

Monday Mirchi

The writing is on the wall

When the writing is on the wall, even officials conditioned for long to be mum suddenly become vocal and throw their weight around, leaving the 'tough' administration in a tizzy. With the Telugu Desam Party winning three Graduates MLC seats and the lone MLAs quota MLC seat it had contested in the recent elections, the climate in Andhra Pradesh Secretariat has changed. Officers at all levels, from junior to senior, have become unusually vocal. The corridors of power, previously confined to whispers, are now echoing with clear and bold talk at high decibels, especially on matters concerning outstanding payments. Officers have begun to openly insist on timely payments, regardless of the damage potential to the cash-strapped government. Herald the change, right on the day of the declaration of MLC elections' results, one of the officers bemoaned loudly that his newspaper bills had not been paid. Taking a cue from him, others are likely to steel themselves in the days ahead in line with the changed political atmosphere in Andhra Pradesh.

Centre to make the most of retired officers

The Government of India has changed rules with scope to engage seasoned bureaucrats from among those who have retired. As the demand for high-performing IAS officers is high in the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), the cream of retired IAS officials may be engaged in the wing as consultants. The icing on the cake for these bureaucrats, who will continue to enjoy the glamour quotient of their work, is that there is no age limit for being hired as consultants. Further, some of these rehired bureaucrats, especially nosey parkers, could be appointed to probe disciplinary cases against serving officials. This top-up in career progression has enthused bureaucrats who no longer need to pin their hopes on always being in the good books of the state government. Not all bureaucrats in TS are getting the role they want. That apart, the applications for a few posts defined recently are also in big numbers. It would be interesting to see who all will make the moves first.

TSPSC reform may begin with heads rolling

With outraged students and the unemployed as well as enraged opposition parties demanding total overhaul of the Telangana State Public Service Commission following the leak of multiple examination papers, it appears that the mending process will begin with TSPSC Commissioner B Janardhan Reddy being asked to put in his papers. There is a bubbling anger among youth that nobody in TSPSC is being held responsible and accountable. A little bird told yours truly that oversight at the top level may cost Janardhan Reddy his post since he has been directly in the line of fire. The buzz is that heads may roll as part of the reforms. For, during the review meeting with the Chief Minister, K Chandrasekhar Rao reportedly opined that the situation could have been prevented had the chairman and secretary Anita Ramchandran been more careful

with staff and confidential matters. The buzz is that the changes are expected to be effective - the Special Investigation Team (SIT) submits its inquiry report on the leak of papers to the state government.

What information does Bandi have up his sleeves?

Does BJP TS unit chief Bandi Sanjay have vital information concerning the TSPSC paper leak up his sleeves? This question springs up when we consider the fact that Bandi Sanjay, while he was at a function in Siddipet, suddenly called for a media briefing around 10:00 pm. In less than seven minutes of that interaction, Sanjay made accusations that the Chief Minister's Office too is involved in the TSPSC paper leak. For the unversed, Bandi had claimed that a retired officer with a key role in CMO, who had previously leaked Singareni papers, was instrumental in the leak of TSPSC papers. While newshounds were wondering what information Bandi had and who had tipped him at that late hour, the BJP leader cryptically also said that when TSPSC Commission was setup, three people had decided the Commission's structure and 'all of them are involved'.

Cops and neighbourhood watch

It looks like cops too need to be wary of neighbourhood watch, though they know it to be an effective method of reducing crime! Otherwise, a cop's sincerity could be questioned based on his neighbours and who he moves with. TPCC chief Revanth Reddy has his own doubts over the objectivity of SIT Incharge for TSPSC leakage A R Srinivas. For, the police officer happens to be a neighbour of Minister KTRama Rao's relative. A R Srinivas and Raj Pakala (brother-in-law of KTR) live in the same locality at Raidurgam. Revanth told the media, ostensibly for private consumption, that A R Srinivas and Raj Pakala speak to each other during evening walks and at social events.

IPS officers detest politicised probes

The Telangana government's decision to constitute Special Investigation Teams (SITs) -- one to counter the central government's CBI in MLAs poaching case and the other on TSPSC paper leak issue - and the notices issued to TPCC president A Revanth Reddy and Telangana BJP president Bandi Sanjay Kumar and others have embroiled the IPS officers concerned in avoidable controversies. They now feel torn between the tug of war between the BJP-led government at the Centre and the BRS government in the state for no fault of theirs. IPS officers are working under the BRS government, and they need to act according to the directions of the state government. But their service rules are governed by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs. So, they are unwittingly getting involved in a proxy war between BRS and BJP. Official circles are now worried that the Union government could use central investigation agencies like IT and ED against officials who do not toe the Union government's line. All they want is cordial relations between the state and the central governments.

-Yours truly

Cong MPs ready to resign for Rahul's sake: Revanth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Pointing out that double engine means 'Adani-Pradhani', TPCC President Revanth Reddy declared that Congress MPs are ready to resign from Parliament for the sake of Rahul Gandhi.

Revanth said that Adani's engine has been repaired and the Prime Minister (Pradhani) is afraid.

The BJP which mocked Rahul by calling him 'Pappu' now has learnt that Rahul is a firebrand and that is why the BJP wanted to remove him from their path.

The BJP disqualified Rahul hastily for pulling up the BJP government on the Adani issue, Revanth said. One can understand how much Prime Minister Modi is afraid of Rahul. The BJP now means British Janata Party, he said.

Addressing the satyagraha at



the Gandhi Bhavan on Sunday as part of the nationwide protest to condemn the disqualification of Rahul from the Lok Sabha following his conviction in a defamation case by a Surat court, Revanth said that Adani is 'looting' the nation's assets.

Narcotic drugs worth thousands of crores are being smuggled through the Adani port and

Adani is trying to loot the nation and make Indian youth addicted to drugs, he said.

Rahul has already said the BJP has been trying to take over the nation using Adani. However, Adani was exposed by the Hindenburg report.

The BJP blocked Rahul when he tried to file a complaint with the ED seeking a probe. He said that Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah can do nothing and that the Congress will fight for Rahul Gandhi.

Addressing the gathering, Bhongir MP Komatireddy Venkat said that the BJP disqualified Rahul for killing democracy. He made it clear that they will continue their fight till justice is done to Rahul. He said that they will resign their MP posts if Sonia and Kharge direct them. "We are all one on that," he said.

Big guys behind TSPSC question paper leak, says Kishan Reddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Declaring that big guys were behind the TSPSC leakage, Union Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy demanded that the youth of Telangana are angry due to the leakage.

He criticised the government saying that the leak took place due to its inefficiency and added that the government failed in departments. Youth have been responding against the BRS government and the

meeting BJYM leaders, who were arrested during the protest against the TSPSC leakage at the Chanchalguda Jail on Sunday, Kishan said that the youth of Telangana are angry due to the leakage.

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Farmers' storm will hit...

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KCR said that farmers are being deceived by Uttar Pradesh and Punjab leaders. "I coined the 'Abki Baar Kisan Sarkar' slogan to ensure that farmers do not get deceived again by leaders. The suicides by farmers cannot be stopped if the nation gets divided in the name of religions," he said.

He said the Maharashtra government had deposited Rs 6000 in farmers' accounts immediately after the BRS' meeting in Nanded a few months ago and people got to know about the strength of the BRS.

"Fadnavis asked me what work I had in Maharashtra. I am telling Fadnavis that the Maha government has to implement the five schemes of Telangana. Then I will not come here or else I will definitely come. The Centre has to give a minimum of Rs 10,000 to farmers under PM Kisan."

Earlier, KCR paid floral tributes to the statues of Chhatrapati Shivaji, Basaveshwarudu and Dr BR Ambedkar, Anna Bahu Sathe, Mahatma Phule and Ahilya Bhai Holkar placed on the dais.

Will it be judgement day...

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Political circles strongly feel after the latest national political developments in Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's issue the Centre will not spare Kavitha in the Delhi liquor case. They think that the arrest of Kavitha in the Delhi liquor scam is certain but when the ED arrest

her is not known.

Kavitha has already appeared before the ED twice and ED officials gathered information from her. If the ED summons Kavitha asking her to appear before them again after the Supreme Court's decision the ED may arrest her.

After Rahul's issue, all opposition parties have

We are proud of you

KCR congratulates Nikhat Zareen for winning gold

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao expressed happiness over Nikhat Zareen winning the gold medal in the 50-kg category in the finals of the Women's World Boxing Championship held at the KD Jadhav Indoor Stadium in New Delhi on Sunday.

KCR congratulated Nikhat Zareen on the occasion and also gave her his best wishes.

The CM said that Nikhat Zareen, who won the gold medal for India in the Women's World Boxing Championship with a 5-0 win over Vietnam's boxer Nuyen, is a child of Telangana. With her successive victories, Nikhat has once again made India proud.

KCR said that this is the second gold medal in her career in world competitions. He said the Telangana government is committed to the development of sports and

the welfare of sportspersons.

Harish, Kavitha laud Zareen

Leaders showered congratulations on boxer Nikhat Zareen for winning the second World Boxing Championship on Sunday in New Delhi.

Finance Minister T. Harish Rao Tweeted, "Heartly Congratulations @nikhat_zareen for winning the gold medal in the Women's World Boxing Championship by knocking out the opponent with powerful punches! That's the second successive Women's World Boxing Championship title for Nikhat. India is proud of your achievements."

BRS MLC Kavitha tweeted, "The Indian Flag once again flies high at the Women's World Boxing Championship. Congratulations @nikhat_zareen on clinching Gold and making India proud."

Nikhat wins her 2nd World...

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"Today's bout was the toughest for me, she is an Asian champion and my next target is Asian Games and I might meet her, so I will work hard," Nikhat said.

"It was a roller coaster bout, she got warning, I got warning, she got count so did I. But I went all out."

Nikhat, who has moved down from her preferred 52kg, looked tentative at first as Tam was the first one to attack. But after a few seconds, the home favourite leapt forward to attack. She then landed two right hooks, followed by straight jabs.

Tam was handed a penalty point for clinching further, tilting the result in Nikhat's favour as she took the first three minutes by a unanimous verdict.

But Tam made a strong comeback as she launched into attack mode. The south-paw landed several punches, forcing Nikhat to play with her head down that earned her a penalty point. The Vietnamese managed to take the round 3-2.

In the final three minutes, both boxers went for broke and attacked each other relentlessly.

If Nikhat's powerful right cross forced the referee to give Tam the eight count, Tam's jab compelled the referee to do the same to the Indian.

"For me, this is the first major competition in this category after the Commonwealth Games, which did not have much competition.

DS re-joins Cong

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He said that if his health is okay he will go to Gandhi Bhavan and bless Sanjay and that his younger son Arvind is already in public service as an MP. He said that wherever his sons are they will have his blessings. He revealed that his sons are working for the people regardless of parties.

After a while, DS came to Gandhi Bhavan in a wheelchair and joined the Congress.

Rumours spread that DS' younger son Arvind, who is the BJP MP from Nizamabad, released the letter.

It may be recalled that DS played a key role in making the Congress victorious in united Andhra Pradesh in 2004 and 2009. DS joined the BRS after resigning from the Congress on July 2, 2015 and became a BRS Rajya Sabha Member.

halfway up the night sky. But don't be late: Mercury and Jupiter will quickly dip below the horizon around half an hour after sunset.

The five-planet spread can be seen from anywhere on Earth, as long as you have clear skies and a view of the west.

A martyr's son can't be silenced

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With several other parties condemning the action against Rahul Gandhi, top Congress leaders Ashok Gehlot and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said the issue had brought the Opposition together and this unity would grow as days go by.

Kharge, who led the "Sankalp Satyagraha" protest outside Delhi's Raj Ghat after the police refused permission to hold it at the Mahatma Gandhi memorial, asked why the BJP was feeling hurt if fugitives Nirav Modi and Lalit Modi were being criticised.

"They talk of OBC now, is Lalit Modi OBC, is Nirav Modi OBC, is Mehul Choksi OBC, they ran away with people's money. If they are fugitives why are you pained if they are criticised."

"You (BJP) punish the person who works to save the country

and send those abroad who loot the country," Kharge said.

Staunchly defending the former Congress president, Priyanka Gandhi said no cases were registered when her brother was called Mir Jafar. Asking if a martyred prime minister's son can insult the country, Priyanka Gandhi said, "This is an insult to that prime minister who gave his life." She said her family gave its blood to the nation and the Congress is ready to do anything to protect democracy and is not scared.

"You have called a martyr's son anti-national, Mir Jafar, insulted his mother in Parliament. The prime minister in Parliament asks why this family does not use the 'Nehru' surname."

"You insult the entire family and the tradition of Kashmiri Pandits. But there is no case against you. You don't get a case or a two-year term and no one

disqualifies you. Why?" she asked.

She hit out at the BJP over the allegation of dynastic politics.

"How much will you insult one person?" Priyanka Gandhi said and asked if Lord Ram, who was sent into exile, was a "parivaarwadi".

"They accuse us of dynasticism. Who was Lord Ram? He was exiled and he fulfilled his responsibilities towards his family and motherland. Was Lord Ram 'parivaarwadi'? Were Pandavas 'parivaarwadi' because they fought to uphold the values of their family. Should we be ashamed that our family members sacrificed their lives for this country?" the Congress leader said.

Priyanka Gandhi said till today, they have been insulting "our family and we remained silent but not anymore".

"Time has come and we are

not the ones who will remain silent anymore," she told the outside Rajghat.

Targeting the prime minister, she said, Rahul Gandhi was being attacked for asking questions about industrialist Gautam Adani, who she alleged was being protected by the entire ruling establishment.

"Take me to jail but the truth is this country's prime minister is a coward. He is hiding behind his power and (he) is arrogant. But this country's tradition is that people reply to an arrogant king," she said.

Priyanka Gandhi also urged the media to understand their responsibility as "democracy is in danger".

"If the one who questions is barred from contesting elections for eight years, it is not right for the country or its democracy. Time has come -- daro mat (don't be afraid)".

Bandi Sanjay...

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Under these circumstances, when I came to know through independent sources that a large number of people had qualified from a certain village, I put it in the public domain so that, as the SIT, you would investigate the matter to find out its veracity," he said.

"Since I am a public representative and the President of TS BJP, I get information from many sources and in situations like this, it becomes incumbent on my part to put it in the public domain. Instead of pursuing the matter, you chose to serve a notice on me and expect me to appear before you. In

ISRO successfully injects...

Continued from page 1

"As we know today the first 16 satellites of the series are already placed into the right orbit. And now it has gone into the far south of the Earth and we will be getting confirmation of the remaining spacecraft separation soon, once the onboard storage data is acquired by our Indian ground stations," he said, addressing scientists at the Mission Control Centre.

The launch was the 18th for OneWeb while for ISRO, it would be the second mission in 2023 after the successful launch of the SSLV/D2-EOS07 undertaken in February.

"Till now based on observations, the vehicle has done extremely well, it went up to the right orbit and placed the space-

craft at the right orbit and also with very minimal disturbances to it," Somanath noted.

Somanath expressed gratitude to NSIL for its support and also for the confidence that the OneWeb India team reposed in ISRO for building the rocket.

Union Minister Jitendra Singh lauded ISRO for Sunday's successful launch.

"Proud to be associated with the department of space #ISRO at a time when India under PM @NarendraModi has emerged as the frontline Space Tech nation of the world," he wrote on Twitter.

"Team ISRO adds yet another feather to its much decorated hat. Successful launch of LVM3-M3/OneWeb India-2 Mission", the Union Minister of State (independent charge) Science

and Technology said.

OneWeb now has 616 satellites in its fleet, which is more than enough to launch global services later this year.

This mission marks OneWeb's second satellite deployment from India, highlighting the collaboration between the United Kingdom and Indian space industries, the company said.

The first set of satellite separation (comprising four of the 36 satellites) took place around 20 minutes after lift-off while the remaining were deployed into their respective orbits in phases later. NewSpace India Ltd Chairman and Managing Director D Radhakrishnan hailed the Indian space agency for undertaking a complex mission and being successful in it.

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Corporate Connections launches Hyd chapter

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Corporate Connections (CC Hyderabad1) launched its first chapter in Hyderabad. CC is a global business networking organisation where the main purpose is to connect leaders around the world and empower them to create opportunities and meaningful change in their organisations and communities.

CC is currently active in five continents, 24 countries and 25 cities in India. The tagline of CC is where leaders connect with the theme of making connections that matter.

Lighting of the lamp by dignitaries from various spheres of the corporate world marked the event. Guest speaker Srinivas Rao Mahankali, CEO at T Hub, Hyderabad, said, "T Hub is the new Charminar of Hyderabad as a city that is rapidly growing with investments and interests from across the globe. Hyderabad is the vaccine capital of the world and proved itself during the

CC is currently active in five continents, 24 countries and 25 cities in India

pandemic by catering to the needy. Its excellent weather and cordial people make it the ultimate destination beating even Bengaluru. I have observed that there is a paradigm shift of IT corporates to Hyderabad." Nihar Yerubandi, Executive Director, CC, said, "There are moments when history is made in a historical city like Hyderabad. This is a community for mutual growth because Hyderabad has a good eco system and plenty of startups."

KVT Ramesh, National Director, CC, said, "We need to connect and empower leaders with core values in order to excel as a catalyst for change and evolve in every sphere."

Western Australian delegates visit T Hub, sign MoUs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Stephen Dawson, Minister for Emergency Services, Western Australia, and his team members working from India and abroad have visited T Hub and We Hub in Hyderabad on Sunday. They were explained regarding the departments by Anish Antony, Chief Executive Officer, T Hub and Dr Sriram, Chief Executive Officer, Data Security Council of India.

"I am very excited today being at T Hub. As part of the delegation of Western Australia, we are here discussing business, academics and government activities to recognise opportunities and things happening right here at T Hub. We have information that T Hub is the largest innovation centre globally, doing extraordinary business and thousands of innovations projects on the ground for the past



few years. We are here to diversify our economy and learn from everybody. Then we also visited WE Hub where women are assisted to work on their business projects. We want to get partnered with them," said Stephen Dawson.

The Memorandum of Understanding between Cyber Security Centre of Excellence (DSCI) (A NASSCOM

Initiative) and Cyber West, will harness the expertise of both organisations using innovation, design, workshops and industry engagement.

The MoU between Cyber Security Centre of Excellence and Edith Cowan University will collaborate for the mutual benefit of both the organisations including research, education, innovation, incuba-

tion, marketing, hackathons, corporate innovation and training programmes.

The Letter Of Intent between We Hub and Cyber West will accelerate growth in the local and international ecosystem and support goals of diversity and inclusion within the cyber security sector. This collaboration will also help in seeding female-led cyber security startups and also integrating cyber safety into all cohorts.

The Western Australia delegation has also elaborated that they have been working with Hyderabad-based space tech startup Skyroot.

Skyroot is the first Indian private industry from Hyderabad to make a rocket (Prarambh or beginning) and successfully fly it from the Satish Dhawan Spaceport in Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh.

Expert's call to protect environment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A three-day international conference on Higher Education - Sustainable Development concluded in Osmania University's Political Science Department.

On the last day of the conference, prominent environmentalist and former head of OU Political Science Department Prof Dr Purushotham Reddy said that human society is facing a crisis by neglecting the environment. He said that protecting the environment is the first duty of man.

National and international dignitaries from various fields presented research papers on various topics in the three-day conference.

In all, 187 research papers were presented by researchers, professors and intellectuals from all over the country in 24 technical

sessions.

The speakers opined that the role of higher education institutions is very active in fostering sustainable development and finding solutions to the challenges faced by the society.

The conference discussed a wide range of topics including the role of innovation in Indian education, dissemination of indigenous knowledge systems and impact of Covid-19 on higher education and globalisation of Indian higher education.

On the first day, a total of eight technical sessions were held and 79 research papers were presented.

Day 2 consisted of 10 technical sessions in which 76 papers were presented, of which 21 papers were presented online from various locations across the country and the world. On Day 3, six sessions were held, with 32 paper presentations.

Farm houses raided, 33 held for violating norms

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Special Operations team of Cyberabad police conducted raids on various farm houses, dhabas and pubs and arrested 33 persons for violating norms.

A total of 31 locations in the Cyberabad Commissionerate were raided over the weekend.

Among those arrested from Lakshmi Villa Guest House are A Vasu, S Kalyan, R Anirudh, M Sourab, Joel, S Vivek, K Vamshi and R Mahesh. Those arrested from Kartikeya Residency include Barla Shiva Dinesh and a victim who was rescued. Two persons including Naresh and Raju are absconding. Those held from Jasmin Farm House include L

Vidya Sagar, Kishore, N Santosh Kumar, Laxmi Narayana, I Shiva Kumar, Abhijeet Singh, Sunil Kumar, K Santosh Kumar, Nagaraju Sai and Obulreddy Pramad Reddy. Mohammed Mustafai Ali, the owner of the farm house, is absconding. Acreation Farm House owner Anup was also arrested.

Those arrested from Mango Wood Farm at Brown Town Resort include Alapati Rajesh, Boya Uday Kiran, Yadlapati Bhargav, Poeti Kumar, Paruchuri Sudhakar, Shanig Dinesh, A Bharat Kumar, Nasari Shashidhar, Bathula Kurumurthy, Simhadri Vicky, Pedin chetti Rajesh, Egara Ravi, Pilli Govind, Madumanchi Vinod Kumar and Valluri Satish.

Two persons including Nithin Agarwal and Abhijeet are absconding.

Other persons arrested were identified as Tanish Agarwal (organiser), Vivek Agarwal, Rishabh Agarwal, Karthik Agarwal, Rishab Agarwal, Mayank Gupta, Nehal and Shiv Shankar.

The police seized three packets of used condoms, eight sealed condoms, 100 grams of loose dry ganja, 10 hookah pots, 11 hookah flavours, 10 hookah pipes, three silver papers, two boxes of coal, 23 beers, nine Breezers, seven Whisky bottles, 47 mobile phones, nine vehicles, including seven four-wheelers and two two-wheelers and cash worth Rs 1,400.

Worn out infra: NTR Gardens cries for revamp

JOHN PASAPALA
■ HYDERABAD

The iconic NTR Gardens, that once encapsulated the spirit of Hyderabad, is now in need of a major revamp. Over 15-year-old Infrastructure that is worn out, inconsistent maintenance and substandard amusement rides are leaving the visitors disappointed. The park is witnessing a significantly low number of visitors. Local vendors said that repeated road blocks changed the pace of life at NTR Marg.

Built in the memory of former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, NT Rama Rao, the NTR Gardens was inaugurated in 2002, adjacent to the Hussain Sagar. The park was a must-visit to every

tourist to Hyderabad over the last decade-and-a-half. However, with focus shifting to major ongoing projects like the new Secretariat, Dr BR Ambedkar statue and the Martyrs Memorial on NTR Marg Road, the iconic NTR Gardens remains neglected.

The toy train that used to attract large crowds, has been sitting barren in the park for several months now. The management said that the 20-year-old train has fallen in repairs. Preethi Singh, a visitor to NTR Gardens, said, "I have come here hoping to take a peaceful ride in the train. We used to do this years ago when everything in the park was intact. Now the train is in a broken condition. They kept one park on display that is full of dust."



Another visitor Krishna said, "The park has become very old. All the chairs, toy cars and rides are old and rusted. The giant wheel, especially is in a dangerous con-

dition. It is broken with no proper gates, very unsafe. The only thing well maintained are the gardens. Still you can see heaps of dried leaves everywhere making it

unpleasant." In view of construction of Ambedkar statue, the kids playing area has also been removed.

Vendors on the other hand said that their business has weakened. They blame the ongoing constructions and repeated roadblocks in this regard. Jayanth, a chat shop vendor said, "They made us close the shops for two weeks when the race happened. Before that, they closed the road for some other reason. As NTR Gardens remained closed for a long time, people are forgetting about it. The crowd is not great even on weekends."

The vendors expressed fear that the inaugural of the new Secretariat could mean more roadblocks which will further affect their businesses.

QUESTION PAPER LEAK SIT takes four accused into custody

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In new developments on the question paper leak case of Telangana State Public Service Commission, the Special Investigation Team (SIT) has taken the four allegedly accused, A-1 Praveen, A-2 Rajasekhara, A-4 Dakiya Naik, A-5 K Rajeshwar into custody for the second time from Chanchalguda Jail.

In the investigation, the sources said that SIT officials have taken one resident of Shadnagar namely Rajendra Kumar for questioning as they found that there is a link established with the person.

It is reportedly said that the SIT officials have prepared the list of candidates who have scored more than 100 marks in Group 1 exams from TSPSC and candidates who came for investigation details of their education, job or study along with their biodata were collected.

An inquiry is being conducted on how many exams have been written and how many marks have been obtained by each candidate.

If the UPSC exams were written, their information was also taken.

The candidates were advised that they will be called back for investigation if necessary.

The SIT officials have assured that those who have written the exam genuinely have no need to fear.

The SIT has already investigated a few candidates who have scored more than 100 and the details of those who have already qualified have been collected and inquired over the phone.

The source also informed that the question paper has been shared to many applicants and there is an eye on every Group 1 applicant's mobile as Whatsapp was the medium through which the paper was forwarded.

Blue-faced Malkoha, Coppersmith's Barbet spotted at Forest Trek Park

SNPNS ■ HYDERABAD

Around 45 people participated in a bird walk at Forest Trek Park in Narsingi.

It was organised by Telangana State Forest Department. The park is situated behind Telangana Police Academy to provide fun to the residents of Hyderabad. The walk has been for the first time. A total of 45 people participated in the programme with 30 birding parents from Hyderabad and 15 bird lovers.

Members have spotted around 30 species of birds in the bird walk. They include blue-faced Malkoha, Coppersmith's Barbet, common Aura, Asian Koel, Rufous Treepie, black Drongo, little Grebe, Wood SandPiper and Shikra.

Members of the birding community appreciated the steps taken by the Forest Department to make the park more attractive and suitable for bird habitat. In the programme, Dr G Skylab,



Divisional Manager, Assistant Director, Eco Tourism, Botanical Garden, said that all the facilities are being provided to the visitors to this park. Many facilities like trekking routes, eight walking paths, gazebos and an open gym have been provided.



Vice Chairman, Managing Director Dr G Chandrasekhar Reddy, said, "Every single park that we are developing is being arranged as a habitat for birds, animals and lizards. Native and shade-giving plants are mostly planted in this park."

Epilepsy screening camp organised

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

An epilepsy screening and awareness camp was organised by Aster Prime Hospitals in collaboration with Walkers Association at Krishna Kanth Park on Sunday to mark the Purple Day of Epilepsy.

Addressing the gathering at the camp, Dr Aniruddh Kumar Purohit, Neurosurgeon of Aster Prime Hospital, explained the methods to identify epilepsy or fits in people.

"Any transient but repetitive neurological phenomenon is either a seizure or TIA or some kind of syncopal attack," Purohit said.

"Usually, any motor, general sensory, or special sensory phenomenon that subsides in less than two minutes could be a fit and such phenomena may last only for a few seconds. Some may last for a long time," he added.

The doctor went on to say, "A child who blinks his eyes or stares blankly for a few seconds, many a time in a day, can be epilepsy."



KTR slams Centre over Uppal, Amberpet flyovers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister KT Ramarao said that the government completed 35 projects but the Centre is unable to complete even two projects, that is, the Uppal and Amberpet flyovers.

KTR tweeted, "Uppal and Amberpet flyovers are unfortunately being executed by the National Highways Authority. Both are progressing at a snail's pace even though the GHMC completed land acquisition as committed."

While we have completed 35 projects they are unable to complete even 2! That's the dif-

ference between KCR Govt and Modi Govt."

KTR re-tweeted the above in response to the re-tweet of his tweet by one Sandeep "@KTRBRS Sir, when can we expect completion of Uppal flyover. Work is going on at a slow pace. Lots of problems for people from Narapally."

Sandeep re-tweeted KTR's tweet, "Actions speak louder than words; time and again we demonstrated our commitment to development. Completed 35 projects under #SRDP to ease traffic congestion in Hyderabad. The latest is the LB Nagar RHS Flyover. 12 more projects under progress. #Happening Hyderabad."

Basti Nidra organised at Mudfort Ambedkar Huts in Cantonment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A Basti Nidra programme was organised by the Telangana State Mineral Development Corporation Chairman Manne Krishank at Mudfort Ambedkar Huts in Cantonment.

About 500 locals participated in the programme and discussed the issue of deletion of 35,000 votes and a postcard campaign was initiated by Krishank, in which locals have written letters to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh for the restoration of their voting right. It was recalled that it was Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and Minister KT Rama Rao who have started free drinking water scheme for Cantonment residents.

During the interaction



with people, Keishank came across four requests for pensions. He was told about the unavailability of toilets was the primary problem in the locality. Though there are around 2,000 people in the locality, there are only five

public toilets. The people requested for five more toilets.

Krishank assured that he will resolve the issues with the help of CSR funds and if not, he will bear the expenses on his own.

Two held for hosting obscene dances in bar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Mahankali police raided the Golden Deer Bar in Mahankali on Sunday for hosting obscene dances with women.

Two organisers were arrested and 40 men and women were detained on Sunday.

Mahankali station head officer Kaveti Srinivasulu said, "We have arrested the accused under Section 294, which prohibits people from presenting obscene acts in public places. The bar has not been sealed yet."

The police have been continually conducting raids on hotels and bars in the city and have arrested several accused in this regard.



Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation's street selfie spots come up for public at Gajularamaram and Qutubullapur

60.92 % write SI technical paper

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State-level Police Recruitment Board officials said that 60.92 per cent of the total candidates attended the technical paper of SCT SI PTO.

A total of 975 in the first batch and 594 in the second batch wrote the examination.

Written examination of the technical paper for the post of SCT SI PTO has been conducted successfully, by scrupulously abiding by all the regulations and as per the planned schedule. Biometric verification of the candidates has been done to ensure the unique identity of each candidate by using digital finger prints and digital photographs that had been captured earlier. Preliminary key of the technical paper will be made available on the official website in due course.

INCREASE IN PEAK-HOUR POWER CHARGES

Jagadish terms Centre’s decision ‘economic disempowerment’

PNS ■ SURYAPET

Minister for Energy G Jagadish Reddy on Sunday hauled the BJP-led Centre for the decision to increase the peak-hour power charges by 20 per cent. He described the decision as nothing but "economic disempowerment."

"Peak demand hours are from 5 am to 10 am and again from 6 pm to 10 pm. We are not prepared to accept the recommendations of the Centre to increase the peak-hour power charges," he made it clear.

Speaking at a media conference here, the intention behind the move was to deprive the common people of access to electricity. The BRS government would not allow a "burden" to be imposed on the poor, he asserted. The decision which was taken by Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao in the case of true-up demonstrated beyond any doubt that the State govern-



The decision which was taken by Chief Minister in the case of true-up demonstrated beyond any doubt that the State overnment was determined to protect the interests of common people.

ment was determined to protect the interests of common people. The Chief Minister ensured that Rs 12,000 true-up charges recommended by the Electricity Regulator Commission (ERC) did not lead to imposing a burden on the common people.

The BJP, at the height of the campaign in the 2014 elections, promised to

increase the generation of power in the country. Now, the Narendra Modi government was conspiring to deprive the common people of electricity. The BJP-led Centre had prepared plans to withdraw subsidies being provided to the poor. The Centre was not releasing funds to the State because the BRS government rejected the

Union government's orders to fix metres to every farm power connection.

The Centre refused to release Rs 30,000 funds because the State government made it clear to the Centre that it would not fix meters to agricultural power connections. The defeat of the BJP is certain, he added.

‘Govt committed to welfare of farmers’

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Minister for Finance T Harish Rao has said that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao announced a compensation of Rs 10,000 per acre to farmers for the crop loss due to the recent unseasonal hail storm. This demonstrated that the Chief Minister accorded top priority to the welfare of the farmers.

Distributing sprinkler systems to 763 farmers here on Sunday under the aegis of the Horticulture and Sericulture Departments, Harish Rao accused the BJP of adopting anti-farmer policies. The saffron party was anti-farmer, he said. The Minister flayed the BJP for claiming the lives of 800 farmers by introducing black laws. He listed out a series of welfare measures initiated by the State government like Rytu Bandhu, Rytu Bima, 24x7 power supply to the farm sector and so on.

He asked whether the BJP-

ruled States have such schemes for the farmer. He reiterated that the State government stood by the farmers always. When the Centre had thrown up its hands, the State government came to the rescue of farmers and purchased paddy from them. The BJP tried to mislead the farmers, he said.

People of the country, especially those in neighbouring States of Telangana, have been exerting putting pressure on their governments to implement schemes which were introduced in Telangana, he said.

He dared the BJP to ensure that the Centre give a matching compensation of Rs 10,000 so that the farmer gets a benefit of Rs 20,000 per acre.

MLC Farooq Hussain, ZP chairperson Roja Radhakrishna Sarma, Siddipet Urban development chairman Ravinder Reddy, market committee chairperson Vijita Venugopal Reddy and others were present.

‘Village adoption vital in uplifting rural Telangana’

Education of 37 girls supported in Ibrahimpur with Rs 10L

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Padma Shri-winning doctor P Raghu Ram called upon the people to adopt villages and help provide a rural livelihood in Telangana. He contributed Rs 10 lakhs to help 37 girls studying in Ibrahimpur school in Siddipet.

Minister for Health T Harish Rao participated in the event with Raghu Ram and appreciated the initiative taken under Sukanya Samridhi Yojana Scheme.

The Minister interacted with the 37 girls on Sunday and showered praises on Raghu Ram for spearheading several philanthropic initiatives in Ibrahimpur over the last eight years.

Raghu Ram, Director, KIMS-Ushalakshmi Centre for Breast Diseases, adopted the village Ibrahimpur, the remotest hamlet in Medak District, in 2015. Through this initiative, Rs 27, 000 has been credited into each of the 37 Sukanya Samridhi Yojana



Minister for Health T Harish Rao, Dr P Raghu Ram with 37 girl students helped Sukanya Samridhi Yojana Scheme at Ibrahimpur in Siddipet district on Sunday

accounts of these girl children, which would mature to around Rs 1 lakh each, when they turn 21. This amount is aimed to cover expenses

‘Counter Opnn. Vicious campaign against govt’

PNS ■ DEVARAKADRA

Agriculture Minister S Niranjan Reddy has hailed Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao for introducing a number of welfare schemes for the benefit of the poor.

Participating in the BRS Atmeeya Sammelan held at Kothakota village of the mandal on Sunday, the Minister listed the welfare scheme like the Asaara scheme, Rytu Bandhu, Rytu Bima, Kalyana Lakshmi.

Further, he said that the government has been providing a fine variety of rice to the hostels of various residential schools. The objective of Atmeeya Sammelan was to explain to people the schemes rolled out by the government. He stressed the need to strengthen the hands of the Chief Minister. He called upon people to counter the vicious campaign by the Opposition against the government.

Niranjan Reddy suggests Nizam did not surrender

PNS ■ WANAPARTHY

Minister for Agriculture S Niranjan Reddy has contested the belief that Hyderabad accession to the Union of India happened after the "surrender" of Nizam.

Addressing students at a coaching centre, being conducted by the Scheduled Castes Development Department at Vallabh Nagar here, the Minister said, "Hyderabad became part of India 13 months after Independence. The merger of Hyderabad with the Union of India was portrayed in different ways. The consensus was reached on the decision to merge Hyderabad with the Union of India."

It was widely believed that because of pressure brought by the then Union Home Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Nizam surrendered.

Niranjan Reddy further said, "Had Nizam either lost the battle or surrendered, why he was allowed to remain as Rajpramukh," he wondered. The Junagadh princely state and Kashmir were merged with Indian Union after



Minister for Agriculture S Niranjan Reddy interacting with students at a coaching centre in Wanaparthy on Sunday

Independence, he said. Hyderabad, Junagadh and Kashmir were the largest regions under British rule. In the later period, Indian history was twisted, he said.

The Minister exhorted the candidate preparing for competitive examinations to make proper use of the coaching centre. "If you concentrate on your studies, you will ultimately achieve success, if not now, in the next attempt," he told the

students. The government established coaching centres for the benefit of students who came from poor and middle-class families.

Niranjan Reddy felicitated the teachers in the coaching centre and praised them for teaching Telangana history effectively to the students. The Minister presented certificates to 150 students who won in competitive examinations conducted by the Iskon.

Tributes paid to Communist veterans Dharmabiksham, Sambasivudu

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Backward Classes Students' Association district unit president Aitagani Janardhan Goud on Sunday hailed the invaluable services of Communist veterans Konapuri Sambasivudu and Bommagani Dharma Biksham and described them as great warriors who fought for the emancipation of the poor.

Paying glowing tributes to the Communist party leaders on the occasion of their death anniversary observed here on Sunday under the aegis of the BC Students' Association, he said.

Dharma Biksham fought against the Nizam's despotic rule in the Telangana armed struggle. He was the first one to give the slogan that the land for tiller and also worked for the toddy tappers' welfare.

He alleged that the State government could not protect the life of Sambasivudu. It

failed to find out who killed Sambasivudu so far. He expressed concern over continuing discrimination towards the leaders of the backward classes. He demanded the state government to come to the rescue of the bereaved family members of Sambasivudu.

The services rendered by Dharmabiksham as three time MLA and two time MP in undivided Nalgonda district are invaluable, he said demanding the government to name Suryapeta district after Dharmabiksham and introduce his life history as a lesson for students and install his idol on the tank bund.

Telangana Vidyavantula Vedika district president Pandula Saidulu, Gouda association leader Narsing Muralidhar Goud BC Youth Association district vice president K Naresh Goud and others were present on the occasion.

Sand mining depletes groundwater table

PNS ■ ADILABAD

The Village Development Committees are allegedly in cahoots with the sand mafia by allowing the quarrying of sand uncontrollably from streams day in and day out.

They allegedly quarry sand from the local stream, called Geddanna Sudda Vagu in Bhansa and Lokeswaram area. Unhindered looting of sand from streams, ponds and rivers in the area is going on unchecked.

The stream flows very close to Katgoan, Kamool Yeggam, Hampoli, Vatoli, Pendpalli, Burugupalli, and Arli villages. There is plenty of sand available in the stream.

They allegedly joined hands with the village development



Tractors at a stream in a village to transport of sand

The stream flows very close to Katgoan, Kamool Yeggam, Hampoli, Vatoli, Pendpalli, Burugupalli, and Arli villages. There is plenty of sand in the stream

committee. The sand mafia hatched a plan to loot the sand from the streams. In an unauthorised auction of the sand by the VDC, the sand mafia bagged the tender paying Rs 30 lakh to Rs 50 lakh to each concerned village. Day in and day out, the sand mafia is

quarrying sand from the stream through tractors and selling sand at the rate of Rs 4,000 to Rs 5,000 a tractor load of sand.

According to a villager, Shaik Amzad, the quarrying of sand from the stream is leading to the depletion of the groundwa-

ter table and it led to a scarcity of water for irrigation. The officials turned a blind eye to the activities of the sand mafia. Another farmer Ashok and villager Mahesh alleged that there was no change in the behaviour of the mafia despite registering many cases against them.

Three held for killing tiger; skin, nails recovered

PNS ■ ADILABAD

The Forest Department task force officials arrested three persons for killing a tiger in the Mancherial district. The three were charged with laying a live electric wire trap and killed the tiger, according to Forest Department officials Siva Aswath Singh here on Sunday.

The officials, during the investigation, identified that Bala Chander, Anji and Lakshmaiah, who hailed from Rangampet village in Bellampalli mandal were trying to sell tiger skin and nails. The forest personnel conducted a search and seizure operation and caught red-handed Balachander and recovered tiger nails from him.



Three persons who were arrested on the charge of killing in tiger in Adilabad on Sunday

On questioning, he admitted to killing the tiger and spilling the beans. The Forest department officials recovered tiger skin and nails from the arrest. The officials exhumed tiger bones and sent them to the forensic laboratory for post-mortem.

A case was registered against the threesome and an investigation is on.

Jagan pays price in MLC elections for his frankness

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

In politics, frankness and honesty do not work always. Survival in politics requires tactfulness too. The recent setback of the YSR Congress in MLC elections is nothing but a case of self-incrimination and nothing else.

Ahead of the Assembly elections, the ruling YSR Congress gave a breakthrough to the main opposition TDP with its overconfidence. The TDP won all three MLC seats from graduate constituencies.

Generally, ruling parties will not announce candidates in graduate MLC constituencies. During the YS Rajasekhara Reddy government, the ruling party used to remain neutral. But the YSR Congress unnecessarily announced its official candidates in the MLC graduate constituencies.

If the YSRC had not announced its candidates the TDP also would not have taken it seriously. In that case, the results would have been different. If the ruling party maintains silence the winning candidate may support the ruling party. But the YSR Congress made a mistake by announcing its candidates. Overconfidence is the reason for this.

The main setback to the YSR Congress and YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is the victory of the TDP MLC candidate from the MLAs' quota. The TDP has only 19 MLAs but

the required number of votes in 22. Two YSR Congress MLAs revolted and voted against YSRC candidates. The TDP does not have the strength to make its candidate win. But surprisingly the TDP candidate got 23 votes against the required 22.

In addition to the two MLAs who revolted another two YSR Congress MLAs also voted for the TDP candidate. After that, the YSR Congress suspended four MLAs from the party.

YSR Congress MLAs Undavalli Sridevi and Mekapati Chandrasekhar Reddy voted for the TDP candidate. Jagan Mohan Reddy is responsible for this. Jagan paid a heavy price in the MLC elections for his frankness.

Based on performance reports Jagan had already told Sridevi and Chandrasekhar Reddy that they will not be given tickets in the next Assembly elections. A day before the voting in the MLC elections from the MLAs quota both YSRC MLAs met Jagan.

Then also Jagan told them frankly that they will not be given tickets in the next Assembly elections but promised that he would do justice to them.

If Jagan had tactfully dealt with them they both would have voted for the YSRC candidate. The frankness of Jagan led to the defeat of the YSRC candidate and the victory of the TDP candidate.

Sridevi hits back at Jagan

○ Vows to give a ‘return gift’, sees life threat from YSRC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Suspended YSRC MLA Undavalli Sridevi on Sunday vehemently denied cross-voting in the recent MLC elections and saw a threat to her life from the YSRC goons.

Addressing the media at her residence in Hyderabad, she expressed anguish that she was defamed for being a Dalit legislator and vowed to give a return gift soon to YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and his YSRC for giving her family the biggest shock of their life.

Undavalli Sridevi alleged that she faces threat to her life from party general secretary and Andhra Pradesh government advisor Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy. A day after her office was attacked allegedly by the cadre of YSRC in Tadikonda constituency in Guntur district, the MLA held a press conference to tar-

get Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and Sajjala. Alleging that she faces threat to her life from Sajjala, she said it was unfortunate that Andhra Pradesh is facing a situation where even a woman MLA has no protection.

She said she would complain to the National Scheduled Caste Commission against Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy. Sridevi was one among the four MLAs who were suspended from YSRC on March 24 for voting for a TDP candidate in Legislative Council elections from MLA quota. The cross-voting by four rebel MLAs of the ruling party had helped TDP win one of the seven Council seats.

Sridevi stated that YSRC leaders were making allegations against her without maintaining decency while talking about a woman MLA. She also remarked that she will soon give

a return gift to those who are alleging that she sold herself in the MLC elections.

The MLA alleged that she was sent out of the party for refusing to be a 'benami' for YSRC's illegal acts and unauthorised mining. She said that after using her for four years, the party dumped her citing cross-voting in the MLC elections as an excuse. She also claimed that "YSRC goons were threatening her". Sridevi said, "There is a conspiracy to send me out of the State capital region." She also announced that she will stand by Amaravati farmers who have been fighting against the government's plans for the trifurcation of the State capital. Stating that she has no plans to join any other party, she said she would fight for solving the problems of the people of her constituency as an independent MLA.

INDIA CORNER

India summons Canadian envoy over Khalistan protests

India has summoned Canadian High Commissioner Cameron MacKay and conveyed its strong concerns about the actions by pro-Khalistani extremist elements against its diplomatic missions in Canada recently. MacKay was summoned by the External Affairs Ministry on Saturday and sought an explanation on how 'separatist and extremist elements' were allowed to breach the security of its diplomatic mission and consulates despite the presence of police, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement. On Sunday last, India's High Commissioner to Canada Sanjay Kumar Verma was forced to skip an event in British Columbia province after a violent protest by Khalistan supporters. Indian-origin journalist Sameer Kaushal, who was at the venue to cover the protest, was also assaulted by protesters. Canada was reminded of its obligations under the Vienna Convention and asked to arrest and prosecute the individuals who have already been identified as being involved in such acts, the ministry said.



Tribals hold rally in Guwahati for safeguarding traditional culture

Thousands of people from various tribal communities of Assam assembled in Guwahati on Sunday demanding measures for safeguarding their traditional culture. Representatives of almost all the tribes of the state, such as Bodos, Rabhas, Mishings, Dimasas, Tiwas, Karbi, tea tribes and Sonowal-Kacharis, from 30 districts attended the day-long Chalo Dispur programme, organiser of the event, the Janajati Dharma Sangskriti Suraksha Manch (JDSSM), said in a press release. The organisation claimed people of the tribal communities were falling prey to "unethical conversion", which has led the converted people to forsake their traditional culture, language and rituals. It demanded that Scheduled Tribe (ST) people who convert to other religions and give up their 'original tribal culture, customs, rituals, way of life and traditions' should be delisted from the ST list.



Masked men rob house posing as HP police staffers carrying out raid

Four men, posing as police personnel, looted jewellery and cash from a house in Badhala village of the Una district on the pretext of carrying out an anti-narcotic raid, officials said on Sunday. Late on Saturday night, the accused entered the house and locked the woman and her daughter in a room. They snatched their mobile phones and earrings and other gold jewellery, police said. The mother-daughter raised an alarm following which the neighbours unlocked their room, a police official said, adding that by that time the accused had fled after looting. The woman, who is the owner of the house, told police that the robbers broke the CCTV cameras installed in the house. A case has been registered and an investigation is underway, police said.



QUOTA BASED ON RELIGION NOT VALID CONSTITUTIONALLY

K'taka govt decision to scrap Muslim quota defended

PNS ■ BIDAR/RAICHUR (KTK)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday lauded the Karnataka government's decision of scrapping the four per cent reservation for Muslims under 2B Other Backward Classes (OBCs) category, saying the quota on religious lines was constitutionally invalid. Addressing public gatherings at Gorata village in Bidar district and Gabbur in Raichur district, he slammed the Congress for introducing the four per cent reservation for Muslims for "its vote bank politics".

The Union Minister pointed out that Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai-led BJP government also tried to do away the injustice to the Scheduled Castes by introducing a new internal reservation. The entire 2B category was only for the Muslims and the BJP government scrapped it saying that it was not constitu-



The Union Minister pointed out that Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai-led BJP government also tried to do away the injustice to the Scheduled Castes by introducing a new internal reservation

tionally tenable and divided the four per cent quota equally among the two dominant communities of the state: Vokkaligas in 2C reservation category and Veerashaiva-Lingayats in 2D reservation category. With this, 2B became redundant while Vokkaligas' reservation went up from four per

cent to six per cent and Lingayats from five per cent to seven per cent. "The BJP never believes in appeasement. So, it decided to change the reservation," Shah said strongly defending the decision. "The BJP abolished the four per cent reservation given to the minorities and gave two per cent to the

Vokkaligas and two per cent to the Lingayats," Shah said. "The reservation for minorities is not Constitutionally valid. There is no provision in the Constitution to give reservation based on religion. This Congress government did it for its appeasement politics and gave reservation to the minorities," he added.

'Congress' Satyagraha display of arrogance, insult to Gandhi'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday slammed the Congress over its 'Sankalp Satyagraha', alleging that it was agitating against the country's Constitution and the court's verdict against Rahul Gandhi to justify his remarks against the 'entire backward community' of the country.

Addressing a press conference, BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi also dubbed the Congress agitation as an "insult" to Mahatma Gandhi, saying while the Father of the Nation had organised Satyagraha for social causes, the Congress was holding "so-called Satyagraha" for personal reasons.

The Congress agitation is a "brazen" display of its arrogance after Gandhi's conviction in a defamation case in Gujarat and his "automatic" disqualification as Lok Sabha MP as a result of the court's verdict, he charged.

The agitation has nothing

to do with fighting for truth, he added.

The BJP leader said Gandhi was convicted by a court in Surat after the due legal process and his disqualification as a Lok Sabha MP was an automatic consequence under the relevant law.

"Then, Satyagraha for what?" the BJP leader asked. "Is it to justify the way you insulted the entire back-

ward community of the country, or against the court which sentenced you, or against the provision under which you have to be disqualified," he said, asking Congress to clarify.

Stating that some of the Congress leaders who were allegedly involved in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots were also participating in the party's agitation, the BJP leader asked the opposition party to clarify if their Satyagraha organised at Mahatma Gandhi's Samadhi Sthal in Rajghat was also against 'Ahimsa' (non-violence).



Plea in SC seeks 'Ram Sethu' be declared as national monument

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking that the Ram Sethu be declared as a national monument.

The PIL, filed by advocate Ashok Pandey, also seeks construction of a wall at the spot to facilitate devotees.

On March 20, the top court had said that it will list at the earliest a petition by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy seeking a direction to the Centre to declare the Ram Sethu as a national heritage monument.

Ram Sethu, also known as Adam's bridge, is a chain of limestone shoals between Pamban Island, off the south-eastern coast of Tamil Nadu, and Mannar Island, off the north-western coast of Sri Lanka.

Swamy had raised the issue of declaring the Ram Sethu a national monument in his PIL against the controversial Sethusamudram Ship Channel project, initiated by the UPA-I government.

The matter reached the apex court, which in 2007 stayed work for the project on the Ram Sethu.

The Centre later said it had considered the 'socio-economic disadvantages' of the project and was willing to explore another route to the shipping channel project without damaging the Ram Sethu.

Rahul's disqualification will put in more steel in Cong: Chidambaram

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Former finance minister and senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Sunday said his party's leader Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from Lok Sabha would strengthen the Congress, helping its prospects in next year's general election.

Describing the political landscape as an "undeclared emergency", Chidambaram in an exclusive email interview, said the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has made the Congress its "prime target", wishing its elimination in order to more easily manage the regional parties.

However, he asserted that Congress would not be "eliminated" and regional parties would "rise and fight" the BJP.

Excerpts:

Q: In the backdrop of Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from the Lok Sabha after a court judgement in a defamation case, how do you read the country's political landscape?

A: The country is already in an emergency-like situation. It is an undeclared emergency. One of the complaints during the emergency was that press freedom was snuffed out. Is it any different today? Journalists and the independence of the media are under numerous constraints today. The BJP's prime target is the Congress



party. They think if they are able to eliminate the Congress party from the electoral battleground, the regional or state-specific parties will be easy targets. They are wrong on both counts. The Congress party cannot be eliminated. The regional or state-specific parties will rise and fight.

Q: Do you think the Rahul Gandhi incident would help the Congress in the 2024 elections?

A: The developments of the last few days have put more steel in the Congress party. We know we are fighting a formidable Leviathan. Fighting the BJP, unity of purpose, struggle, sacrifice etc., will indeed strengthen the Congress party. A stronger Congress will certainly be a major force in the (2024) election.

Q: As a senior leader of the Congress, what would be your

advice to Rahul Gandhi at this hour?

A: He (Rahul Gandhi) does not need my advice and I do not advise him. He is brave and fearless. In the Bharat Jodo Yatra he demonstrated his grit and determination qualities that many people were happy to discover in Mr Gandhi.

Q: Though the Trinamool Congress has described Gandhi's disqualification from the LS "as a new low for Constitutional democracy," it has also earlier stated that the Congress "should not consider itself to be the big boss of the Opposition Front and should give due respect to the regional parties". What is your opinion on this?

A: Broadly speaking, I agree with that view. To the best of my knowledge, the Congress' leadership does not think differently. We think that Opposition unity can be achieved and sustained only through a common understanding of the current political situation, shared goals, and mutual respect.

No one in the Congress has suggested that the Congress should be the big boss. The way that Mrs Sonia Gandhi and Dr Mannohan Singh led the UPA (the alliance and the government) with exceptional grace and wisdom and successfully too is proof of the fact that no one in the Congress harbours any sense of superiority.



fasting during Navratri. "I kept a fast on the first day of Navratri and will keep one on the last day. In jail, we all live with unity and respect everyone's religious sentiments.

'BJP will win more than 200 seats in MP Assembly polls'

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Bharatiya Janata Party president JP Nadda on Sunday said his party would win more than 200 out of 230 Assembly seats in Madhya Pradesh, where elections are set to be held at the end of this year.

Nadda later performed a ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of a new BJP office in the state capital.

"The warm welcome accorded to me by the spirited BJP cadre shows we are going to more than 200 Assembly seats in MP," he said.

A 10-storey modern office complex will come up in Arera Colony area located near the Kamalapati railway station in place of an old building which was demolished by the BJP earlier.

A group of priests performed 'bhoomipujan' rituals in which Nadda, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and state BJP president VD Sharma took part along with other leaders of the saffron party.

Union ministers Narendra Singh Tomar, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Virendra Kumar and Prahlaad Patel, members of the state cabinet, and BJP's national general secretary Kailash Vijaywargiya were also present on the occasion.



"The estimated cost of the 10-storey building will be calculated after finalizing the DPR (detailed project report)," a BJP leader said.

The old state BJP office, which was razed for the new one, was constructed in 1991 when the saffron party government under the late Sundarlal Patwa was in power, sources said.

The BJP formed a government in Madhya Pradesh again in 2003 and remained in power for 15 years till 2018 when it lost to Congress by a narrow margin.

The Congress formed a coalition government under Kamal Nath, which fell in March 2020 when MLAs loyal to Jyotiraditya Scindia revolted, paving the way for the return of Shivraj Singh Chouhan as chief minister.

ICMR comes up with first ethical guidelines for application of AI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has come up with the country's first Ethical Guidelines for the Application of Artificial Intelligence in Biomedical Research and Healthcare to provide an ethical framework for the development of AI-based tools which will benefit all stakeholders.

According to a document drafted by the Department of Health Research and ICMR's Artificial Intelligence Cell, AI for health, to a large extent,



depends on data obtained from human participants and invokes additional concerns related to potential biases, data handling, interpretation, autonomy, risk minimization, professional competence, data sharing, and confidentiality.

"It is therefore imperative to have an ethical framework that addresses issues specific to AI for biomedical research and healthcare," the guidelines stated. The adoption of AI technology in healthcare is growing in India. However, AI as data-driven technology has many potential ethical challenges which include algorithmic transparency and explainability, clarity on liability, accountability and oversight, bias and discrimination, said ICMR Director General Dr Rajiv Behl.

PNS ■ AGRA (UP)

In a display of communal harmony and brotherhood, some Muslim inmates at the Central Jail here joined their Hindu brethren to fast on Navratri -- a gesture reciprocated by a few Hindu prisoners who observed 'roza' during Ramzan.

Chaitra Navratri, the nine-day Hindu celebration of the triumph of good over evil, started on March 22 while the Muslim holy month of Ramzan began the following day.

Radha Krishna Mishra, the

deputy inspector general in-charge at Central Jail, told PTI, "Muslim inmates are observing fast for Navratri and also taking part in 'bhajan (devotional songs)' being organised at the temple on the premises."

Pointing to the Hindu inmates observing roza, Mishra said, "It is a good concept where inmates from both the religions are generating a message of Hindu-Muslim unity."

In a video released by the jail authorities, Naushad, an inmate, shared his views on

BOTHERHOOD AMONG INMATES IN AGRA JAIL

Muslims fast on Navratri, Hindus in roza for Ramzan

"We take part in the bhajans organised at the temple and sing with the Hindu inmates."

Alok Singh, the jailor, said the facility has 905 inmates. Of them, 17 Muslim inmates observed a fast on Navratri while 37 Hindus observed roza.

The jail administration has made arrangements for fruits and milk for inmates fasting for Navratri. For the inmates observing roza, the authorities have arranged for dates to break their fasts.

Since Friday, the jail authorities have also been organising

'Bhagwat Katha' for the prisoners. On March 31, a 'bhandara' will be organised. "It brings positivity among the inmates and keeps them motivated," Singh added. Vartika Nanda, founder of Tinka Tinka -- a social organisation that works for the welfare of prison inmates -- said jail is the perfect place for the exchange of religious festivals and rituals.

"When inmates from different religions take part in each other's rituals, it is a perfect example of solidarity and mutual respect," she said.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Dirty debate

Our leaders must shed some sanctimony and mawkishness to cleanse the political arena

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's conviction in a defamation case, the ensuing disqualification from Lok Sabha as a Member of Parliament, and the attendant political row over it reveals—if any revelation was needed—a lot that is wrong and rotten in Indian politics. To begin with, there are the falling standards of political debate: A court in Surat found his rhetorical remark “why all thieves have Modi surname” defamatory. As we mentioned earlier, it was surely in bad taste. A senior leader not only condemned a large section of people just because they share their surname with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but also refused, and refuses, to show any remorse for making the unsavoury remark. An apology might have resulted in the withdrawal of the case or perhaps his exoneration. There is nothing wrong in apologising. After all, our political masters are also human, and it's human to err. They, however, refuse to act like the man on the street, who says sorry when he does anything wrong. Apparently, Rahul doesn't believe that he can err. So, the day he was disqualified from Lok Sabha, he said, “My name is not Savarkar, my name is Gandhi. Gandhis don't apologise to anyone.” It is interesting to note here the fact that he had quoted Gandhi immediately after his conviction—as if his deplorable remark is something any politician could be proud of. But then in politics, self-righteousness has become an integral part of the belief systems that parties subscribe to and the communication strategies they adopt. On Sunday, the former Congress chief changed his Twitter bio, which now describes him as a ‘Dis'Qualified MP’. Evidently, he is wearing the conviction and the disqualification as badges of honour.

The same day, the Congress started a day-long Sankalp Satyagraha at Rajghat in Delhi to show their solidarity with Rahul Gandhi. The entire grand old party is with him. Party luminaries like president Mallikarjun Kharge, general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and senior leaders KC Venugopal, P Chidambaram and Salman Khurshid were among those who participated in the satyagraha. While the GOP has not covered itself in glory, the Bharatiya Janata Party too has not reacted in a manner that can be termed as dignified. Vice-president of Gujarat BJP Gordhan Zadaphia said at a press conference an OBC (other backward class) community has been insulted. In response, Kharge asked, “Is Nirav Modi OBC? Is Mehul Choksi OBC? Is Lalit Modi OBC? They are fugitives.” On her part, Priyanka indulges in sentimentalism and whataboutery. She said on Sunday, “You call my brother, the son of a martyr, a traitor and Mir Jafar. You insult his mother. Your Chief Minister says Rahul Gandhi doesn't know who his mother is. You insult my family every day. But no cases are filed.” Could our political leaders shed some sanctimony and mawkishness? For the same of some swachhata in the political arena.

PICTALK



People buy bananas for 'Chaiti Chhath' festival, in Patna.

PTI

Fight for ticket heats up in coastal Karnataka

Too many hands for Kumta seat in coastal Karnataka, writes Manjunath K Shresthi

The southern state of Karnataka with 224 seats is scheduled to the assembly polls anytime in the next two months in 2023. This is subject to the Election Commission of India (ECI) dates. The state's geographical area begins with the Uttara Kannada (UK) district in north-west Karnataka. One enters Karwar via Polem (Goa state) after crossing the excise check post on NH 66. The state shares land borders with Maharashtra in the north; Telangana/Andhra Pradesh in the East, Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the south and south west respectively. The Uttara Kannada (UK) district in the state has 11 taluks and six legislative assembly constituencies (LAC), and two or more taluks make up one assembly constituency. They being: Haliyal-Joida (including Dandeli) 76; Karwar-Ankola (77); Kumta-Honnavar (78); Sirsi-Siddapur (80); Mundagod-Yellapur (81). Bhatkal (79) stands out as the smallest constituency compared to the above areas in the largest UK district. The Kumta-Honnavar (78) constituency has definite-



ly raised political temperatures during an election season, and the heat may become unbearable in the run up to the polls. The BJP has clarity with its choice of candidates and only a formal announcement is expected for most of the seats in the district, barring a few (or only one seat). The five current MLAs from the saffron party in the district might retain their seats (but surprises are not ruled out). The Congress party has one MLA, R.V. Deshpande, representing the Haliyal-Joida assembly seat. Dinakar Shetty twice and the current BJP MLA won the seat from the JD (S) in 2008. In 2013, the seat was won by Congress MLA Ms. Sharada Shetty; Dinakar Shetty con-

tested for the BJP seat in the 2018 assembly election, and defeated his Congress opponent. There's no smooth sailing for the Congress party, as it's now facing a plenty problem for the Kumta-Honnavar assembly seat. It is learnt that there are 15 candidates aspiring for the party ticket. They are old loyal party members who have been in the party for a long time. There's another new entrant, from outside Kumta, who's thrown his hat in the ring. Former Governor Ms. Margaret Alva's son, Nivedith Alva, is also vying for the Kumta party ticket. This new development has taken the party members in Kumta by surprise; and they are trying to push their candidature for

the B Form. There has been a mixed response to Nivedith's entry, as some voiced their dissent and others quietly supported him. None of the Congress ticket hopefuls criticise him, as he wields clout in the party. There is both opposition and support for his entry. Some ticket aspirants have invited him to the Kumta constituency. They have also convinced him of their support in the upcoming elections. Nivedith Alva along with another candidate from Uttara Kannada (UK) district, were conspicuous on the dais, during Rahul Gandhi's one-day recent visit to Belagavi on March 20. If Nivedith gets the party ticket, will he win the confidence and support of Congress members in the constituency? The constituency voters will finally get to decide who they will choose in the elections ahead? And will the Congress party finally be able to increase its tally in the geographically large Uttara Kannada (UK) district in the 2023 elections? There's a lot of answering for Nivedith Alva to do, if he gets the party ticket from the Kumta assembly constituency?

Haryana witnessed a major Sarpanch agitation against the state government. The sarpanchs were on a warpath with the state government on two crucial issues. One, the introduction of an e-tendering process for development works above Rs 5 lakhs and two, the “right to recall” law that allows people to remove a sarpanch if they are not happy with their performance. The state government justified these actions as steps towards “course correction” taken with the intention of bringing transparency and credibility in the working of the Panchayats. They are directly related to the use of developmental funds and the continuation of sarpanchs in power.

These remedial measures were suggested by the report submitted by the Haryana Lokayukta Justice, Hari Pal Verma in December, 2022. The audit report of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for 2017-18 had also listed many cases of irregular expenditure and account books. The report cited many instances of misappropriation of lakhs of rupees. It found that in most cases the records of panchayats were found missing which were supposed to be in the custody of the sarpanchs. It was revealed that nearly 1,100 former sarpanchs had not submitted village development records. The explanation given for this lapse was that the records were either burnt, washed away or soiled. The office bearers of the Association of Sarpanchs put the blame on the panchayat secretaries who had failed in maintaining and submitting the records to the authorities. Recently, on the complaint of a resident of Aashiyaki Tappa Jadhval village in Rewari district, an enquiry conducted by District Development Panchayat Officer (BDPO), Dharuhera, has found the ‘gram sachiv’, Rohit Kumar and former sarpanch Mahesh Kumar guilty of embezzling Rs 7.44 Lakh in the construction of the pathway. Construction work cost Rs 8,37,399 on paper. However, the inquiry revealed that the cost of work was evaluated as Rs 92,692 causing a loss of Rs 7,44,777 to the state exchequer.



The ‘gram sachiv’ has been suspended and orders for recovery of the embezzled amount from the former sarpanch and gram sachiv have been issued. We find that candidates spend a phenomenal amount of money to win the elections for sarpanch in villages. They lure voters by offering gifts, interest free loans, distribution of liquor and sweets. The intention is to win the elections by hook or crook. This will enable me to recover many times the election investment. After getting elected, the sarpanchs indulge in corruption by siphoning away the money allocated for the village's development.

In order to contain the agitation, the state government announced that sarpanchs could get development works up to Rs 5 lakh executed on a quotation basis. This was earlier Rs 2 lakh and e-tendering mode would be used for works valued at more than Rs 5 lakh. The honorariums of sarpanchs were increased from Rs 3,000/- to Rs 5,000/- and the panches from Rs 1,000/- to Rs 1,600/- by linking these with Dearness Allowance on the lines of government employees. To make

BOTH ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AND GOVERNMENT SHOULD DISCHARGE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES HONESTLY AND TRANSPARENTLY

the gram sachivs accountable to the sarpanchs, the provision of recording the comments in the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) of gram sachiv by sarpanchs has been introduced. For the social audit of development works in panchayats, a committee would be formed at the village level. This committee would consist of village residents who would keep watch of the development works being undertaken in the village.

A separate engineering wing would be set up for the Development and Panchayat Departments. The panchayats could get works done on quotations for a total amount of Rs 25 lakh in a financial year or up to 50 per cent of the total grant amount of the State Finance Commission, whichever is less. The responsibilities for quality have also been fixed. The technical staff would ensure the quality of the development works through e-tendering. The sarpanchs would be responsible for the quality of works carried out on a quotation basis.

The introduction and implementation of the Panchayati Raj system in the 1980s was a landmark decision of the Government headed by

then Prime Minister, late Rajiv Gandhi. It led to decentralization of financial powers to the local grassroot representatives—the gram pradhans paving way to the implementation of the concept of “Gram Swaraj” envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi and to ensure the utilization of funds meant for panchayats in a transparent manner.

Through the connivance of government functionaries and pardhans, crores of rupees are disbursed annually to PRIs, of which a large amount is misused. The practice of these practices needs to be checked and those found guilty should be punished. Both elected representatives and the government should discharge their responsibilities honestly and transparently. The Haryana government has done a commendable job in checking malpractices by laying down check and balances. This would help in judicial use of funds at the grassroots level.

(The writer is a senior journalist and Chairman, Panwar Group of Institutions, Solan, Himachal Pradesh. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LACK OF STORAGE FOR FARMERS

Sir — Farmers often struggle to grow fruits and vegetables. But due to a lack of storage options, they have to sell them at very low prices. It is also often the result of natural calamities. When rain falls unseasonably, all stored goods are soaked and damaged. The government intends to implement the godown scheme in the village so that agricultural produce can be stored locally till it fetches a high price. The study will be conducted by a 12-member committee. There are times when the cost of production is not even available.

But transportation costs also have to be paid. Due to lack of price, sometimes the plow is turned in full fields. Therefore, it is not possible for all the farmers to store till they get a reasonable price. Vakhar Corporation has warehouses. Their number is very small, 205. The storage capacity is 17 lakh 60 thousand metric tons. There is capacity.

There are only two things farmers need to do before they can sell at the price they get: take a risk. So this is the government's plan for rural areas. By setting up storage areas in rural areas with all the necessary facilities, improving the quality of its goods, and providing financing and credit facilities, we will be able to achieve our goals. The government is implementing this plan. Through this plan, efforts will be made to invest in the private and cooperative sector in warehouse construction.

The criteria for the scheme, the exact nature of the scheme, how to provide state-of-the-art facilities for perishable goods, and this committee will study. The report is to be given till 13th June. From the point of view of farmers, the scheme “Village There Godown” is commendable. The committee should give its report at the earliest and the government should give justice to farmers through the recommendations of the committee.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

Rahul Gandhi's disqualification



Kapil Sibal, a top Indian lawyer and former federal law minister, told the media that while Gandhi was automatically disqualified as a legislator, his two-year jail sentence itself was “bizarre”.

The court granted him bail immediately and suspended the sentence for a month. After Rahul Gandhi was sentenced to two years in prison in a defamation case, India's parliament disqualified him. Though the Opposition not only have accused the prime minister of using the law to stymie political critics, but they have also accused PM Modi of misusing national agencies, including the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Directorate of Enforcement (ED), to go after critics including journalists (“The press must remain free if a country is to remain a democracy,” Chief Justice of India Mr. Chandrachud), nonprofits and media companies.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

DIABETIC FOOT CARE

Sir — Most diabetes patients can prevent serious foot complications. Regular care at home and doctor's appointments are your best bet for preventing foot problems. This will help in stopping small problems from becoming serious ones. Wash your feet every day in warm (not hot) water. Don't soak your feet. Dry your feet completely and apply lotion to the top and bottom—but not between your toes, which could lead to infection. Never go barefoot. When you check your feet every day, you can catch problems early and treat them immediately. Early treatment greatly reduces your amputation risk. Check your feet every day for cuts, redness, swelling, sores, blisters, corns, calluses, or any other change to the skin or nails. Use a mirror if you can't see the bottom of your feet, or ask a family member to help. Remember: Diabetes-related foot problems can worsen very quickly and are difficult to treat, so seek prompt medical attention.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

VANDALISM BY KHALISTAN SUPPORTERS

Sir — Khalistan supporters' vandalism acts at Indian missions abroad are serious concerns. Khalistan demand is not justified as India cannot be further broken into pieces. But equally wrong are those who want India to be declared a ‘Hindu rashttra’ since people do not want India to become a ‘Hindu Pakistan’. India is a secular country and cannot be based on religion. Action should also be taken against those who raise such obnoxious demands. Secondly, the Punjab Police has launched a major crackdown against radical preacher Amritpal Singh, and his outfit Waris Punjab De. Kejriwal proudly claimed that strict action being taken against criminals by the government had shown that ‘AAP is a hardcore patriotic party’. Amritpal escapes the police dragnet.


Vishal Mayur | Tumkur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

HOW TO DEAL WITH SEIZURES?

Epilepsy is a lifelong condition, and but it can be managed with medication



DR RAVINDRA SRIVASTAVA

In the early human civilisations, it was geography and weather that decided what crops were to be grown in any region. The same crop was consumed by the people of that area. Exports were tough and risky. But, in modern civilisation, Governments directly or indirectly control the food consumed.

Epilepsy accounts for a significant proportion of the world affecting 50 million people. Each year an estimated 5 million people are diagnosed with epilepsy. In India, more than 10 million patients suffer from epilepsy, which represents 20% of the 50 million worldwide. Purple Day is an international awareness day dedicated to raising awareness about epilepsy and reducing the stigma surrounding this neurological disorder. Observed annually on March 26th, Purple Day encourages people to learn more about epilepsy. It encourages people to recognize the signs of a seizure and support those living with this condition. By coming together to raise awareness and support those affected by epilepsy, we can improve the lives of millions of people around the world.



What is epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a chronic disorder that affects the brain's ability to transmit electrical impulses. These disruptions can cause seizures, which can be mild or severe and affect various parts of the body. Epilepsy is a lifelong condition, and while it can be managed with medication, it cannot be cured. Some people may outgrow epilepsy, while others may have it for their entire lives.

What are seizures?

Seizures are the primary epilepsy symptom. They occur when there is a sudden surge of electrical activity in the brain. The symptoms of a seizure can vary widely depending on the type and severity of the seizure. Some people experience a brief loss of awareness or consciousness, while others have convulsions and lose control of their limbs.

Medically Intractable Epilepsy

Medically intractable epilepsy is a severe form of epilepsy that cannot be controlled with medication. People with this type of epilepsy may experience multiple seizures per day, which can severely impact their quality of life. Treatment options for medically intractable epilepsy may include surgery or implantable devices that regulate brain activity.

Seizure First Aid

If you witness someone having a seizure, it is essential to stay calm and take the following steps:

- Keep the person safe: Clear the area around the person to prevent injury. Remove any sharp objects that could harm.
- Protect the person's head: If possible, place something soft, like a jacket or pillow, under the person's head to cushion it.
- Turn the person on their side: If the person is lying down, turn them onto their side to prevent choking.
- Time of the seizure: Note the time the seizure began and how long it lasted. This information can help medical professionals.
- Do not restrain the person: Do not restrain the person or put anything in their mouth during the seizure.
- Stay with the person: Once the seizure has ended, stay with the person until they are fully alert and oriented.

(The writer is Director, Neurosciences, Primus Superspecialty Hospital)

Open letter to Rahul Gandhi

By questioning Rahul's conviction, the Opposition party is undermining the judiciary



SUMEET BHASIN



Within a couple of hours of his conviction by a Surat court, the party's legal luminary Abhishek Manu Singhvi spoke at length about the merits of the case. The Congress has a strong battery of lawyers practicing in India's higher courts. There have been occasions in the past when they rushed to the top court for judicial intervention in matters where their leaders are caught in discomfort.

However, the Congress did not approach the judicial authorities for relief from the Surat court sentence. It is not possible that Congress' legal eagles are aware of the Supreme Court order of 2013 which said that a conviction with a jail term of two or more years leads to automatic disqualification of a member of the legislatures—the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and state Assemblies. Clearly, staging a political stunt, Congress leaders feigned ignorance that Gandhi was automatically disqualified upon his conviction by the Surat court magistrate. Curiously, Gandhi came to Parliament despite knowing he had already been disqualified.

This must have been clear to him more than to anyone else since it was he who had torn apart an Ordinance approved by the Union Cabinet, presided over by Manmohan Singh, the former prime minister. The Ordinance intended to dilute the Supreme Court ruling of automatic disqualification of membership of a convicted legislature member. If Rahul Gandhi claims that he did not know the import of the Supreme Court ruling of 2013, he is guilty of acting impulsively as an ignoramus. He tore apart the Ordinance at the Press Club of India in the presence of the press corps.

Rahul Gandhi is accused of impulsive behaviour. His willful resorted to defamatory utterances in the past. He is involved in several court cases. He is also on bail in the National Herald case. He has only shown that he is an incorrigible bully of

IT IS WORTHWHILE TO ASK: WHY SHOULD ANYONE LEVEL ALLEGATIONS AGAINST OTHERS WHICH THEY CANNOT SUBSTANTIATE

(The author is a political analyst)

Indian politics, from insulting Manmohan Singh to demeaning Indian democracy on foreign soil in London. The Congress' yearning for sympathy votes is old. The party daydreams that people will vote for it out of sympathy. It has been marginalised under the Gandhi family.

Why should the country sympathise with Rahul Gandhi? What is his contribution to the uplift of the poor of this country? He has been convicted for defaming a community. In his statement that "all thieves have the Modi surname", what message did he intend to convey? Did it not occur to him that he was defaming a hard-working community, spread over the country and abroad?

People must decide if the country's politicians have freedom to say anything against anyone. Some people argue that defamation should not be a criminal offence. But it is worthwhile to ask: why should anyone level allegations against others which they cannot substantiate? This license to defame others has taken Indian politics to a new low. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal made libelous insinuations against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a television show. The news anchor tried to contest Kejriwal's claims, but he was bullied to stay silent. Kejriwal questioned the educational qualifications of PM Modi. The same news channel reproduced the interview of PM Modi given several years ago from which Kejriwal had selectively quoted.

The Delhi Chief Minister repeated his insinuations against PM Modi in the Assembly. There are millions of youths who pursue distant learning. Kejriwal has defamed a vast number of youths for such learning which government has promoted for several decades. There are a number of universities, including the Indira Gandhi National Open University, for this purpose.

Also, it is well known that Kejriwal escaped conviction in defamation cases by apologising to the late Arun Jaitley and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari. Gandhi chose not to apologise in the Surat court. Defamatory political discourse, based on mudslinging, has no space in Indian democracy, which is known to be aspirational. Rahul Gandhi has also said that he's "not Savarkar, but Gandhi and Gandhis don't apologise." But not long ago he had apologised to the Supreme Court for making baseless allegations on the Rafale issue.

Members of the legislature must commit themselves to the singular efforts to realise the dreams of the people. This naturally calls for a review of the discretionary powers of the Members of Parliament. It must be asked if it's still relevant for an MP to recommend students for admission in Kendriya Vidyalaya and to exercise similar discretionary powers in extending other entitlements.

There must not be any doubt that the Gandhi family has a feudal mindset. Despite a strong campaign for inner democracy, the Congress coterie defeated the efforts for genuine intra-party democracy. This coterie keeps alive the feudal mindset of the party's ruling family.

Memories are still fresh of how Sitaram Keshri was thrown out of the party by the Gandhi family. People of the country have not forgotten that the mortal remains of late PV Narsimha Rao, former prime minister, were not allowed into the party office premises for his followers to pay their last respects to the departed soul. As a result of breaking the law and claiming victimhood, the Gandhis have demonstrated the least political decency in the world.

But the law is the same for all. Laws don't discriminate between citizens.


The Opposition protesting against Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from the Lok Sabha membership after his conviction in a criminal defamation case is as good as a celebration of corruption, which the people in the national capital saw after the arrest of Manish Sisodia, the former deputy chief minister of Delhi, by the Central Bureau of Investigation. The New Excise Policy of the city government is being probed for financial irregularity and conspiracy.

Indian democracy rests on institutions. The judiciary is a crucial institution in the country. By questioning Rahul's conviction, the Opposition party is undermining the judiciary.

Also, Parliament has passed laws. If the Opposition parties believe that some laws need changes, they can certainly change them in Parliament. But for that they need people's mandates. Self-centered politics must stop immediately. Stringent rules should be framed with necessary amendments to the Representation of People's Act. This will guide Indian democracy on the path free of compulsive lying and defamation.

Human resource management is a prerequisite for growth

The top management must be compassionate towards their employees, it ensures productivity and high standards of corporate ethics



RAVI CHANDER KOCHHAR

(The writer is s the Group Pro Vice Chancellor with Amity University Noida Campus)

In the recent past, Human Resource Management has transformed and become the epicentre of any organisation aspiring for excellence. Day by day the involvement and importance of Human Resource Management have increased and become the central point of the outcome of any Centre of Excellence.

This transition has not been an easy one but over some time all out sustained efforts by the organisations have been made for a complete overhaul of the system. No doubt digitisation has made some difference in HR Processes and Decision Making, however, it's the policies that have triggered the overall changes and brought about the revolution in HRM. First and foremost, has

been the WHY factor in the decision-making at the highest echelon of management to decide in which direction you want the organisation to move and once WHY has been clearly defined then the whole process will revolve around it to achieve this aim. This WHY factor can be defined by the Mission and Aim of the Organisation. Having decided the WHY factor one can now clearly move to WHAT type of personnel you want to hire. Clearly define their roles and responsibilities, set the targets, and milestones and carve out a roadmap to be followed by the organisation to achieve its Mission and Aim.

The next step will be when the recruiters start defining the QRs including the Qualification, Expertise,

Experience, Previous Job profile and the notable results achieved. Having decided the WHY and WHAT factors one has to move to the next factor, HOW. This is also an important factor, one has to start planning as to how one wants to proceed in this direction.

The organisation must ensure that the best person for the job is available and thus the search has to be perfect before recruiting anyone. Check out the newspapers which have maximum circulation and accordingly insert a well-designed advertisement in local / all India editions as per the requirement. The head-hunting team of the organisation must search on the job portals, as well as various websites that provide the details of employees, check if

anyone matches the organisational requirement of a specific job and establish contact if they are willing to change before setting up the process of recruitment. Once the database is available, the process of shortlisting begins, making sure that no compromise is made on the QRs laid down for each profile. For every possible job, shortlist at least five persons and conduct personal interviews at various levels to check the suitability of the person for the job. Of these five, the best two must be met by the top management. During the process, it must also be considered what financial package is to be decided. During the interviews, the family background of the candidate must also be examined as that will determine

how much time he /she will be able to devote towards undertaking the task assigned including roles and responsibilities.

Yet another consideration must be, the scope for his/her future growth in the organisation. Once the selection process is complete, the financial package is acceptable and the candidate has joined the organisation, the even more important phase of onboarding must be seamless. The buddy system has proved very beneficial wherein one person is attached to the new joiner to make him feel comfortable and introduce him/her to the systems and practices of the organisation, introduce him /her to colleagues and others as required.

This phase is of relevance so that the person doesn't feel out of place and adapts to the new environment amicably. Initially, at short intervals, the candidate may be guided and advised to appreciate his/her strong/weak points and there's ample opportunity available for him to take corrective action. As the organisation grows, the employees must also grow and part of the benefits must also be passed on to the employees. It's very important to retain experienced people so that they effectively contribute to the growth of the organisation. At the same time, the organisation must also continuously evolve ways and means to look after the employees, be it annual increments or various welfare measures so that the employees concentrate on their job

and performance to ensure the growth of the organisation. One of the important aspects must be that top management must be compassionate towards their employees, be it leave or medical cover or such other arrangements so that each employee feels confident that in times of need the person will not be left high and dry to face the emergent condition and this aspect is very important, everyone must be treated with dignity and humanity must prevail.

Finally for any organisation to grow it needs qualified, experienced and dedicated, sincere and loyal employees and this leadership must be provided by the top management with compassion and transparency in their policies and systems.

MONEY MATTERS

RevFin targets financing 20 lakh electric vehicles in next 5 years

Electric vehicles (EV) financing digital platform RevFin Services is targeting to finance 20 lakh vehicles in the next five years, with an aim to grow three to four times every year, according to its CEO & Founder Sameer Aggarwal. With the Indian electric vehicle industry poised for an accelerated growth, he said the company is confident of meeting its target and would continue to raise funds through debt and equity going forward for the purpose. "From a long-term perspective we have taken a very strong position on EVs, and we have committed to financing two million electric vehicles in the next five years," Aggarwal said. Asked if the target is not too steep, considering RevFin has financed 17,118 EVs in the last 51 months, he said, "The monthly loan disbursement is growing month-on-month by about 15 per cent. So overall, it has grown almost four times in the last one year. If we continue the kind of growth that we are currently on we will actually achieve these numbers."



Only 15% insolvency cases reach resolution during Oct-Dec

Only 15 per cent of the 267 insolvency cases admitted in company law tribunals during October-December 2022 reached resolution with overall recovery of just 27 per cent of claimed amount, the IBBI data showed. As much as 45 per cent cases were concluded through liquidation, according to a Kotak Securities analysis of the latest data from the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI). On quarter-on-quarter basis, the second quarter of FY23 saw 256 cases in NCLTs (National Company Law Tribunals), massively down from the yearly run-rate of 2,000 cases in FY20. According to the analysis, one-third of all liquidations happened because no resolution plans were received. Of the 1,901 cases resolved so far, in 1,229 cases the banker decided to go in for a liquidation, while in 600 cases, no resolution plans were received.



Korean fund house Mirae Asset eyes Rs 1.5 lakh cr AUM by Dec

Mirae Asset Investment Managers India hopes to close the current year with an AUM of Rs 1.5 lakh crore, up from Rs 1.20 lakh crore in December 2022, on the back of aggressive growth in systematic investments plans and its forte of equity-linked funds. Mirae Asset is the only Korean fund operating in the country and since its entry in 2008, it has grown to become the 12th largest fund house in the country with an AUM of Rs 1.16 lakh crore as of February 2023. Mirae Asset is fully-owned by the Mirae Financial Group of Seoul that globally manages over USD 225 billion assets. Mirae, whose large-cap fund has an AUM of over Rs 30,000 crore, and an emerging fund with Rs 24,000 crore, has two subsidiaries in the country -- wealth management and a zero-brokerage equity broking arm.



RBI may go in for 25 basis point interest rate hike

PNS ■ MUMBAI

With retail inflation remaining above the comfort level of 6 per cent and most global peers including US Fed continuing hawkish stance, the Reserve Bank of India too may go in for a 25 basis points hike in the bi-monthly monetary policy to be announced on April 6, opined experts.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank will be meeting for three days on April 3, 5 and 6 to take into account various domestic and global factors before coming out with the first bi-monthly monetary policy for fiscal 2023-24.

The two key factors which the committee will deliberate intensely while firming up the next monetary policy are elevated retail inflation and the recent action taken by central



banks of the developed nations especially the US Federal Reserve, European Central Bank and Bank of England.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been raising benchmark rates since May 2022 to contain inflation which has been largely driven by external factors, especially the disruption of the global supply chain following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war.

In its last policy meeting held in February, RBI had raised the policy rate or repo by 25 basis points to 6.50 per cent.

Having remained below six per cent for two months (November and December 2022), the retail inflation breached the comfort zone warranting action by the Reserve Bank.

The Consumer Price Index

(CPI)-based inflation was 6.52 per cent in January and 6.44 per cent in February.

"Given that CPI inflation has been 6.5 per cent and 6.4 per cent in the last two months and that liquidity is now near neutral, we may expect the RBI to raise rates once again by 25 bps and probably change stance to neutral to signal that this cycle is over," opined Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda.

India Ratings and Research Chief Economist D K Pant too expects the central bank to raise policy rate by 25 bps (basis points).

"This is likely to be last rate hike in present policy tightening cycle," he said, and added that inflation trajectory from here is going to decline due to impact of past policy rate hikes, softening of global commodity prices, and base effect.

Govt hikes duty on X-ray machine imports to 15%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has hiked customs duty on import of X-ray machines and non-portable X-ray generators to 15 per cent with effect from April 1.

Currently, portable X-ray machines and non-portable X-ray generators and apparatus attract 10 per cent import duty.

The changes in the customs duty rate was brought in as part of the amendments to the Finance Bill, 2023, which was passed by the Lok Sabha last Friday.

The new rates would be effective from April 1, 2023, the amendment said.

AMRG & Associates Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said this is intended to improve barriers to manufacturing in India.

"This will encourage 'Make in India' to reduce import dependence in the niche sector," he said.

Govt caps maximum GST cess rate on pan masala, tobacco

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has capped the maximum rate of GST compensation cess that would be levied on pan masala, cigarettes and other forms of tobacco and linked the highest rate to their retail sale price.

The capping of the cess rate was brought in as part of the amendments to the Finance Bill, 2023, which was passed by the Lok Sabha last Friday.

As per the amendment, the maximum GST compensation cess rate for pan masala will be 51 per cent of the retail sale price per unit. In the current regime, the cess is charged at 135 per cent ad valorem.

The rate for tobacco has been fixed at Rs 4,170 per thousand sticks plus 290 per cent ad valorem or 100 per cent of the retail sale price per unit.

So far, the highest rate was Rs 4,170 per thousand sticks plus 290 per cent ad valorem.

The cess is levied over and



above the highest Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate of 28 per cent.

Changes in schedule-I of GST compensation cess Act, brought in via amendment in Finance Bill, has capped the maximum cess that can be charged on Pan masala and tobacco products.

Tax experts, however, said to ascertain the exact compensation cess applicable following this change, the GST council will need to issue a notification.

AMRG & Associates Senior

Partner Rajat Mohan said the latest amendment in the GST Compensation cess law is an enabler that will permit the GST council to introduce applicable tax rates through a notification.

"This change marks a significant shift in taxation policy for pan masala and tobacco-supplying companies. Though this policy will arrest tax evasion to a great extent in this sector, it still may prove to be a regressive plan from an economic standpoint," Mohan said.

Markets to track global factors in holiday-shortened week



May face volatility: Analysts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stock markets may face volatility in a holiday-shortened week ahead amid monthly derivatives expiry, besides global factors and foreign fund trading activity would continue to dictate terms, analysts said.

Factors such as movement of global oil benchmark Brent crude and the rupee would also guide the trend in equities.

Markets would remain closed on Thursday for Ram Navami.

"While volatility may increase locally before the March Futures and Options (F&O) expiry, the position of major international banks will continue to play a significant role in the direction of the market globally.

"The market will also keep an eye on the geopolitical situation because there is still tension between Russia and Ukraine and there is also some tension developing between the US and Syria. But, the market is not paying much attention to this. Due to FIIs' aggressive selling in recent months, the institutional flow will also

be crucial," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd.

Last week, the BSE benchmark fell 462.8 points or 0.79 per cent, while the Nifty slipped 155 points or 0.90 per cent. Both the benchmarks ended in the negative territory for the third week in a row.

Three major factors that contributed to the market's volatility were the global banking crisis, the US Federal Reserve's rate increase, and the Finance Bill amendment, Meena added.

"This week is a holiday-shortened one and we expect volatility to remain high due to the scheduled expiry of March month derivatives contracts. Besides, global cues, foreign flows and movement in crude could further add to the chopiness," Ajit Mishra, VP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Global markets have been turbulent amid worries over turmoil in the banking sector and uncertainty about what the Federal Reserve and other central banks will do with interest rates going forward.



Tatas to supply only seats, interior panels for Vande Bharat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The order placed by the Railways is for the supply of seats and interior panels for Vande Bharat trains and "not to manufacture its coaches", a Tata Steel official has clarified.

As part of the Rs 225 crore order, Tata Steel will supply light-weight seats for 23 coaches of Vande Bharat rails and fibre-reinforced polymer composite-based interior panels for 16 coaches of the high-speed train, Debashish Bhattacharjee, Vice President (VP) - Technology & New Materials Business of Tata Steel, told.

Some sections of the media have reported that Tata Steel has bagged orders for manufacturing coaches of Vande Bharat trains, which is "incorrect and baseless. We have not received the order to manufacture its coaches," he said.

"Tata Steel has bagged the seats and interior panels order through a competitive bidding process executed by the national transporter (the Railways). We appeared as L1 for the prestigious order," he said, adding that the value of the order is Rs 225 crore.

The company will supply the composite solutions from its partner manufacturing facilities spread across India to Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai, the company official said.

SOFT DRINKS TO SOAPS Reliance unveils big price war plan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After stirring a price war in the soft drink segment with the relaunch of Campa, billionaire Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance has entered the personal and home care segment of FMCG, offering products at 30 to 35 per cent lesser price.

Experts say "the jury is out" and a competitive offering from Reliance would attract the customers to try its products and evaluate performance, quality and perception in comparison to the same from the established brands.

Products of RCPL, the FMCG arm and wholly-owned subsidiary of Reliance Retail Ventures Limited (RRVL), are available only in selected markets but the company is building a dealer network on a pan-India basis, and



the availability of its products will be scaled up across modern and general trade channels.

"They are creating a distinct and dedicated distribution network comprising traditional dealer/stockists as well as modern trade b2b channels," said an industry source.

It articulates ambitions to be a relevant player in the USD 110-billion FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) segment, largely dominated by players as HUL, P&G,

Reckitt, and Nestle.

RCPL has priced its Glimmer beauty soaps, Get Real natural soaps, and Puric hygiene soaps at Rs 25, which is much lower than the products of leading brands such as Lux (Rs 35 for 100 gm), Dettol (Rs 40 for 75 gm) and Santoor (Rs 34 for 100 gm) etc, while prices of its Enzo 2 litre front load and top load liquid detergent is Rs 250 (on Jio Mart) in comparison to a 2-litre pack of Surf Excel Matic priced at Rs 325.

For Enzo front-load and top-load detergent powder, it had priced at Rs 149 for 1-kilogramme pack (on Jio Mart).

Front-load and top-load refer to the two categories of washing machine.

While, in the dish wash segment, it has started with the attractive price point of Rs 5,

10 and 15 for bars and has also launched liquid gel packs at price points of Rs 10, Rs 30 and Rs 45.

RCPL, which competes with HUL's Vim, Jyothy Lab's Exo and Pril in the dish wash category, has also introduced a Rs 1 sachet of liquid gel in the category.

It is yet to announce the price of Enzo detergent bars.

Earlier this month, RCPL relaunched the iconic soft drinks brand Campa, entering into the turf of US cola majors PepsiCo and Coca-Cola. It had priced competitively at Rs 10 for a 200-ml bottle and Rs 20 for a 500-ml bottle.

According to the online market and consumer data platform Statista, the Indian soft drinks segment is estimated at USD 8.85 billion.

FPIs invest Rs 7,200 crore in Indian equities in March so far

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors have pumped Rs 7,200 crore into the Indian equities so far this month, mainly driven by bulk investment in the Adani Group companies by the US-based GQG Partners.

Going ahead, FPIs are likely to be cautious in the near term since there is a risk-off sentiment in equity markets globally due to the stress in the US banking system and the crash in

banking stocks, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said. The stress appeared in the US banking system after the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank earlier this month.

Most global equity markets witnessed a sharp recovery, even as macro sentiments remained volatile as frailties in European and US banks were under focus. "On the economy front, the US Federal Reserve

increased the Fed Fund rates by 25 basis points while voicing confidence in the stability of the US financial system. FPIs flow are expected to remain volatile given the tight central bank monetary policy," Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd, said.

According to the data with the depositories, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) invested Rs 7,233 crore in Indian equities till March 25.



Five of top 10 firms lose Rs 86,447 cr in m-cap

Infosys, TCS, SBI hit hard

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Five of the top 10 most valued firms together lost Rs 86,447.12 crore in market valuation last week, with Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services and State Bank of India taking the biggest hit.

Last week, the BSE benchmark fell 462.8 points or 0.79 per cent. While Reliance Industries Limited, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, Infosys and State Bank of India suffered erosion from their valuation, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever Limited, ITC, HDFC and Bharti Airtel posted gains.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of Infosys tumbled by Rs 25,217.2 crore to Rs 5,72,687.97 crore. The valua-

tion of State Bank of India fell Rs 21,062.08 crore to Rs 4,51,228.38 crore, and that of TCS tanked Rs 21,039.55 crore to Rs 11,42,154.59 crore.

The mcap of Reliance Industries declined by Rs 13,226.53 crore to Rs 14,90,775.40 crore, and HDFC Bank dipped Rs 5,901.76 crore to Rs 8,71,416.33 crore. However, ICICI Bank added Rs 10,905.18 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 5,94,888.25 crore.

The valuation of Hindustan Unilever rallied Rs 7,542.19 crore to Rs 5,82,816.11 crore, and ITC climbed Rs 3,664.01 crore to Rs 4,70,360.22 crore. Bharti Airtel's mcap jumped Rs 2,787.57 crore to Rs 4,24,964.64 crore, and that of HDFC advanced Rs 384.89 crore to Rs 4,69,845.34 crore.

Most private firms lack risk management function: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly 67 per cent of private companies do not have an adequate risk management function, and over 52 per cent are still not equipped with formal risk management processes, said a report by risk advisory firm MGC Global.

Over 50 per cent of the survey participants were affiliated with companies that reported revenues of over Rs 1,000 crore.

It was conducted with an outreach to over 60,000 professionals in management and board-level roles in various

sectors in India to assess the corporate governance on a range of pertinent practices in their respective companies, MGC Global said in a release.

According to the survey titled 'State of Corporate Governance in India, 2023', about 67 per cent of closely held companies and 38 per cent of public companies were found to have inadequate practices for risk management. In addition, several companies are at risk of cronyism due to less than one-third of the board being independent directors.

This survey also found out



that around 45 per cent of respondents from private companies have less than one-third of their board comprising

independent directors. This could lead to cronyism and impact objectivity in decision-making.

"This year, we had launched a survey with a wide and cross-sector outreach and had looked closely at the state of governance on the ground in an environment that has been witnessing a significant change in terms of the development and adoption of governance practices," said Monish G Chatrath, Managing Partner, MGC Global.

With data theft on the rise and with the advent of data protection regulations, such as GDPR, it is encouraging to see that 89 per cent of public companies have policies and

procedures relating to cyber security and data protection in place, the report said.

The survey also found that women are grossly under-represented on boards of 96 per cent of private companies and 51 per cent of public companies; shareholder engagement is restricted to annual general meetings in 67 per cent of public companies; codes of ethical business conduct were not published in 25 per cent of private companies; and CEOs, CFOs and HR directors play the roles of ombudsman in 41 per cent of public companies.

SHIKHA DUGGAL



what's brewing?



● Bhavika



● Rakhi



● Soumya



PARTY

● Saloni Jain



● Manju



● Dr. Tarun Joshi and Rohit Behal



● Saionee



● Mamta Jain



● Goutam Chand and Kavita Jain



● Sushila Bokadia

Actor Rohit Behal, along with Dr. Train Joshi, IPS, and Ajay Mishra, former additional chief secretary, Govt. of Telangana, graced the studio launch of Saloni Jain's, The Vogue Naari and Moha India, at Banjara Hills road no: 4, Hyderabad.

Photos by - SV Chary



Actor-writer Adivi Sesh, along with K Vijay Bhaskar CEO, Vemulapati Ajay Kumar director IMFS, and other dignitaries launched the Good school app, specially designed to provide high quality visual content for students.



The Celebrity Cricket League (CCL) 2023- Reloaded traverses the exciting league recently reached the pinnacle of excitement as the 4 top teams in the league staged Karnataka Bulldozers take on Vasavi Telugu Warriors and Bhojpuri Dabanggs take on Mumbai Heroes, to reach the finals at Dr. YS Rajashekar Reddy Cricket Stadium in Vizag.

T-Hub CEO Srinivas Rao Mahankali, graced the launch of Corporate Connections (CC Hyderabad1) first chapter in Hyderabad. They are currently active in 5 continents, 24 countries, and 25 cities in India.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



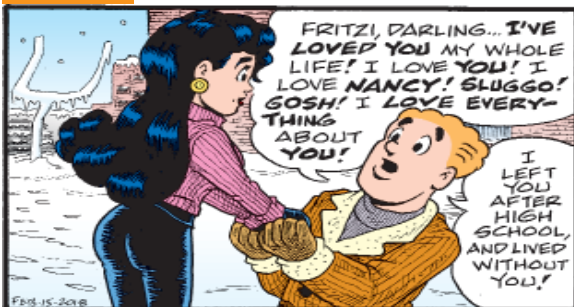
SPEED BUMP



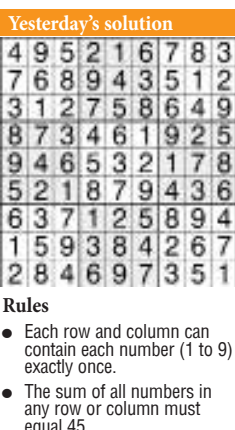
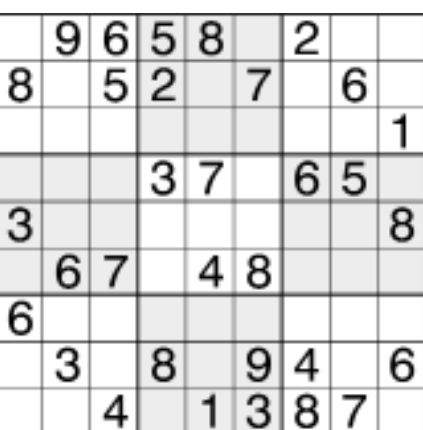
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



ACROSS

- 1 Train stops
- 6 Tumble over and over
- 7 Young cows
- 9 A tall type of building
- 11 A feeling of rage
- 12 Bees make this
- 13 One third of twenty-one
- 16 Instructions for cake making
- 18 The part along the side or end of something
- 19 Always ready to give away or share what you have

DOWN

- 5 Tell a fib
- 8 People unknown to you
- 10 The late part of the day
- 14 A machine that can record television programmes
- 15 A type of blood vessel
- 17 Poise



GINGER MEGGS



‘Gunasekhar didn’t want the trend of fake jewellery taking space on screen’

SHIKHA DUGGAL

The art and production design in every Gunasekhar film is a whole mood in itself. A source exclusively told us, “We have heard the standards set by our forefathers. Let’s talk about the cinematic adaptation of *Shaakuntalam*! In 1940, a Tamil movie called *Shakunthalai* came out, which was directed by a Hollywood director. Subbalakshmi garu acted as Shakuntala in it. Kalidasa brilliantly wrote the story of Shakuntala Dusyanta in the Adiparvam of Mahabharata under the name Abhijnana Sakunthalam. The stage adaptation was excellent. They set the trend. Then Rama Rao made a movie. Santaram did one too! Thereafter, no one has done it for 60-70 years. It is a timeless classic.”

So, whatever the setting or the story be, Tollywood fans come to expect that signature look of his. So many kilos of gold worn by the lead actors is the next talk of the town.

The source continued, “Samantha was so sporting. From the exteriors, she may look like a delicate woman but nonetheless she has a lot of stamina.”

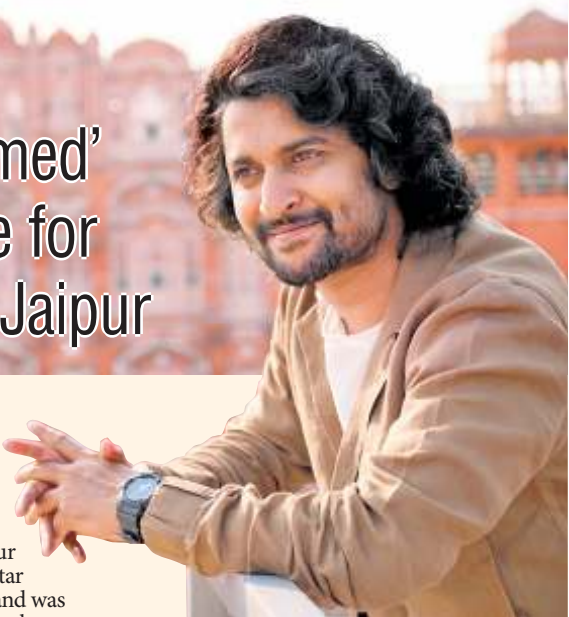
Nowadays, in films jewellery is also digitised but not following that path and instead taking the real inspiration from Rama Rao — the director didn’t want the trend of fake jewellery taking space on screen. Dil Raju, the producer, was ready to invest fourteen crores immediately but then Neelima Guna spoke to Vasundhara Jewellers. They are art lovers. They didn’t start counting commercially, their primary goal differed.”

What will happen to the jewelry once the movie is over? Well, the director has decided to continue to preserve it under the Shakuntalam collection. Well to know how the big banner approached Vasundhara group — we had the insights from the adversary’s end too.

The team responds, “Neelima Guna approached my (Vasundhara Jewellers owner) daughter in law, she had already seen the samples before. Probably, she remembered. She was impressed, it seems! Then she gave us the intricate details as to how she wants her lead actors to wear authentic jewellery. My sister got too involved and for the next six to eight months she was on the project! After the designs were made, minor changes were done here and there. Neeta Lulla was guiding us!”



Nani is ‘overwhelmed’ by the love for *Dasara* in Jaipur



It’s been an exciting few days for Natural actor Nani who is on a promotional spree for his Pan-India film *Dasara* that releases 30th March. After an activity-filled tour in Ahmedabad, the superstar travelled to the Pink City and was welcomed by Jaipur with a thunderous response, speaking volumes for the kind of anticipation surrounding his film ‘Dasara’ up north!

Apart from visiting the monumental Hawa Mahal and exploring the city, the actor got a local taste of Jaipur’s signature paan. Nani has been making headlines for his entry in different cities and after entering on a truck in Lucknow, a chagada in

Ahmedabad and a tractor in Nagpur, he made a grand entry in an open jeep at a college visit in Jaipur. Crowds gathered in large numbers to watch the superstar after the stupendous response the trailer received ever since it dropped.

Written and directed by Srikanth Odela, *Dasara* takes audiences through the socio economic condition, political ambition and power struggle of the Singareni collieries. With an extraordinary storyline and anticipated to have some note-worthy performances, the film has unquestionably been the talk of the town.

Thrilling with high-energy, the trailer of the film gave audiences a glimpse of all the entertainment in store as the superstar takes on his whistle-worthy role. Said Nani, “After Lucknow, Mumbai, Nagpur and Ahmedabad, I was thrilled to meet the people of Jaipur and ecstatic with all the things they had to say about *Dasara* and how excited they are about the film. The energy and love I’ve received from Jaipur is really overwhelming and I can’t wait for them to watch the film.”

Produced by Sudhakar Cherukuri and Srikanth Chundi, ‘Dasara’ stars Nani, Keerthy Suresh, Dheekshith Shetty, Shine Tom Chacko, Samuthirakani, Sai Kumar. Written and directed by Srikanth Odela with music by Santhosh Narayanan and cinematography by Sathyan Sooryan Isc the film is all set for its big nationwide release on 30th March.

Raashii Khanna desires to do an *Aashiqui* kind of film with Kartik Aaryan



Actress Raashii Khanna has expressed her desire to work with actor Kartik Aaryan in a love story just like *Aashiqui*.

Recently during an interview, while talking about Kartik, Raashii said, “I think with him, I would like to do an intense love story, not a comedy fun genre kind of film but like an intense film like *Aashiqui*.”

“That film I think will be very nice because I love romantic films and I had done a film and that was the film that was immensely loved by the audience so they love me in a love story. So if I have to do with Kartik, probably a film like that.”

On the work front, Raashii Khanna will be making her Bollywood debut alongside Sidharth Malhotra in *Yodha*.



Action producer Kenny Bates onboard for director Koratala Siva’s *NTR 30*

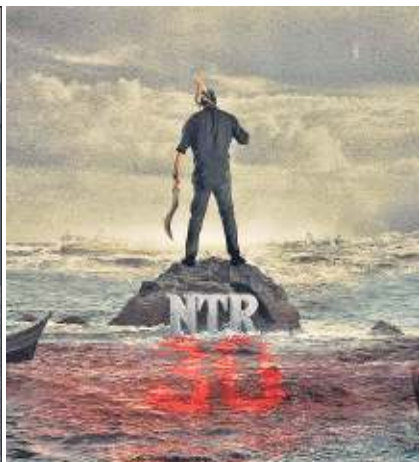
After hosting a grand muhurat puja in Hyderabad on Thursday, the makers of NTR Jr’s next *NTR 30* have released an update for all eager fans. Kenny Bates has now joined director Koratala Siva’s team in the long-awaited actioner which will go on the floors this month.

NTR 30 will mark director Koratala Siva’s second outing with NTR Jr after Janatha Garage’s grand success. Kenny Bates will oversee most of the action sequences in the film. In the past, Kenny Bates has worked on international projects like *Transformers*, *Rambo III* etc.

In the picture shared on social media we can see director Koratala Siva in a deep discussion with Kenny Bates, Sabu Cyril and R Rathnavelu over a miniature sculpture of a boat.

A source close to the filmmaker added, “Director Koratala Siva is leaving no stone unturned to ensure *NTR 30* is the biggest and best film. While he has already been working for more than a year with his dream team on this project, Kenny Bates will be a bonus to this project.”

The film already has Anirudh Ravichander creating music. The makers also have DOP R Rathnavelu, Art director Sabu Cyril and editor



Sreekar Prasad working on this film. The actioner also stars Janhvi Kapoor and is produced by Hari Krishna K of NTR Arts and Sudhakar Mikkilineni of Yuvasudha Arts. It will release on 5th April 2024.

Meanwhile, the director had also expressed being fortunate to collaborate with NTR Jr.

The director said, “I feel fortunate to work with my brother and one of the best actors of our generation for the second time. The film’s backdrop is centered around the far and forgotten

coastal lands of India. The people, or rather the villains, in the film neither fear death nor god and there is no sense of humanity among them. The film is a very emotional story that emphasizes the role fear plays in having a moral and humane society. I promise everyone that *#NTR30* is going to be my biggest and best film”

The film is produced by Hari Krishna K of NTR Arts and Sudhakar Mikkilineni of Yuvasudha Arts and will be releasing on 5th April 2024.

Pawan Kalyan completes shooting for *#PKSDT*

Pawan Kalyan’s latest film referred as *#PKSDT* co-starring Sai Dharam Tej was launched last month. Ever since the film has been progressing at jet speed with Pawan Kalyan taking part in the shoot regularly. Even when he needed to take a break for a couple of days to participate in Janasena party 10th formation day celebrations, after completing the meeting at midnight he joined the shoot the next morning.

The film which is a remake of Tamil film Vinodhaya Sitham, has Pawan Kalyan in a prominent role along with Sai Dharam Tej in the lead role. To everyone’s surprise Pawan Kalyan has completed shooting his part except for songs. The same was announced by director in his tweet. He stat-

ed, “Thank you God ?? . We have successfully completed our talkie portion of Kalyan sir. See you all in theatres on July 28.”

It is known that the release date of the film has been announced as July 28. This is the fastest film in Pawan Kalyan’s career to release within five months of its launch. The film has an interesting theme where Sai Dharam Tej after meeting with an accident gets a second chance to live and it is given by a godlike character played by Pawan Kalyan.

PKSDT is produced by People Media Factory in collaboration with ZEE Studios. Thaman is providing the music. Trivikram is penning the screenplay of the film. The film will hit the screens on 28th July.



Mem Famous promises to be a rib-tickling entertainer

Recently *Balagam* has created a trend of pure Telangana flavour films. Now another film is coming in the same zone but this time it is a youthful fun-filled film. After the success of *Writer Padmabhushan*, Lahari Films and Chai Bisket Films are coming together with another interesting project titled *Mem Famous!*

First look of the film was released recently. The makers unleashed the teaser of the movie on Sunday. This movie is about three reckless friends in a village who enjoy life to the fullest, despite being scolded by their parents. They regularly use the term famous. They are not famous but tell people to make them famous. The torn jeans episode, the discussion about the 13th-day ceremony, and posing for photographs at a function are the entertaining parts in the teaser. The video assures that *Mem Famous!* is going to be a hilarious entertainer.

Sumanth Prabhas is playing the lead role, besides directing it. Mani Aegurla, Mourya Chowdary, Saarya and Siri Raasi are the other prominent cast of the movie written and directed by Sumanth Prabhas himself. Anurag Reddy, Sharath, and Chandru Manoharan together are producing the movie.

Sumanth Prabhas who also directed the movie picked a subject that has enough scope for amusement. Shyam Dupati’s cinematography is impressive, while Kalyan Nayak elevated the fun quotient with his background score. The makers announced to release the movie worldwide on 2nd June.

First single from *Risk* released in Hindi, Telugu Tamil and Kannada

Based on the events of the movie *6 Teens*, the film’s music director Ghanthadi Krishna is producing and directing its sequel titled *Risk*. The movie is being released pan India with dubs in Hindi, Telugu Tamil and Kannada.

The film’s first single *SogasukeSogasu* by Sid Sriram was recently released under the Aditya Music label. The event was graced

by the legendary producer cum director MS Raju, Yalamanchili Ravi shankar of Mythri Movies, hero Aditya Om, Uppal MLA Bethi Subhash Reddy, Telangana BC commission chairman V Ramakrishna Rao, sociologist D Kumara Swami, Raavi Suresh Reddy, Gaddam Ravi, Vijay Varma, Director RK and others from the film team.

The Telugu version *Sogasuke*

Sogasu was released by MS Raju who lauded Krishna’s melodious music composition for the movie. Meanwhile, the Hindi lyrical *ItiKhubsurat* was released by hero Aditya Om, Tamil version *Azhaguze Azhagu* was released by the MLA BetiSubhash Reddy, and the Kannada version *Sogasi* *Merugu* was released by the Telangana BC commission’s chairman V Ramakrishna Rao.



Satwik-Chirag win Swiss Open title

PTI ■ BASEL

Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty capped off their impressive campaign with a title win, beating China's Ren Xiang Yu and Tan Qiang in the final of the Swiss Open Super 300 badminton tournament here on Sunday.

The second-seeded Indian pair, the 2022 World Championships bronze medallist, was solid in defence and dished out an attacking game to outwit the world No. 21 pair 21-19, 24-22 in 54 minutes.

It was the first title of the season for India with Satwik and Chirag putting to rest the disappointment of last week's All England Championships where they had exited in the second round.

Overall, it was the fifth career world tour title for the Indian pair, who had claimed the India Open and French Open last year, besides securing the Thailand Open in 2019 and Hyderabad Open in 2018.

Satwik and Chirag had also won the Commonwealth Games gold in 2022.

The title run also meant India continued its love affair with the Swiss Open, with PV Sindhu (2022), Saina Nehwal (2011, 2012), Kidambi Srikanth (2015) and HS Prannoy (2016) claiming the crown in the past.



The two pairs had contracting march to the final with Satwik and Chirag playing three three-game matches on their way to the summit clash, while Tan and Ren didn't drop a game.

Tan had forged a world No. 10 pairing with He Jiting in 2019, winning the 2021 World Championships silver medal, while Ren had been ranked as high as 16 with his former partner Ou Xuanyi.

Playing the Chinese pair for the first time, Satwik and Chirag turned up the heat at the right moments, displayed their attacking prowess and steely nerves to come out victorious.

A service error from Chirag was a dampener but India managed to lead 3-1 early on before the Chinese drew parity at 6-6. There was another service error for height from Satwik before the Indians entered the break with a three-point cushion.

The Indians tried to keep the rallies flat and short and it worked, as they led 15-10 and then 18-13.

However, Tan and Ren soon narrowed down the gap to 17-18.

But, a precise smash from Chirag, which bisected the court, gave India two game points. Satwik sailed one long before sealing the game with a winner to take the first advantage.

The second game was an extremely close affair as the rivals

fought tooth and nail.

After trailing 2-4 early, Chirag went on the attack from the front court to draw level.

The Chinese pair kept fighting and clawed back at 8-8 with Tan finding a winner at the forecourt with a drop.

Satwik smashed one into the net before the Chinese made a service error to hand a two-point advantage to the Indians at the mid-game interval.

The Indian duo quickly extended the lead to 14-11 with Satwik producing a powerful smash. Tan and Chirag then engaged in a terrific rally but the latter went long as the Chinese kept breathing down the neck of the Indian pair.

With Satwik erring twice, China was back on level par at 16-16. In the end, a straight smash from Chirag earned India two championship points. After another exciting rally, Chirag went long to squander one opportunity.

A lucky net chord helped China draw parity at 20-20 before Tan sent one into the net to gift another match point to the Indians.

However, once again, a return bounced from the net as China saved another championship point.

Tan and Ren then grabbed a game point of their own with Chirag erring, but China lost it with a shot going into net.

Indian lifters bag two bronze on Day 1 of World Youth C'ships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian weightlifters Dhanush Loganathan and Jyoshna Sabar won bronze medals in their respective categories on the opening day of the IWF World Youth Championships in Durres, Albania.

Competing in the women's 40kg event, 14-year-old Jyoshna had a combined lift of 115kg (53kg in snatch and 62kg in clean & jerk) as she came in third on Saturday night.

Jyoshna won silver in the snatch section but was sixth in the clean and jerk category in the seven-lifter field.

Dhanush, on the other hand, heaved a total weight of 200kg (88kg+112kg) to finish third behind Filipinos Prince K. Delos Santos and Eron Borres in the men's 49kg event.

The 16-year-old won a silver medal in the snatch category.

Lifters between the age of 13-17 are eligible for youth competitions.

Gauff loses out to Potapova, Rybakina rallies in Miami

AP ■ MIAMI

American Coco Gauff was knocked out of the Miami Open on Saturday after an intense three-set battle with Anastasia Potapova while Indian Wells champion Elena Rybakina earned a hard-fought comeback win against Spain's Paula Badosa.

Three-times Miami winner Victoria Azarenka fell to Poland's Magda Linette but third-seed Jessica Pegula advanced with a 6-1, 7-6 (7/0) win over fellow American Danielle Collins.

Potapova showed determination, stamina and some powerful baseline hitting as she beat South Florida-based Gauff, the world number six, 6-7 (8/10), 7-5, 6-2.

The two hour, 41 minute match in the early afternoon heat ebbed and flowed before Potapova took a firm grip in the third set.

The win was Potapova's third career victory against a top 10 opponent and her first against Gauff after two losses.

"I think I just let it go, and I started to focus on my tennis and going for my shots and not



thinking what she is going to do," Potapova said of her turnaround performance.

Gauff was disappointed with a performance where she failed to find a consistent rhythm.

Potapova will play Chinese starlet Zheng Qinwen in the round of 16 after she beat 12th seed Liudmila Samsonova 5-7, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 in 3 hours and 7 minutes.

Rybakina rallied from a set down to sink Badosa 3-6, 7-5, 6-3. She extended her winning streak to 10 matches as she kept on course to claim the Miami-Indian Wells "Sunshine Double".

Azarenka fell in three sets to the lower-ranked Linette 7-6 (7/3), 2-6, 6-4 ending her hopes of a fourth Miami title.

Linette, who had not won a set off of Azarenka in their two prior meetings, converted five of her eight break points and will now face Pegula for a place in the quarter-finals.

Former French Open winner Jelena Ostapenko defeated 13th seed Brazilian Beatriz Haddad Maia for the fourth time in as many meetings to reach the fourth round with a 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 win.

Samra clinches 50m 3P bronze in shooting WC

PTI ■ BHOPAL

India's upcoming shooter Sift Kaur Samra came up with an inspired performance to clinch her second senior medal at the international level, beating a tough field to win the 50m rifle 3P bronze on the penultimate day of the ISSF Rifle/Pistol World Cup here on Sunday.

On a day when China continued their domination, with Zhang Qiongyue winning gold in the event, Samra, the reigning national champion, scored a total of 403.9 points in the ranking round to finish third, even as Zhang (414.7 points) and Czech Republic's Aneta Brabцова (411.3) entered the title round.

In the gold-medal round, Zhang defeated her Czech rival 16-8.

India are currently second on the medals table behind China with one gold, one silver and five bronze medals.

China are leading the tally with seven gold, two silver and an equal number of bronze.

On Sunday, Samra added to the bronze medal she had won



last year at the World Cup in Changwon, China.

All eyes were on world championships silver medallist in air rifle Anjum Moudgil in the preliminary round of the 3P event, but Samra was in a different zone on Sunday, shooting superb series in all three positions to emerge second

best at the end of the qualification round with a score of 588.

Samra, 21, who had some of the best scores in the trials held in New Delhi ahead of the World Cup, had three awful 'standing' rounds in the ranking match, which allowed Zhang and Brabцова to race to the top.

Bayern players 'shocked' by Nagelsmann dismissal



AP ■ MUNICH

Bayern Munich midfielders Joshua Kimmich and Leon Goretzka admitted on Saturday that Julian Nagelsmann's dismissal as head coach had come as a "disappointment" and a "shock".

"It's always difficult when a coach goes, and I had a very close relationship with Julian," Goretzka told ZDF broadcaster after Germany's 2-0 friendly international win over Peru.

"In the last year, I've probably seen him more than my family, so it is a shock," he added.

Kimmich said that he and his team-mates were at fault for the departure of Nagelsmann, who was sacked by Bayern on Friday.

"It's always disappointing when a coach is sacked, because it means we have not delivered as players," said Kimmich.

He added that it had been strange to prepare for an international game amid the noise of Nagelsmann's dismissal.

"It's a curious situation,

but that's the football business at the end of the day. There is not much heart, not much love."

Nagelsmann was sacked on Friday after a 2-1 defeat to Bayer Leverkusen saw Bayern slip behind title rivals Borussia Dortmund last weekend.

His successor Thomas Tuchel was presented in Munich on Saturday, with Bayern bosses expressing optimism that the former Chelsea and Paris Saint-Germain coach could turn a turbulent season around.

Kimmich, though, admitted that he had no relationship with Tuchel as of yet.

"I don't know him yet," he told ZDF.

Goretzka, meanwhile, seemed to question statements by Bayern sporting director Hasan Alihamidzic that there had been a split between Nagelsmann and the players.

"I'd be stupid to contradict my boss, but personally, I had no split with Julian," he said. "We have to trust our bosses that they are making the right decision for the club," he added.

Morocco stun Brazil for first time

AP ■ TANGIERS

Morocco stunned Brazil 2-1 in a friendly international on Saturday as the north African side recorded a first ever win over the five-time world champions.

Midfielder Sofiane Boufal, a former Southampton star, but now playing with Al Rayyan in Qatar, gave Morocco the lead after 29 minutes, scoring with a powerful turn and drive from a pass by Bilal El Khannous.

Brazil skipper Casemiro

levelled in the 67th minute when his weak shot was fumbled by goalkeeper Yassine Bounou.

But on-loan Sampdoria midfielder Abdelhamid Sabiri struck the winner with a volley in the 79th minute as Morocco showed that becoming the first Arab or African nation to reach the World Cup semi-finals last year was no fluke.

"I wouldn't say we lacked understanding, it's about putting into practice the ideas of a new coach," said



Manchester United's Casemiro.

"I think we played a good game and did everything as far as possible to win."

Only 10 of the 23-man squad that took Brazil to a disappointing quarter-final exit at the World Cup made the trip to Morocco for the game.

The injured Neymar was again missing with his number 10 shirt passing to Real Madrid youngster Rodrygo.

Brazil also had a new manager in the dugout with interim coach Ramon Menezes having replaced Tite who

stepped down after the World Cup last-eight exit at the hands of Croatia.

The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) hopes to be able to announce the name of its new coach before the start of qualifying for the 2026 World Cup in September.

According to Brazilian media, the CBF's first choice is Carlo Ancelotti, currently in charge of Real Madrid.

However, he is not expected to make a decision on his future before the end of the European season.

Fuellkrug at the double as Germany sink Peru

AP ■ MAINZ

Two goals from Niclas Fuellkrug helped Germany blow away their World Cup blues with a 2-0 win in a friendly against Peru on Saturday.

Fuellkrug struck twice in the first half to give Hansi Flick's side a welcome victory in their first game since a catastrophic World Cup campaign in Qatar last year which ended with a group stage exit.

"It was all about getting a good start to the year today," said Fuellkrug.

"After what happened at the World Cup, it was important that we started well in 2023, so I'm happy we managed to do that," added Germany goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen, who deputised in place of the injured Manuel Neuer.

With his side automatical-



ly qualifying for Euro 2024 as hosts, Flick had made clear his desire to experiment with younger players in friendlies against Peru and Belgium.

The Germany coach named a squad which con-

tained five uncapped players and left out big-name stars such as Thomas Mueller, Leroy Sane and Ilkay Gundogan.

But it was 30-year-old Bundesliga journeyman Fuellkrug who made the differ-

ence as Germany eased past a toothless Peru side.

Germany dominated the first half and deserved to take the lead on 12 minutes.

Kai Havertz brought down a long ball from Nico Schlotterbeck in the box, allowing an unmarked Fuellkrug to smash in the opener from close range.

Debutant Marius Wolf fizzed a low cross into the box to set up Fuellkrug for a first-time, close-range finish to double the lead just after the half-hour mark.

Fuellkrug has now scored five goals in as many games for his country, and is well on the way to establishing himself as a regular for Germany.

"I'm getting my opportunities and I'm really happy that I'm linking up so well with the others, so let's hope it continues," he told broadcaster ZDF.

Spain make winning start in Euro qualifying

AP ■ PARIS

Spain won 3-0 against a Norway side missing the injured Erling Haaland in the opening round of Euro 2024 qualifiers on Saturday, while Wales snatched a stoppage-time equaliser to frustrate Croatia.

Dani Olmo turned in Alejandro Balde's driven low cross on 13 minutes in Malaga and Joselu scored twice on his Spain debut to give new coach Luis de la Fuente a victory in his first match in charge.

Three-time European champions Spain next go to Scotland, who saw off Cyprus 3-0 in their Group A opener after Scott McTominay scored twice late on as a substitute at Hampden Park.

Croatia, finalists and semi-finalists at the past two World Cups, conceded a last-gasp equaliser to kick off Group D as Wales debutant



Nathan Broadhead tapped home a flick-on from a long throw.

Turkey came from behind to defeat Armenia 2-1 in Yerevan.

Renato Steffen scored a first-half hat-trick as Switzerland thrashed Belarus 5-0 in a game played behind closed doors in Serbia.

Dennis Man and Denis Alibec were on target as Romania eased to a 2-0 win away to 10-man Andorra, while Israel drew 1-1 at home to Kosovo.