

Dr Soumya's hour of glory gets subdued media attention

LETTER OF THE WEEK



nathan are the first Indian father-daughter duo to get the FRS and Soumya is the

HEARTY congratulations to the Indian scientist Dr Soumya Swaminathan, who has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS), the world's oldest scientific academy in continuous existence. Soumya and Bharat Ratna MS Swami-

second Indian woman to get the honour. Soumya has now entered a privileged league of exceptional scientists. Soumya's role as chief scientist in the World Health Organization (WHO) helped understand the Covid situation better during the pandemic. Alas Indian newspapers did not give as much page 1 prominence as her achievement deserved.

S Sankaranarayanan, Chennai 40

DON'T IGNORE SOLAR POWER

EVERYONE knows that summer temperatures will be extremely high. I remember that during our childhood days, Vijayawada used to be called as 'Blazewada' due to the scorching heat. Ironically nature continues to be peaceful and cheerful irrespective of the season. We must be thankful that nature is giving us free solar power. We should make appropriate use of this bountiful. The government and private authorities must utilise the abundant solar power. With solar powered panels, we can obtain and reap the benefits of

an overwhelming power availability that can be used to maximum levels.

G Murali Mohan Rao, Secunderabad-11.

Better late than never

THE state government of Telangana had taken the right forward step by enhancing minimum wages that have remained stagnant for the past 12 years. Indeed, the decision was prompted by the ongoing writ petition filed in the High Court by members belong-



ing to the working class. It is a paradox of civil administration that while government employees are entitled to DA, yearly increments and a hefty pay revision every ten years together with accrual of arrears, the working class in the unorganised and MSME sectors are denied a regular minimum wage revision. Hope this move will usher in better days for the perennially deprived class.

P R Ravinder, Hyderabad

A Melody moment in Italy

THE gesture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifting a packet of Melody chocolates to his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni took India by storm. It contagiously went viral on social media and grabbed the attention of millions of viewers. The picture postcard of the pair at the iconic Colosseum was bubbling under and, understandably so, given their glamour and charisma. It was fortuitous that the names blended so well to form the coinage - Meloni + Modi = Melody. Both the leaders exuded exuberance and smiled radiantly without detectable simulation. While a packet of eye-catching Melody may have warmed the cockles of the heart of the Italian Prime Minister and established a close rapport with her, it is hard to quantify how much it has contributed to strengthening, as against 'sweetening', the relations between the two countries. Still, it is certainly indicative of greater cooperation and collaboration that both the countries are keen on having. Leaders too are human

like the rest of us, and they are quite within their rights to give a personal touch to their diplomatic encounters if they choose to. However, it becomes farcical when it is done to make reels for the consumption of supporters. The thought of how Modi's predecessor Dr Manmohan Singh would have conducted himself while meeting another head of government springs to mind. The Opposition has dubbed it "Toffee diplomacy" and faulted him for handing out candies as a token of intimacy in Italy when India is faced with the prospect of an economic crisis.

G David Milton, Maruthancode (TN)

It's more than an amusing market anecdote

With reference to the news report "Wrong Parle Stock jumps 5% after Modi-Meloni video," (THI, May 21), the episode of investors rushing to buy Parle Industries Ltd - an entirely unrelated listed company -



simply because its name resembled Parle Products, the maker of Melody toffees, is more than an amusing market anecdote. It exposes a serious and persistent problem with retail investor behaviour in India. A significant section of market participants continues to make buying decisions

based on social media videos and name recognition rather than any basic due diligence. SEBI has repeatedly flagged this concern, yet the pattern recurs. Stock exchanges and brokers must strengthen real-time investor alerts when trading surges in scrips with no visible fundamental

trigger. Financial literacy campaigns need to move beyond awareness posters and reach investors at the point of transaction, before uninformed decisions cause avoidable losses.

A Myilsami, Suler (P O)-641402

Modi must pursue diplomatic goals

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Italy seems more glamorous than achieving an economic breakthrough out of trade deals between the nations. The 'Melody' and Meloni rhyming and Modi gifting Re one iconic toffee to Giorgia Meloni, his Italian counterpart, became an amusing meme creating an internet viral moment. The expensive foreign trips of the PM need to pursue diplomatic goals, such as regarding the Iran-US and Ukraine-Russia war as well as to ink deals bringing capital/technology inflows into India.

P R Ravinder, Hyderabad.

Restoring trust in Indian exams

ABHINANDAN BHATIA

FOR a student, on examination day, all the hard work, teachers' relentless efforts and parents' expectations - are all at stake. Underlying every competitive examination is a tacit public trust that the system is fair, cannot be gamed, and rewards purely on merit. However, such confidence erodes due to episodes like the recent NEET paper leak, which reflects the deep-rooted systemic complacency of our institutions.

The vulnerabilities in the current method of conducting the NEET examination are evident: too many human points of failure in the channel - from officials engaged in the examination process and question paper setting to the printing press employees and logistics intermediaries. These create enormous financial incentives for organised



"exam mafias" to cultivate networks of insider access.

More concerning, however, is the continued complacency and lack of urgent corrective action by the concerned authorities after the 2024 NEET exam leak. Why were the relevant agencies and departments so slow - nearly two years after the report's submission - to adopt the recommendations of the expert committee led by Dr K Radhakrishnan?

The major recommendations included introduction of Computer Based Testing (CBT) for secure and paperless conduct of the examination across multiple shifts; equipping rural areas and each district with CBT infrastructure; utilising the infrastructure of Kendriya Vidyalayas as well as Central and State Universities; and deploying appropriate normalisation techniques for multi-session examinations.

Infrastructure will remain a challenge in ensuring accessibility to rural candidates. Apart from this, we cannot ignore the contentious normalisation methods used to equate varying difficulty levels across multiple exam shifts.

Nonetheless, we would have a more secure and credible examination system.

It is time decisive and proactive measures are taken by policymakers and public authorities towards restoring public confidence in the integrity of our examination systems.

It is the call of the hour to take stringent action against the perpetrators who desecrate the sanctity of our examinations for private gain and, in doing so, jeopardise the futures of millions of students.

(The writer is a research student at Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence, Delhi-NCR)



Make Antya Pushkar devotee-friendly

THIS refers to the news report "Sri Kaleshwara Mukteshwar temple is Greater than Prayag: Priest," (THI, May 21). The Antya Pushkaras at the Triveni Sangam of the Saraswati River is a significant religious event, and the arrangements made for hundreds of thousands of devotees are commendable. Large gatherings of this nature, however, require equally serious attention to crowd management, sanitation, medical facilities, and

river cleanliness. The spiritual importance of the occasion must be matched by administrative preparedness. Authorities must ensure that the sacred experience for pilgrims is not undermined by inadequate infrastructure or pollution of the very waters in which devotees seek to bathe and be cleansed. Proper planning today will preserve the sanctity of such events for future generations.

S P Suganya Devi, Coimbatore

Co-op banks must boost governance

THIS refers to "High yields, tight liquidity: Wake-up call for cooperative banks" (THI, May 22). The article rightly highlights the growing pressure on cooperative banks in a period of rising bond yields and uneven liquidity conditions. These institutions remain vital for rural borrowers, small traders and agricultural communities, yet many continue to function with weak risk management systems and excessive dependence on wholesale funding. Instead of merely increasing lending rates, cooperative banks must strengthen governance, improve deposit mobilisation and invest in professional treasury management. Greater financial literacy among customers and timely regulatory guidance from the RBI can also improve resilience. Cooperative banking is not only about profitability; it is equally about sustaining trust and ensuring stable credit access for vulnerable sections of society.

Swathi Senthilkumar, Coimbatore

IMD move a blessing for farmers

THIS refers to the THI article "Weather forecasting blends two models to sharpen accuracy." The IMD's initiative to blend two forecasting models for improved monsoon accuracy is a welcome and overdue step. For Indian farmers, weather unpredictability is not an inconvenience but a direct threat to their livelihood. A missed forecast can mean delayed sowing, wasted inputs, or crop failure. The real test, however, lies in last-mile delivery. Block-level forecasts are only useful if they reach farmers in their local language,



through channels they use like mobile alerts, local radio, or panchayat networks. Technology at the top must translate into actionable information at the field level, or its potential remains largely unrealised.

M Barathi, Bengaluru-560076



Disturbed biodiversity is bad news

ENVIRONMENT is the second home of both animate and inanimate matter. Air pollution biodiversity, ecosystem restoration and earth care are all issues that are closely associated with maintenance of a clean and sustainable environment. Destruction of wildlife habitats, deforestation, expanding populations and adverse climate changes allow easy passages for viral infections from animal to man. The cycle is: deforestation--loss of habitat--increased human and animal interaction--viral transmission. In the last five decades, the rich natural resources of the globe have declined by at least half. Overpopulation, global warming and wildlife sustainability have, therefore, been primary topics of global interest.

Dr Ganapathi Bhat, Akola

Each of us should swear by austerity

IN times of economic challenge, the strength of a nation lies in the collective discipline of its people and its leaders. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has outlined key austerity measures that every citizen should embrace as a measure of one's national duty.

Austerity measures for citizens:

1. Postpone gold purchases: Delay buying gold by at least one year. Gold imports drain foreign exchange. Preserving our forex reserves is critical for national stability today.
2. Conserve fuel: Save petrol and diesel. Carpool whenever possible and choose alternative transport des like electric vehicles (EVs).
3. Harness solar power: India is blessed with abundant sunshine. We delayed adopting solar energy. At least now go in for rooftop solar panels and generate your own electricity.
4. Reduce edible oil use:



Cut consumption by at least 10 per cent to save on money and improve health.

5. Embrace gold-coated jewellery: Women can lead by choosing gold-coated jewellery over real gold, reducing import burden without losing tradition.

Meanwhile, official convoys can be reduced by half. Courts should immediately

expand virtual hearings. Patronise online transactions.

Austerity measures for governments:

1. Public Representatives: Salaries and pensions for public representatives should be revised. A specially constituted committee can decide the amount of honorarium.
2. Downsize official quar-

ters: Where possible, reduce the size and cost of government housing, and vehicle repairs to prevent waste.

3. Digital shift: Exams should gradually move online. All government services that can be done virtually should make the shift on priority basis.

4. Vote by mobile: Software engineers should develop secure ways for citizens to cast votes using mobile phones.

Citizens, government employees, banks and corporates must all understand austerity and spend only on what is necessary. I suggest a dedicated committee to prepare comprehensive austerity guidelines for all departments, including Parliament.

Our long-term goal must be clear. We must move from a deficit budget to a balanced budget where revenue equals expenditure. It is tough, but not impossible to achieve. This is our moment. Let us rise to the occasion.

K Lakshman Rao, Bangalore

BENGALURU ONLINE

Upcoming Anekal cricket stadium to accommodate 80,000 spectators

BENGALURU: A major milestone in Karnataka's sports infrastructure development was marked on Saturday as Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar jointly laid the foundation stone for a massive international cricket stadium at Indlawadi village in Anekal taluk on the outskirts of Bengaluru.

The proposed stadium, which is being developed at an estimated cost of Rs 900 crore, is expected to become the second-largest international cricket stadium in the country with a seating capacity of nearly 80,000 spectators. The ambitious project is being undertaken by the Karnataka Housing Board across nearly 100 acres of land and is expected to be completed within the next two to three years. The groundbreaking ceremony was held amid much fanfare, with thousands of people and party workers gathering at the venue. Local MLA Anekal Shivanna welcomed the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister by presenting them with a symbolic silver mace as a mark of honour and appreciation. The dignitaries were also greeted with massive apple garlands, traditional folk performances and ceremonial 'Poorna Kumbha' processions by women. Several senior political leaders and officials attended the event, including Home Minister G. Parameshwara, MLA K.M. Shivalingegowda, CPM's legal advisor A.S. Ponnanna and MLA Krishnappa.

Officials said the upcoming sports complex will feature world-class indoor, outdoor and aquatic facilities. The indoor sports arena will accommodate 11 major disciplines including badminton, basketball, volleyball, handball, table tennis, squash, kabaddi, kho-kho, judo, taekwondo, wrestling, fencing and weightlifting. The project will also include an Olympic-size swimming pool, a high-diving pool, a separate practice pool, synthetic athletic tracks and courts for tennis, basketball and volleyball. Dedicated arenas for emerging sports like padel and pickleball are also planned.

Apart from sports facilities, the stadium complex will feature multilevel parking for more than 500 vehicles, commercial and retail outlets, sports equipment stores, food courts and modern accommodation facilities for players, coaches and staff. A helipad, public plaza and a large green zone are also part of the master plan.

Read more at <https://epaper.thehansindia.com>

An ode to Alfred Rose, the golden voice of Goa

THERE are voices that simply entertain, and then there are voices that become woven into the fabric of people's lives. Alfred Rose belonged firmly to the latter. For generations of Goans and admirers of Konkani music across the globe, his songs were never just melodies—they were living narratives, filled with emotion, humour, and the rhythms of everyday life. Born in 1932, Alfred shot to prominence when Konkani music was still striving for

wider recognition. Through sheer talent and dedication, he transformed it into a powerful medium of cultural expression. With his distinctive baritone voice, sharp lyrical wit, and remarkable storytelling ability, he created compositions that explored love, satire, social concerns, and the ordinary yet meaningful experiences of Goan society. His songs often carried subtle messages, addressing issues like migration, identity, and community values, all

while remaining deeply engaging and accessible. What truly set him apart was his ability to connect. His music resonated with both the local Goan community and the diaspora, preserving the Konkani language and identity during times when cultural erosion was a genuine concern. He didn't just sing songs; he safeguarded a heritage.

Beyond his musical achievements, Alfred Rose also made significant contri-



butions to Konkani cinema. His appearance in the film Boglantt, alongside his wife Rita Rose, highlighted his versatility as an artist. The couple became an iconic duo for their shared commitment to promote Konkani art and culture.

Even today, his music continues to endure. His songs are still played at family gatherings, cultural events, and celebrations. Older generations revisit them with nostalgia, while

younger listeners discover them with fresh appreciation. In a rapidly changing world, his work remains timeless—bridging generations and keeping traditions alive. Remembering Alfred Rose is not merely about honouring a legendary musician; it is about celebrating a legacy that continues to inspire, unite, and define a community. Alfred Rose will always remain the golden voice of Goa.

Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai