



FM: No direction on loading
RS 2,000
notes in ATMs **P:7**



Aditi Rao Hydari: I walk onto a set and I'm like
A SPONGE



The youth of Telangana are facing more challenges than their counterparts in any other state in the country. Raj Bhavan has youth who are courageous enough to overcome these challenges. Whenever we invite VIPs, we never know whether they will come or not. But today's VIPs, who are Yuva Shakti, accepted my invitation and came in as early as 4:00 pm.

**-Dr Tamilisai Sounderrajan,
TS Governor**

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-SPORTS



NAVEENA GHANATE
HYDERABAD

■ The ED has arrested 12 people in the case, including former Delhi deputy chief minister and AAP leader Manish Sisodia

Pillai, the ED had said, "represented the South Group," an alleged liquor cartel linked to Kavitha and others, that paid kickbacks amounting to about Rs 100 crore to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)


In the 11 hours BRS MLC Kavitha spent at the ED office, she was reportedly asked 14 questions and made to wait for hours. Sources said that there is a conspiracy to give the impression that Kavitha is not cooperating with the ED despite extending full cooperation to the investigation. Even though Kavitha is being called to the ED office reportedly for confrontational interrogation with the accused, she was reportedly not confronted by anyone so far. Inside sources believe that even though the ED could not show any evidence regarding the role of Kavitha, the ED investigated Kavitha only due to political pressure without any evidence. Kavitha clearly informed the ED officials that she hasn't done anything wrong and that this was just a political conspiracy.

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The Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up by the TS government to probe the TSPSC leak pasted a notice on TPCC President Revanth Reddy's residence as he was not available. The SIT notice asked Revanth to come for questioning at 11 am on March 23 and to present the evidence he claimed to have in the TSPSC leak case. Earlier in the day, Revanth said that he will respond only after receiving the notice. He also made it clear that he will not submit the evidence he has to the SIT but will submit it if the government appoints a High Court Judge to probe the case. He made it clear that there is no need to fear the SIT's notices. Revanth said that the entire paper leak episode happened through IT Minister KT Ramasao's office and that KTR's role was clear in the TSPSC leak case. Rajasekhara Reddy, who is A-2 in the paper leakage case, - PAGE



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The High Court posted the hearing on the TSPSC question paper leakage to March 21, that is, Tuesday. NSUI State President Balmoor Venkat Narasimha Rao requested the HC to postpone the case to Tuesday. Venkat's lawyer Karunakar told the HC that Congress Legal Cell President Vivek Dhanka who is also a Supreme Court lawyer will argue the case for the NSUI president. Accepting the appeal of the NSUI President's lawyer, the High Court posted the case to Tuesday. NSUI State President Balmoor Venkat Narasimha Rao filed a petition in the High Court requesting the HC to order the TS government to get the TSPSC leak case probed by the CBI. The NSUI stated in its petition that there is no possibility of the State government appointed SIT probing the case impartially as biwangs in the government are involved in the case. - PAGE 2-

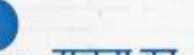
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The BRS says that Reliance is the

Responding to KTR's tweet Sanjay said, "The BRS is a party of bald-faced liars. People will not

believe anything that Twitter Tillu (KTR) says as KCR is not reducing VAT. Telangana people are forced to pay one of the highest prices for petrol in India, that is, Rs 109.66 per litre which is outright loot. In BJP-ruled UP petrol costs just Rs 96.57 a litre. He said that VAT in TS on petrol is 35.2% but in UP it is 26.8%. The VAT in TS on diesel is 27%, but in UP it is 17.48%.”

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सूचना का
अधिकार
RIGHT TO
INFORMATION

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The bench, also comprising Justices P S Narasimha and J E Pardiwala, was apprised that the high courts of Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha have already set up web portals for the purpose

Regarding the district judiciary which is under the administrative control of the high courts, the bench asked the registrar general of high courts to take administrative directions from the chief justice.

PNS ■ **BERLIN**

"Humanity is on thin ice and that ice is melting fast," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said. "Our world needs climate action on all fronts everything, everywhere, all at once."

Our world needs climate
action on all fronts everything,
everywhere, all at once

He urged carbon-free electricity generation in the developed world by 2035, meaning no gas-fired power plants too.

After contentious debate, the 11-member science panel calculated and reported that to stay under the warming limit set in Paris the world needs to cut 60% of its greenhouse gas emis-

"The choices and actions implemented in this decade will have impacts for thousands of years," the report, said calling climate change "a threat to human well-being and

"We are not on the right track but

No growth under governments led by regional parties

The crucial exercise of preparing and presenting the annual budget reflects the priorities of the government, be it at the Centre or in the States. The Modi-led BharatiyaJanata Party government at the Centre announced a series of measures in the Union Budget for 2023-24 to strengthen the nation's economy. The measures include specific steps to increase the capital expenditure to augment the nation's wealth; enhance investments to develop infrastructure as well as amenities in sectors such as railways, transportation, highways and ports. Besides, the Centre had allotted Rs 1 lakh crore loan to the states to encourage them to increase capital expenditure; yet, some of the governments led by regional parties paid no attention to increase the

nation's wealth. Instead, they totally neglected development, while resorting to heavy borrowing amid increasing revenue deficit. The Governments of West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu have announced huge investments in their budgets. Mamata Bannerjee presented Rs 3.39-lakh crore budget for this year. However, she resorted to heavy borrowing as such the total borrowings of West Bengal reached Rs 6.48-lakh crore. The per capita debt on each person in the state is put at Rs 59,000. The total borrowings of the West Bengal constituted 37.05% of the GSDP of the state. Not a single industry could be set up during the Mamata regime. The situation in the states of Kerala, Punjab and Bihar is

The Governments of West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu have announced huge investments in their budgets. Mamata Bannerjee presented Rs 3.39-lakh crore budget for this year. However, she resorted to heavy borrowing as such the total borrowings of West Bengal reached Rs 6.48-lakh crore.

not good. The borrowings crossed 48.5% (Punjab), 37.2% (Kerala) and 38% (Bihar) of the GSDP of the respective states. The Jaganmohan Reddy government in AP has gone a step further. The AP government is disposing of government properties. As publicity gimmick, the state govern-

ment claimed that it had allocated huge amounts for investments in the Rs 2.79-lakh crore annual budget. Of the amount, Rs 1.60-lakh crore would be raised by way of external borrowings, central assistance, and the state's share of taxes devolved by the Centre. The roads in Andhra Pradesh are in a miserable



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

condition because the total allocations made by the Jaganmohan Reddy government, since coming to power, for development of roads and bridges did not exceed 2%. Why would the execution of irrigation projects go slow if the government were to spend funds in tune with the bud-

getary allocations? What is the reason for the failure of the government to pay salaries to its employees every month on time? People are not going to buy the argument of the state government that it had provided employment to over 6.81 lakh persons. The budget is silent on the total borrowings made by the government in spite of the total borrowings crossing Rs 10 lakh crore. The GSDP of the state was put at 11.47%, in spite of it not crossing 7%. The budget wrongly states that the share of the financial services was 35.41%, while the actual share was limited to 24.2%. In February last, the KCR government presented a Rs 2.90-lakh crore budget for 2023-24. In Telangana, the dif-

ference in budgetary allocations and expenditure would be very high as per the revised estimates. Allocation of Rs 40,000 crore more in this budget, compared to the last year's budget, does not mean that development in Telangana is notable. Revenue receipts were predicted to be Rs 2.16 lakh crore, though the actual receipts for the last year in this regard had fallen short of projections. Support to Telangana from the Centre has increased in the form of state's share of central taxes, grants-in-aid; yet, the revenue deficit has been increasing beyond expectations. The debt servicing burden for the next year would be Rs 22,407 crore. Surprisingly, the Government

of Telangana allocated Rs 1,000 crore for publicity, which is 575% more than the allocations made last year. The allocation of funds to this head of account is more compared to the allocations made under Arogyasri. The debt burden in Telangana has crossed Rs 3 lakh crore. During 2014-23, the Centre allocated Rs 1,30,000 crore by way of taxes and Rs 1,39,000 crore by way of grants-in-aid. Under development of basic amenities for railways, the Centre during the current fiscal year allocated Rs 3,048 crore. The upshot is that the heads of governments led by regional parties are interested in improving their personal network rather than developing the state. The Delhi liquor scandal stands as the latest example in this regard.

Court extends Sisodia's judicial custody by 14 days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia's judicial custody was extended till April 3 on Monday by a court here in a case related to the excise policy being probed by the CBI. He is at present in the Enforcement Directorate (ED) custody in a related case.

Special judge M K Nagpal extended the judicial custody of the senior AAP leader in the CBI case after he was produced in the court virtually. His bail plea in the matter will be heard by the court on Tuesday. The ED arrested Sisodia on March 9 evening in the Tihar jail, where he was lodged in connection with the case.

Banks returned Rs 217 crore to SHGs, says Harish Rao

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Over two lakh women's Self-Help Groups in the state have received Rs 217 crore in their bank accounts.

Finance Minister T. Harish Rao conducted the 35th review meeting of the State-Level Bankers Committee (SLBC) on December 23.

He directed officials to decide interest rates for the loans taken by SHGs as per RBI guidelines. He made it clear to the officials to ensure that money collected illegally is paid back with interest.

The RBI gave clear guidelines to bankers on July 20,



2022, on how much interest bankers should charge from Women's Self Help Groups.

The RBI suggested imposing a maximum of 7 per cent interest for loans up to Rs 3 lakh and 10 per cent for a loan of up to Rs 5 lakh or one year's MCLR, whichever is low.

It has come to the notice of Minister Harish that some banks have not taken this rule into consideration and have collected more interest. Sometimes, different branches of the same bank collect different interest rates.

The Minister found out that women in self-help groups were losing money as they have to pay huge rates of interest.

The matter was discussed in the SLBC meeting held on

December 23, 2022. The Minister asked bankers to review once again whether or not they were following RBI guidelines. If they had charged excess interest, they should deposit the same in bank accounts of their clients, Harish said.

After this, the bankers held a review meeting and found that Rs 217.61 crore had been collected additionally from 2,03,535 SHGs. The extra collected by the bankers was deposited into the bank accounts of SHG women on Monday. Around two lakh SHGs benefitted from the directions of Minister Harish Rao.

BRS WANTS CENTRE TO COMPENSATE FOR CROP LOSS Rains destroy crops in 1.50L acres

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

District Collectors have given reports that 80,000 farmers have lost 1.50 lakh acres of crops due to the recent rains.

Rythu Bandhu Samithi President Dr Palla Rajeshwar Reddy, MLAs Gandra Venkataramana Reddy, Sandra Venkata Veeraiah and KP Vivekananda held a press meet on Monday. Dr Rajeshwar Reddy said, "the state has witnessed untimely rains over the past three days. The largest crop of Yasangi in the country is grown in Telangana. We directly examined the crop damage caused by rains as per the CM's orders. In all, 2,603 agricultural clusters are there in the state. We are creating cluster-wise reports. After the final reports, the government will take steps to reas-

sure and support the farmers. The Central government should also send teams to check crop loss. In the past, if there was a crop loss of Rs 7,000 crore, the Centre helped by Rs 250 crore. The Centre is angry with the people of Telangana. That's why they are not responding properly."

He said that the Central crop insurance scheme PM Fasal Bima Yojana is flawed. It is useful for insurance companies but not to the farmers. He said the Centre should bring a new scheme immediately. He lamented that Opposition parties in the state are provoking the unemployed. "When Praveen Kumar was the Secretary of Gurukul, should we say whether our public representatives recommended him for the job? It is not appropriate for Praveen to criticise honest TSPSC

CM KCR to visit rain-hit districts today, tomorrow

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao will visit the districts affected by hailstorms on Tuesday or Wednesday. The CM ordered the concerned district Ministers, the Chief Secretary and the officials of the Agriculture department to get details of the damages caused by hailstorms. The Chief Minister will examine the reports on Tuesday, will take a decision and visit the badly damaged districts.

Chairman Janardhan Reddy for it. Telangana police is a role model for the country.

'Does the SIT have the guts to issue notices to KTR'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Asking SIT whether it has the guts to issue notices to IT Minister KT Ramarao for mentioning his name, BJP State President MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar said the BRS government is conspiring to suppress the opposition and the media.

Sanjay said the SIT is a pocket agency of the BRS and there is no question of submitting evidence to it. He said that there was no need to fear an SIT inquiry. KCR himself is afraid to order a probe by a sitting HC Judge as he knows that facts will come out and that his



son KTR will have to go to jail, he said.

Addressing the media on Monday, Sanjay said that KCR has to order a probe by a sitting HC Judge into the TSPSC leak if his son KTR had not done

anything illegal. "I am ready to submit evidence if a sitting HC Judge probes the case," he said.

Sanjay said that KCR has been issuing notices to the opposition to suppress their voices while letting go of persons responsible for the TSPSC leak. He said there is a conspiracy to suppress the media in the name of attacks and bans and in the name of notices issued to opposition parties.

In the past, people have a history of overthrowing dictators like Hitler and Indira Gandhi. The KCR government will also suffer the same fate, he warned. He said that he came to

know that the SIT issued notices asking to submit evidence.

"KTR accused me of having a hand in the TSPSC leak. If the SIT is committed, does it have the guts to issue a notice to KTR to submit evidence proving his allegations? Does the SIT have the guts to call KTR and question him?" Sanjay asked.

"KCR, who announced in the Assembly that he will not spare his son or daughter if they have broken the law, should serve a notice first to his son before issuing notices to Revanth Reddy and opposition parties," Sanjay said.

Set up online RTI portal within 3...

Continued from page 1

"The high courts will be at liberty to utilise the resources of the National Informatics Centre for the purpose. The NIC shall provide all logistical and technical assistance in that regard to the high courts," the bench said.

"Online facilities will considerably facilitate the fulfilment of the objects of the Act. Though the Act was enacted in October 2005 after a lapse of 17 years, online web portals are still to be operationalised by some of the high courts," it observed.

The bench said a certified copy of its order shall be remitted to all the registrar general who shall, in turn, seek administrative directions from the chief justices of the high courts for implementation.

In the apex court, an RTI online portal was launched in November last year to help people access information about the Supreme Court. Earlier, RTI applications concerning the top court were being filed through post only.

VANDALISM AT INDIAN CONSULATE IN SAN FRANCISCO

India conveys strong protest to America

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Monday lodged a strong protest with the US Charge d'Affaires in Delhi over the incident of vandalism at the Indian consulate general in San Francisco by some pro-Khalistan elements during a protest.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the US government was asked to take appropriate measures to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

"In a meeting with the US Charge d'Affaires in New Delhi, India conveyed its strong protest at the vandalism of the property of the Consulate General of India, San Francisco," the MEA said.

"The US Government was reminded of its basic obligation to protect and secure diplomatic representation. It was asked to take appropriate measures to prevent the recurrence of such incidents," it said.

'Humanity is on...

Continued from page 1

including report authors, told The Associated Press.

After 1.5 degrees "the risks are starting to pile on," said report co-author Francis X. Johnson, a climate, land and policy scientist at the Stockholm Environment Institute. The report mentions "tipping points" around that temperature of species extinction, including coral reefs, irreversible melting of ice sheets and sea level rise on the order of several metres (several yards).

"The window is closing if emissions are not reduced as quickly as possible," Johnson said in an interview.

Amazon to lay off 9,000 employees...

Continued from page 1

The short answer is that not all of the teams were done with their analyses in the late fall; and rather than rush through these assessments without the appropriate diligence, we chose to share these decisions as we've made them so people had the information as soon as possible," Jassy said. (AP)

KTR questions Modi on fuel prices...

Continued from page 1

"The BJP government cut Central Excise duty twice, in May 2022 and in November 2021. This amounts to Rs 13 per litre for petrol and Rs 15 per litre for diesel. This resulted in a loss of Rs 2,200 billion a year to the Centre. Prices of petrol and diesel in India (New Delhi) have declined by 5% and 3.71% respectively between March 2022 and March 2023. These

prices have gone up by 38% and 104.02% in Sri Lanka, 22% and 45.16% in Pakistan, 28% and 20.23% in Bangladesh and 22% and 36.09% in Nepal," Sanjay said in his Tweet.

"The lies manufactured by the BRS cannot conceal the fact that global energy analysts are astonished at the fact that India, despite the fact that 50 lakh LPG cylinders are delivered by OMCs and six crore consumers visits OMC petrol pumps every day,

has managed to ensure affordable energy to 1.4 billion people at a time when its immediate neighbourhood is facing dry-outs and massive price hikes," Sanjay added.

"Inspired by Modi's decisive consumer-welfare gesture, many State Governments reduced VAT EXCEPT Telangana. Instead of trying the old tactic of spreading outright lies, the BRS should cut the VAT in the interests of the public," he said.

SIT asks Revanth to submit evidence...

Continued from page 1

and KTR's PA Tirupati are friends and Tirupati is the person who enabled Rajashekar Reddy to get the TSPSC job. The government transferred Rajashekar Reddy to the TSPSC by giving him a promotion although he was an outsourced employee as per the suggestion of KTR's PA Tirupati. KTR's PA Tirupati played the main role in the TSPSC leak.

Did all this happen without KTR knowledge, Revanth asked, and made it clear that everything happened in KTR's office. He said that KTR is the shadow CM and KTR's PA a shadow Minister.

KTR's PA Tirupati's village is in Kodimayala mandal in Jagtial district and Rajashekar Reddy's village also is in

HC to hear NSUI plea in TSPSC case...

Continued from page 1

Venkat also submitted an affidavit to the HC on Monday requesting it to order a probe into the role of IT Minister KT Ramarao's PA Tirupati in the TSPSC leakage case. Two unemployed youths also filed petitions along with Venkat Narsimha Rao. The HC stated said that it is posting the unemployed youths' petition to Tuesday. In fact, Venkat expressed doubts at 20 people from one district getting more than 100 marks in the Group-I examination. He also expressed doubts about KTR's statement made at a press conference. Venkat said that KTR's statement that only two persons were involved in the TSPSC leakage is intended to mislead the investigation.

Kodimayala mandal. Around 100 persons belonging to this mandal got more than 100 marks, Revanth said. In fact, the SIT has sought details regarding his allegations, he said.

Revanth demanded that the SIT should issue notices to

Ministers KTR, Sabitha Indra Reddy, and TSPSC Chairman Janardhan Reddy.

He said that KCR and KTR are involved in the TSPSC leakage and that the TSTS Chairman is a very close relative of KTR. It is TSTS which maintains computers in all

government departments. The computerization of TSPSC is also being done under KTR's supervision, he said.

Revanth asked the IT Department to conduct a security audit of all TSPSC computers.

He also asked SIT officer AR Srinivas to reveal how Ministers can say that the TSPSC leak took place only through two individuals.

KTR said that only two persons were involved in the leak and another Minister Gangula Kamalakara supported KTR's statement and questioned the need to ask him for evidence.

Revanth said the SIT must issue notices to Ministers also. "KTR and I will meet in High Court if the SIT fails to issue notices to KTR and other ministers," he said.

The "South Group," according to the ED, comprises Sarath Reddy (promoter of Aurobindo Pharma), Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy (YSR Congress MP from Ongole in AP), his son Raghav Magunta, Kavitha and others.

The ED also alleged in Pillai's remand papers that he "represented the proxy investments" of Kavitha in the case. Kavitha was earlier questioned by the CBI in connection with the case at her residence in Hyderabad.

The ED has arrested 12 people in the case, including former Delhi deputy chief minister and AAP leader Manish Sisodia. It has also recorded the statement of Butchibabu, an accountant allegedly linked to Kavitha, in which he said that "there was a political understanding between Kavitha and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and deputy chief minister Sisodia. Kavitha also met Vijay Nair on March 19 and 20, 2021."

Nair was arrested in the case by both the ED and the CBI. Butchibabu was arrested by the CBI and was questioned recently again by the ED.

According to Butchibabu's statement, Nair was "trying to impress Kavitha with what he could do in the excise policy."

"Vijay Nair was acting on behalf of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal

Kavitha puts a brave face...

Continued from page 1

Based on inside happenings, Kavitha said that the ED lacked transparency due to political pressure and it was part of political harassment. Sources said that ED officials made Kavitha wait till the hour of reaching the ED office and mentally harassed her by making them sit in a room for hours. Sources said that there is no transparency in the investigation by ED officials. The ED reportedly didn't have answers for some of the questions put by Kavitha. ED officers reportedly probed her only on political lines. When MLC Kavitha reportedly asked the ED officers whether she was called as an "accused," they couldn't clarify. Sources said that officials who called Kavitha for the investigation did not do arrange any confrontation with anyone and investigated with political malice. Kavitha time and again clarified that she is fully cooperating with the ED investigation. She reportedly asked the ED officials what is the need to investigate her so quickly when her petition is pending with the Supreme Court. Kavitha apparently asked the ED authorities to check her phone, which was seized during the last investigation session. Kavitha who is worried about privacy didn't mince words in asking ED officials as to who told the media that she had destroyed many phones. Kavitha purportedly mentioned about the cases that were not investigated after the concerned politicians joined the BJP. The ED officials reportedly became angry with Kavitha when she mentioned the cases of Himanta Biswa Sharma, Sujana Chowdary and Narayan Rane whose cases were dropped after they joined the BJP.

and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia," the statement recorded by the ED read.

It is alleged that the Delhi government's excise policy for 2021-22 to grant licences to liquor traders allowed cartelisation and favoured certain dealers who had

allegedly paid bribes for it, a charge strongly refuted by the AAP.

The policy was subsequently scrapped and the Delhi Lieutenant Governor recommended a CBI probe, following which the ED registered a case under PMLA.

NEW AGENDA TO MAKE THEM STRONGER

Millet biryani to top list of cops' healthy food

DEEPIKA PASHAM
■ HYDERABAD

The stress factor causing diabetes, hypertension is common in any individual's life. The more such cases being registered is in police professionals. To tackle this, Hyderabad city police has begun supplying millet-based food in police security beat and various other meetings.

There is also a plan for a kitchen in Telangana State Police Integrated Command and Control Centre to cook millets food. Menu includes cuisine made with millets such as biryani, idli, pongal, roti, sweets, ragi ambali, khichidi and curd rice served as breakfast, lunch and dinner.

CV Anand, Commissioner of Hyderabad said, "My 10 years experience with the Hyderabad city police has revealed that the stress of



duties is very high. With all the political and other major events happening in the city, the staff does not get much time to eat proper healthy food and exercise."

"Whatever is available on the roadside or given by the in-charge officers is supplied. Giving biryani is the easiest way to keep everyone happy and over decades, this has got accepted and the officer who gives the best biryani is also the

best human being. But little is realised that biryani is like poison if eaten daily or very regularly. There is so much oil, masala and fat that it is very hard to digest. It gets stored as fat in the pot bellies and leads to diabetes and hypertension faster.

Therefore we are slowly moving to a millet-based diet as it is healthy. It has so many positive effects on health. Though more expensive by

1/3, it is worth the effort and expenditure as more healthy police staff and families, duties will be more effective," he added. Chandana Deepthi, DCP of North Zone, who distributed the millet food for the first time to the cops, said, "The bandabosth for President's visit at Rashtrapati Nilayam was for more than three days and then we introduced millet menu. This included cuisine made with major millets such as biryani, idli, pongal, roti, sweets, ragi ambali, khichidi and curd rice served as breakfast, lunch and dinner. The menu changes every day so that people don't get bored. The supplier is Naya Millets from Vanasthalipuram."

"To monitor the diet change in police health there will be a check up with the Fit Cop Application. Top Priority is food and then focus will be on health of the police."

Mayor inaugurates Flight symbolising women's power

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Mayor Gadwal Vijayalaxmi on March 19 inaugurated the Flight, a commemorative sculpture celebrating women's power.

The sculpture is placed at the junction opposite KBR Park at Jubilee Hills. Pinky Reddy, Hyderabad's well-known philanthropist, Shubhrra Maheshwari, Chairperson, FICCI Ladies Organisation, Hyderabad, were also present on the occasion.

Speaking of the Flight, Gadwal said, "Flight is a fine organisation. I have been associated with it for a long time.

Gradually, I am learning more about their activities. Yet at times, I feel like joining the organization. But, you know, I hardly get time.

Maybe when I leave my office as Mayor, I will contemplate joining the organisation." The mayor and the ladies further said, "The Flight is a representation of a female guardian angel.

WORLD SPARROW DAY

Awareness drive on environment protection, priority to greening

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Forest officials, bird lovers and students enthusiastically celebrated World Sparrow Day at KBR Park on Monday. Principal Chief Conservator Officer of Forests and Head of Forest Forces (PCCF, HOFF) RM Dobriyal said that birds especially sparrows, have continued to be a part of our way of life and it is everyone's responsibility to ensure that they do not become extinct.

He was the chief guest at the World Sparrow Day (March-20) celebrations held at Kasu Brahmananda Reddy National Park (KBR Park). Everyone remembers the days of playing with sparrows as a child, and if those sweet memories are to be passed on to the coming generations, environmental protection should be everyone's duty. He said that Telangana government is giving priority to greening and restoration of forests and good results are being seen and



nature is reviving. Along with raising awareness among schoolchildren, Dobriyal asked walkers associations and voluntary organisations to participate in environmental welfare programmes on a large scale.

The bird lovers who participated in the programme said that due to the actions of the government and the forest department, the forests and environment in Telangana have improved a lot and the migration of animals and bird

species has also increased significantly compared to the past.

Enthusiasts who participated in the KBR Park Bird Walk captured many types of birds on their cameras.

Various programmes such as bird watching, environmental awareness, do's and don'ts in forest areas, distribution of quail nests, drawing for schoolchildren, making slogans and signature campaigns were organised.

COLLEGE OF AIR WARFARE



Warfare, Aerospace strategy drive begins

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

No 2 Warfare and Aerospace Strategy Programme (WASP) course commenced at the College of Air Warfare, Secunderabad, on Monday. The 15-week-long programme is being attended by eight specially selected officers of the Indian Air Force. They will be guided by distinguished thinkers from vari-

ous domains including academia.

The course has been designed to build intellectual capital within the IAF and create a repository of cerebral air power practitioners with nimble critical thinking skills, capable of producing well-researched and cogent arguments and strategies in various domains of statecraft, including air power.

Bar Association to abstain from work today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Following the alleged harassment by Ghatkesar police and a threat to advocate Lamba Satyanarayana, Members of the Bar Association of Ranga Reddy district on Monday conducted an emergency meeting and unanimously decided to abstain from court work on Tuesday (March 21).

The note said members of the Bar Association Ranga Reddy District Court are hereby informed that the executive committee has unanimously resolved in its emergency meeting to abstain from court work on Tuesday in Ranga Reddy District Court Complex while condemning the harassment by police officers of PS Ghatkesar and threat to advocate Lamba Satyanarayana.



Arrange essential facilities for IPL-2023: CP Chauhan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Arrange minimum essentials like drinking water, toilet facilities and necessary parking arrangements to avoid any inconvenience to the audience, said Chauhan, Commissioner of Rachakonda, for IPL-2023.

He held a review meeting with Sunrisers team representatives, Hyderabad Cricket Association Board of Control for Cricket in India representatives and police officials at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Uppal.

The CP ordered the officials to take all necessary security precautions for the matches to be held in Rachakonda Commissionerate. Organising cricket in Rachakonda Commissionerate is a great opportunity and the officials have been instructed to make adequate security arrangements and ensure that no inconvenience is caused to the spectators. The Sunrisers team has been instructed to ensure that there is no confusion in the distribution of tickets.



The CP ordered the officials to take all necessary security precautions for the matches to be held in Rachakonda Commissionerate. Organising cricket in Commissionerate limits is a great opportunity and the officials have been instructed to ensure that no inconvenience is caused to the spectators

Organisers were advised to take due care in issuing passes to media representatives and others. It was suggested to arrange minimum needs like drinking water, toilet facilities and necessary parking arrangements to avoid any inconvenience to the audience. It was suggested to install

CCTVs in the vicinity of the stadium. Everyone's movements will be recorded in CCTV cameras. He said that strict action will be taken against those who sell fake tickets and distribution of tickets will be done in full transparency and no rumours should be believed.

Min Talasani assures help for fire victims

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav has assured that the government will stand by the families of the victims of Qnet Vihaan Direct company who died and will take all possible steps to ensure justice.

The company is running in the Swapnalok complex where there was a fire recently and around 60 people from Warangal, Khammam, Nalgonda, Karimnagar and other districts.

He said that the six people who died in the fire were paid money in QNet. They complained to the minister that their parents had mortgaged their gold and property, believing that they would get a better future.

The minister assured them that they will immediately take appropriate action against QNet administrators and see to it that the money paid will be returned to the company.

The minister expressed regret that six people who had



The minister said that financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh per family announced by the Chief Minister has been sanctioned for the families of the deceased

a great future died in the fire. The minister said that financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh per family announced by the Chief Minister has been sanctioned for the families of the deceased and the assistance will be given to the affected families soon.

MCR HRD Institute holds sports meet for civil service officers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Dr MCR HRD Institute on Monday conducted a sports meet for civil service officers at the Telangana State Special Police Grounds in Yousufguda.

In all, 112 officers participated in the event. Among them were 86 Indian Statistical Service Officers and 26 Indian Economic Service Officers from across the country.

They took part in various competitions including track events of 100 meters, 200 meters, Relay Race 4x100 meters, obstacle race; field events comprising javelin throw, long jump, shot put, discus throw; and indoor games such as chess, carroms, billiards, table tennis, lawn tennis and badminton.

Addressing the officers, Rajiv Trivedi, former DGP/Principal Secretary



(Home) to Government of Telangana, said, "An officer is a role model not only for his family members but also his colleagues at the workplace. If he makes a deliberate attempt to be physically fit, he will be emulated by others and a culture of physical fitness will be created."

Speaking of the event, Benhur Mahesh Dutt Ekka, DG, Dr MCR HRD Institute and Principal Secretary to Government of Telangana said, "The sports meet was organ-

ised not just to celebrate the victories but also to impart lessons on sportsman spirit and promote 'esprit de corps' among the officer trainees.

He urged the participants to find time to participate in sports, despite their busy official engagements, considering the fact that it will go a long way in developing health, character, human bonding, community building and happiness index. "Participation in sports is more important than merely getting medals," he added.



KTR to soon inaugurate LB Nagar RHS flyover

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The construction of the 760-meter-long flyover located on the right hand side of LB Nagar has been completed. It will soon be inaugurated by Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development KT Rama Rao.

The inauguration was halted due to the code of conduct which came into force due to the MLC elections.

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has spent a total of

Rs 32 crore for the flyover construction, including civil works, land acquisition and utility shifting.

With the inauguration of this flyover, commuters will be able to travel without any hassle to Hayathnagar, Vanasthalipuram and other nearby areas via LB Nagar junction.

Out of the 47 works undertaken as part of Strategic Road Development Programme, 32 works were with the funds of the GHMC and have been completed.

Arrangements for Ramzan to be in place at mosques

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Minorities Welfare Minister Koppula Eshwar on Monday urged authorities to make appropriate arrangements for Ramzan.

Addressing a meeting at the DSS Bhavan at Masab Tank, Eshwar asked officials to complete lighting and water works at mosques and to organise iftar till the end of the month and arrange dustbins to collect waste generated following the iftar. These arrangements are being made as per the orders from Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao.

The meeting was attended by Home Minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali, AIMIM MLAs Zafar Hussain, Ahmed Balala,



Telangana minority welfare minister Koppula Eshwar flanked by labour minister Malla Reddy and Home Minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali addresses the meet at DSS Bhavan

Pasha Qadri, Mumtaz, MLC, Syed Aminul Hasan Jafri, Government Advisor AK Khan, Minority Sector Principal Secretary Ahmed Nadeem, Waqf Board

Chairman Masi Ulla Khan, Haj Committee Chairman Mohammed Saleem, City Commissioner of Police CV Anand and officials from various departments.

Yuva Shakthi of Telangana facing many challenges: Guv

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Raj Bhavan was lit up with Yuva Shakthi as the student achievers from major fields have accepted the invitation of Ugadi celebrations, said Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Monday.

"This is the most wonderful day as we thought to give importance to Yuva Shakthi of Telangana. It is a thank you for higher education department as future leaders were sent to the Raj Bhavan," she said.

The speciality of Ugadi festival

is the inclusion of all flavours of sweet, bitter, soar and in life we have to practice the taste of bitterness also apart from sweetness, the Governor said. "The Yuva Shakthi of Telangana will overcome the bitterness and reach sweetness in life. This Ugadi we will find the way because the new state was formed with sacrifice of the youth," she added.

"As Raj Bhavan is filled with youth, my appeal is definitely to the youth of Telangana to face challenges more than any

other state. But, whatever it may be, Telangana youth are courageous to face it and Raj Bhavan is with you in all the challenges, the Governor said.

The Governor asked the students to be associated with social activities being done by Raj Bhavan. "As universities are lacking infrastructure, we are asking the alumni to contribute for the welfare of their universities," she said. Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan honoured 13 people in recognition of their services and achievements in different fields.

CALL TO CONCLUDE ATMEEYA SAMMELANAMS BY APRIL 20

Meet farmers facing problems, says KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtira Samithi Working President KT Rama Rao held a teleconference with MLAs and other public representatives on Monday on Aatmeeya Sammelanams.

He said, "Farmers facing problems due to untimely rains should be approached by the local agricultural officials and public representatives. Go to damaged fields. We need to reach out to the farmer brothers to give them confidence in their current difficult situation.

Apart from this, the MLAs of the party should monitor the programmes which are being carried out by the government at present."

He said, "If the Atmeeya Sammelanams are completed by April 20, we are going to hold a meeting of the party representatives at the constituency level on April 25. These meetings will have 1,000 to 1,500 party representatives in each party representative meeting. On April 27, there will be a flag festival in every village and every ward on the occasion of the foundation day of the party. Party plenary



will be held on April 27. Only representatives invited by the party will attend it," KTR said.

"As per the suggestion of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, focus

should be on strengthening of panchayat raj roads and coordinate to complete the works before the monsoon season."

It was suggested that plans should be prepared to advance all these at a faster pace in the context of the government's special focus on paying the bills of the development programmes undertaken as part of Palle and Pattana Pragathi, along with Employee Guarantee Scheme, wherein wages should be given at the village level. "The payment of bills has been delayed due to the pending Central government funds of Rs 1,300

crore related to employment guarantee for the state government," he said.

KTR said, "Regarding Atmiya Sammelana programmes, he said the party programmes are going on extensively under the leadership of district in-charges. Chief Minister KCR's special message should be read aloud in all gatherings. A special message sent by the Chief Minister should be sent to every worker reminding them of the fact that they have supported the party since the period of the movement and helped to form the government twice."

KCR govt made lives of tribals miserable: Bhatti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana CLP leader Bhatti Vikarmarka condemned the BRS government for completely neglecting development, especially in rural and tribal areas.

On Monday Bhatti visited remote villages in Asifabad in Adilabad district. Bhatti covered Jangaon, Ushegaon, Pochamaluddi, Jainoor, Powerguda and Jamni villages in the Jainoor Mandal of the Asifabad constituency walking 22 km.

In Jangaon, he visited the Adivasi Oja Girijan handicraft centre. The workers there told Bhatti that they are not paid even Rs 100 a day.

Bhatti was given a warm welcome in Ushegaon village. Women came on to the road to welcome the padayatra. They complained that their grievances were ignored by the BRS.



CLP leader Bhatti Vikarmarka interacting with people in Adilabad district on Monday

The tribals told Bhatti that they do not have safe drinking water or houses.

They said they are being deprived of their rights over Podu lands and are not allowed to enter forests. Officials are asking for a bribe of Rs 4,000 even to change the name in an inherited land document.

Mission Bhagirath tanks

were constructed only to generate huge bills, but they were not connected to taps, they said.

They complained that officials were not allowing them to construct a small dais during marriages and are imposing fines.

Villagers in Gondugudem cried narrating their sufferings. They said that they did

not receive money for NREGS work.

The teachers of Kasturba Gandhi Girls Vidyalaya in Pocham village shared their problems with Bhatti.

Dalit Rights Action Samithi District Committee President Jadhav broke into tears narrating the problems of Dalits and said they do not get any welfare scheme benefits.

The villagers were overwhelmed at seeing Bhatti. Tribal women joined his padayatra singing 'Rela Rela Re'.

Bhatti said that KCR's claim of Telangana becoming a rich State was nothing but a lie. The NREGS is not being implemented and the dues of workers remained unpaid.

Bhatti said that not even a single promise given to tribals, including 12% reservation, was fulfilled.

Minister reviews arrangements for Sri Rama Navami

PNS ■ BHADRACHALAM

Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar has directed government officials to take all measures to avoid any inconvenience to devotees thronging Bhadrachalam for Srirama Navami celebrations to be held on March 30 and 31.

Reviewing the arrangements for Sri Rama Navami at the sub-collector's office here on Monday, he asked the officials to open 19 counters to sell Prasadam and 70 counters to sell Talambralu.

In all, 400 buses would be pressed into service to the temple town of Bhadrachalam from Telugu states.

Government whip Rega Kantarao, MLC Tata Madhu, ZP Chairman Koram Kanakaiah, District Collector Anudeep and SP Dr Vineet were present.

Payment delay worries paddy farmers in district

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALAPALLY

Farmers in the district are still waiting for payment even though two months lapsed since they sold their paddy at procurement centres. The farmers are a worried lot.

District Collector Bhavesh Mishra ordered an inquiry into the delay in payment for the paddy sold at the procurements centres. The Collector ordered the inquiry after Kataram Mandal Praja Parishad president Pantakani Sammaiah raised the issue in the general body meeting of the Zilla Parishad on March 14.

The online websites to record the procurement of paddy and payment details to farmers stopped working. The District Supply Officer, who went on leave for one month, has not yet resumed duty.

Because of the alarming situation prevailing in some parts of the district, the Collector directed the officials of the Agriculture Department to col-



Farmers pouring out their woes to district Collector Bhavesh Mishra in Bhupalapally on Monday

lect the details of the farmers who were not paid for their produce though they sold the paddy at the procurement centre. The farmers should have been paid within two days of paddy procurement.

The farmers registered their protest over the delay in payment for the paddy they sold at the procurements by blocking the Kataram-Warangal highway recently. Apart from it, the farmers approached the Collector and poured out their woes.

According to official sources,

the farmers sold 6,000 quintals of paddy at procurement centres in Lakshmipuram, Mallaram and Vilasagar villages under Kataram mandal during Vanakalam (kharif) season. The farmers are yet to get dues amounting to Rs 1.20 crore.

Though the government already deposited the money into the bank accounts of farmers for the paddy procured in almost mandals, the farmers in Lakshmipuram, Mallaram and Vilassagar were denied payment.

Siddipet stands as a model city for others: Harish Rao

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Siddipet will stand as a model city for other cities and towns, said Minister for Finance T Harish Rao on Monday. He reviewed the developmental activities with the civic body officials through video conference.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the Siddipet town won 20 awards and stood as a role model for other towns and cities. The town has become an agricultural and industrial hub. It would show the way forward on development, he said. He stressed the need to further develop the town. He thanked the people for extending their cooperation in developing the town.

Harish Rao exhorted the officials and the people's representatives to work in coordination for the development of the Siddipet town and the



district.

He directed the officials to monitor the movements of garbage transport vehicles through closed-circuit TV cameras. He asked the officials to ensure that the mixed waste of dry and wet garbage is not dumped in Resource Park at Bussapur. The bio-enriched organic plant was already launched in the district, he said.

Unable to bear harassment, girl commits suicide

PNS ■ MANCHERIAL

A 22-year-old woman Yembadi Saishma committed suicide at Kotha Mamidipally village under Dandepally mandal in the district after being pressurised to accept a proposal made by a youth, identified as Nalimela Vinay. The woman died on Monday.

According to police, the youth used to harass Saishma by pressuring her to love him or die by suicide. He threatened to kill her if she dared to marry another man.

Saishma's parents decided to marry her off to a youth from Srirampur. But Vinay did not leave the woman alone. Unable to bear the pressure exerted on her, she consumed pesticides. She was admitted to the NIMS in Hyderabad where she died on Monday.

Internal bickerings in dist Congress surface

PNS ■ KAMAREDDY

Internal bickerings surfaced in Kamareddy district with TPCC vice-president Kalakuntla Madan Mohan Reddy objecting to former minister Mohammed Ali Shabbir trying to influence the party leadership in the selection of candidates in the next Assembly elections.

Joining the issue with Shabbir over his recommendation that Subhash Reddy be fielded as the Congress candidate from the Yellareddy constituency, Madan Mohan Reddy asked, "who is he (Shabbir Ali) to make recommendations." Shabbir Ali was even a TPCC member and then how can he interfere in the selection of candidates for either the Yellareddy or Kamareddy



TPCC vice-president Kalakuntla Madan Mohan Reddy speaking to the media in Kamareddy on Monday

constituencies?

Addressing a media conference, the TPCC vice-president recalled that AICC leader Rahul Gandhi at the Warangal meeting made it clear that only Congress workers, who strived for the success of the party, would be given tickets in the next Assembly elections. As

Shabbir Ali lost elections seven times, he lost eligibility to contest elections. The Congress has a policy not to give ticket to ticket to those who lost elections more than three times, he said. Madan Mohan Reddy expressed hope that the AICC would field him from the Yellareddy constituency.

Prehistoric stone tool found at Buddhavanam

PNS ■ NAGARJUNASAGAR

A prehistoric pebble stone tool was found at Buddhavanam, the Buddhist Heritage Theme park, developed by Telangana government at Nagarjunasagar on Monday.

The tool called 'chopper' belonging to the Acheulean industry in archaeological terms was picked up during the exploration conducted to create a track for walking and cycling on the peripheral edge of Buddhavanam along the river side under the guidance of Mallepalli Laxmaiah, Special Officer, Buddhavanam.

E Sivanagireddy, archaeologist and Buddhist Expert Consultant, Buddhavanam, who spotted and picked up the tool said that it belonged to a period between 2.5 to 1.5 million years which clearly revealed that the



Buddhavanam campus and the surroundings served as a habitation to prehistoric man.

Similar tools were recovered from Nagarjunakonda and Yeleswaram excavations conducted between 1954 and 1964 added Sivanagireddy. Ven.Aruno Bhikkhu an Indian-Thai monk, K Sudhanreddy, OSD, and D R Shyamsundar Rao, designs in-charge, Buddhavanam, participated in the exploration.

T-Hub to help boost Bihar's start-up ecosystem

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The T-Hub, signed an MoU with the CIMP Business Incubation and Innovation Foundation (CIMP-BIIF) on Monday. The CIMP-BIIF manages the B-Hub in collaboration with the Bihar Department of Industries.

The MoU was signed to synergize and boost the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Bihar.

The T-Hub team paid a two-day visit to attend a business conclave hosted by the Chandragupt Institute of Management Patna (CIMP).

The visit led to a series of events, including a student face-to-face interaction session, an entrepreneur session with incubated start-ups at the B-hub, a management session with faculty and staff members at CIMP and CMP BIIF, and an official MoU signing ceremony.

Wg. Cdr. Anish Anthony



(Retd) (Chief Delivery Officer, T-hub) and Saurabh Nitnaware (Manager, Govt. Innovation programmes, T-Hub) were present at the MoU signing ceremony, alongside Prof. (Dr) Rana Singh, Director CIMP, Kumod Kumar (Chief Administrative Officer, CIMP), Prof. (Dr) Rajeev Verma, and other faculty members and staffers of CIMP-BIIF. Speaking on the occasion, Wg. Cdr. Anish Anthony said, "We are happy

to partner with CIMP-BIIF in Bihar to boost the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Through this strategic collaboration, we aim to share our expertise to help build a vibrant start-up ecosystem in Bihar, creating opportunities for youth, and fostering innovation and growth.

"He also congratulated both teams and shared insights into T-Hub's journey towards becoming the world's largest and India's best innovation and incubation ecosystem.



Mahabubnagar Collector G Ravi Nayak receiving petitions from people at Prajavani programme in Mahabubnagar on Monday

Officials told to resolve Prajavani petitions promptly

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

District Collector G Ravi Naik on Monday received representations from people during Prajavani and took steps to resolve them. He also spoke to Tahsildars and MPDOs through video conference and gave directions for the redressal of complaints at the mandal level. He asked the officials not to delay the disposal of the representations.

He directed the district offi-

cials concerned and asked them to take steps to resolve the representatives received for resolution of problems at the district level.

The majority of the complaints highlighted personal problems, land issues, employment opportunities and other issues. Revenue Divisional Officer Anil Kumar, Special Collector Padmasri, DRDO Yadaiah, and district officials received representations from people.

KCR's political line gets support at the national level

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

BRS President Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's political line is finally drawing support at the national level.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav have also endorsed KCR's policy of maintaining equidistance from the BJP and the Congress.

Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav has decided to break his party's decades-long ties with the Congress. Mamata has also taken a firm decision to maintain equidistance from the BJP and the Congress like KCR. Delhi Chief Minister Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Chief Arvind Kejriwal also follow the same policy.

The decision of NCP Chief Sharad Pawar, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) is crucial in forging a third front. At present these parties are sailing with the Congress.

Meanwhile, if a third front is set up by these parties it will be better than contesting as part of an alliance.

In the north, this may help the Trinamool Congress, the NCP, the RJD, the Samajwadi Party and the AAP as they have a presence in more than one state. But in the south, particularly in Telangana, the third front will not have any impact on the BRS as these parties do not have a presence in Telangana.

But the national leaders of these parties may join in the campaign for the BRS in Telangana which may help the BRS. In the north, the BRS has no existence and the third

front will help KCR to campaign for those parties.

As things stand if a third front is formed the BRS, the TMC, the AAP and the Samajwadi Party will join it. In the south one of the strongest regional parties, the DMK, which is in power in Tamil Nadu, will continue its ties with the Congress as it is not ready to break its alliance with the Congress.

In the north, the NCP, the RJD, the Janata Dal (United) and the Shiva Sena have strong ties with the Congress and these parties think that without the Congress it will not be possible to forge a front to fight the BJP.

Unless there is a strong commitment among opposition parties to defeat the BJP by joining hands setting aside political differences the formation of a third front is certain.

YSRCP, TDP MLAs come to blows

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Assembly plunged into pandemonium as YSRCP and Opposition MLAs came to blows on Monday. It all began with TDP members staging a protest seeking revocation of GO No. 1. They moved into the well of the House and the situation went out of control after they surrounded the Speaker holding placards and hurling pieces of agenda papers at him. In the melee, YSRCP MLA TJR Sudhakar Babu was injured. With TDP legislators covering Speaker Tammineni Sitaram's face with placards, YSRC MLAs went to his rescue by rushing to the podium. However, marshals entered the scene and brought the situation under control. Later, the Speaker suspended the TDP members for a day.

As usual, on Monday too, the House proceedings began at 9 am with the Question Hour.

The TDP MLA stood in their allo-

cated seats and demanded an adjournment motion on GO No. 1. However, the Speaker did not concede the demand of the opposition members. However, the TDP members repeatedly continued their protests, disrupting the House proceedings.

After some time, the TDP members moved towards the podium raising slogans, tearing the agenda papers, and throwing them over the Speaker.

TDP MLA Dola Veerajaneya Swamy and two other legislators moved toward the Speaker's Chair and raised slogans and even tried to attack him with placards.

Fearing that the TDP members might attack the Speaker, YSRCP member Sudhakar Babu rushed to the podium resulting in a brawl with the Opposition members, resulting in an injury to Sudhakar. A few more treasury members rushed to the podium and the marshals had to

bring the situation under control.

The marshals sent the TDP MLAs back to their seats on the instructions of the Speaker. The TDP members protested by squatting on the floor while a few stood at their seats, creating obstacles to the House proceedings.

The ruling party members requested the Speaker to keep the House in order time and again. With no other option left, the Speaker suspended the TDP members. As TDP MLA Veerajaneya Swamy was reluctant, the marshals took him out of the House while other TDP members moved out as the marshals moved toward them.

Later, the YSRCP members insisted that the TDP MLAs be suspended for the rest of the Assembly sessions for the smooth function of the house for the remaining three days. They termed it a 'Black Day for Democracy' and sought stringent action against the perpetrators.

Revantth for compensation to farmers

PNS ■ KAMAREDDY

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president A Revantth Reddy has expressed concern over the severe loss caused to farmers due to unseasonal rains and hailstorms. He accused Banswada MLA Pocharam Srinivas Reddy and his sons of failing to come to the rescue of farmers.

He interacted with farmers in Sunkuni village of Potangal mandal of the constituency here on Monday. Revantth Reddy said that the Union government's Fasal Bima Scheme is not being implemented.

He demanded that the State government come to the rescue of the farmers by paying Rs 15,000 per acre towards compensation for the crop loss.

He said that the standing



TPCC president A Revantth Reddy interacting with farmers in Potangal mandal in Kamareddy district

crops in 5 lakh acres were damaged due to unseasonal rains. Crops, including mango and maize, bore the brunt.

He appealed to Agriculture and Revenue officials to furnish a report to the government on damage to crops and see to it that the farmers

receive compensation for the loss.

He recalled how the erstwhile Congress regime extended compensation to farmers when rains damaged standing crops and accused the BRD government of not giving seeds, fertilisers and subsidized farm equipment to

the farmers. While the KCR government was cruel towards the farmers, the then Congress regime in united AP had extended compensation of Rs 40,000 per acre when such incidents took place.

He charged the BRS government with watering down the crop insurance scheme. This has been causing losses to farmers. Crops in 8000 acres of land in a single mandal of Banswada constituency got damaged in 2021.

But, no compensation was paid to farmers for over 15 months. He alleged that Srinivas Reddy and his son were looting the people in the constituency.

The BJP MPs and Union Minister Kishan Reddy were reduced to processional deities and failed to impress upon the Centre to announce relief to farmers.

INDIA CORNER

Delhi man falls prey to obscene video call, loses 1.5 lakh in extortion

A 44-year-old man from Central Delhi has become the latest victim of cybercrime wherein fraudsters make obscene video calls and encourage the call receiver to indulge in similar acts. The fraudsters record the act and later demand money under the threat to defame the person by uploading the video on social media, police said on Monday, adding in such cybercrime, the scammers use pre-recorded obscene videos to dupe people. The latest case came to light when the man, who has been a priest at a temple for the past several years, informed the cyber police about it. "I received a video call from a nude girl. She encouraged me to undress and I did the same. Soon, I realised my mistake and disconnected the call," he said in his complaint to police. According to police, the caller recorded his nude video and sent it to him on his WhatsApp number demanding money for not making it public.



Remarks on PM: C transfers 3 FIRs against Pawan Khera to Lucknow

The Supreme Court Monday clubbed three FIRs lodged against Congress leader Pawan Khera for allegedly making objectionable remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and transferred them to the Hazratganj police station in Uttar Pradesh's Lucknow. Extending the interim bail till April 10, a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala took note of the facts that three FIRs were lodged against Khera. Out of the three FIRs, two were lodged at the Cantonment police station in Varanasi and the Hazratganj police station in Lucknow. The third FIR was lodged in Assam. The apex court bench directed that the three FIRs stand transferred to Hazratganj police station in Lucknow. Khera, whose interim bail was extended till April 10, will have to appear before the court of competent jurisdiction in Lucknow to seek regular bail in the matter. The apex court, from time to time, had been extending the interim bail of Khera.



Maoist leader carrying Rs 5 lakh reward on head surrenders in Jharkhand

A sub-zonal commander of the banned Maoist outfit Tritiya Sammelan Prastuti Committee (TSPC), who is carrying a bounty of Rs 5 lakh on his head, surrendered before the security forces in Jharkhad's Latehar district on Monday, police said. Dasrath Oraon alias Roshan Ji, who was wanted in 60 cases related to Maoist attacks, surrendered in presence of Inspector General (Palamu) Rajkumar Lakra, Latehar Superintendent of Police Anjani Anjan and CRPF commandant KD Joshi at the SP's office here. "These 60 cases were lodged in police stations of Balumath, Latehar, Chandwa, Herhani, Manika, Tandwa and Kunda," Lakra said. After the surrender, Oraon told media persons that he was associated with activities of the CPI(Maoist) and the TSPC for the past 19 years. "I was with the CPI(Maoist) till 2016 and then shifted to the TSPC. The government's surrender policy attracted me to surrender."



India, Japan resolve to boost cooperation in Indo-Pacific

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India-Japan global partnership is based on shared democratic values and respect for the rule of law and promotes peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday after holding wide-ranging talks with his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida.

The two prime ministers largely focused on significantly boosting cooperation in areas of clean energy, semiconductors and co-development of military hardware besides exploring ways to deal with regional security challenges amidst the increasing assertiveness of China.

During the talks, Modi conveyed to Kishida that one of the areas of very strong cooperation between India and Japan could be co-innovation, co-design co-creation in the defence manufacturing sector, officials said. Modi and Kishida also vowed to work together to deal with



pressing global challenges under India's presidency of the G20 and Japan's chairship of the G7 grouping.

Kishida, who was in India for just about 27 hours, said he invited Modi to the G-7 summit in Hiroshima in May, and the offer was immediately accepted.

On the sidelines of the talks, a note was exchanged between the two sides concerning the provision of the fourth tranche of a Japanese loan of up to 300 billion yen (around Rs 18,000 crore) for the Mumbai-

Ahmedabad high-speed rail.

"The India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership is based on our shared democratic values, and respect for the rule of law in the international arena," Modi said in his media statement.

"Strengthening this partnership is not only important for both our countries, but it also promotes peace, prosperity and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

In our conversation today, we have reviewed the progress

made in our bilateral relations," he added.

The Japanese prime minister arrived in Delhi this morning on a brief visit amid global geopolitical turmoil over the Ukraine conflict and increasing concerns over China's aggressive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific.

Modi said he and Kishida exchanged views on defence equipment and technology collaboration, trade, health, and digital partnership.

There was also a fruitful discussion on the importance of reliable supply chains in semiconductors and other critical technologies, he said.

"Last year, we had set a target of Japanese investment of 5 trillion yen in India in the next 5 years, that is, Rs 3,20,000 crore rupees. It is a matter of satisfaction that there has been good progress in this direction," Modi said.

Modi said "fast" progress is being made on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail project.

MHA recommends CBI probe against NGO Aman Biradari

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has recommended a CBI inquiry against Aman Biradari, an NGO established by writer and human rights activist Harsh Mander, for alleged violation of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, officials said on Monday.

Mander, who was a member of the Sonia Gandhi-led National Advisory Council during the erstwhile UPA government, founded Aman Biradari -- "a people's campaign for a secular, peaceful, just and humane world".

Official said a CBI inquiry has been recommended against Aman Biradari for violation of various provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act. All NGOs receiving foreign funding have to mandatorily register with the Home Ministry under the FCRA.

According to Mander's website (<https://harshmander.in>), he is the "founder of Aman Biradari, a people's campaign for a secular, peaceful, just and humane world, established after the Gujarat communal carnage of 2002".

DELAY IN HC JUDGES' APPOINTMENT

Fix all bottlenecks: Parl panel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Parliamentary panel has asked the government to "fix all bottlenecks" responsible for delays in the appointment of high court judges, saying the vacancies must be filled with the same zeal as shown in the appointment of Supreme Court judges.

An apex court bench had recently expressed concern over delay in appointment and transfer of HC judges.

Last week, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju had asserted that it is the bounden duty of the government to carry out due diligence on the names recommended by the collegium. "Otherwise I'll be sitting there as a post master," he had said.

In its report on the demands for grants of the Department of Justice in the Law Ministry, the standing committee on personnel and law also observed that the government and the Supreme Court have failed to reach a consensus on revision of the Memorandum of Procedure (MOP) for appointment of judges to the



apex court and the high courts, "though the same is under consideration of both for about seven years now".

The MoP is a set of documents which guide the appointment, transfer and elevation of SC and HC judges.

The panel headed by BJP's Sushil Kumar Modi pointed out that as on December 31, 2022, vacancies in the high courts stood at 30 per cent of the total strength of 1,108.

"Six high courts have vacancies of 40 per cent and above and another six have vacancies in the range of 30 to 40 per cent. Though the situation has improved over the last year, the

vacancies at the high court level are quite significant," it observed.

In smaller states such as Manipur and Tripura where the bench strength is small, high levels of vacancies leads divisional benches not being constituted for want of judges "and if there is some retirement or elevation or transfers, the working of such high courts are brought to a standstill," it observed.

"Accordingly, the Committee recommends the Department of Justice to fix all the bottlenecks responsible for delays in the appointment of Judges at the High Court.

RUNS IN INDIA'S DNA: TN GOVERNOR

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam not a political slogan

PNS ■ COIMBATORE

The theme of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (World Is One Family) is apt for India's presidency of G20 as it has been following the concept for ages,

Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi said on Monday.

Addressing the 'G20 Young Ambassador Summit 2023' at Sri Krishna College of Engineering and Technology here as the chief guest of the programme, Ravi said the theme of the yearlong presidency of the grouping envisages "one earth, one family and one future".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not see India in different geographies, but as one family as the various welfare schemes being implemented in the last nine years, including the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme, were meant for all and not for any particular religion and caste, he pointed out. Contending that over the last 70 years, policies and schemes were shaped following the legacy of the British Raj, the Governor said that since Modi came to power, the Centre has rolled out programmes for the develop-



ment of the entire nation.

He cited data stating that only 500 startups had been set up prior to 2014, and that the count has now gone up to over one lakh startups in the last nine years.

"India's way of seeing the country as one family will be invaluable in its G20 Presidency," Ravi said, adding the maxim of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' is not a political slogan but a concept running in India's DNA.

He said affluent Western nations developed vaccines for Covid-19 and adopted "vaccine nationalism" but India realised the needs of different countries and manufactured vaccines considering the entire world as one family. Ravi exhorted the youth to create the space given at the G20 summit for contributing to the future and asked the delegates to create a network and interact periodically to enhance their career prospects.

The Governor urged them to come up with recommendations that can fulfil their dreams and present it before G20, and influence the leaders of the grouping to bring to fruition the proposals.

Rahul promises unemployment aid; to fill 2.5 L govt jobs

PNS ■ BELAGAVI (K'TAKA)

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday called on party leaders in poll-bound Karnataka to fight the BJP in a united manner as he exuded confidence about "sweeping" the upcoming assembly elections.

The party also vowed the youth with promises of unemployment allowance -- its fourth poll 'guarantee' -- and filling up of vacancies in government jobs, in the event of the party coming to power in the State, where Assembly elections are due by May. While thanking people of Karnataka for supporting his 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' and making it successful, Gandhi took a dig at the BJP-led government at the Centre.



"The Yatra sent out a message that this country belongs to everyone, not just to select two to three, not Adaniji's (industrialist Gautam Adani). This country belongs to farmers, labourers, the poor and youth," the Wayanad MP said. He dubbed the Basavaraj Bommai-led BJP government in Karnataka as "most corrupt in the country" and

a "40 per cent commission government". "We will fight the election together. All Congress leaders will fight together. Congress will sweep this election, because the BJP government is a 40 per cent commission government, and the people of Karnataka want to get rid of this government."

They want a government that will work for poor, downtrodden, middle class, small traders," Gandhi said. Taking into account the message of the youth that they are not getting jobs, the Congress has decided to give Rs 3,000 per month to every graduate, and Rs 1,500 per month to every diploma holder, for two years as unemployment allowance, he said.

‘Amritpal maintains close links with ISI’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pro-Khalistan supporter and radical preacher Amritpal Singh, who is on the run following a massive crackdown on his outfit 'Waris Punjab De', has allegedly been maintaining close links with drug peddlers and Pakistan's ISI to further his goal for a separate country for the Sikhs, officials said.

While drug lords were allegedly helping the pro-Khalistan preacher financially, including gifting him a high-end

Mercedes SUV, the ISI was helping him with arms, ammunition and other logistics, they said. At the time when police was chasing Singh, he was travelling in a Mercedes SUV, allegedly gifted by Ravel Singh, who is accused of peddling drugs, they said. This is the same SUV from whose sunroof he used to wave people and his supporters.

On Saturday, when police was trying to apprehend the radical preacher, he had abandoned the SUV to evade the police and rode a bike and fled the scene.



Stop arresting ‘innocent’ Sikh youths: SGPC

PNS ■ AMRITSAR

Against radical preacher Amritpal Singh and his associates, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) on Monday asked the Punjab government to stop arresting "innocent" Sikh youths.

BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY NGOs upset over SC ruling, seek compensation for victims

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Voluntary organisations fighting for the victims of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy have expressed displeasure over the Supreme Court's dismissal of the Centre's curative plea seeking an additional Rs 7,844 crore from the Union Carbide Corporation's (UCC) successor firms and demanded that the government compensate them adequately.

The apex court last week

dismissed the Centre's curative plea seeking an additional Rs 7,844 crore from the UCC's successor firms to extend higher compensation to the victims of the gas tragedy that killed more than 3,000 people, maimed thousands of others, and caused environmental damage. The non-governmental organizations (NGOs) representing the victims are also mulling filing claims of the second generation of survivors in competent courts.

Exit permit to US citizen after she pays full course fee: HC

PNS ■ BENGALURU

A US citizen who approached the High Court of Karnataka seeking a direction to the Union Government and Bureau of Immigration to issue her an exit permit has been ordered to pay the full fee of her MBBS course.

Coming to India on a tourist visa as a child, she had completed her education throughout claiming to be an Indian citizen. It was only when she sought an exit permit from India that it came to light that she was an US citizen on an unauthorised stay in India.

"The petitioner has shamelessly resorted to falsehood and achieved her goals by unethical means as indicated hereinabove. Curious enough, the petitioner is not even wanting to pursue her career in this country, having secured benefits throughout her career contending that she is an Indian," Justice M Nagaprasanna said in his judgment recently. The Court allowed the issuance of an exit permit to her subject to her paying the course fee applicable to a NRI/Overseas citizen of India.

‘Underactive response may explain Covid in obese’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

People who are obese may be more susceptible to severe COVID-19 because of a poorer inflammatory immune response, according to a study.

The research, published in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, found that following SARS-CoV-2 infection, cells in the lining of the lungs, nasal cells, and immune cells in the blood show a blunted inflammatory response in obese patients, producing suboptimal levels of molecules needed to fight the infection.

While some people have very mild -- or even no -- symptoms due to COVID-19, others have much more severe symptoms, including acute res-

piratory distress syndrome requiring ventilator support.

One of the major risk factors for severe COVID-19 is obesity, which is defined as a body mass index (BMI) of over 30, the researchers said.

While this link has been shown in numerous epidemiological studies, until now, it has not been clear why obesity should increase an individual's risk of severe COVID-19.

"During the pandemic, the majority of younger patients I saw on the COVID wards were obese," said Professor Menna Clatworthy, a clinician scientist at the University of Cambridge, UK. "Given what we know about obesity, if you'd asked me why this was the case, I would have said that it was most likely due to excessive inflam-



mation. What we found was the absolute opposite," Clatworthy said.

The team analysed blood and lung samples taken from 13 obese patients with severe COVID-19 requiring mechanical ventilation and intensive care treatment, and 20 controls. The researchers used a tech-

nique known as transcriptomics, which looks at RNA molecules produced by our genetic material, DNA, to study activity of cells in these key tissues. Contrary to expectations, they found that the obese patients had underactive immune and inflammatory responses in their lungs.

In particular, when compared to non-obese patients, cells in the lining of their lungs and some of their immune cells had lower levels of activity among genes responsible for the production of two molecules known as interferons (INF) interferon-alpha and interferon-gamma which help control the response of the immune system.

The researchers also found lower levels of tumour necrosis factor (TNF), which causes inflammation.

When they looked at immune cells in the blood of 42 adults from an independent group, they found a similar, but less marked, reduction in the activity of interferon-producing genes as well as lower levels of IFN-alpha in the blood.

"This was really surprising and unexpected. Across every cell type we looked at, we found that that the genes responsible for the classical antiviral response were less active. They were completely muted," Clatworthy said.

The team was able to replicate its findings in nasal immune cells taken from obese children with COVID-19, where they again found lower levels of activity among the genes that produce IFN-alpha and IFN-gamma. This is important because the nose is one of the entry points for the virus a robust immune response there could prevent the infection spreading further into the body, while a poorer response would be less effective, the researchers said.

Digital solutions hold capacity to revolutionise healthcare: Mandaviya

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Digital solutions hold the capacity to revolutionise the healthcare delivery systems and under the visionary leadership of the prime minister, India aims to launch a global initiative on digital health as an institutional framework, said Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Monday.

This framework aims to converge the global efforts for digital health and scale up digital solutions with use of cutting-edge technologies, Mandaviya said as he virtually addressed the 'Global Conference on Digital Health - Taking Universal Health Coverage to the Last Citizen', a co-branded event under India's G20

Presidency organised by WHO - South-East Asia Region in collaboration with the Ministry of Health.

"It is time to move from 'silos to systems' with collaboration of all countries for enhanced coverage and quality of healthcare services," he said. Highlighting the importance of digital health, Mandaviya said digital health is a great enabler in delivery of healthcare services and has the potential to support overall universal health coverage (UHC) targets.

He further said that national health policies proved instrumental for various path-breaking digital health intervention ensuring availability, accessibility and affordability, and equity of health services.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Asian alliance

Japanese PM Kishida's visit to New Delhi has the potential to open new vistas in bilateral ties

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to New Delhi Monday is important not just from the perspective of bilateral relations covering a gamut of spheres but also a critical signal it sends to the big bullies in the international arena: democracies are joining hands like never before. The two nations are discussing a raft of issues, ranging from defence and security to trade, investment, and technology. Committing themselves to a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Kishida vowed to expand the India-Japan global strategic partnership. This century has seen the deepening and broadening of the bilateral ties, which became 'Global Partnership' in 2000, 'Strategic and Global Partnership' in 2006, and 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership' in 2014. This is of great importance against the backdrop of China's bellicosity in the region. It is serendipitous that India's presidency of G20 coincides with Japan's presidency of the G7. It needs to be mentioned here that Kishida has been striving to bring the rich and poor nations of the world together. In his address to the Japanese Parliament earlier this year, he revived the term Global South. This was a favorite of the votaries of non-alignment, used to depict and highlight the North-South conflicts. But the Japanese Prime Minister resuscitated just the term, not the idea that it connoted to the pinkish non-alignment enthusiasts. He doesn't seem to be an admirer of Nehruvian principles in international matters; he would not like to act as the trade union leader of poor nations and fight against rich countries; indeed he comes from a rich country. He



wants to unite all countries, rich as well as poor, for a rules-based international order.

Kishida is following the late prime minister Shinzo Abe's foreign policy, which has been called "panoramic diplomacy." It has been officially described as a "diplomacy that takes a panoramic perspective of the terrestrial globe." Gone are the days of Tokyo's pacifism. A quarter of a century ago, when India carried out nuclear explosions, Tokyo condemned New Delhi. Today, however, Japan sees an ally in India in the eventuality of a conflict with China; it is arming itself. Japan's role in strengthening the Quad is critical. It is a measure of growing proximity between the two nations that Modi and Kishida met three times in 2022. Along with defence and security cooperation between the two Asian democracies, trade is also growing. Last year, the bilateral trade was \$20.75 billion, the largest ever. The two countries signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement or CEPA in 2011. Now both sides emphasise reliable supply chains for semiconductors and other critical technologies. A year ago, Kishida had promised a Rs 320,000-crore investment target in India in five years. This may be the time to redeem the old promise — and make new ones. The same is true for India.

PICTALK



A boy plays with snow on a tree in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir

PTI

Memories rush back as the mangoes bloom

Being in the midst of nature is unmatched. To be one with nature is to live a pristine life in tune with the moment

In spring, trees bloom, turning the world into a colourful garden. One bloom that stands out is the bloom of mango trees. The trees bloom and the air is filled with a sweet scent that attracts bees, birds, and people. For me, as a child, the season of spring, which starts in February in north India and spills into the month of March, was a season of extremes. The first few days were spent studying for final exams, and the last few days were spent jovially and academically free. We played hide and seek or explored the jungle trails during the balmy, pleasant weather filled with colors and fragrances of spring. Occasionally, we sneaked into a friend's ox driven 'Belna' (country made sugarcane juice machine) where freshly prepared jaggery coming from a huge boiler, treated our taste buds.

As the weather gets warmer, the bloom starts maturing and with the onset of monsoons, the fruit is ripe and ready. During school days, the ripening of mangoes coincided with the two-



month long monsoon break and there are so many memories associated with those mango-savouring holidays. Every tree had a folklore and history associated with it—some were planted by a revered ancestor and some took to roots by accident, some had divine powers and some were the abode of ghosts, some bore fruits

every year and some never. The rain soaked days, paddy fields and trees blanketed in green, mango trees loaded with fruits, the streams filled with fresh water meandering leisurely downhill, the early morning calls of 'koel' (Cuckoo) and the company of friends made those times truly memorable ones. It was like reliving all

those past moments when I was at home at the beginning of the mango bloom. A whiff of fresh fragrance from our courtyard blooming mango tree transported me back in time. I savoured every day trying to hold on to those smells, sights and flavours and enjoyed every moment of spring at home. The sun rises woke me up early to witness the most spectacular sights of nature and the sunsets took me to the highest hilltop in the village, the flowing streams led me on paths less taken, the forests took me in a search of wild, I sat under trees and felt the morning breeze touching my cheeks, I roamed in wheat fields and saw the fresh dew drops kissing the tender plants, I heard the birds chirping in the silence of mornings, I sat on the bank of the rivers to feel the stillness and solitude, I met old friends and we talked late into the nights, like good old times and doing all this I understood the true meaning of living in moments. (The writer pens down stories of human interest and his travels. He also likes to click portraits)



AMIT KANWAR

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The hullabaloo over UK's refugee policy

There's been a sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers to Britain. PM Rishi Sunak is trying to put a timely end to the impending danger

The outcry over the latest Refugee/Asylum Bill in Britain was not unexpected. The Indian media has not remained unaffected. Incidentally, even a fraction of this "concern" is seldom seen in the latter's coverage of genuine refugees fleeing to India — victims of religious persecution from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan!

The website of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) indicates that it "is profoundly concerned by the asylum Bill introduced by the UK Government in the House of Commons". It further stated, "The legislation, if passed, would amount to an asylum ban-extinguishing the right to seek refugee protection in the U.K. for those who arrive irregularly, no matter how genuine or compelling their claims may be". It further urged, "the Government, to all MPs and Peers to reconsider the Bill and instead pursue a more humane and practical policy solution".

Be that as it may, the ground reality is that there has been a sharp increase in the number of small boat arrivals on British shores in recent times. All of them have sought asylum in the country. In the year ending September 2022, the UK received 72,027 asylum applications. This is double the number of applicants received in 2019. Add to this the number of unresolved cases. In the critical backdrop of the UK's declining Christian population and a sudden upsurge in the Muslim population, it assumes a serious complexion. These are the real causes of concern.

Since the 1950s, there have been many legal and illegal immigrants who have settled down in English and have done well. Most of them have complied with the norms of the host community. As against them, there have been a growing number of Islamic terrorist activities, targeting the sons of the soil and their civilizational values. One would do well to recall, among many, the activities of the ISIS bride Shamima Begum, who had been stripped of her British citizenship and the forceful cam-



paign in her favour by numerous Britishers including the B.B.C. There are areas in London and the midlands, which make one feel as if they have been transported to a strange, unfamiliar territory, resembling more of a Pakistani and Bangladeshi ghetto.

In the early 1990s, a "Muslim Parliament" had been set up in Britain and had been clamouring for absurd favours including the introduction of Sharia! This writer pointed out this emerging threat thirty years ago. ("Muslim Parliament in Secular Britain", The Pioneer, 7 Feb 1992: "Islamic Assertion in Britain", The Pioneer, 30 June 1995)

They carry with them the medieval religious-social-political norms of their original homeland that were notorious for inhumane treatment of religious minorities. Then, there are the crimes committed by the Muslim grooming gangs who have played systematic havoc with the British white girls besides many Hindu/ Sikh girls, unfortunately abetted by the British society on the pretext of multiculturalism that has generally failed. Integration of such a sizable and viciously

MANY OF THESE IMMIGRANTS CARRY THE MEDIEVAL RELIGIOUS-SOCIAL-POLITICAL NORMS OF THEIR ORIGINAL HOMELANDS, WHICH ARE INFAMOUS FOR THEIR INHUMAN TREATMENT OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

ungrateful segment of the population into the mainstream was a non-starter to begin with.

After all, the UK, is a sovereign nation and its political culture is shaped by the ideas of Hobbes- who had enunciated the concept of untrammeled sovereignty (Leviathan, 1561) which came to be tempered by the liberal ideas of John Lock and the subsequent political revolutions and remedial parliamentary legislations. While its claim to "civilizing mission" in its erstwhile colonies, when the Sun had not yet set on the British Empire, need not be taken seriously, it is absurd to demand that every refugee/asylum seeker entering Britain by hook or crook is entitled to stay back and enjoy all the benefits of a welfare state free of cost. Those who find this Nazi like may have to revise their knowledge of some rudimentary history!

Rishi Sunak, and his Conservative Party may have correctly sensed the nature of the impending danger, and are now trying to put a timely end to it. Surely, the number of their sympathisers in Britain and elsewhere in the civilised world would

increase. Sunak belongs to a Hindu family that once lived in a part of undivided India which is now in Pakistan. Unlike many of India's political classes, he must be aware of the disastrous consequences of a changing religious demographic. There is still a solution to the problem in Whitehall even without Palmerston and Disraeli.

Following the mass expulsion of Asians by Idi Amin from Kenya, their rehabilitation in Britain was both legal and justified, and so is the status of the asylum seekers from Hong Kong, which had been a Crown colony till it was returned to China, and inhabitants of the Falkland islands for which the "Iron Lady" had fought with Argentina.

It is high time that the UNHCR and its parent bodies extinguish the very roots of this malady in the countries of origin — the persecution of religious minorities and their flight across boundaries. Why should they not begin with India's neighborhood? That should be a top priority for any non-political and impartial humanitarian agency.

(The author is a Member of the ICHR)



SARADINDU MUKHERJI

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NO RELAXATION FOR EWS MEMBERS

Sir — The rationale behind the reservation of seats in Government employment and education is often asserted to be the inadequate representation of various social groups. Due to poor implementation of government policies, sometimes even by the Government itself, the purpose of reservation in favour of reserved categories, be it OBC, SC, ST, or the newly introduced EWS, often gets defeated in other dimensions. I recently observed that the application fee for various government examinations such as Provincial Civil Service (PCS) in states like Uttar Pradesh for EWS candidates is exactly the same as for the unreserved (General) candidates. This is ironic because the very purpose behind the EWS quota is to uplift economically weaker sections as is evident from the very definition of EWS. Thus, it defeats the very purpose of reservation. This is because EWS candidates may find it difficult to fill out the forms for those exams where the application fees are very high.

Shivanshu K Srivastava | Lucknow

NATIONALIST MUSLIMS

Sir — According to a certain prominent leader of a poll-bound state, his party definitely needs the support of "nationalist Muslims"! However there has been no mention of asking for support from "nationalist Hindus"! Surely in his dictionary, the entire Hindu community is "nationalist" by default! After all no Hindu can afford to terrorise or work against the nation, such is their "sanskar"! Disgusting, but hardly surprising given his party's "glorious tradition" of flexing rabid religious muscle mixed with invocations of barbaric Islamophobia!

Also thanks to him, we can arrive at the conclusion that loudspeakers "screaming" azan (which get performed few times a day for just a few minutes) disturb the neighborhood students and patients; but his silence upon the day/days long screams (shlokas, bhajans, mantras, drums, conch, bells) coming from loudspeakers of temples during various festivals throughout the

Millet: Superfood against hunger



The United Nations has declared the year 2023 as the International Year of Millets (IYOM) in response to a suggestion made by the Indian government to promote millets as a nutritious and climate-resilient crop. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also voiced his support for Millets. He stated that they are the gateway to prosperity for small farmers and a key to fighting hunger, malnutrition, and poverty.

The Global Millets (Shree Anna) Conference held in Pusa, New Delhi, is a crucial event for

the global good, highlighting India's increasing responsibility for the global good. It is a matter of great honor for India that after its proposal and efforts, the United Nations declared 2023 the International Year of Millets.

Millets have been a staple in India for centuries, mentioned in some of the oldest Yajurveda texts. However, with the Green Revolution in the 1960s, millets were replaced by rice and wheat, which were considered more profitable. But now, with the promotion of millets as a superfood, their popularity is once again on the rise. The International Year of Millets is an opportunity to promote millets as a superfood and raise awareness of their benefits. The Indian government's Millet Mission is an example of the importance placed on promoting millets and their potential to fight hunger, malnutrition, and poverty.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

year prove that if sound emanates from temples, it acts as balm or honey upon ears without causing minimum disturbance to the neighbourhood students and patients! What better can be expected from such a force which treats electoral wins of their own as "Victory of democracy" but the Opposition wins are "triumph of dynasts!" What a blatant example of hypocrisy!

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

CLOSING OF MADRASAS IN ASSAM

Sir — Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's decision to shut down all madrasas is a foolish decision. It is nothing but a move to suppress the Muslim community. By closing all madrasas in the State and saying that there is a threat to our culture and tradition is against our constitution. This is because it is against the right to practice and learn his own religion. Instead of converting Madrasas into other schools why don't the Assam Government construct new modern schools? Government funding should only be stopped if they believe the Quran is being taught in madrasas. Who are

these people to decide what to study and what not to study? If madrasas are closed, there will be mass dropout of female students. Is this *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*? In any madrasa, besides Islamic studies and languages such as Arabic and Urdu, general subjects and other modern Indian languages are taught to all students. Many parents who prefer their daughters to get Islamic education along with regular subjects will pull them out of schools.

The Assam Government has forgotten that notable personalities such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Munshi Prem Chand, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, and Dr. Zakir Hussain studied in madrasas. Previously the Government cited that madrasas are funded by terror activities. However, the Government could find nothing like that in the madrasas. The Assam Government should know that these madrasas were set up to fulfill a religious need rather than promote enmity with any community.


Zakir Hussain | Kazipet

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FIRST COLUMN

LIFE INSURANCE UNDER THE NEW I-T SCHEME

What to do with the insurance policies already taken, is the big question



S KALYANASUNDARAM

The Union Budget presented for the next fiscal year has provided the necessary incentive for taxpayers to switch to a new income tax scheme. Individual taxpayers are free to choose the old scheme or the updated scheme as per his/her convenience. Under the old scheme, tax payers were claiming deductions based on different savings, expenses and loan repayments as per provisions of the IT Act. The revised scheme does not allow any such deductions and immediately provides a higher exemption limit. Therefore, individuals opting for the new scheme need not continue with their savings.


The situation provides an opportunity for individuals to continue or discontinue endowment policies (and also similar life cover instruments like Money back policies, ULIP etc.). Though ideally term insurance will be the best option for life coverage, many have contracted for endowment policies on the perception that it is also a saving instrument. If they have taken the insurance only as a saving measure, they now have the option to discontinue it. The following options are available when choosing a new tax scheme for endowment policies (and similar policies).

Surrender the policy

It is possible to surrender the insurance policy to the issuer. This means no more premium is payable on this and the life cover will also lapse. The insurance company will return what is called the surrender value. Surrender value is the amount the policyholder will get from the life insurance company if he decides to exit the policy before maturity. Surrender value varies from policy to policy and it is printed on the policy itself.

Do not surrender but stop paying premium

This would not be the only option available. One need not surrender the policy but simply stop paying further premiums. When one continues with the policy without paying any further premium, the policy will have what is called "Paid up Value". In other words, the paid up value is the value payable at maturity of the discontinued policy (of premium payment).



Generally, a life insurance policy with an investment value earns some paid up value after at least 3 years in force (5 years for ULIPs). This means that policies like money-back endowment will have paid-up value after 3 years and ULIP will have market value after 5 years. To calculate the paid up value, multiply the number of premiums paid by the sum assured by the total number of premiums. This method will offer continuing life coverage at a reduced amount (paid up value) and maturing.

Allow it to lapse

By not paying premiums further, one can allow the policy to lapse if it has no surrender value. The premium paid will be a loss. But cash outflows for many more years in the future will be a big saving.

Taxation

The surrender value of a life policy is allowed as a tax-free benefit only if it fulfils some conditions with regard to the number of years premium paid. But as the surrender value eligibility matches this, the surrender value will be tax free. (Only if the policy was issued between 1st April 2003 and 31st March 2012, there are additional conditions). There is no change in the deductions allowed in earlier years on account of premium payment. For paid up value, the amount received on maturity will be tax free.

Takeaway

The revised income tax regime allows the discontinuation of insurance policies taken with intent to save. This should not be confused with the necessity of life insurance. One may need life insurance protection, and it may be appropriate to have term insurance for the amount of coverage required. The decision of surrendering, continuing the policy without further premiums, or letting it lapse depends on the individual's determination of opportunity cost.

(The writer is a retired banker)

Inflation management needs salutary changes



SUMEET BHASIN

The Reserve Bank of India's MPC will meet in the first week of April. The stakeholders are concerned if it will emerge wiser from recent global experiences



Vietnam became the first country to break ranks with the global community to cut the policy rates. The Central bank of Vietnam surprised the global economists to cut the benchmark interest rate. The East Asian nation was wary of the fact that the blind-walking alongside the US Federal Reserve to keep raising the interest rates would have surely taken its economy into fast downturn.

Europe remains hawkish with rate hikes, increasing the policy rate by 50 basis points last week. Jerome Powell, the head of the US Federal Reserve, has come under intense fire within his country. He is being accused of walking the US economy to the doorsteps of a deep recession. He has been dogged in pursuit of higher interest rates despite fellow members cautioning him of risks associated with hawkish measures.

Within a span of a few days, three banks in the US have come to their knees, with one collapsing in 48 hours. The US and Europe are now battling the worst fears of economists of banks failing the high interest regime. The monetary policy meeting (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India will meet in the first week of April. The concerned stakeholders are watching out with intense curiosity to see if the MPC of the RBI will be wiser from the immediate global experiences of following a hawkish path.

Inflation indeed is a cause of concern. The poor suffers the most from an uncontrolled inflation. Therefore, there is an unequivocal understanding that inflation must be tamed with all the policy might available at the RBI and the government.

But it must not be ignored that high interest rates may be suicidal for the economy, as a number of factors make it less effective at controlling inflation, while harmful economic growth more. High interest rates drive away capital, which may exacerbate inflation further, while harming emerging economies more by putting pressure on their currencies.

Several studies and reports have taken

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WITHIN A FEW DAYS, THREE BANKS IN THE US HAVE COME TO THEIR KNEES, WITH ONE COLLAPSING IN 48 HOURS. THE US AND EUROPE ARE NOW BATTLING THE WORST FEARS OF ECONOMISTS OF BANKS FAILING THE HIGH INTEREST REGIME

(Author is a policy analyst)

note of the creditstress, harming small businesses and low-income households, who are most sensitive to changes in interest rates, while being at loan repayments risks when rates are high. Also, economic growth naturally takes the blows of high interest rate regime, as private investment and private consumption take backseat in the economy.

Furthermore, increasing interest rates may not address the underlying causes of inflation, which can be caused by a range of factors, including rise in the money supply, high production costs, or changes in consumer demand. For instance high cereal costs in India is driving inflation high. Indeed, core inflation is also staying above six per cent. But cereal and fruits are making the management of inflation a daunting task. India indeed needs to take steps to work on post-harvest management with the participation of the private capital to ensure that the cereals, fruits and vegetables don't march on high price trajectory to give fresh legs to inflation.

Thus, it's incumbent upon the policymakers to consider targeted interventions to address specific drivers of inflation. The government has done well by proactively asking the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to auction the public wheat stock in the open market. The four rounds of the auctions of the wheat stocks have shown sobering impact on the wheat prices, which have significantly cooled down in the last few days.

Similar interventions are needed to cool down the prices of the specific drivers stepping up the inflation. The price stabilization fund, which is a mechanism created by the Centre, to deal with the volatility in the prices of food items needs effective utilization. This has

to be done by the state governments with effective utilization of the market intelligence architecture. It will be worthwhile to explore if there could be a mechanism to incentivize the states for better performances on the price stabilization front.

Failures among banks, including Silicon Valley Bank (SVB), have been attributed to a variety of factors, with high-interest rates bring the principal culprit, which has proven to be unsustainable and even disastrous. Banks resort to offer high-interest rates to attract depositors in pursuit of rapid growth. But the banks tend to gain customers who are primarily interested in the rate, leading to a higher concentration of risky or unstable deposits. This makes banks becoming host to hot money, which can make a sudden flight from the first sign of stress, as had been the case with Silicon Valley Bank and other regional banks in the US.

By all accounts the RBI will not be able to meet the projected inflation rate of 5.7 per cent for this fiscal. This will be possible only if inflation crashes by over 230 points in the last month of the financial year. This will call for the RBI to explain why it failed in the inflation management as mandated by Parliament. We already know that couple of the members of the MPC had opposed the Repo Rate hike in the last meeting. Therefore, it will be desired that the RBI embraces a course correction in the light of the fresh developments globally.

Pausing the rate hike trend will be most desired by the stakeholders. Cut in the rate hikes will, however, be the demand of the prevailing situations. Also, the fact that India had not resorted to printing of currencies to deal with the sit-

uations arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic may be factored in since the market is not flush with cash that requires to be sucked out. Indeed, the US and the European nations had excessively printed their currencies to deal with the economic crises due to the pandemic. They may require flushing out the excess cash from the system to control the inflation. This is surely not the case in India.

But it must not be forgotten that India has paid a heavy price for such quick-fix approach of the government to deal with the situations arising out of the economic crisis. The UPA government led by Manmohan Singh, former prime minister, had done exactly the same thing, of giving cash in the hands of the people in its bid to find an easy way out of the economic crisis, which India faced in the wake of the 2008 global crisis. This had led India to double-digit food inflation for the remainder of the term of the UPA government.

It was only when Narendra Modi took charge of the country as the prime minister that the Central government could tame the runaway food inflation with agile policy making.

The weather scientists have warned that India may have to face El Nino this year. There may be a risk of weather pattern disruptions, which could also have bearing on prices of several items, which constitute the retail inflation basket. This also calls for the RBI to elicit wider participation in the process of the inflation management, since some of the solutions may lie in the domains of the Centre and the state governments.

It must be understood that working in silos is an ailment that made India suffer the most. The RBI must make sure that it's not working from silos.

Reforming Parliament: Charity begins at home

It is high time that parliamentary reforms are undertaken to make the House more effective and in sync with the changing times

Just as we need reforms in many other areas, Parliament needs reforms urgently. Right now, both Houses remain paralysed. The Opposition is looking for public and media attention to embarrass the Government, while the Government is also in an aggressive mood.

The BJP opposed the earlier Congress Governments precisely as the Congress is following now, everything which could attract the public and media attention. The direct TV telecast also makes members play to the gallery.

The face-off between the adamant Treasury Benches and the belligerent Opposition continues over two controversial issues. The first concerns Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's recent alleged defam-



KALYANI SHANKAR

(The author is a senior journalist)

atory comments about the Modi government in the U.K. Strangely, the treasury benches are demanding, "Rahul Gandhi *sadan mein aao, sadan mein aakar maafi mango* (Rahul Gandhi come to the House and apologise)".

The second comes from the Opposition, which demands a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the Adani-Hindenburg issue. The Adoni issue had been simmering for some time, but the Government has been unwilling to discuss it in the House.

The second half of the budget session opened on March 13. The row has become intense now, with the Opposition taking to the streets. The Congress also gave a privilege notice against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Lok Sabha.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said, "A member of this House (meaning Rahul Gandhi) went abroad and made defamatory comments. He has to tender an apology. And how these people (some Opposition MPs) who are protesting and carrying placards in the House should be acted against; in my opinion, they should be suspended."

This brings us to the larger question of Parliament's functioning. There are enough checks and balances. Parliament's liberal framework provides many opportunities for vigorous debate, discussion, and dissent. Political parties must replace disorder, disruption and delay in legislation with debate, discussion, and decision in a democracy. The

adage is while the Opposition should have its say, the Government should have its way.

Historically, there was a degree of homogeneity in both Houses in the fifties and sixties. Many members like Piloo Modii enlivened the House with their repartees, humour, and healthy debates while maintaining the dignity and decorum of the House.

Congress shrank since the eighties while others, including regional parties, grew, leading to coalition politics.

Another area for improvement is the duration of sittings. Most state legislatures sit for barely 30 days a year. In some, like Haryana and Punjab, the average is about a fortnight. The Parliament spends less time on legislative business resulting in lawmakers spending less time on law-making.

The first three Lok Sabhas sat for an average of 120 DAYS a year. The Lok Sabha spent less than 10 minutes to pass a law, and the Rajya Sabha less than half an hour.

The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution recommended that Lok Sabha should have at least 120 and Rajya Sabha 100 sittings. A single minute in Parliament leads to an expenditure of Rs. 2.5 lakhs approx to the exchequer.

The former chief justice N.V. Ramana recently lamented how Parliament passed laws without deliberation and debate. The judiciary interprets the law and always looks for the discussion before passing the law. The presiding officers of both Houses have time and again urged the members to maintain the dignity of the House in mind.

There should be a complete revamp of the rules to make clearing legislation and discussion on issues open, transparent, and outcome-oriented. Secondly, political parties should choose eminent men and women as members.

Thirdly, new members should be given adequate time to participate in the proceedings.

Fourthly, the party leaders should focus more on Parliament's functioning as they are also stakeholders.

Fifthly, Question Hour should not be disturbed as that is when Government answers many questions. The cancellation of Zero Hour and

Question Hour indicates that parliamentary reforms are urgently needed.

Sixthly, presiding officers should be given more teeth.

Seventhly, accommodation and negotiations should be part of the conduct of the House.

Eighthly, new members should be trained to understand the House's rules and regulations.

The parliamentary committees have gradually decreased their number of sittings. The Government also only refers some pieces of legislation to the committee.

A healthy democracy needs a fit functioning Parliament. Indian democracy has matured over the years, and it is time to make some necessary corrective issues.

MONEY MATTERS

Air India to temporarily reduce flights on some US routes: CEO

Air India will reduce the frequency of flights on certain US routes due to crew shortage issues for a temporary period, its chief Campbell Wilson said on Monday. Six weekly flights to the US, three each to Newark and San Francisco will be trimmed. Wilson also said the airline will have 100 pilots for Boeing 777 planes in three months as they are being "activated" and around 1,400 cabin crew are in training. In recent months, there have been instances of some long haul flights getting impacted due to crew shortage issues. Wilson, who is the CEO and MD, said frequencies will be reduced on some US routes due to crew shortage issues. The six weekly flights -- three each to Newark and San Francisco -- will be reduced due to shortage of crew. This will be in place for the coming two to three months, Wilson said. The airline has a staff strength of around 11,000 people, including flying and non-flying employees.



Mahindra fully acquires MITRA Agro Equipments

Mahindra & Mahindra on Monday said it has fully acquired MITRA Agro Equipments Pvt Ltd for an undisclosed amount. The company's Farm Equipment Sector (FES) has increased its stake in MITRA Agro Equipments Pvt Ltd (M.I.T.R.A) to 100 per cent from the existing 47.33 per cent. As part of the acquisition, Mahindra has fully bought out Omnivore's stake in the business. The company, however, did not share financial details. "Mahindra aims to grow its farm machinery business by 10-fold in 5 years and is making rapid progress towards achieving this goal. The additional share purchase in M.I.T.R.A would aid Mahindra's growth and expansion into the growing horticulture market," Mahindra & Mahindra Farm Equipment Sector President Hemant Sikka said in a statement. Founded in 2012 by Devneth Bajaj, M.I.T.R.A is a leading player in high precision orchard sprayers, a brand for farmers growing fruits like grapes.



We don't want to be in a rush: Jet Airways

Jet Airways CEO-Designate Sanjiv Kapoor on Monday said the new management does not want to be "in a rush" to restart operations while asserting that the airline will be unique and different. The ownership transfer of the airline under the insolvency resolution plan is facing hurdles over differences between the winning bidder and lenders. "We don't want to be in a rush," Kapoor said. Speaking at the CAPA aviation summit in the national capital, he also said it is a marathon and not a sprint. In October 2020, the airline's Committee of Creditors (CoC) approved the revival plan submitted by the consortium of Dubai-based Murari Lal Jalan and the UK's Kalrock Capital. In June 2021, the consortium's bid was approved under the insolvency resolution process. However, the implementation of the plan is getting delayed. Once-storied carrier, Jet Airways shuttered operations in April 2019.



FM: No direction on loading Rs 2,000 notes in ATMs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

No instructions have been given to banks for filling or not filling Rs 2,000 notes in Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) as lenders make their own choice for loading of cash vending machines, Parliament was informed on Monday.

As per Annual Reports of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the total value of Rs 500 and Rs 2,000 denomination bank notes in circulation as at end-March 2017 and as at March-end 2022 was Rs 9,512 lakh crore and Rs 27,057 lakh crore, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a written reply in Lok Sabha.

"No instructions have been given to banks for not filling Rs 2,000 notes in ATMs. Banks make their own assessment of amount and denominational requirement for ATMs on the basis of past usage, consumer requirement, seasonal trend, etc," she said.

Replying to another question, the finance minister said,



total amount of the central government debt/liabilities is estimated at about Rs 155.8 lakh crore (57.3 per cent of GDP) as on March 31, 2023.

Out of this, she said, external debt valued at current exchange rate is estimated at Rs 7.03 lakh crore (2.6 per cent of GDP).

"Share of external debt is only about 4.5 per cent of total

debt/liabilities of the central government and less than 3 per cent of GDP. External debt is mostly financed by multilateral and bilateral agencies at concessional rates. Therefore, the risk profile stands out as safe and prudent," she said.

RBI in consultation with the government has announced various measures recently to diversify and

expand the sources of forex funding to mitigate exchange rate volatility and global spillovers, she said.

It included, "fresh FCNR(B) and NRE deposits were exempted from the extant regulation on interest rates (i.e. interest rates shall not be higher than those offered by the banks on comparable domestic rupee term deposits) till October 31, 2022."

The external commercial borrowing limit under automatic route has been raised to USD 1.5 billion and the all-in-cost ceiling has been raised by 100 basis points in select cases up to December 31, 2022, she said.

In order to promote the growth of exports from India and to support the increasing interest of the global trading community in the Indian rupee, she said, RBI has put in place an additional arrangement for invoicing, payment, and settlement of exports/imports in the rupee on July 11, 2022 etc.

'Strong case to hike coal prices, could happen soon'

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Coal India Chairman Pramod Agrawal on Monday said there is a "strong case" for increasing coal prices, and the hike could be effected "very soon" as discussions are underway with stakeholders.

Agrawal also said he is confident the mining behemoth will achieve its production target of 1 billion tonnes by 2025-26.

"There is a strong case for increasing coal prices, as that has not happened in the last five-odd years. This year, the wage negotiation has taken place as well, which will have an impact on CIL's financial condition, especially for a few subsidiaries where the manpower cost is very high."

"There will be a lot of problems if prices are not hiked. Discussions are underway with stakeholders... It will happen very soon," Agrawal said at the Indian Coal Markets Conference here organized by Mjunction.

PSU banks' gross NPA declines to 5.53%

○ Earn total profit of Rs 70,167 cr in Apr-Dec FY23

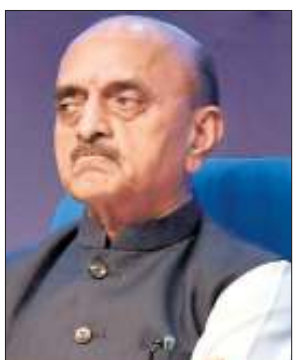
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has taken various reforms following which asset quality of public sector banks has improved significantly with gross NPA ratio declining from the peak of 14.6 per cent in March 2018 to 5.53 per cent in December 2022, Parliament was informed on Monday.

All PSBs are in profit with aggregate profit being Rs 66,543 crore in 2021-22, and that further increased to Rs 70,167 crore in first nine months of current financial year, Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat K Karad said in a written reply to Lok Sabha.

At the same time, resilience has increased with provision coverage ratio of PSBs rising from 46 per cent to 89.9 per cent in December 2022, he said, adding capital adequacy ratio of PSBs improved significantly from 11.5 per cent in March 2015 to 14.5 per cent in December 2022.

Total market cap of PSBs (excluding IDBI Bank, which was



categorised as private sector bank in January 2019) increased from Rs 4.52 lakh crore in March 2018 to Rs 10.63 lakh crore in December 2022, he said.

Karad also said banks, earlier placed under Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework by RBI, have made significant improvement.

Talking about various measures taken to improve the financial health of PSBs, Karad said, the government implemented a comprehensive 4R strategy of

Recognising NPAs transparently, Resolution and recovery, Recapitalising PSBs, and Reforms in the financial ecosystem.

Major banking reforms undertaken by the government over the last eight years addressed credit discipline, responsible lending and improved governance, besides adoption of technology, amalgamation of banks, and maintaining general confidence of bankers, he said.

In reply to another question, Karad said, as per the information provided by Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH), the total estimated vehicle fleet is 30.48 crore (excluding data from Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Lakshadweep), of which 16.54 crore vehicles are uninsured.

Replying to another question, Karad said the government since 2016 has given in-principle approval for strategic disinvestment of 36 cases of public sector enterprises (PSEs) and/or subsidiaries/units/joint ventures of PSEs/ banks.

Gold rallies Rs 1,400 to touch all-time high; silver zooms Rs 1,860

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price rallied Rs 1,400 to touch a life-time high of Rs 60,100 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid strong global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had ended at Rs 58,700 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver also zoomed Rs 1,860 to Rs 69,340 per kilogramme.

"Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at Rs 60,100 per 10 grams, up Rs 1,400 per 10 grams," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the overseas markets, both gold and silver were trading higher at USD 2,005 per ounce and USD 22.55 per ounce, respectively.

Comex Gold prices traded



higher in Asian trading hours on Monday and rose to a fresh 52-week high of USD 2,005 per ounce, Gandhi said.

"Bullions continue surge, with gold on domestic front hitting a new life-time high of over Rs 60,000, as a wave of banking crises shook global markets and put bullion on track for its biggest weekly rise in three years, while bets solidified for a less aggressive Fed in its fight against inflation," Navneet Damani, Senior VP - Commodity Research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

Sensex sheds 360 points, Nifty closes below 17k amid global rout

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex declined by 360 points while the Nifty closed below the 17,000-level on Monday due to a sell-off in financials, IT and capital goods shares amid a global rout in equities on lingering worries over the banking crisis.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 360.95 points or 0.62 per cent to close at 57,628.95 as 23 of its stocks ended in the red. The index tanked more than 900 points to touch a low of 57,084.91 before recovering some losses at the day end.

The broader Nifty of the NSE plunged by 111.65 points or 0.65 per cent to close below



the 17,000-level at 16,988.40. As many as 40 Nifty stocks declined while 10 advanced.

Analysts said investors fretted over the US banking crisis even as Federal Reserve and other central banks took efforts to ease a fast-growing banking crisis.

"The fear of contagion of the financial crisis has kept investors away from the equity markets as the global mar-

ket faces numerous hurdles. Despite Swiss regulators' intervention to protect the global financial system, investor sentiment remained shaky," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Among Sensex shares, Bajaj Finserv fell the most by 4.08 per cent. Bajaj Finance declined by 3.01 per cent, Tata Steel by 2.2 per cent, Wipro by 2.09 per cent, Tata Motors by 1.96 per cent, IndusInd Bank by 1.9 per cent, SBI by 1.75 per cent, Tech Mahindra by 1.66 per cent and HCL Tech by 1.2 per cent.

TCS, Infosys, Power Grid, Maruti, Reliance, HDFC twins, L&T, M&M, NTPC and Ultratech Cement were also among the losers.

PE/VC investments nearly halve in Feb 2023: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Investments by private equity and venture capital funds declined by 44 per cent to USD 3.7 billion in February compared to the same period a year ago, a report said on Monday.

The bets by the long-term investors were 13 per cent lower when compared to the investments in the preceding month of January, the report by industry lobby Indian Venture and Alternate Capital Association and consultancy firm EY, said.

"rising global recession concerns, increasing cost of capital and mismatch in valuation expectations between sellers and investors are turning out to be major impediments in



the deployment of capital," EY's partner Vivek Soni said.

He added that the recent events in the global financial world after the failure of SVB and the contagion spreading to other mid-market US banks catering to the technology sector has added to the overall uncertainty, and "may discourage investors from making bold bets in the immediate term".

Nine Adani group stocks end lower; snaps 2-day winning streak

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nine out of ten listed companies of the Adani group closed with losses on Monday, snapping two-day of gains amid an across-the-board sell-off in the broader market.

While some Adani stocks hit their lowest circuit prices, flagship Adani Enterprises Ltd declined 3.84 per cent to close at Rs 1,805.10 on BSE. The flagship commanded a market capitalisation of Rs 2.05 lakh crore. The stock was the second biggest loser among Nifty stocks, dropping by 3.44 per cent. Adani Total Gas plunged 4.99 per cent to end at Rs 853.10, Adani Power tumbled 4.83 per cent.

PSUs asked to issue LoCs based on their financial strength

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry has asked central public sector undertakings (CPSUs) to issue letters of comfort (LoCs) on the basis of their own financial strength so that no liability devolves on the Government of India.

The Office Memorandum dated March 20, 2023, has been issued following a request from some CPSUs in the oil and power sector seeking relaxation with regard to the issuance of LoCs.



"In view of requirements, it has been decided that CPSUs may issue LoCs on its own financial strength and all such LoCs shall only be issued after specifically inserting the following clause--under no circumstances, the liability under this Letter of Comfort shall

devolve on the Government of India," the memorandum said.

Under the provision of the fiscal responsibility law, the budget requires to provide details of guarantees given by the government.

It further clarified that ministries and departments will not issue any letters of comfort as specified under the Office Memorandum dated March 31, 2022 on behalf of the Government of India.

Issuance of LoCs based on own financial strength is a part of regular business practice.

Merged AI Express-AirAsia India will have enormous potential

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The integration of Air India Express and AirAsia India is expected to be complete by the end of next financial year and the merged entity will have "enormous growth opportunities" in the coming years, according to a top executive.

Air India, Air India Express, Vistara and AirAsia India, now rebranded as AIX Connect are part of the Tata Group.

The merger process of Air India Express and AirAsia India as well as that of Vistara with Air India is underway.

Air India Express CEO Alok Singh on Monday said the businesses of the airline and AIX Connect are complementary.

The merged entity of Air India Express and AirAsia India will look at large growth opportunities and also unlock the synergies between the two carriers, Singh said.

Speaking at the CAPA aviation summit here, he also said the merger of the two carriers is expected to be complete by the end of next fiscal.

Singh is now in charge of both Air India Express and AirAsia India.

India to be among top 5 markets for Cisco by 2025

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Telecom gear maker Cisco is bullish about India's business prospects where rapid digitisation across sectors and 5G play are fuelling robust growth, a top executive said on Monday, adding India is well on its way to be counted among top five markets for the company globally by 2025.

On the new regulations in offering in India's telecom and IT sectors, Daisy Chittilapilly, President, Cisco India and SAARC, said that guardrails are important and "needed" as connectivity improves.

TAKEOVER ANNOUNCEMENT

Credit Suisse, UBS shares plunge

PNS ■ GENEVA

Shares of Credit Suisse plunged 63 per cent in early trading Monday after the announcement that banking giant UBS would buy its troubled rival for almost USD 3.25 billion in a deal orchestrated by regulators to stave off further market-shaking turmoil in the global banking system.

UBS shares were down 14 per cent in early trading on the Swiss stock exchange. Swiss authorities urged UBS to take over its smaller rival after a plan for Credit Suisse to borrow up to 50 billion francs (USD 54 billion) failed to reassure investors and the bank's customers.

Shares of Credit Suisse and other banks plunged after the failure of two banks in the US raised questions about other



potentially shaky global financial institutions. Credit Suisse is among 30 financial institutions known as globally systemically important banks, and authorities worried about the fallout if it were to fail. The deal was "one of great breadth for the stability of international finance," Swiss President Alain Berset said as he announced it Sunday night. "An uncontrolled collapse of Credit Suisse would lead to incalculable consequences for the country and the international financial system."

Wind energy can surge 4-5 times on policy tailwinds

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Positive policy moves by the new and renewable energy ministry can crank up the annual wind capacity addition by 6-8 gigawatt (GW) from fiscal 2026, around 4 times more than 1.6 GW of growth clocked in the past five fiscals, a report said.

According to a Crisil analysis, the aggressive tariff bids in reverse auctions since fiscal 2018 has been one of the key drivers of the wind energy growth.

The process led to discovery of irrationally low tariffs that were favoured by state distribution companies, but compromised returns left little incentives for developers to complete the projects. There were also delays in land acquisition and setting up of evacuation infrastructure.

Under reverse auction, bidders compete on an open e-platform, adjust tariffs within timeframes with their quotes visible to all participants. Prior to FY18, wind projects were awarded under the feed-in



tariff regime, where payments at fixed tariffs were made by discoms to producers under long-term contracts without

competitive bids.

Only 41 per cent of projects awarded by the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI)

during fiscals 2018-21 got commissioned till December 2022, while 23 per cent were cancelled and the remaining projects are delayed due to issues in land acquisition, and evacuation and supply-side constraints, the report noted.

While the annual solar capacity addition averaged 8.3 GW in the five fiscals through 2022, wind capacities grew a meagre 1.6 GW per annum during this period. All that can change now with the ministry introducing four key policy measures in January, the

report said. The first of these four major policy changes include setting a goal to award 8 GW of wind tenders per annum. This is significant because wind tendering has been low at just 3.3 GW per annum in the past five fiscals. This can propel capacity growth at a faster rate if executed well.

Secondly, the ministry has replaced the reverse auction process with a single stage, two-envelope closed bidding, which will curb irrational bidding.

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, internationally acclaimed comedian Vir Das speaks of his collaboration with UnCrave by Licious, his favourite cuisine, his comfort food, channeling himself to be creative, and more.



Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a common inflammatory disease of the joints. It affects multiple joints, mainly the small joints of the hands and wrists but also larger ones. It causes painful joints with stiffness that is typically more in the morning and progresses with time, causing joint deformities and, ultimately, a crippling state. Effective treatments are available, and therefore, early diagnosis and regular treatment with monitoring of disease activity are important to limit or prevent permanent damage.

Dr. SK Chabra, senior consultant, pulmonary medicine, Primus Superspecialty Hospital, Chanakyaपुरi, New Delhi, answers some queries related to rheumatoid arthritis.

Can rheumatoid arthritis cause lung disease?

RA is more than just a joint disease. The inflammatory process also affects several other parts of the body. The most frequently affected are the lungs, besides the skin, eyes, digestive system, heart, and blood vessels. The lung conditions that occur in patients with RA are of several types. More than 25% of patients with RA will eventually develop lung conditions and diseases

the more common causes of an ILD. There are several types of ILD patterns, and treatment, prognosis, and natural history differ according to the ILD pattern.

A patient with ILD develops breathlessness on exertion, initially on running or walking fast, especially up an incline. It progresses with time and, ultimately, even activities of daily living such as dressing, taking a bath, or even taking food cause breathlessness. The oxygen levels in the blood decrease, in the early stages of exertion, and later, even at rest. These patients require home oxygen to keep their oxygen in the normal range. Dry cough is the other major symptom. Patients with ILD sometimes get sudden flare-ups, called acute exacerbations, that acutely worsen respiratory failure and carry a high risk of mortality.

Males, smokers, those with a long history of joint disease, more active joint disease, and older age are more prone to developing ILD, but many RA patients with none of these risk factors can also

newer class of drugs called antifibrotics may help slow down the increasing shrinkage. The fibrosis is not reversible.

Treatments for other lung diseases due to rheumatoid arthritis

Management of a large pleural effusion would require drainage with a chest tube or a video-assisted thoracoscopy, which is minimal-access surgery. Treatment of lung infections requires appropriate antibiotics. Narrowing of the lung airways requires inhaled medicines.

Other treatment modalities for Interstitial Lung Disease

Apart from drugs, breathing exercises and nutritional supplementation as needed are given as part of what is called pulmonary rehabilitation. This reduces breathlessness and improves exercise tolerance. Patients who are unable to maintain normal blood oxygen levels, which can easily be measured by pulse oximeter and blood gas analysis, require oxygen therapy round the clock. This can be done

How rheumatoid arthritis affects lungs

in their lifetime. If all patients with RA are screened for lung disease, even when there are no lung symptoms, more than half are found to have evidence of lung involvement. Lung disease is next only to cardiac disease and cancer as the leading cause of death in patients with RA. Lung disease due to RA is a major contributor to a poorer quality of life besides mortality. Most often, lung disease follows joint involvement, but rarely, RA may start as a lung disease and joint manifestations may follow later.

Different lung diseases caused by rheumatoid arthritis

The most common lung disease caused by rheumatoid arthritis is a shrinkage of the lungs called interstitial lung disease (ILD). Other lung conditions and diseases that can occur in RA include pulmonary nodules (one or more rounded masses of tissue of various sizes, confusing the possibility of lung cancer), pleural effusion (protein-rich fluid in the sac around the lungs), pleural thickening, bronchiectasis (dilatation of lung airways causing pooling of secretions and lung infections), bronchiolitis (narrowing of airways deep in the lung), pulmonary hypertension (high blood pressure in the lung) and increased tendency for lung infections like pneumonia. The drugs that are used to treat RA in general suppress immunity, increasing the risk of lung infections.

What is Interstitial Lung Disease?

ILDs are a group of conditions with diverse causes that have in common a reduction in lung size due to fibrosis that usually worsens with time. RA is one of

develop ILD.

How is an ILD diagnosed and treated?

ILD is diagnosed by features on chest examination, breathing tests called spirometry and diffusion capacity, and imaging including a plain chest radiograph and a high-resolution computed tomogram (HRCT) of the chest that provides the clue to the pattern of ILD. In a case where the diagnosis of RA is already established by clinical features and characteristic blood tests, a lung biopsy is not required. Some of these tests are required from time to time after treatment is started to evaluate for a response as well as the progress of the disease.

Treatment of ILD due to RA has variable effectiveness and may produce relief from symptoms. This is in addition to the drugs that are being given for other symptoms of RA, including joint disease. While effective treatments are now available for RA according to the severity and extent of the disease, treatment of lung diseases like ILD is more difficult. The drugs that work for the joints do not seem to work for the lungs in general. Drugs like corticosteroids that suppress immunologically mediated immune damage have a variable response. For those who have increased lung fibrosis, a

using oxygen concentrators. Portable machines are also available.

The last resort for extensively scarred lungs is lung transplantation, a highly specialized and expensive surgery now increasingly available in different cities in India.

Measures advised in rheumatoid arthritis ILD

It is very important to give up smoking as well as avoid passive exposure and exposure to air pollution. These patients are advised to get timely vaccinations against influenza and pneumonia. Patients are encouraged to talk with their physician to make sure that the medications are optimal for their joint symptoms, side effects are managed, and their lung health is monitored for early diagnosis and prompt action.

Can patients with rheumatoid arthritis detect that they have a lung problem?

Once you are diagnosed with RA, an assessment for the presence of lung disease is advisable, as early lung disease may not produce any symptoms. Subsequently, any occurrence of prolonged cough, expectoration, and, most importantly, breathlessness with reduced exercise tolerance calls for an evaluation of a possible lung complication. Early diagnosis holds the best promise for a good response.

‘I feel one shouldn’t focus on making reel-friendly music’

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Sometimes Zaeden just needs a gentle reminder of how far others have come starting from the same position — and not just him; all of us realised he has defeated the age-old idea of what an artist is and that being successful doesn't only mean being signed by a big label. For instance, look at his recent track with Amyra Dastur, titled *Jaana*. He's having a stellar career of his own!

He exclusively describes it to us: “The chorus is the coolest part of this song. I wanted to keep the chorus of the song as easy as falling off a log and something that people could instantly sing along to. So this is a song about the fight for love and tells the story of a person who is determined to win the heart of their beloved, no matter the odds. In a world full of distractions, fighting for the people and things you care about is worthwhile.”

Laughing to himself and enjoying his much more private life at the same time, he exudes more amour, saying, “Amyra has been a fabulous co-star since day one. She featured in the music video of my debut single, too, and people loved our chemistry. I knew I had to work with her again in another music video of mine, and this felt like the perfect song to bring her back! It feels as if we have come full circle with this song.”

In this game, Zaeden became a mega success all of a sudden despite not having



Singer Zaeden, who is climbing the ladder of success through his music, gets candid with *The Pioneer* about his recent track *Jaana*, working with Amyra, and social media as a medium to promote music.

the backing of a major record label like most independent artists do in the country. But abroad, hell no. Who began as Sahil Sharma and then changed his name to Zaeden had no idea his remix would be played on a Dutch DJ's radio show. Hold your horses. He went onto her, signed by the international label—she collaborated with Borgeous, a closing act for David Guetta, performed at Tomorrowland's festival, with DJ duo Nina and Malika, with Kendrick Lamar, and you name it.

“Instagram has definitely become

friendly, as this will limit one's creativity,” he adds.

Let's hope to see him break more records, even in the mainstream jungle, and change the way a release of a music is seen.

a great medium nowadays to promote your music. With the introduction of reels, it has become an added bonus for artists to make their music reach the right audience. The reach and engagement that reels see today are tremendous. “However, even though the platform provides a significant boost to making music more popular, I believe that one should not solely focus on making music that is reel-



Lagadapati Janaki and Sailaja Reddy



Dr. Nawab Shaikh Ibrahim and Kabeer Khan



Chandini



Shanoor sana



Mahmood Ali, Sahuda, Suman, Bholeki Tihaku Morojele



Simran Ahuja



Krishnavani and Sarspathi



Rina and Vibhudhi



Divya Sukui



Dr. Sabitha Rani

Minister of Home, Prisons, and Fire Services Mohammed Mahmood Ali, graced the International legendary award 2023, organised by the NSI Global Council, organised by Dr. Nawab Shaikh Ibrahim and Kabeer Khan at Taj Deccan



Swati Saraf



Anju Poddar



Juhi



Pinky Reddy

Renowned author Anju Poddar, along with enthusiastic art curator Pinky Reddy, inaugurated the first Les Petits store by its president Swati Saraf, in Banjara Hills, Hyderabad.

LISTINGS

Yatra Online limited partners with Delhi Capitals

Yatra Online Limited has rolled out their latest campaign - 'Jab Yatra hai toh kaahe ka dar, #BindaasPlanKar' to offer stress-free travel to its customers. The campaign is focused on the cancellation protection feature available on Yatra.com which ensures a smooth yatra for travelers despite any pesky disruptions or unconfirmed plans. Cancellation protection is an insurance policy offered by 'Liberty General Insurance Ltd' for the customers of Yatra booking flight tickets on Yatra's website, mobile site, and mobile app. This product facilitates customers to claim the reimbursement of flight ticket cost applied in the event of cancellation of the flight ticket. To back this latest offering and drive adoption, this digital marketing campaign will include 3 digital video commercials (DVCs) featuring popular faces of the Delhi Capital - Shafali Verma, Shikha Pandey, Taniya Bhatia, Alice Capsey and Tara Norris. All three DVCs focus on apprehensions that travelers have in booking their travel in advance and how the feature of cancellation protection addresses the concern.

Synchrony named among India's best workplaces building a culture of innovation

Synchrony has been recognised as one of India's best workplaces building a culture of innovation by all 2023, ranking under top 50, by Great Place to Work India. This recognition is a testament to Synchrony's people-first culture and commitment to fostering a positive and empowering work environment for its employees. The Top 50 organizations among India's Best Workplaces Building a Culture of Innovation by All 2023 have been evaluated based on a rigorous methodology. Synchrony's recognition highlights its efforts in developing people practices that prioritize employee well-being and proactively respond to feedback to create a high trust and performance culture.

KL Deemed to be university wins big for best water management


KL Deemed to be University has been awarded the Best Water Management- Institution by Advance Water Digest Pvt. Ltd. 2022-23 in an event supported by UNESCO and the Ministries of Jal Shakti and Environment of the Government of India. The university is honoured by this award for its exceptional water management strategies and conservation measures. With its operations, inventions, and associated initiatives, the University is helping to create a water-secure world. The Chief Guest Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Cabinet Minister in Ministry of Jal Shakti, Sister Shivani, life coach from Brahma Kumari's Spiritual Movement of India presided over the felicitation and presented the award to Dr. V Rajesh, Dean, P&D, KL Deemed to be University in New Delhi on March 16 2023.

Maruti Suzuki introduces All New Brezza S-CNG

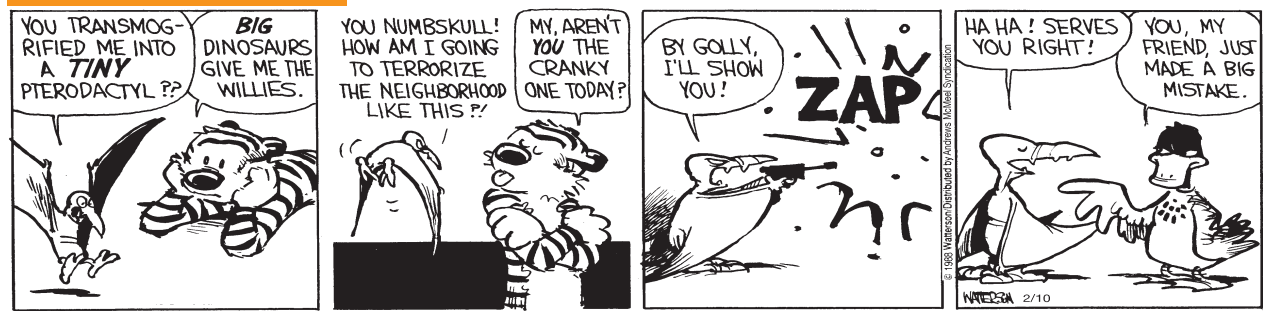
Further strengthening Maruti Suzuki's green mobility vision for India, the company has launched the all new Brezza with S-CNG technology for today's cool new generation. The all new hot and techy brezza S-CNG is designed to offer an eco-friendly motoring experience to customers while being loaded with features such as an electric sunroof, cruise control, smartplay pro infotainment system with wireless apple carplay and android auto, keyless push start and more. The price of it starts from Rs 9,14,000 and goes up to Rs 12,05,500.

FUN


ARCHIE



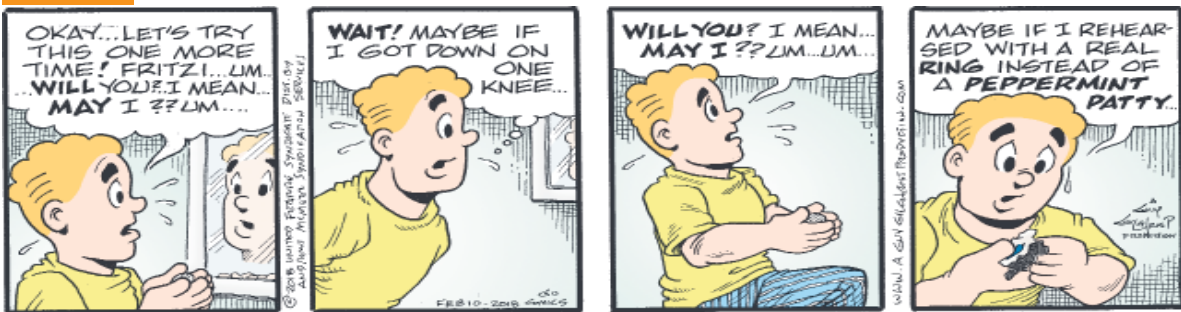
CALVIN AND HOBBS




GARFIELD



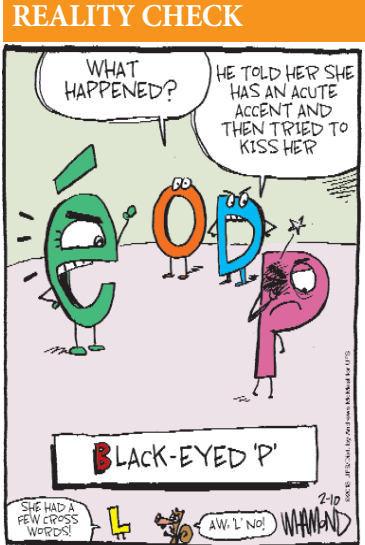
NANCY




GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	6
7					
9					
12	13		14	15	
17				18	
19					

SUDOKU

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

Yesterdays solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- The first teenage year
- A neck warmer
- This makes bread rise
- Having a meal
- Expensive
- A heat injury
- An artist's workshop
- Precise
- Shave with this
- A sheep minder

DOWN

- Easily burnt breakfast food
- Young child
- Things to play with
- Rub out
- Puts together from separate parts

SOLUTION

B	A	S	E	B	A	L	L	E
A	O	R	E	M				
T	A	C	K	M	U	S	E	U
E	A	S	E	L				
I	N	N	U	S	H			
E	R	A						
S	A	F	E					
I	S	O	L	M				
R	T	O	M	A	T	O	E	S

Aditi Rao Hydari: I walk onto a set and I’m like a sponge



AMARTYA SMARAN

Aditi Rao Hydari belongs to the pantheon of the most beautiful and charismatic leading ladies in Indian cinema. She made her Tollywood debut with director Indraganti Mohanakrishna's *Sammohanam* (2018). After the success of her maiden Telugu film, she went on to star in a couple of other T'wood flicks: *Antariksham 9000 KMPH* (2018), *V* (2020), and *Maha Samudram* (2021). Her portrayal of the iconic mythic character Anarkali, in Zee5's *Taj: Divided by Blood* is gaining widespread critical acclaim. The web series was released on Zee5 on March 3 and is available for viewing in three Indian languages (Hindi, Tamil, Telugu). Recently, the actress paid a visit to Hyderabad as a part of the webseries' promotions and *The Pioneer* didn't miss out on the opportunity to dig deeper into what fascinated her about Anarkali and *Taj: Divided by Blood*.

"My reference was my script," said Aditi Rao speaking of her character's reference. "Anarkali has been played by the iconic Madhubala ji and I think there can be no better Anarkali than her. We were not making *Mughal-E-Azam*, we were making a story about the Mughals, the succession, love, and betrayal. Actually, this is a family drama. This girl, Anarkali, of course, is a very important part of the story because she shakes up this kingdom. The prince's life changes because of her."

Initially Aditi thought the makers were remaking *Mughal-E-Azam* and was not quite keen on signing the project, "I thought that we were remaking *Mughal-E-Azam* and I was like, 'You can't touch that film. It's too perfect.' And then I realised that they were not making *Mughal-E-Azam* and they were so determined to have me. Once I heard it, it was such a new perspective and such a human story, I was very excited to do it. I got to delve into the very fragile, but courageous part of a girl who is the secret of a palace. It's such a beautiful combination of innocence and courage."

She says playing a girl from the 16th century who overturns the kingdom and has the courage to stand up to the emperor, to love, and stand by her loyalty was sort of a blessing. "Anarkali is a vibe. I was very happy that they didn't take no for an answer and they convinced me that I should do it. Now that the show is a success and people are loving Anarkali, I'm very relieved and grateful. I genuinely feel that it's Madhubala ji's blessings that have made this work for us."

"My work is to give them a platform or the stage to make their space look believable and plausible," said the director of the webseries, Ron Scalpello, while in an exclusive interaction with *The Pioneer* ahead of the show's release.

We asked Aditi as to what kind of direction she received from Ron Scalpello. She said, "The showrunners William and Ron described Anarkali to me as this epic tragic heroine. I know there's a lot of romanticism and poetic quality to that. Through my discussions with them, I was determined to also bring out the very steady courageous heart of Anarkali. Her power is her innocence and purity. The fact that she has been violated as a little girl but she has done no wrong. Her only fault has been to dream of freedom and fall in love with a boy, who happens to be a prince; she doesn't know that. She falls in love with the boy who respects her and who loves her and will go to any length for that love. Don't all of us want that?"

Aditi informed us that she was extremely determined to work on her lines. "When you're translating from English to Urdu, translations can be complicated," explained the V star. "I worked a lot on my dialogue because I felt like Anarkali should be soft, poetic, and graceful. But, because she has truth and purity on her side, I felt like whatever she says should hit you like a dagger."

The *Maha Samudram* actress was so empathetic towards her character that she personally requested the creators of the show that at no point should Anarkali lower her eyes out of fear or shame because she's not done anything wrong. "She just wanted to love and dance. Now that the makers were so collaborative, they encouraged me to play it like that and not to just play her as a damsel in distress. Even when she runs, I said she runs with courage, that she will be free. Even when she dies, she dies looking straight into the eyes of her love. Love is the most powerful thing," asserted the charming lady.

The *Sammohanam* actress only looks forward to great things and she's ever-so passionate to learn new things in life. "I realised one thing growing up in this industry, that I'm a person who functions from the heart," earnestly shared Aditi. And continued, "A lot of people think that, if they touch me, I'll break or if the wind comes, I'll just fly away and they think I'm this very sort of delicate person who needs to be saved but trust you, I will save you in a storm because I listen to my heart and I stand very steady. My vulnerability is my biggest strength, and I think I've learned to accept that over the years."

Wrapping up the interview, she expressed how delighted she is, now that she fulfilled her childhood dream of being a Mani Ratnam heroine, "My childhood dream of working with Mani Ratnam Sir and being a Mani Ratnam heroine really changed my life. I love to be challenged, nurtured, and learn everyday. These are the things I've learned over the years and I continue to learn. I walk onto a set and I'm like a sponge. That is why it's very important for me to work with people I really respect."



Angad Bedi to soon make his south debut with Nani



Actor Angad Bedi is all set to make his debut in the south with Telugu superstar Nani in his upcoming *Nani 30*. The movie stars Mrunal Thakur as well. This won't be the first time Angad and Mrunal will be coming together. Both actors have already worked on R. Balki's shorts in *Lust Stories 2*, which is set to be released.

A source close to Angad said: "He is preparing for his southern debut with Telugu movie *Nani 30*. It is one of the highly anticipated movies that's coming this year. One of the prime reasons for Angad making south Indian movies is because he wanted to try out movies which cater to different kinds of audiences."

Nani 30 is an emotional drama movie directed by Shouryuv, which revolves around a father-daughter relationship.

Actress Karthika Nair receives Golden Visa from UAE government

Karthika Nair, the prominent actress, has been honored with the distinguished UAE Golden Visa. As the Executive Director of Uday Samudra Group, the young entrepreneur has played a remarkable role in developing her business operations for several years.

Hamad Almansoori, a dignitary from the UAE, handed over the Golden Visa to the actress at a function held at TwoFour54 head office in Dubai. Commenting on the occasion, Karthika expressed her gratitude for being warmly welcomed into the UAE as a young female entrepreneur. She is honored to receive this recognition, and appreciates the UAE government's encouragement and openness to new talent and business ventures in their country.

Earlier, Radha, Karthika's mother and star heroine of the 1980s, was honoured with the Golden Visa after duly considering her contributions to films. Radha is credited with giving starry performances in a number of films across languages, especially Telugu and Tamil. She also acted in Kannada, Malayalam, and Hindi.

Uday Samudra Group's operations are firmly established in Kerala, encompassing a network of hotels and resorts, convention centers, and educational institutions. Karthika is confident that the latest recognition will enable her business to make significant contributions in the future.



Das Ka Dhamki will be a milestone movie in Vishwak Sen's career: Nivetha Pethuraj



Dynamic hero Vishwak Sen's first Pan-Indian film *Das Ka Dhamki* is all set to hit the theaters on March 22. In the upcoming film, the actor is not just a protagonist, but has simultaneously directed and produced the film. The songs of the film have already become a chartbuster.

Infact, the recently released theatrical trailer 2.0 has set high expectations on the film. The film also stars Nivetha Pethuraj, starring opposite Vishwak Sen in this film. Ahead of the film's release, the actress interacted with the media, and shared some insights about the film.

This is not going to be the first time that Nivetha and Vishwak will be seen together in the film. After *Paagal*, this is going to mark their second collaboration together. But guess what? The actress was also approached for *Ori Devuda*, while she was working on *Paagal*. However, "I didn't feel like the role was suitable for me. And later as I heard the script of *Dhamki*, and this being Vishwak's direction, I was sure I was going to do it."

Recently, the *RRR* star NTR Jr. in a recent event had said, "I wish *Das Ka Dhamki* will become a blockbuster. I hope Vishwak will stop direction. There are many young directors who are wishing to direct youngsters. It's a golden period for Telugu cinema. We should encourage such talent. I hope, this will be his last directorial movie. Vishwak told me that he spent everything on this movie." Meanwhile, while the scribes asked the lead actress about the same, she said, "Vishwak is a director with great energy. He has many excellent points. But I think he should direct other heroes instead of being an actor. Vishwak has a lot of mass. There is a touch like Lokesh Kanakaraj. Vishwak has the ability to direct big mass heroes like Balakrishna. He is crazy about gangster movies. He will be a very good gangster director. He has many good stories."

Das Ka Dhamki is a mass commercial entertainer, and the actress thinks "It will be the biggest opening in Vishwak's career, and the film stands as a milestone movie in Vishwak's career."

According to Nivetha, the main strength of the film is the story, and the music. While talking about the direction, she says she has no plans for it. "Apart from acting, I am focusing on business as well, opened a restaurant in Chennai," ends the actress who is currently working in a film under the production of Sushmita, and a film in Hindi.

Trivikram Srinivas felicitates young artiste at Natyakadambam

Under the guidance of Soujanya Srinivas, wife of renowned filmmaker Trivikram Srinivas, Sishtha Vaishnavi, impressed the audience with her fine dance routines at the Natyakadambam event. The Natyakadambam was organised in the presence of Central Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee eminent dance teacher Pasumarthi Ramalinga Sastry, director of culture department of Telangana, Dr. Mamidi Harikrishna, and director of NIGL Hospital, Dr. RV Raghavendra Rao. On this occasion, a guru pooja was also performed for the couple Trivikram Srinivas and Soujanya Srinivas. Trivikram Srinivas, who was also the chief guest at the event felicitated the young artiste, and said that the way in which the youth are excelling in many aspects is pleasing.



Rangamarthanda promises a complete package of emotions



Krishna Vamsi, the renowned Telugu director, is making a grand comeback with his latest film, *Rangamarthanda*. After a prolonged gap without delivering a significant blockbuster, the director has left no stone unturned in making this film a masterpiece. He has focused on his strength in presenting the core human emotions, and *Rangamarthanda* seems to be a reflection of just that.

Judging by the trailer and other promotional materials, it is evident that *Rangamarthanda* is a treasure trove of human emotions that are bound to resonate with the audience on a deeper level.

The film is an official remake of the Marathi film *Natsamrat*, and Krishna Vamsi has done justice to the original by bringing out the essence of the story in his own unique way.

Krishna Vamsi has assembled an outstanding cast for the film, including the likes of Prakash Raj, Ramya Krishnan, and Brahmanandam, all of whom are renowned actors in their own right. With such an exceptional lineup of actors, it is safe to say that *Rangamarthanda* promises to be a cinematic treat.

As per the latest announcement from Krishna Vamsi, the film is all set to release on March 22.

GRACE KNOCKS RCB, GG OUT OF WPL

PTI ■ MUMBAI

UP Warroirz's Grace Harris (72 off 41 balls) once again set the stage on fire with her heavy-duty hitting, as the team defeated Gujarat Giants for the second consecutive time by three wickets with just one delivery to secure a place in the playoffs of the inaugural season here on Monday.

Following the win, Mumbai Indians, Delhi Capitals and UP Warriors have made the grade, while Gujarat Giants and Royal Challengers Bangalore have been eliminated from the tournament.

Grace smashed the Giants attack to smithereens, hitting seven fours and four maximums in the chase of the Giants' 178/6. When she departed at 172, caught by Kim Garth of Harleen Deol, there were still seven runs to be scored for victory.

There were a few nervous moments when Simran Shaikh departed and it became 177/7 for the Warriorz. Two runs off the last two deliveries can always be a tricky proposition, but Sophie Ecclestone swept a Sneha Rana delivery to the boundary to signal the win with just one ball to spare.

Grace was involved in two productive partnerships, with McGrath was worth 78 runs, with Sophie it fetched 42 runs and it ensured an easy passage into the knockouts with just one balls to spare.

The partnership between Grace and Tahlia had laid a solid foundation and the former con-

tinued even after her country-mate had departed at 117/4.

Grace, who had scored an unbeaten 59 the last time the teams had met at the DY Patil Stadium and ensured a thrilling victory for the Warriorz with just one ball to spare, played with such ferocity, it made the Giants bowlers look mere pedestrians.

All this despite the UP Warriorz being off to a rank bad start on a pitch that offered good bounce and carry. The team was down in the dumps at 3/39 before Grace and Tahlia came together to turn the tables on the Giants.

Skipper Alyssa Healy (12) went early after giving indication she meant business.

Young Giants medium-pacer Monica Patel took the prized scalp in just the second over of the innings after being dispatched for consecutive boundaries by the Australian.

Monika was given a pep talk by team-mates, and the result was the big wicket two deliveries later. The left-arm kept a back-of-length delivery on middle and leg stump that bounced a bit extra and Healy committed herself to a pull shot slightly early, getting an edge which flew to Harleen Deol at deep deep square leg.

The third over saw the Warriorz lose their second key batter in Kiran Navgire with Australian right-arm quick Kim Garth dismissing the quick for just four and reducing the Warriorz to 2/19.

To add to their woes, left-arm spinner Tanuja Kanwar got Devika Vaidya caught behind the stumps by Sushma Verma in the fifth over. Devika aimlessly raced down the track



to flick the ball only to get a feather touch which flew to the keeper.

Earlier, a brilliant 93-run partnership between Dayalan Hemalatha (57 off 33 balls) and the second costliest player Ashleigh Gardner (60 off 39 balls) helped Gujarat Giants post 178/6 in their do-or-die clash.

The authority and attacking ways with which the duo played indicated they were on a mission, given the do-or-die nature of the contest as the tournament enters its business end.

By the time the partnership ended, with Hemalatha dismissed by Parshavi Chopra in the 17th over with the team total on 143, the stand had put the team on course for a competitive total.

South African opener Laura Wolvaardt and Sophia Dunkley went about their task of scoring runs in powerplay with a lot of urgency. Runs flowed freely while the two batting stalwarts were at the crease, with Wolvaardt smacking a fine boundary off just the third ball of the opening over bowled by left-arm pacer Anjali Sarvani.

The 23-year-old used the width on offer to steer it past backward point, making her intentions clear. Just two overs into the match and Gujarat Giants were in overdrive, with the team having scored 26 runs.

The powerful six by the South African off a length delivery outside off stump from left-arm India spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad in the second over had class and power written all over it.

Soon England batter Dunkley took charge, giving a further fillip to the scoring rate.

Gujarat Giants gave bewildering reasoning for my omission: Dottin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

West Indian Deandra Dottin has expressed disappointment at her exclusion from Women's Premier League franchise Gujarat Giants, terming it "bewildering".

The 31-year-old Caribbean all-rounder was signed for Rs 60 lakh by the Adani-owned side, but before the start of the tournament, she was excluded from the squad on medical grounds.

The Giants had stated that Dottin failed to get medical clearance by the deadline, which was the reason why they replaced her with Australia's Kim Garth. But Dottin refuted the claims made by the franchise.

"I wish to issue a brief statement in light of ongoing speculation surrounding my recent exclusion from the inaugural Women's Premier League that is currently taking place in India.

"I remain deeply disappointed by what can only, plausibly, be described as bewildering reasoning for my omission from the tournament," Dottin said in statement which she posted on Twitter.

"I was bought at the WPL auction by the Gujarat Giants, a franchise owned and operated by the Adani Group. At the commencement of the tournament, the franchise claimed that I was excluded from the team because I was apparently "recovering from a medical situation".

"This was followed by a

subsequent, clarifying statement that contended that I was, in fact "unable to obtain medical clearance" despite being granted as recently as February 20th," she said.

The veteran of 143 ODIs and 127 T20Is said that she was shocked by the decision taken by Giants' team management.

"I would like to make it clear that I had experienced minor abdominal pain and swelling for which I had sought treatment in December 2022. This was followed by two further referrals to specialists for second opinions in December and January 2023, respectively.

"Following testing and investigations by the specialists, I was asked to rest until February 13th and was cleared to resume fitness and playing activity from February 14th.

"Consequently, I recommenced my personal training and fitness regime according to the guided timelines and experienced some soreness on the first day of resumed training which was anticipated and reasonable, given that I had been asked to rest in the weeks preceding training." Dottin said her words were misinterpreted by the Giants.

"I was transparent about this in correspondence with the Gujarat Giants physiotherapist, however, this was misconstrued and later conveyed to members of the franchise's management team as me "experiencing abdominal pain post-session" which was not what I had indicated.



New Zealand whitewash Sri Lanka

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Lanky fast bowler Blair Tuckner and spinner Michael Bracewell slogged all day in a Basin Reserve gale to bowl New Zealand to an innings and 58 run win over Sri Lanka in the second Test on Monday and a sweep of the two-match series.

The win was completed with only minutes remaining on the fourth day and capped New Zealand's extraordinary summer of home Test matches, which includes a one-run win over England at the Basin Reserve and a two-wicket win over Sri Lanka from the last ball of the first Test.

Once again New Zealand couldn't win without drama as it pursued Sri Lanka's last two wickets in fading light and a blustering wind on Monday. Had it not bowled out Sri Lanka, it would have had to have returned to try to do so on the final day, when rain was forecast

in Wellington.

Sri Lanka's last two pairs defied the New Zealand bowlers for almost two hours before the home team secured the wickets it needed for victory. New Zealand had to bowl 142 overs to dismiss Sri Lanka in the second innings, after bowling 67 in the first innings before enforcing the follow on.

Dhanahaya de Silva made 98 and Dinesh Chandimal 62 to help Sri Lanka bat throughout all but a few minutes of the final day. Kusal Rajitha then batted for 2-1/2 hours, Prabath Jayasuriya and Lahiru Kumara for an hour each as the Sri Lanka tail gallantly tried to force the match into the fifth day when weather might intervene. Southee took 3-21.

New Zealand claimed an extra half hour as the light faded and Rajitha's long vigil ended when he fell to Tim Southee for 20 as Sri Lanka was all out for 358.

"Losing the toss and being asked to bat and being able to put a score on the board was very pleasing to see, and set up the performance the bowlers produced over the last two days," New Zealand captain Tim Southee said.

"There are few weary bodies tonight so it's good to have that extra day off. We thought if we could put that one last push in tonight it was one less warm-up to do tomorrow."

Double centuries by Kane Williamson and Henry Nicholls allowed New Zealand to post 580-4 in its only innings before it bowled out Sri Lanka for 164 and enforced the follow with the tourists 416 behind.

New Zealand came into the fourth day in a commanding position: Sri Lanka was 113-2 when play began, still 303 runs behind, and New Zealand found itself in a race to complete the win against the possibility of a rained-out final day.

Swiss Open: Title holder Sindhu eyes turnaround

PTI ■ BASEL

Enduring a wretched run of form, defending champion PV Sindhu will hope to get back to winning ways when she competes at the Swiss Open Super 300 tournament, beginning here on Tuesday.

World number 9 HS Prannoy, who had finished runners-up in the last edition, too will eye a better show after a second round exit in the All England Championships.

The fifth seeded Indian, however, will have a tough task at hand as he opens against 2018 world championships silver medallist China's Shi Yuqi, who finished second best in Birmingham last week.

While Prannoy has been the most consistent singles player from the country, Sindhu and Lakshya Sen have struggled this season, making early exits in a series of events.

Sindhu, who parted ways with Korean coach Park Tae-sang after failing to get results following a long injury



lay-off, made a first round exit last week after losing to Zhang Yi Man of China.

A double Olympic medallist, Sindhu will hope to regain her confidence as she returns to the \$210,000 event, opening her campaign against local player Jenjira Stadelmann.

Sen, who had made early exits from Malaysia and India Open, notched up an intense win over Chou Tien Chen last week but faltered against former world number 2 and two-time world championships medallist Anders Antonsen of Denmark.

MI bags New York franchise in Major League Cricket

AP ■ NEW YORK

After Delhi Capitals and Chennai Super Kings, Mumbai Indians have now joined the US cricket revolution bandwagon as they acquired the New York franchise in the upcoming Major League Cricket (MLC), here on Monday.

The team will participate in the inaugural edition of Major League Cricket (MLC) subject to completion of customary due diligence; negotiation, and execution of definitive binding agreements, and receipt of required corporate, regulatory and third-party approvals and compliances," a press release stated.

Earlier, GMR group, co-owners of Delhi Capitals, have invested alongside Microsoft CEO



Satya Nadella in Seattle Orcas, while Chennai Super Kings are part of the Texas team.

"I am thrilled to welcome our New York franchise to the growing MI Family! With our entry into the first cricket league in the US, I hope we are able to establish Mumbai Indians as a global brand of fearless and entertaining cricket! This is another new beginning for MI and I look forward to the exciting journey ahead," owner Nita Ambani said.

The MI New York will be the fifth franchise after Mumbai Indians (IPL), MI Cape Town (SA20), MI Emirates (ILT20), and Mumbai Indians (WPL), in three different continents, four different countries, and five different leagues.

RR to continue with Sangakkara

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Kumar Sangakkara will continue to serve in the dual role of Rajasthan Royals' director of cricket and head coach, and will be assisted by Trevor Penney, the IPL franchise said on Monday. Fellow Sri Lankan legend Lasith Malinga also continues with the franchise as fast bowling coach, along with Zubin Bharucha as strategy, development and performance director, Giles Lindsay as head of analytics and technology, Siddhartha Lahiri as support coach and Dishant Yagnik as fielding coach.

The Sanju Samson-led team has also retained the services of John Gloster (head

physio), Dr. Rob Young (team doctor), and AT Rajamani Prabhu (strength and conditioning coach). The IPL 2022 finalists have also on-boarded Mon Brokman as their mental performance coach and Neil Barry as the assistant physio.

Brokman, who has previously worked with athletes from various Olympic sports, joins the Royals to assist with mental conditioning and help the players with their decision-making during pressure situations. Meanwhile, Barry has served Rajasthan Royals' partner franchise Barbados Royals in the Caribbean Premier League, and will be assisting John Gloster during the IPL season.

Hima Das, Ancy Sojan win gold in 200m and long jump in IGP

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Star sprinter Hima Das won the 200m race quite comfortably in 23.79 seconds while long jumper Ancy Sojan shared the limelight with a best effort of 6.49m in the Indian Grand Prix-1 athletics event here on Monday.

Assam's Hima beat Aishwarya Kailash Mishra (24.81) of Maharashtra and VK Vismaya (24.82) of Kerala to take the women's 200m gold at the Laxmibai National College of Physical Education here.

Sojan, meanwhile, produced a series of leaps beyond 6.00m and won with a best effort of 6.49m, just past the 6.45m mark laid down as the Asian Games qualifying standard.

The meet though received lukewarm response with very

few top athletes competing in it. Many events had just three athletes competing.

Women's high jump and men's triple jump saw just two competitors each, men's 400m hurdles four, women's 400m hurdles three — one disqualified later —, women's shot put three, 800m women three and women's 5000m three participants.

Haryana's Krishan Kumar stepped up the pace approaching the halfway mark and topped the men's 800m race, clocking 1:47.26, his second best time over the distance. The Army man went past the Asian Games qualifying standard of 1:49.05.

The men's 5000m race saw three Uttar Pradesh runners come home inside the Asian Games qualifying mark of 14:00.00.

Lovlina, Sakshi advance to quarterfinals of Women's World C'ships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain made a winning start to her campaign as she and Sakshi Chaudhary moved to the quarterfinals of the Women's World Championships with dominant victories here on Monday.

Both Sakshi (54kg) and Lovlina (75kg) notched identical 5-0 unanimous decision wins respectively.

While Lovlina out-punched Mexico's Vanessa Ortiz, Sakshi got the better of Zhazira Urakbayeva of Kazakhstan to progress to the last eight stage.

But the most electrifying Indian performance of the day was displayed by Preeti (54kg). The youngster though eventually lost her bout to last year's 52kg silver medallist Thailand's Jitpong Jutamas by a 4-3 verdict, the bout was so close that a review had to be taken.

Preeti entered the tournament on the back of a selection row, where her place in the side was questioned as she

didn't win the National Championships.

However, the 19-year-old justified her place in the Indian team with her fearless performance.

The tenacious Preeti showed aggression against a more experienced opponent to take the first round 4-1.

She fought toe to toe with Jutamas as both pugilists connected punches but the Thai was able to edge the Indian and took the remaining two rounds with the final result being decided by a bout review.

"I learned a lot from this bout, the competitor was also good. I need to work harder. I was aggressive in the first round and I should have continued that and I should have dominated the bout," Preeti said.

Competing in her new 75kg category, Lovlina, who received a first round bye, won her opening encounter to walk one step closer to a medal.

"It was my first bout, the boxer was shorter than me. I was not able to follow by strategy to the T. I am not



very happy with this performance, I could have done better. She was coming ahead so I was forced to move back," Lovlina said after her bout.

"It is my first World Championships in this weight category. It will be difficult as the other boxers are already competing in this weight class. We will have to see how to play with which opponent. I think I can do better."

Sakshi, the 2021 Asian Championship bronze medallist, utilised her height and long reach to her advantage. She would punch Urakbayeva and step back quickly, not letting her opponent counter-attack.

The Indian danced around the ring, playing with aggression and released a number of punches to emerge victorious.

"I played much better than I expected. She is a good boxer so I thought it would be a 19-20 fight but the strategy worked for me and I was able to dominate," Sakshi said after the bout.