equilibrium of Vata, Kafa and Pitta in the body denotes health. When any of the three increases or decreases, we may fall ill. Kafa is deposited all over the body during the winter season. The warmth of spring melts the kafa which is the cause of diseases like cough, cold, asthma and other ailments of the respiratory tract. That's why the level of immunity is lowered during change of season and people, especially the children & the elders fall ill easily. People, whose lungs have become weak due to corona infection, are more prone to catch the viral infection. Such types of patients are also facing problems like breathlessness and low levels of oxygen. Since it is a droplet infection, it spreads very fast. If a kid suffering from H3N2 infection attends school, he may spread the infection to a large number of students. Similarly if one member of a family gets infected, the whole family is likely to fall ill.

How to avert the infection: Keeping a vigil on feeding and living habits will definitely avert the infection. Observing covid appropriate behaviour is necessary which includes wearing of masks, regular cleaning of hands, avoid hands shake, etc. Cold drinks, ice creams and refrigerated items must be avoided. Do not consume items of cool temperament like rice, kadh, curd, cauliflower peanuts, arhar daal, etc.

Never use cold water just after consuming fried foods. In case of viral infection, alum or saline gargles in warm water will help to reduce inflammation of the throat and the respiratory tract. Tulsi, Ginger, clove, pippali, cinnamon bark and kali mirch boiled in water, milk or tea will also give relief. Hot soups of tomato and other seasonal vegetables will increase immunity on one hand and reduce inflammation as well as itching on the other hand. Fruits like Amla, Giloy, Anjir, resins, grapes and oranges will provide immunity and strength to the body.

Ayurvedic treatment: Ayurvedic drugs are capable of treating the infection within three to five days. Medicines like Sitopaladi churan, Talishadi churan, Laxmivilas Ras, Kafketu Ras, Sanjeevani Vati, Sudarshan ghan vati, Trilokyachintamani ras, Sameerpannag ras are quite effective to treat the infection. Chyavanprash, Vasa Avleha, Agastya Haritki provide relief in cough and cold within a few days.

If chewed, Aladi Vati, Lavangadi vati and Vyoshadi vati provide instant relief in cough. Ayurvedic cough syrups containing Tulsi, vasa, jufa, pippali, mulethi, somlata, kantkari are quite effective and safe even in children and elders.

What is the H3N2 virus? According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), seasonal influenza is an acute respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses. There are 4 types of seasonal influenza viruses, types A, B, C and D. Influenza A and B viruses circulate and cause seasonal epidemics of disease. Influenza A viruses are further classified into subtypes according to the combinations of the hemagglutinin (HA) and the neuraminidase (NA), the proteins on the surface of the virus.

How Does The Virus Transmit? H3N2 Influenza virus transmitted mainly through infected droplets created when infected pigs

WHAT/HOW/CAUSES/SYMPTOMS/MANAGEMENT OF H3N2

cough or sneeze. If these droplets land in your nose or mouth, or you inhale them, you can be infected. After this when an infected person sneezes or coughs, the respiratory droplets can travel in the air and reach the nose, and mouth of another individual, making him/her catch the virus and fall sick.

Common Symptoms of H3N2 virus: Cough and runny nose/ Body aches/ Coughing/ Fever/ Vomiting/ Nausea/ Diarrhea and Chills among few others.

Tips for Patients infected with H3N2: In

symptomatic cases, patients should wash hands with soap and water, wear masks and avoid crowded places, cover mouth and nose while sneezing and coughing, avoid touching eyes and nose, take plenty of fluids and take paracetamol for fever and bodyache.

Who is More at Risk? Following is a list of all the health and age factors that are known to increase a person's risk of getting serious flu complications, according to US body Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

or CDC

■ Although all children younger than 5 years old are considered at higher risk of serious flu complications, the highest risk is for those younger than 2 years old, with the highest hospitalization and death rates among infants younger than 6 months old.

■ Adults 65 years and older/ Asthma/ Neurologic and neurodevelopment conditions/ Blood disorders (such as sickle cell disease)/ Chronic lung disease (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [COPD] and

cystic fibrosis)/ Endocrine disorders (such as diabetes mellitus)/ Heart disease (such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease)/ Kidney diseases/ Liver disorders/ Metabolic disorders (such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders)/ Obese people with a body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher/ People younger than 19 years old on long-term aspirin- or salicylate-containing medications/ People with a weakened immune system/ People who have had a stroke/ Pregnant women and those up to 2 weeks after the end of pregnancy/ People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

HEALTH BRIEFS



GURU NANAK EYE CENTRE CELEBRATES FOUNDATION DAY: Delhi-based GURU Nanak Eye Centre celebrated its 37th Foundation Day on ... On the occasion, it released a souvenir. "The glorious history and journey of GURU Nanak Eye Centre," compiled by the staff of GNEC team. It was released by Lt Gen Dr Daljit Singh, Dir. Gen. Medical Services (Army), Prof Poonam Narang (Dir. Prof. Radiology, Dean.

Dr. Kirti Singh, Director of the hospital said, the surgical expertise and clinical acumen of the doctors meets the best among their peers, a fact that is reflected in the annual footfall of 3-4 lakh patients requiring eye care.

AIIMS, DELHI MOOTS 5G ROUTE: AIIMS, Delhi is embarking on an installation of a smart fifth-generation cellular network in its premises by June 30, capitalizing on 5G's fast speeds to enhance access to care and improve efficiency.

A five-member panel headed by Prof Vivek Tandon, Department of Neurosurgery has been set up to expedite the process. An office memorandum issued by AIIMS director M Srinivas stated, "To enable maximum utilisation of modern communication technology for patient care, teaching, research, good governance, and for optimal deployment of integrated medical university information system (IMUIS), it is desirable that the entire campus has good strength of 5G mobile network to enable a robust mobile and data connectivity inside the buildings."

He also said that strong 5G connectivity will help the institute stay in touch with its main and outreach campuses like NCI Jhajjar, which will enable senior faculty members to provide their expert advice during off-duty hours.

The other members of committee include Dr Vivek Gupta (computer facility) and superin-

tending engineer Jitendra Saxena. Dr Vikas from telecommunications will be member secretary of the committee and Sunita Cherodath, senior deputy director general, department of telecommunications, will be a special invitee.



BOLLYWOOD ACTRESS BHUMI UNDP'S SDGS AMBASSADOR: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has announced Bollywood actor Bhumi Pednekar as their first national advocate for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recently.

As a national advocate, Bhumi will support UNDP India's efforts to raise awareness and mobilize support for the SDGs, a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

Taking on the new role, Bhumi said, "I believe it is our collective responsibility to ensure we leave behind a better world for future generations. The SDGs provide a roadmap for building a more sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future for all."

Shoko Noda, Resident Representative, UNDP India said that Bhumi's talent and dedication to gender equality and sustainability make her an ideal advocate for the SDGs.

Cancer Prevention Strategies for Women



DR ADITI AGGARWAL
Senior Consultant,
Radiation Oncology, Paras
Hospital, Gurgaon

As per the World Health Organisation (WHO), cancer is the second most common cause of death globally with cases increasing every year in India as in the world.

Looking at cancers occurring in females, globally breast cancer tops the list followed by colorectal and lung cancers whereas in India, breast cancer is the leading and cervical cancer is the second most common cancer followed by ovary, head neck and colorectal cancers.

When it comes to cancer prevention, it is important to understand the risk factors for these diseases. Breast cancer

occurs more commonly in urban population than rural, pointing towards the westernization and changes in lifestyle that is contributory. Also the reproductive habits have changed over decades, amongst women in India. The older a woman is when she has her first full-term pregnancy, the higher her risk of breast cancer, no/fewer children, no breastfeeding. Poor genital hygiene, multiple births, multiple sexual partners are causative for cervical cancers. Consumption of saturated fats, processed foods, red meat, sedentary lifestyle being risk factors for breast and colorectal, as well as ovarian cancers to some extent. Smoking, tobacco chewing, alcohol are leading cause for head, neck and lung cancers. Family history is another important factor in breast, colorectal and ovarian cancers in few cases.

Amongst risk reduction/ cancer prevention strategies that need to be followed, the first and foremost is leading a healthy lifestyle which means, no addictions, healthy diet with adequate



fibers, fruits and vegetables, minimal processed food, low red meat, avoiding constipation. Also moderate amount of exercise in our daily routine for around 30 minutes is recommended to maintain a healthy weight and keep many diseases away, not just cancer. Healthy reproductive habits and good genital hygiene, having children timely, limiting the number of births, avoiding high risk sexual behavior is equally important.

Following a routine of getting yourself tested regularly, termed as screening for breast and cervical cancers should be done by all females. Mammo-

graphy for breast cancer should be undertaken at the age of 45 years, thereafter done once in two years, till the age of 74 years as per USPSTF. Also PAP Smear for cervical cancer should be done for all sexually active females once in 3 years till the age of 65 years. These are simple tests which can detect very early lesions, sometimes even before they become cancerous. Screening for colorectal cancers using a test called colonoscopy is recommended for all those touching 45 to 50 years, done once in 5 to 10 years till the age of 75 years. In case of a positive family history, these tests should start 10 years earlier than the

Down Syndrome: Untapped Sky-high Potential



ALOK KUMAR 'BHUWAN'

Down Syndrome (DS) is a condition in which extra genetic material causes delays in the mental and physical development of a child. One of the most common genetic disorders, the condition is characterised by the presence of an extra 21st chromosome. It is not a disease and there is no way to prevent it. In India, around 32,000 cases are observed.

Individuals with Down syndrome demonstrate more similarities than differences compared to other typically developing peers.

Demystifying the myths that such children have a bleak future, each day, many new kids on the block are beating the

odds, showing extraordinary achievements, the ability to possess hopes and dreams for the future, and a solid determination to meet their goals.

Though individuals with Down syndrome experience learning difficulties that give rise to developmental delays, not all areas are impacted with an equivalent effect.

Here, I would like to talk about Nagpur's **Devanshi Joshi**, a recipient of 'Role Model' award which was conferred on her by the then President Ram Nath



Kovind in 2021. She has been breaking many stereotypes and misconceptions around intellectual disability through her path-breaking achievements.

Ditto is the case with 24-year-old **Adya Verma**. An advocate by profession, Adya is with our organization, aiding in the creation of Easy Road Documents as well as taking part in numerous lectures and workshops to communicate her vision.

Similarly, **Rashmi Rekha Sahu** with Down Syndrome is charting her own path under the guidance of her parents, both

school teachers. An Odissi dancer, she leaves everybody in awe with her excellent dance expressions and movements. Recently, she successfully accomplished Sangeet Visharad Pratham Khand (IV year) organized by well-known organization, Pracheen Kala.

These are just among a few examples even for many of us who are pursuing with relentless passion to accomplish their potential as well as passion.

On our part, on World Down Syndrome Day 2023 our organization in collaboration with SNAC & CBSM, organiz-

ing a programme where over 500 participants comprising those diagnosed with disabilities will attempt to exhibit their talents.

Such events are an attempt made at creating awareness related to communication skills, primary sign language and easy-read training for intellectual



and developmental disabilities, guidance on career options after school along with education and skill training opportunities, plus ensuring good oral hygiene and healthcare among others – all coming together to promote inclusive living within our society.

Therefore, let us set sails towards reaching success by enabling each child with Down syndrome to gain access to schooling and college environments which come equipped with platforms that allow for auditory/visual modifications, accommodating physical exercises (occupational/speech therapies). Efforts should be made on giving them the extra time required for classwork – all so that we can better comprehend each individual affected by this condition including his/her abilities & special needs.

After all, it is our responsibility as a society to provide opportunities and nurture diversity at every step going forward.

(The writer is Managing Secretary of Manovikas Charitable Society, Delhi)

How a warrant for Putin puts new spin on Xi visit to Russia

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Chinese President Xi Jinping's plans to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow next week highlighted China's aspirations for a greater role on the world stage.

But they also revealed the perils of global diplomacy: Hours after Friday's announcement of the trip, an international arrest warrant was issued for Putin on war crimes charges, taking at least some wind out of the sails of China's big reveal.

The flurry of developments which followed China's brokering of an agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran to resume diplomatic relations and its release of what it calls a "peace plan" for Ukraine came as the Biden administration watches warily Beijing's moves to assert itself more forcefully in international affairs.

US President Joe Biden said on Friday he believes the decision by the International Criminal Court in The Hague to charge Putin was "justified."

Speaking to reporters as he left the White House for his Delaware home, he said Putin "clearly committed war crimes."

While the US does not recognise the court, Biden said it "makes a very strong point" to call out the Russian leader for his actions in ordering the invasion of Ukraine.

Other US officials privately expressed satisfaction that an international body had agreed with Washington's assessment that Russia has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine.

Asked about the Xi-Putin meeting, Biden said, "Well, we'll see when that meeting takes place."

The Biden administration believes China's desire to be seen as a broker for peace between Russia and Ukraine may be viewed more critically now that Putin is officially a war crime suspect, according to two U.S. officials. The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the matter pub-



licly, said the administration hopes the warrants will help mobilize heretofore neutral countries to weigh in on the conflict.

A look at the Xi-Putin meeting and how it may be affected by the warrant.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF XI MEETING WITH PUTIN?

The visit to Russia will be Xi's first foreign trip since being elected to an unprecedented third term as China's president.

It comes as Beijing and Moscow have intensified ties in steps that began shortly before Russia's invasion of Ukraine with a meeting between the two leaders in Beijing during last year's Winter Olympics at which they declared a "no limits" partnership.

Since then, China has repeatedly sided with Russia in blocking interna-

tional action against Moscow for the Ukraine conflict and, US officials say, is considering supplying Russia with weapons to support the war.

But it has also tried to cast itself in a more neutral role, offering a peace plan that was essentially ignored.

The meeting in Moscow is likely to see the two sides recommit to their partnership, which both see as critical to countering what they consider undue and undeserved influence exerted by the US and its Western allies.

In the immediate term, the ICC's warrant for Putin and one of his aides is unlikely to have a major impact on the meeting or China's position toward Russia. Neither China nor Russia nor the United States or Ukraine has ratified the ICC's founding treaty.

The US, beginning with the Clinton

administration, has refused to join the court, fearing that its broad mandate could result in the prosecution of American troops or officials.

That means that none of the four countries formally recognises the court's jurisdiction or is bound by its orders, although Ukraine has consented to allowing some ICC probes of crimes on its territory and the US has cooperated with ICC investigations.

In addition, it is highly unlikely that Putin would travel to a country that would be bound by obligations to the ICC.

If he did, it is questionable whether that country would actually arrest him. There is precedent for those previously indicted, notably former Sudanese President Omar Bashir, to have visited ICC members without being detained.



Sea level rise could sink significant parts of deltas

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Relative sea level rise, caused by local drivers, together with global sea level rise, could cause significant parts of the world's largest deltas to fall below the rising sea before the turn of the century, according to a new study.

Relative sea level rise also takes into account sinking lands which amplify the effect of rising seas.

Local drivers such as groundwater pumping and extraction of hydrocarbons creates subsidence, and coastal vegetation, which can provide some protection, is lost to make space for farmland and tourism.

Scientists of the Stanford University-led study have found overwhelming evidence that it is not sea level rise, rather sinking land, that puts global deltas most at risk.

While climate change is increasingly recognized as a risk to coastal livelihoods and global wealth and security, this is only one part of the story.

This is of great importance for managing river deltas, according to Rafael Schmitt, lead author of the study, a lead scientist with the Stanford

Natural Capital Project.

"It is often not rising seas, but sinking land due to human activities that puts coastal populations most at risk," said Schmitt.

"Our research highlights that this relevant global risk is grossly understudied for all but very few coastal regions," said Schmitt. Little is known about local and regional drivers of relative sea level rise.

So, Schmitt's study set out to identify key drivers of land loss and vulnerability across the world's major deltas, and the knowledge gaps impeding more sustainable delta management, for specific deltas and on a global scale.

Under natural conditions, deltas are subject to a number of factors that together create dynamic but stable systems.

For instance, sediment supplied from upstream river basins builds new land even when sea levels are rising. Sediment supply is also critical to offset the effect that the recent, unconsolidated delta land compacts continuously under its own weight.

Today, all of these processes are out of balance.

River deltas are cut off from

their natural sediment supply by dams and reservoirs, and the little sediment still reaching deltas cannot spread because of artificial levees and dikes.

The livelihoods of millions of people who live in river deltas, among the world's most productive lands, are at risk.

Created where large rivers meet the ocean and deposit their natural sediment load, river deltas are often just a few meters above sea level.

While they make up less than 0.5 per cent of the world's land area, river deltas contribute more than 4 per cent of the global GDP, 3 per cent of global crop production, and are home to 5.5 per cent of the world's population.

All of these values are highly vulnerable to imminent global environmental change, the study said.

Of course, climate mitigation is important to curb global sea level rise.

However, fighting overuse of local natural resources in river deltas and their contributing basins would have much greater and more immediate effects, posing both an opportunity and a responsibility for coastal nations, the study said.

Odour molecule could help decipher sense of smell

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Scientists have created the first molecular-level, 3D picture of how an odour molecule activates a human odorant receptor, a crucial step towards deciphering the sense of smell.

The scientists help break a longstanding impasse in our understanding of olfaction and the 3D picture created has implications for fragrances, food science, and beyond.

The model, created by scientists at University of California San Francisco (UCSF), US, is poised to reignite interest in the science of smell.

The findings have been published in the journal Nature.

Odorant receptors, proteins that bind odour molecules on the surface of olfactory cells, make up half of the largest, most diverse family of receptors in our bodies. A deeper understanding of them paves the way for new insights about a range of biological processes.

Smell involves about 400 unique receptors.

Each of the hundreds of thousands of scents we can detect is made of a mixture of different odour molecules. Each type of molecule may be detected by an array of receptors, creating a puzzle for the brain to solve each time the nose catches a whiff of something new.

"It's like hitting keys on a piano to produce a chord," said Hiroaki Matsunami, professor at Duke University and a



close collaborator of Aashish Manglik, associate professor, UCSF.

Matsunami's work over the past two decades has focused on decoding the sense of smell.

"Seeing how an odorant receptor binds an odorant explains how this works at a fundamental level," said Matsunami.

We haven't been able to map olfaction, because without a picture, said Manglik, we didn't know how odour molecules would react with their corresponding odour receptors.

To create the 3D picture, the study said, Manglik's lab used a type of imaging called cryo-electron microscopy (cryo-EM), that allows researchers to see atomic structure and study the molecular shapes of proteins.

But before Manglik's team could visualize the odorant receptor binding an odorant, they first needed to purify a sufficient quantity of the receptor protein.

Odorant receptors are noto-

riously challenging, some say impossible, to make in the lab for such purposes.

The Manglik and Matsunami teams looked for an odorant receptor that was abundant in both the body and the nose, thinking it might be easier to make artificially, and one that also could detect water-soluble odorants, according to the study.

They settled on a receptor called OR51E2, which is known to respond to propionate - a molecule that contributes to the pungent smell of Swiss cheese.

But even OR51E2 proved hard to make in the lab, the study said.

Typical cryo-EM experiments require a milligram of protein to produce atomic-level images.

However, co-first author Christian Billesbolle, a senior scientist in the Manglik Lab, developed approaches to use only 1/100th of a milligram of OR51E2, putting the snapshot of receptor and odorant within reach, the study said.

British Muslim analyst found guilty of terror charges

PNS ■ LONDON

A British Muslim financial analyst influenced by extremist Islamist ideology has been found guilty of multiple terrorism related offences by a UK court after his laptop led police to dangerous bomb-making plans.

Asad Bhatti, from Redhill in Surrey, south-east England, was arrested and charged in January 2021, following which a search was carried out at an address in the area which revealed a makeshift bomb-making facility.

Surrey Police said the 49-year-old, of South Asian origin, was found guilty of two counts of possessing an article for the purpose of terrorism, contrary to Section 57 of the UK's Terrorism Act 2000. He was also found guilty of three counts of making or possessing an



explosive substance under suspicious circumstances contrary to Section 4 of the UK's Explosive Substance Act at the Old Bailey court in London on Friday. Bhatti remains in custody and will

be sentenced for the crimes at the same court on April 25.

"The case against Bhatti was strong. I am glad the jury found him guilty today," said Detective Chief

Superintendent Olly Wright, Head of Counter Terrorism Policing South East (CTPSE) in Surrey.

"There was clear evidence of his extreme Islamist ideology and the danger he posed. He clearly hated those whom he considers do not follow his version of Islam, and he made a range of derogatory comments towards those he considers to be unbelievers," he said.

Bhatti was investigated by officers from the CTPSE after he had taken his laptop into a shop to be fixed and a member of staff found some concerning file titles, which he reported.

Upon further investigation by CTPSE, some documents were discovered suggesting whoever was using the device had an interest in explosives and making explosive devices.

Washington turns to Wall Street for help to rescue dying bank

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

The scene was reminiscent of the last financial crisis, nearly 15 years ago: Faced with a blossoming emergency in the banking sector, worried regulators and policymakers in Washington turned to Wall Street for help.

The anxiety this week centred on First Republic Bank in San Francisco, which was once the envy of the banking sector, with its wealthy and well-travelled clientele. Now the bank was reeling after some of those customers withdrew billions of dollars.

As early as Tuesday, it became clear to policymakers that the First Republic needed to be rescued or it could fail, two people

briefed on the matter told The Associated Press, speaking anonymously because they were not authorized to discuss details.

The result was a swift agreement among the nation's leading banks to lay aside competitive instincts to come to First Republic's aid. With Washington greasing the wheels, a coalition of lenders put USD 30 billion in uninsured deposits into the California-based bank as a show of support.

The money gives First Republic a lifeline while it reportedly seeks a buyer. Regulators hope it also bolsters confidence in the health of the broader banking system.

The recent turmoil in the banking industry isn't on par



with the crisis that sparked the Great Recession from 2007 to 2009. But after Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank failed and were seized by the federal government, the industry's over-

seers worried about more dominoes falling.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen discussed the idea of supporting First Republic with other bank regulators the Federal Reserve,

the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. and the Comptroller of the Currency. Together they concluded that some sort of private rescue package was needed to prevent the crisis from worsening. Among the first calls made by Yellen and other policymakers was to Jamie Dimon, the chairman and CEO of JPMorgan Chase & Co. There may have been a sense of d j vu: Back in 2008, Dimon was the go-to banker for Washington to find private solutions for that banking crisis.

We have our marching orders," Dimon reportedly said after the call with Yellen. He then proceeded to build a coalition of banks willing to place deposits with First Republic.

Distant exoplanets could harbour life in 'terminator zones': Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

"Terminator zones" on distant exoplanets, or zones where the "day" side of the planet meets the "night" side, could potentially harbour extraterrestrial life, according to a new study.

Astronomers from University of California, Irvine (UCI), US, describe "terminator" as the dividing line between the day and night sides of the planet, which have one side that always faces its star and one side that is always dark.

Terminator zones could exist in that "just right" temperature zone between too hot and too cold, they said in the study.



"These planets have a permanent day side and a permanent night side," said Ana Lobo, a postdoctor-

al researcher in the UCI Department of Physics & Astronomy who led the new work

published in The Astrophysical Journal.

Lobo added that such planets are particularly common because they exist around stars that make up about 70 per cent of the stars seen in the night sky - so-called M-dwarf stars, which are relatively dimmer than our Sun.

"You want a planet that's in the sweet spot of just the right temperature for having liquid water," said Lobo, because liquid water, as far as scientists know, is an essential ingredient for life.

"This is a planet where the day side can be scorching hot, well beyond habitability, and the night side is going to be freezing, poten-

tially covered in ice. You could have large glaciers on the night side," Lobo said.

According to the study, Lobo alongside Aomawa Shields, UCI associate professor of physics & astronomy, modelled the climate of terminator planets using software typically used to model our own planet's climate, but with a few adjustments, including slowing down planetary rotation.

One key to the finding, Lobo added, was pinpointing exactly what kind of terminator zone planet can retain liquid water.

If the planet is mostly covered in water, then the water facing the star, the team found, would likely evap-

orate and cover the entire planet in a thick layer of vapour.

But if there's land, this effect shouldn't occur.

"Ana has shown if there's a lot of land on the planet, the scenario we call 'terminator habitability' can exist a lot more easily," said Shields.

"These new and exotic habitability states our team is uncovering are no longer the stuff of science fiction - Ana has done the work to show that such states can be climatically stable," said Shields.

The study believes it is the first time astronomers have been able to show that such planets can sustain habitable climates confined to this terminator region.

Historically, researchers have mostly studied ocean-covered exoplanets in their search for candidates for habitability.

However, this study could increase the options life-hunting astronomers have to choose from. "We are trying to draw attention to more water-limited planets, which despite not having widespread oceans, could have lakes or other smaller bodies of liquid water, and these climates could actually be very promising," Lobo said.

"By exploring these exotic climate states, we increase our chances of finding and properly identifying a habitable planet in the near future," said Lobo.