

ANALYSIS 7
MANAGE TERROR
BETTER

MONEY 8
HATE SPEECH ACCOUNTS FOR 10-11
OF EVERY 10,000 CONTENT VIEWS

SPORTS 12
KL GOOD ENOUGH TO
FILL ROHIT'S VOID: MAXI

HYDERABAD, SATURDAY NOVEMBER 21, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



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SHARWA TO DON
KHAKI AGAIN

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LORD VISHNU'S 1,300-YR-OLD TEMPLE DISCOVERED IN NORTHWEST PAKISTAN

A Hindu temple, believed to have been constructed 1,300 years ago, has been discovered by Pakistani and Italian archaeological experts at a mountain in northwest Pakistan's Svat district. The discovery was made during an excavation at Barikot Ghundai. Announcing the discovery on Thursday, Fazle Khaliq of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Department of Archaeology said that the temple discovered is of Lord Vishnu. It was built by the Hindus 1,300 years ago during the Hindu Shahi period, he said. The Hindu Shahis or Kabul Shahis (850-1026 CE) was a Hindu dynasty that ruled the Kabul Valley (eastern Afghanistan), Gandhara (modern-day Pakistan-Afghanistan), and present-day northwestern India.



BHUTAN DENIES CHINESE INCURSION; BLATANT UNTRUTH, SAY OBSERVERS

Bhutan today denied reports that China has constructed a village more than 2 kilometres inside Bhutanese territory near the contested Doklam plateau, despite clear satellite imagery and detailed map locations to the contrary. Maps bearing the official seal of the Bhutan government, accessed by NDTV, also indicate that this new Chinese settlement lies well within Bhutan's present claim lines. Major General Vetsop Namgyel, Bhutan's Ambassador to India, said, "There is no Chinese village inside Bhutan." On whether Bhutan and China had reached any understanding on realigning the border in the contested area, the Ambassador said he "does not comment on border matters."



WHO ADVISES AGAINST REMDESIVIR FOR ALL HOSPITALISED COVID PATIENTS

Gilead's remdesivir is not recommended for patients hospitalised with COVID-19, regardless of how ill they are, as there is no evidence the drug improves survival or reduces the need for ventilation, a World Health Organization panel said on Friday. "The ... panel found a lack of evidence that remdesivir improved outcomes that matter to patients such as reduced mortality, need for mechanical ventilation, time to clinical improvement, and others," the guideline said. The advice is another setback for the drug, which grabbed worldwide attention as a potentially effective treatment for COVID-19 in the summer after early trials showed some promise.



LORD MEGHNAD DESAI RESIGNS FROM UK LABOUR PARTY, CITES RACISM

Indian-origin economist, author and peer Lord Meghnad Desai has resigned as a member of the UK's Opposition Labour Party over its failure to effectively tackle antisemitic racism within its ranks. The 80-year-old peer said he has only ever been a Labour Party supporter but was forced to take the decision to cancel his membership on Thursday after 49 years after former party leader Jeremy Corbyn was readmitted after just 19 days of suspension despite findings of "unlawful acts" by the country's human rights watchdog. "It was a very peculiar decision to allow him back without any apology. He has been refused the party whip in the House of Commons for a few months, but that is a very lame response to a very big crisis," Lord Desai said.



Choose TRS for PEACE: KTR

Want decisive policies or divisive politics, asks TRS working prez

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

TRS working K T Rama Rao has advised the pink party's candidates in the fray for the GHMC elections to just showcase the progress achieved on the welfare front and the initiatives taken by the state government over the past six years in Hyderabad. Let people choose between 'decisive policies' (of the TRS government) and 'divisive politics' (of the saffron brigade), he declared, while releasing a 'progress report' at Telangana Bhavan here on Friday.

The report details the developmental works undertaken by GHMC. KTR said that the report could serve as a campaign tool for the pink party candidates. He gave

Why not BJP paying challans in Gujarat, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh ?

guidelines to party candidates and suggested that those who had secured tickets should work with those who did not, and win the elections. "Work 24 hours tirelessly for the next 10 days and see that the pink flag flies in GHMC," he

exhorted. The TRS working president asked the contesting candidates to pose two specific questions to people. Firstly, BJP came to power in Delhi six years ago: Can they show one work that



HIGHLIGHTS OF EXPENDITURE ON HYD

Hyderabad Metro Rail - Rs 17,290.31 cr	Water Supply and sewerage treatment - Rs 14,175.30 cr
Road Infrastructure - Rs 14,738.55 cr	Uninterrupted power supply - Rs 2,374.36 cr
SRDP - Rs 8,410 cr	Energy conservation - Rs 564 cr
Model Road Corridors - Rs 313.65 cr	Law and order - Rs 1,940.33 cr
CRMP - Rs 1,839 cr	2BHK - Rs 9,700 cr
Roads & Buildings - Rs 866.19 cr	Swachh Hyderabad - Rs 1,716.33 cr
Rs 2,000 crore worth work completed during lockdown	DRF - Rs 15 cr
ORR - Rs 3,309.71 cr	Green Hyderabad - Rs 332.70 cr
	Parks and recreation - Rs 250 cr

Covid test rates to come down more: Etela

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The cost of COVID -19 tests in private labs may go down further in near future from the current level of Rs 850, Telangana Health Minister Etela Rajender said on Friday. According to a press release, the minister stated this while addressing a panel discussion organised by TRSMA (Telangana Recognised School Management Association) as part of the ongoing three-day hybrid exhibition PHIC (Preventive Healthcare and Infection Control Expo)-2020 here. "We never wanted to permit private labs to test COVID as they charge exorbitantly, but, because of various reasons, we were compelled to permit them. The prices were beyond the reach of many common people.

Now we have brought it down to Rs 850 just a few days back and it might go down further in next few days, maybe 10 days or more," the release quoted Rajender as saying.



Scene of the encounter in J & K in which four JeM terrorists were neutralized by the Army on Thursday

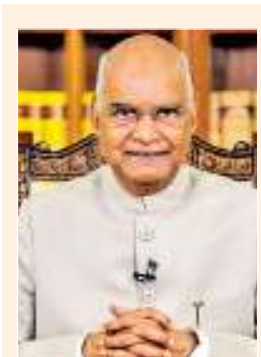
J&K ENCOUNTER

Jaish 'efforts to wreak major havoc thwarted': PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday held a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and others

after a probe indicated that a group of terrorists, killed in Jammu and Kashmir a day before, were planning "something big" ahead of local elections in the union territory.



'Intl community will emerge stronger'

4



Ramulamma, Kavitha not 'star campaigners'

4



The Administrator's Dilemma

2

2021 Summer will be almost normal: Bill Gates

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates believes that a "lot of things" will be back to "normal" by the summer of 2021 if Covid-19 vaccine approvals don't turn up any nasty surprises.

"Very likely by the summer, a lot of things will be back to normal... If vaccine approvals come along quickly," Gates said in a television interview on Thursday night.

Two vaccines, one each from Pfizer and Moderna, have already turned up more than 90 per cent efficacy results and are moving fast towards applying for emergency use approval. The first vaccinations are tipped to begin in the US late December. "We will be able to go back to offices and open up those



restaurants and bars and say okay, we are in a completely different stage than right now," Gates said about his summer of 2021 vision. He thinks a 2021 school year that is "completely normal" is within reach.

2

Allow regional languages for job exams, KCR to Modi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao on Friday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide equal and fair opportunity to students from all States of India, by permitting them to write competitive exams in the regional language of their choice, in addition to English and Hindi. In a letter to Modi, KCR stated that all the competitive exams for recruitment to posts in the Central government, Public Sector Undertakings, Railways, Defence services, nationalised banks etc, are held in only two languages — Hindi and English.

"Students who do not study in English medium or those who are not from Hindi-speaking States face severe disadvantage in these competitive examinations," he said.



Police refrain from arresting Sanjay

To not repeat Siddipet fiasco that gained sympathy for BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Police, despite being 'forewarned', refrained from arresting Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar during his attempt to visit Dubbak MLA M Raghunandan Rao's relatives' houses where police and revenue officials conducted raids during the Dubbak by-elections.

On Thursday, Bandi had challenged KCR to swear in the name of God that his statement that Bandi Sanjay wrote

this time the police stopped short of repeating their Siddipet style of functioning when they recently arrested Bandi Sanjay Kumar during his attempt to visit Dubbak MLA M Raghunandan Rao's relatives' houses where police and revenue officials conducted raids during the Dubbak by-elections.

On Thursday, Bandi had challenged KCR to swear in the name of God that his statement that Bandi Sanjay wrote



Tight security at Charminar, where TS BJP chief Bandi Sanjay prayed at Bhagyalakshmi shrine as part of his pious to CM KCR

RBI panel bats for corporate-backed private banks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India's internal working committee has recommended path-breaking reforms in the Indian banking sector, calling for participation of large Indian corporates and industrial house as promoters of banks.

The P.K. Mohanty-headed working group was set up in June to examine and review the extant licensing and regulatory guidelines relating to ownership and control, and corporate structure of Indian private sector banks.

"Large corporate/industrial houses may be allowed as promoters of banks only after necessary amendments to the Banking Regulations Act,

2

Jana Sena withdraws from GHMC polls to back BJP

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

The Jana Sena party has withdrawn from contesting the GHMC elections and has decided to instead extend support to the BJP. The party candidates would withdraw their nominations, sources said.

After discussions with BJP leaders - Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy and BJP OBC Morcha president Dr K Laxman - Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan stated that his party would work with BJP in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. He said that Hyderabad was transforming into a world-class city under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. There was



Jana Sena party chief Pawan Kalyan after a meeting with BJP leaders Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy and BJP OBC Morcha president Dr K Laxman on Friday

need for strong leadership in Hyderabad city and hence the party would extend full sup-

port to the BJP.

2

No stopping TRS: Kavitha

Page 4

India to get AstraZeneca vaccine by January

PNS ■ MUMBAI (REUTERS)

The head of an Indian company contracted to make AstraZeneca Plc's COVID

vaccine said it could deliver it to health care workers and elderly Indians by January as the country's caseload of infections crossed nine mil-

lion on Friday. The Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine manufacturer,

2

TRS fields candidates for all 150 wards Congress, BJP fail to file nominations in all divisions in GHMC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The ruling Telangana Samithra Samiti party seems to have a head start as, unlike other parties, it has fielded its candidates for all the 150 wards in the GHMC elections. By doing so, the TRS stands out among parties in the fray, particularly the opposition

Bharatiya Janata Party and Congress, which, despite claiming to be the 'alternative' to TRS in Telangana, have failed to put up candidates in all wards of GHMC. TRS working president KT Rama Rao would be trailblazing even with regard to the launch of campaigning for the GHMC elections among all parties. He will kick-start his party's elec-

tion campaigning from Kukatpally on Saturday. KTR has reportedly devised plans to cover over 100 wards in the next few days till November 29 - the last day of campaigning. TRS has submitted applications to the Police Department and the TS Sports Authority seeking permission to hold a public meeting in the LB Stadium on November 29.

However, there is no clarity from TRS sources on whether this public meeting would be finally held or not and whether TRS chief and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao would address the meeting. TRS sources said KCR was yet to take a call on this public meeting. The BJP, despite being engaged in a tug of war with the TRS, could field just 129 candidates, out of 150, till the deadline to file nominations ended on Friday.

2

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:
Kartik & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam
Tithi: Saptami: 09:47 pm
Nakshatram: Shravana: 09:53 am
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)

Rahukalam: 09:15 am - 10:38 am
Yamagandam: 01:25 pm - 02:48 pm
Variyam: 02:06 pm - 03:47 pm
Gulika: 06:28 am - 07:51 am
Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 12:12 am - 01:53 am
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:39 am - 12:24 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy
Temp: 29/19
Humidity: 55%
Sunrise: 06:24 am
Sunset: 05:39 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated November 20, 2020 5:00 PM

Recent concerns raised by the political executive about the performance of bureaucrats, shows the enduring disquiet about their expectation of performance from civil servants.

This is not new. The drive expected from the bureaucracy comes out clearly in Jawaharlal Nehru's address to the Fourth Annual General Body Meeting of the Institute of Public Administration: "In a period of dynamic growth, however, we want as civil servants persons who are not merely head clerks but people with minds, people with vision, people with a desire to achieve, who have some initiative for doing a job and who can think how to do it. But the person who is completely neutral is a head clerk and no more Can a person be neutral, I ask you, about basic things which we stand for, our state stands for, our Plan stands for"

Later, similar sentiments were echoed by Indira

Gandhi in her address to the Institute of Engineers - "unreserved faith in the programs they administer We must all have a commitment to the development of the country and a sense of personal involvement with the welfare of our people".

What are the reasons for such uneasiness by the top political executive?

As early as the 1950s, some of the basic reasons were identified by Paul Appleby, an academic commissioned to study the Indian bureaucracy. He found that administrators preferred "technique over purpose", looked for a "wholly scientific or technical and wholly right decision", and conceived of programme planning to be a "mechanical, merely technical, unvarying" activity.

Later studies (e.g. Taub,

Smart politics is to step away from the technical rigour of rules and regulations and come to terms with political governance - working with political leaders, combining sound administrative practices and procedures with their development agendas, and delivering on goals

Potter) have shown that administrators have, by and large, continued to follow these methods of working. This in the face of accumulating evidence that effective decision-making required peoples' participation, political engagement, program advocacy and willingness to innovate and adapt to local contextual conditions.

If bureaucrats have to meet expectations most of the time,

then they have to practice smart politics, find "champions for ideas", focus on citizen involvement, and follow up on implementation.

Smart politics is to step away from the technical rigour of rules and regulations and come to terms with political governance - working with political leaders, combining sound administrative practices and procedures with their development agendas,



DR. SAMEER SHARMA

and delivering on goals.

Second, floating an idea is not enough and administrators have to go out and find support for their ideas because "no idea is good enough to succeed on the power of the idea alone". Ideas have to fit into ongoing development agendas, and

administrative responses have to be based on an understanding of what the political leaders and the citizens need and how to deliver on these.

During the process of championing ideas, relationships matter, and relationships mean emotions. And emotions are important because they lead to acceptance of new ideas by political stakeholders and citizens.

Third, effective citizen participation is required, especially in this internet-era of citizen involvement. This means respecting the decisions of the "publics" and learning to use citizen engagement opportunities to achieve goals. The standard way of citizen participation involves making people feel good by consulting them and seemingly listening to their concerns, but not taking their

views seriously or giving them opportunities to act on their own behalf.

However, real participation involves, "people who are organised and who become effective in rendering their environment relatively more malleable will begin to perceive themselves differently, as subjects not objects, as people who develop a vision of a better world and who can act coherently to achieve it".

Fourth, initiatives have to be developed and pursued because things don't get done on their own, and flexibility in making choices during implementation leads to goal achievement.

A crucial element is listening and acknowledging others' ideas. Often, that will mean that others will be given credit for your work, but in the end one has the satisfac-

tion of knowing that the work was done well.

All in all, a talisman for consistently effective performance is as follows: The starting point is to decide on a course of action based on a careful analysis of alternatives and projections of probable impacts. After this, step away from technicalities and come to terms with political governance — working with political leaders, combining sound administrative practices and procedures with development agendas, introducing ideas at the right time and chasing goals.

Of course governance systems, values, and culture do vary in different states and within states, too. The good news is that it is possible to acquire these skills through constant practice.

(Author has a PhD from the USA and a DLitt from Kanchi University. The article is based on his research and practice and views are personal)

GHMC elections signal end of 'coalition politics' era

L VENKAT RAM REDDY
■ HYDERABAD

The GHMC elections signaled the end of 'coalition politics' era in Telangana. For the first time, all parties are contesting elections on their own without forming any alliances. TRS, BJP, Congress and TDP have fielded their own candidates. YSRCP and Jana Sena, branded as 'Andhra parties' have stayed away from the GHMC electoral battle. TDP though branded as 'Andhra Party' by the ruling TRS is testing its electoral fortunes again in Telangana after it failed to contest Lok Sabha polls in Telangana for the first time in 2019 since its inception in 1982.

The era of coalition politics began in 2004 in undivided Andhra Pradesh in which Telangana region was a part. Congress party led by YS Rajasekhara Reddy forged an



alliance with TRS and Left Parties in 2004 to dethrone nine-year regime of TDP led by then AP CM N Chandrababu Naidu. YSR's 'coalition politics' worked and TDP was defeated in 2004 Assembly polls.

YSR became CM and could formed the coalition government with TRS for the first time in May 2014 though it's a different issue that TRS parted ways with Congress a little over a year in July 2005. Opposition parties stitched

another 'coalition' in 2009 to dethrone YSR-led Congress regime in 2009 Lok Sabha polls. Then prime opposition in state TDP formed 'grand alliance' with TRS and Left Parties to defeat Congress. But the 'coalition politics' proved futile as YSR retained power for the second term in 2009. After the bifurcation of AP and formation of Telangana State in 2014, 'coalition politics' came back to the fore again.

This time, TDP and BJP

formed alliance to defeat Congress and TRS contested all the seats on its own. The 'coalition politics' failed yet again in 2014 as TRS emerged victorious and formed government on its own. The TDP-BJP alliance continued even in GHMC polls held in January 2016 but received a severe drubbing at the hands of ruling TRS and the alliance was confined to just single digit victory out of 150 wards.

Opposition parties stitched yet another 'grand alliance' to dethrone KCR-led TRS government in 2018 December Assembly polls. Prime opposition Congress formed an alliance with TDP, Left Parties and ProfKodandaram's TJS for the purpose. However, the grand alliance failed miserably as TRS won Assembly polls with a landslide majority and retained power for the second term. The 'coalition politics' were never successful except in 2004.

Jana Sena withdraws from GHMC...

Continued from page 1

The discussions between Jana Sena and BJP were held at Jana Sena senior leader Nadendla Manohar's residence in Hyderabad on Friday. They also discussed the conditions prevailing in Hyderabad in connection with the GHMC elections.

Pawan Kalyan said that there was a need for the victory of BJP in the GHMC elections. He called upon the Jana Sena Party cadre to ensure that Jana Sena votes did not go to any party other than the BJP. He said that the

party would work together with the BJP in the GHMC elections and in future elections. He said that their party candidates might be disappointed with the party decision; however, there was a need to withdraw from the contest for the sake of development of people. The decision had been taken in unavoidable conditions, he said. He called upon his party activists to work along with BJP for bringing the change. "I will talk to my party activists. They should not be disappointed with the party decision," he said.

India to get AstraZeneca vaccine...

Continued from page 1

On Thursday, data published in the medical journal The Lancet showed that AstraZeneca's vaccine

produced a strong immune response in older adults, with researchers expecting to release late-stage trial results by Christmas.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
GOLD	
₹ 51,240 (10 gm)	
₹ 100	
SILVER	
₹ 66,500 (1kg)	
₹ 200	
CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹155
Without Skin	₹177
Broiler at Farm	₹107
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	474
VIJAYAWADA	471
VISAKHAPATNAM	470
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.74

TRS fields candidates for all 150...

Continued from page 1

The Congress fielded just a little over 100 candidates, though the official figure was not released until late night on Friday.

However, the BJP and the Congress were hoping to fill this 'gap' by giving B-forms to candidates who had already filed nominations, but could not secure any party tickets so far.

There is a provision for candidates who had filed nominations to submit B-forms to the State Election Commission till November 22 -- the deadline to withdraw nominations.

Choose TRS for...

Continued from page 1

We have undertaken the construction of the Keshavapuram reservoir in Hyderabad. Keshavapuram reservoir water will be available in six months. The government has taken steps to ensure that there is no shortage of drinking water until 2050", he said.

The TRS working president underlined that party candidates had a responsibility to report on the progress of the government. "We want to let the people know what kind of developmental work we have done in Hyderabad". He said that continuous, quality electricity was being provided by

Public transport - Rs 156.59 crore	Lakes' rejuvenation - Rs 376.80 crore
Bus shelters - Rs 45 crore	Basti Dawakhana - Rs 30.51 cr
Sports infrastructure - Rs 97.37 crore	Annapurna Canteens - Rs152.03 crore
Grave yards - Rs 66.97 crore	Tourism heritage - Rs 34.66 crore
Brand Hyderabad - Rs 2, 115.93 crore	Reviving heritage - Rs100 crore

the TRS government and the poker and gundumba clubs in Hyderabad had been closed. "Investments totaling Rs 2 lakh crore are coming in Hyderabad. Hyderabad is the financial engine of Telangana," he observed.

KTR said that the candidates' names were finalized

after considering all aspects. About 85 divisions are reserved for women. Although 10 seats had been reserved for SCs, TRS allotted 13 seats. He said equal opportunities were provided to all sections. The TRS candidates should go public only after submitting the B-form as time was short, he said.

Tech-savvy siblings take on BJP, Cong on social media

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

These days more than half the poll battles are won on social media platforms, at least in urban centers. No wonder, TRS' tech-savvy brother-sister duo are hyper-active on social media platforms, targeting BJP and Congress respectively.

On Friday, K T Rama Rao asked BJP Telangana chief Bandi Sanjay to refrain from making baseless comments linking Chief Minister to terrorist outfits. He said that this is stooping to a new low and most reprehensible rhetoric. In reply to the doubts cast by Sanjay on whether the Chief Minister may be having links with terrorists, KTR tweeted: "Let's fight elections like how they should be fought, without making absurd, illogical & ridiculous comments like



these". Kavitha, engaged in a brawl with Congress AICC in-charge Manickam Tagore, strongly objected to the Congress leader's tweets terming Chandrashekhar Rao as 'a Modi supporter'. She said: "We know Manickam Tagoreji is new to our state and (Cong) has decided to attack us in whichever way possible. However, talking about pres-

ence of Rahul Gandhiji when the roster had pre-notified tabling farms bills in Parliament, she shared a screenshot showcasing absence of Rahul Gandhi.

Earlier, she demanded an explanation from the Congress to the people of Hyderabad "Why did Congress party give an official letter to stop the Rs 10,000/- relief that was to (be) given to flood-hit families?"

Police refrain from...

Continued from page 1

City Police Commissioner said that Bandi Sanjay Kumar did not need permission to visit the Bhagyalaxmi temple, but there was no permission to go there with a rally from the State BJP office.

Reacting to the need of police permission to visit the Bhagyalaxmi temple, Bandi Sanjay, before his visit to the temple, said that the police didn't give any permission to him to visit the Bhagyalaxmi temple. He said that there was a chance of the police arresting him in spite of any permission given. He said that he would reach the Bhagyalaxmi temple at any cost and in time. "I will go there by changing my attire if need arises," he said.

However, the police said that there was no permission

for the rally as the Election Code was in force. The police

made it clear that Bandi Sanjay could visit Bhagyalaxmi temple between 11 am and 12 noon. However, the police deployed huge force at State BJP office and Charminar to see that there would not be any untoward incident as the day was Friday. However, Bandi Sanjay visited Bhagyalaxmi Ammavaru shrine. Sanjay performed pooja there. Later, speaking to the media, Bandi Sanjay said that he didn't address any letter to the SEC asking it to stop the distribution of flood relief funds. He said that the letter, being circulated in social media, was forged. The Chief Minister made allegations on the basis of a forged letter, he said. It was unfortunate that the Chief Minister himself made allegations against him, he said.

2021 Summer will be...

Continued from page 1

"We can get the whole country, every city back in school. I think that's achievable and a very important goal to have in mind," Gates told CNN.

He spoke in some detail about the "daunting" work of distributing the vaccines which are around the corner.

"The urgency and the numbers are pretty daunting. You know if you end up with all today's vaccines, we need over 10 billion doses to get to a high percentage of the world," Gates said. Gates' remarks come at a time when the US is experiencing its worst coronavirus surge in months, with daily cases smashing records day after day. The US has the world's highest coronavirus caseload and death toll.

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No 'Aasara' for the needy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Aasara Pension Scheme has been much appreciated by many. However, there are still several needy people who haven't received the benefits of the scheme, despite having submitted their papers months ago. The scheme, which is for various groups, including senior citizens, widows, handicapped, HIV patients, weavers etc, extends a financial help ranging between Rs 3,000-2,000 per month.

Farhat Raheem, a mother of two handicapped children living in Edi Bazaar, has been going from office to office so as to get some money for her kids' treatment. She shares, "Both my kids' brains are not developed according to their age. The medicines costs a lot and my husband is an auto driver. Hence we thought we would apply for this scheme. But even after receiving assurance



from the officials, we haven't received a rupee. I applied for pension in September 2019. I just want the money to make sure my kids can have timely treatment, medicine and good food."

Unfortunately, there are many such cases, Mohd Inayat, who has a small pan shop in Prakash Nagar, Begumpet is a senior citizen and despite applying for the pension last year, he hasn't received any-

There are still several needy people who haven't received the benefits of the scheme, despite having submitted their papers months ago

thing. "I had a heart bypass surgery a few years back, post which my medicinal expenditure increased a lot. That's why I applied for the scheme. I went to the GHMC office so many times, but no one helped me. It's getting very hard financially, as I am the only breadwinner in the family."

Momeena Bee, from Engine Bowli, who is a widow and lives

alone shares that she has been taking help from her neighbours to even eat. "I lost my husband three years back, and soon after my son also passed away. Since then I am alone. I applied for the pension in January this year.

But they keep telling me to go to various offices and get so many documents. I did all they said, but till now haven't received anything. My neighbours are helping me, but they can't do it for ever. The Rs 2,000 will help me at least eat daily."

With GHMC elections on head, and yet waiting for their pension, these people are not too keen to vote for TRS candidates. Shares Farhat, "TRS is the governing party and this scheme is their's. They are not helping us now. Their governance has failed. I don't want to vote for them one more time. I will see what other candidates in my area say."

Slum-dwellers of Rajendra Nagar cry for attention

NAMRATA SRIVASTAVA
■ HYDERABAD



The slum-dwellers of Rajendra Nagar say that they have been struggling with the constantly flowing sewage and no roads in the area. They are planning to cast NOTA if their demands are not met

They might live in slums, but the residents of MM Pahadi, Rajendra Nagar are in no mood to look the other way when their locality lacks basic amenities such as sewage lines, rolin and street lights. Claiming that no work has been done in the area since the last GHMC elections, the basti, which was established around a decade ago, has been struggling with the constantly flowing sewage and no roads in the area.

Mohd Javed, an auto driver who resides in the area shares that despite many complaints, no one has come to their rescue. He said, "My house is very near the Mir Alam Tank and we were flooded during the recent rains. But, during every rainy season, the water comes into the colony. The sewage in the basti is also a big concern. Most of the potholes have no lid, and keep flowing all 12 months. It gets really stinky. Add to that, no one comes to collect the garbage. It's very horrible here. We must have complaint, verbal and in writing, at least 10 times. We met the local TRS leader and AIMIM leader many times. But, no action has been taken yet. We are very clear that if they don't work, then they won't get our vote. So, we plan to go for NOTA."

The people of slums are forced to live in darkness as the street lights as well are not put up. Zareena, a housewife says, "The drainage is one thing, but we don't even have street lights. It gets very difficult to get out in the night - especially with no roads and flowing sewage. We also have issues of mosquitos. Last year, due to this, we had several dengue cases. While people were dealing with the pandemic, we were hit by severe floods. No family got a single rupee as flood relief. That's why we can't trust any political party anymore." Many com-

plained that the local AIMIM and TRS leaders didn't even visit them after the floods. Shares Azam Ali, a local citizen, "After we complained so many times, a few party workers had come to our basti last year. They said that they will make arrangements for street lights, roads and also work for the sewage lines. Since last December, no one came for any work at all. If we have to work ourselves by contributing money, why have a ward member? That's why we are not going to support any party leader, until our demands are met."

CITY LIGHTS

GMRVF distributes relief kits among the flood-hit families

The recent rains in Telangana caused significant loss to the state. In particular, the city of Hyderabad suffered a major loss. Many colonies were inundated by water and people had to go through untold suffering and it is far from over. With many city areas completely waterlogged, many households have lost all their belonging, houses damaged beyond repair and are in need to any kind of assistance they can get. In an effort to help those who are in such a dire state of helplessness, GMR Varalakshmi Foundation (GMRVF) identified a few majorly affected localities in the city and distributed 300 food relief kits that included dry ration along with utensils set and couple of Solapur bedsheets. The distribution was carried on 10th, 11th and 12th November among the rain affected areas of Hanuman Nagar, Bandlaguda, Nagole, Ambica Nagar, Chandrayangutta and Chaderghat. It may be recalled that GMRVF distributed food packets earlier in October among the rain affected. Around 1000 cooked food packets were distributed in Ali Nagar and Chaderghat areas.



NHRD Hyderabad to help students hone their skills

The National HRD Network (NHRD), Hyderabad is planning to strengthen academic institutes by helping their students hone their employability skills, supporting faculty by sharing latest trends in management and by promoting an interface with the industry. Most of the students need help in understanding industry expectations, building an appropriate resume, in positioning themselves for internships and in preparing for job interviews. NHRD wishes to address these challenges through an initiative called "Get Set Go-Mentor@Campus". About 100 practising professionals working at leadership roles in leading organisations would interact and mentor students of select premier B-schools through virtual and physical mode. They will interact with the students and conduct sessions on building interpersonal skills, resume-writing, positioning for internships and honing interviewing skills. NHRD also wishes to create Learning Circles or Clubs in chosen B-Schools to be managed by students themselves under the guidance of an industry mentor.



SpiceJet starts Hyd-Nashik flight under Udan scheme

SpiceJet on Friday started operating flights on the Hyderabad-Nashik route under regional connectivity scheme Udan, an official statement said. "The airline will be operating four weekly flights and will deploy its 78-seater Q400 aircraft. Nashik is the 14th destination to be connected under Udan by SpiceJet," the statement issued by the Civil Aviation Ministry said. Under the Udan scheme, financial incentives from the Centre, state governments and airport operators are extended to selected airlines to encourage operations from unserved and underserved airports, and keep airfares affordable. "The Hyderabad-Nashik route received a massive demand from the passengers owing to the trade and tourism opportunities possessed by the Nashik city," the statement said.



Telangana records 894 new Covid cases, 4 deaths

Telangana recorded 894 new Covid-19 infections and four fatalities on Thursday taking the overall toll to 1,423 and the cumulative number of positive cases so far to 2,61,728. As on Thursday, there were 12,515 active Covid-19 cases in the State. A total of 1,057 persons recovered on Thursday taking the cumulative Covid-19 recoveries in the State to 2,47,790 with a recovery rate of 94.67 per cent, while the countrywide recovery rate was 93.6 per cent. Between Wednesday and Thursday, 39,448 Covid tests were conducted in the State while reports of another 784 samples were awaited. So far, a total of 50,50,612 Covid-19 tests have been conducted in the State out of which 2,61,728 have tested positive and 2,47,790 persons have recovered. The Covid-19 positive cases reported from the districts included nine from Adilabad, 54 from Bhadrachal, 154 from areas under GHMC, 32 from Jagtial, 17 from Jangaon, eight each from Bhupalpalay and Gadwal, 10 from Kamareddy and 36 from Karimnagar.



Non-Covid services to resume at Gandhi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Gandhi Hospital on Friday started non-Covid services after becoming designate Covid hospital nine months ago.

All the departments with all services (OP, IP, all surgeries-elective & emergency) will commence from Saturday. To prevent spread of Covid, the hospital authorities have taken up certain measures including removal of visiting hours. Only one patient and one attendant are allowed. Mask is mandatory and without mask there is no entry. People have

been urged to maintain social distance. This apart, the hospital urged visitors not to spit in hospital premises.

Dr Raja Rao, superintendent Gandhi Hospital said that even though it is a difficult task to run both the streams effectively, the authorities will do the best.

"We are maintaining separate gates and separate entry and exit points for Covid and non Covid and are labelling the areas," he said. DME, Dr Ramesh Reddy visited Gandhi and inspected the areas and gave his suggestions also.

New tech to make Favipiravir

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Aptus Therapeutics, a start-up at ASPIRE-TBI, UoH, which focuses on Synthetic Chemistry and Chemo Enzymatic Chemistry, has developed novel and innovative methods for manufacturing Favipiravir, an antiviral drug. Currently, the drug is being used in combating Covid-19. The developed synthetic process technology is cost effective and eco-friendly which uses less solvents and easy to isolate the target molecule in large quantities. The firm has successfully developed and validated the technology for commercial bulk production.

AUSPICIOUS DAY



Women offer prayers on the occasion of Chhath Puja at Hussainsagar in city on Friday. Chief Secretary Someh Kumar, Principal Secretary Arvind Kumar also performed Chhath Pooja along Sanjeevaiah Park

Activists vent their ire for advanced polls

DURGA PRASAD SUNKU
■ HYDERABAD

Activists in the city vent their ire on the state government for giving its go-ahead to hold the GHMC polls and bringing forward the entire process by almost two months. "Why the government is in hurry to hold the polls when the state is dealing with second wave of Covid and recovering from the recent floods. The elections can be held once the term of the present elected body expires," they opined. Speaking to the 'Pioneer', Retired High Court Judge Justice B Chandra Kumar said, "The government wantedly preponed the polls so that the opposition parties won't get time to prepare for elections. In addition to that, before announcement of notification, the government increased the salaries of GHMC employees and 50 per cent relief in the property tax."

Padmanabha Reddy from Forum for Good Governance said, "The State Election Commission has advanced the elections without any valid reason. Further, the city is in chaos due to recent floods and



Covid-19. Rather than concentrating on the relief measures, the government wants is going ahead with elections." "Also, time for filing nominations has been drastically reduced to just mere 3 days, instead of 7 days. There is no time to even prepare manifesto. There are two writ petition regard-

ing GHMC elections pending with the courts. Keeping all this issues aside, the government gave nod to conduct elections," he added.

Syed Bilal from Human rights forum said, "Still there areas in the city which are yet to recover from the recent floods. Areas like Osman Nagar Colony, Chandrayanagutta

The city is in chaos due to recent floods and Covid-19. Rather than concentrating on relief measures, the govt wants is going ahead with elections, said Padmanabha Reddy, FGG

are still reeling under flood waters. The government had promised Rs1 lakh for flood victims but is giving only Rs 10,000." He further added that the elections are being held at a time when the experts have warned of second wave of Covid. Though the State Election Commission issued notices to stop the relief distribution till the completion of election, there are high chances it will shown an impact on the elections.

Cyberabad police crack dating racket

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Cyberabad Cyber Crime police on Friday busted a dating racket and arrested three fraudsters from West Bengal. The accused allegedly cheated people on pretext of providing male and female escorts and collecting money online. The arrested were identified as Bijay Kumar Sah, Binod Kumar Sah, Mohamad Nur Alam Ansari hailing from West Bengal. The kingpins of the gang Amit Paul and Sushank Kumar Sah are absconding. The gang created websites named 'Datershub

and Spicyfriendship and luring netizens. The gang created dating/escort service website with the help of professionals and posted few telephone numbers assuring male escort jobs for men/boys and providing female escort services.

The matter came to light when two victims approached Cyberabad Cyber Crime police and lodged a complaint. The accused cheated a person to a tune of Rs 13.82 lakh under the guise of employing male escort job. In another case, the gang cheated a person of Rs 1.3 lakh.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA						
REVENUE (LA) DEPARTMENT						
DISTRICT COLLECTOR, MAHABUBABAD						
FORM-VII						
DECLARATION						
(See sub-rule (1) of rule -25 and section-19(1) of the Act-30(2013))						
MAHABUBABAD DISTRICT GAZETTE No. 28/ MAHABUBABAD/2020						
DATED: 17.11.2020						
DATE: 17.11.2020						
RC.NO.61/1678/2019						
Whereas it appears to the Government of Telangana Collector that a total of Ac.13.13 Gls. land is required in the Mahabubabad Village and Mandal of Mahabubabad District for public purpose, namely, for the work of Approach Road to Kurav Mahabadi Road via Land Venkateswara Temple, Anantapur from Km.0.0 to 2.5 (which was already taken possession and executed).						
Therefore Declaration is made that a piece of land admeasuring, more or less Ac.13.13 Gls. of standard measurement under Acquisition for the above said project in the Mahabubabad Village and Mandal of Mahabubabad District, whose detail description is as following, is under acquisition.						
SCHEDULE						
Village: Mahabubabad Mandal: Mahabubabad District: Mahabubabad						
Sl. No.	Area (Gls.)	Area (Gls.)	Type of Land	Type of Land	Name & Address of person interested	Trees/ Structures if any
1	199/9/12	0.08	Dry	Patta	Bhoroagiri Radhakrishna S/o Venkatarammanna	Nil
2	200/1/2	0.05	Patta	Dry		
Total		0.13				
This Declaration is made after hearing of objections of persons interested and due enquiry as provided U/s 15 of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (Act No. 30/2013), to all whom it may concern. Mines of coal, iron-ore, slate or other minerals lying under the said land or any particular portion of the said land, except such parts of the mines and minerals which may be required to be dug or removed or used during the construction phase of the project for the purpose of which the land is being acquired, are not needed. A Plan of the land may be inspected in the Office of the District Collector, Mahabubabad and Land Acquisition Officer/Revenue Divisional Officer, Mahabubabad on any working day during the working hours.						
Land Acquisition Officer and Revenue Divisional Officer		Additional Collector, Mahabubabad		District Collector, Mahabubabad		
DIPR R.O. No: 869/LA/PP/Advt/Pub/2020-21						



Final list of TRS, BJP candidates

S.NO	DIV NO	NAME OF THE DIVISION	NAME OF THE CANDIDATE
1	2	Dr.A.S.Rao Nagar	P Pavani Reddy
2	3	Cherlapally	Bonthu Sridevi Yadav
3	4	Meerpet H.B.Colony	Prabhudas Jerripothula
4	6	Nacharam	Saijan Shekar
5	7	Chilkhanagar	Bannala Praveen Mudiraj
6	8	Habsiguda	Bethi Swapna Reddy
7	10	Uppal	Aaratikayala Bhaskar
8	61	Attapur	Madhavi Amarendra
9	80	Kachiguda	Dr Sirisha Yadav
10	81	Nallakunta	Gariganti Sridevi
11	83	Amberpet	Vijay Kumar Goud
12	85	Adikmet	Hemalatha Reddy
13	86	Musheerabad	Edla Bagyalakshmi Yadav
14	90	Kavadiguda	Lasya Nanditha
15	96	Yousufguda	Raj Kumar Patel
16	99	Vengal Rao Nagar	Dedeepya Rao
17	102	Rahamath Nagar	CN Reddy
18	136	Neredmet	Meena Upender Reddy
19	139	East Anand Bagh	Y Prem Kumar
20	141	Goutham nagar	Mekala Sunitha Ramu Yadav
21	82	Golnaka	Doosari Lavanya
22	110	Chandanagar	Manjula Raghunath Reddy
23	123	Hydernagar	Narne Srinivas Rao
24	143	Tarnaka	Mothe Srilatha
25	138	Moula Ali	Mumtaz Fatima

SL.	NO.	DIVISION	NAME
1	1	KAPRA	Vinod
2	2	DRAS RAO NAGAR	M. Chandrika
3	3	CHERLAPALLY	Surender Goud
4	4	MEERPET HB COLONY	Bangi Jayalaxmi
5	5	MALLAPUR	Mallikarjun Goud
6	6	NACHARAM	Anitha Padmareddy Reddy
7	7	CHILKA NAGAR	Shallaja Srikanth
8	8	HABSIGUDA	ChetanaHarish
9	9	RAMANTHAPUR	Bandari Sreevani
10	10	UPPAL	Dr. Shilpareddy
11	15	VANASTHALI PURAM	Venkatesshwar Reddy
12	16	HASTHINAPURAM	Sujatha
13	25	MOOSARAMBAGH	Bhagyalaxmi Bakka
14	26	OLD MALAKPET	Kanakaboina Renuka Mudiraj
15	29	CHAWNI	Erukala Abhishek Goud
16	34	TALABCHACHALAM	Kothapally Renuka
17	35	GOWLIPURA	Ale Bhagyalaxmi Padmashali
18	39	SANTHOSH NAGAR	Yeshwanth Jaiswal
19	42	BARKAS	Y. Vijayalaxmi
20	46	FALUKNUMA	Mahender
21	47	NAWAB SAHAB KUNTA	Prajwala Goud
22	54	JAHANUMA	A. Srihari
23	56	KISHAN BAGH	Bandari Naveen kumar
24	60	RAJENDRA NAGAR	Archana
25	61	ATTAPUR	Sangeetha
26	99	VENGAL RAO NAGAR	Kilari Manohar
27	101	ERRAGADDA	Prasanna
28	111	BHARATI NAGAR	Godavari Anjireddy
29	112	RAMCHANDRAPURAM	G. Sathyanaarayana
30	113	PATANCHERU	Ashish Goud
31	114	KPHB COLONY	Preetham Reddy
32	115	BALAJI NAGAR	Aritakula Charumathi
33	116	ALLAPUR	Puligolla Laxmi Yadav
34	117	MOOSAPET	K. Mahender Kammari
35	118	FATHE NAGAR	Krishna Goud
36	119	OLD BOWENPALLY	Tirupath I
37	120	BAL NAGAR	Narsi Reddy
38	121	KUKATPALLY	Nayini Pavan
39	125	GAJULARAMARAM	Sridhar Verma
40	126	JAGADHIGIRI GUTTA	Mahesh Yadav
41	127	RANGA REDDY NAGAR	Nandanam Divakar
42	128	CHINTAL	Pathi Shruthi
43	129	SURARAM	Bakka Shankar Reddy
44	130	SUBASH NAGAR	Malathi Reddy Reddy
45	131	QUTBULLAHPUR	Ukkanti Swathi
46	132	JEEDIMETLA	Tara Chandrareddy
47	133	MACHABOLLARAM	Sarve Naresh
48	134	ALWAL	K. Veena Goud Goud
49	135	VENKATAPURAM	G. Shiva Abhishek
50	136	NEREDMET	Prasanna (Advocate)
51	137	VINAYAK NAGAR	C. Rajyalaxmi
52	138	MOULA ALI	Sunitha Shekar Yadav
53	139	EAST ANAND BAGH	Bakka Nagaraj
54	140	MALKAJGIRI	V. Shravan
55	141	GOWTHAM NAGAR	Santoshi Srinivas Mudiraj
56	147	BANSILAL PET	Spandana

No stopping TRS: Kavitha

Says KCR's non-BJP conclave is evoking huge response across India

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Nizamabad MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha, the daughter of TRS chief and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao stated that KCR's proposed non-BJP conclave to be held in the second week of December in Hyderabad has been evoking huge response from all the sections across India. She said KCR's non-BJP conclave caught the attention of not just political parties but also various employees, farmers and trade unions across India, who are extending support to KCR's initiative to take on anti-farmer, anti-labour and anti-poor policies of BJP-led NDA government at the Centre. In an informal interaction with media persons here on Friday, Kavitha said that TRS victory in ensuing GHMC polls is a writing on the wall and no force on this earth can stop TRS from bagging GHMC Mayor post adding that the huge development programmes by spend-



She said KCR's non-BJP conclave caught the attention of not just political parties but also various employees, farmers and trade unions

ing over Rs 67,000 crore undertaken by TRS government over the past six years for the all-round development of Hyderabad were enough to gain votes and ensure TRS victory in GHMC polls. "Several farmers' organisations and trade unions across India are extending support to KCR's non-BJP conclave. They are approaching TRS party and party leaders through various social media platforms extending support and evinc-

ing interest to take part in the conclave. Our party chief KCR garu will take a call on inviting them to this conclave soon," Kavitha said. Stating that the huge response for KCR's non-BJP conclave is a reflection of angst among various sections of society across India against Modi government's anti-labour, anti-poor, anti-people, anti-farmer and against weakening of public sector undertakings in the name of divestments.



Edu-related issues to play indirect role

NAMRATA SRIVASTAVA ■ HYDERABAD

Education related issues will play a key role in GHMC elections this year despite the corporation not having a direct link in this regard. Several parents and teachers association in the city are planning to vote for individual candidates over candidates of TRS or BJP. Claiming that throughout the entire pandemic they ran from pillar to post, but no one helped them - State or Centre, A Santhosh Kumar, the President of TSTCEA, shares, "They still haven't resolved our issue regarding the salaries. And this is not a new issue. We are not so keen to vote for people of TRS, who is in power in

the state or BJP, who are at the Centre." Adding to the same, D Srinivas Varma, General Secretary of TTIEA, says, "The association has thousands of the teachers associated with us. We cannot trust the same people who have let us down time and again. So, we have decided that we will look for individuals who will do some good work, or even go for NOTA." Several parents took to Twitter to express their views. Hridesh Gupta @guptahridesh, wrote on Twitter while tagging KTR, TRS and the Telangana CMO, "Why parents should vote for you when you haven't fulfilled your own promise. Check your tweet in 2016. You and your government supporting greedy pvt schools, not parents."

Coronavirus norms go for a toss during poll campaigns



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Campaigns for the GHMC elections took off this week with a worrying disregard for Covid-19 precautions. Not just one, but all political parties have been accused of violating Covid-19 norms while submitting nominations on Friday. Contesting candidates accompanied by large group of supporters and senior party members rushed to file nominations. Even the guidelines framed by Election Commission keeping the pandemic in mind were violated. One of the most important guideline is mandatory mask for every person during every election-related activity. Mayor Bonthu Ram Mohan's wife, Bonthu Sridevi

who is contesting on his seat, took out procession. Deputy Mayor Baba Fasiuddin had a procession while filing nominations. This was the case in every ward. Even the norms for filing of nominations were violated. The norms state that apart from the candidate, only two more persons will be permitted for submission of nomination. In several places, multiple persons were seen. Further, the number of vehicles for nomination purpose is also restricted to two but then Friday witnessed processions. Officials have expressed worry that such processions could turn into super-spreader events. Social distancing will have to be maintained as per Covid guidelines of the State govern-

ment and Ministry of Home Affairs. This was viciously violated. Health experts say that crowds that politicians invariably attract during election time will complicate the efforts to slow the spread of Coronavirus. Government guidelines permit up to 200 people, or 50 percent of seating capacity at closed-door political events. An official said, "Politicians have been in public since the pandemic started and several of them tested positive, but this didn't deter them from participating in events. It is important to follow covid precautions, especially lot of them are compromising with their masks. Often supporters behaviour ends up in a outbreak."

Can BJP get Rs 1L cr package for Hyd?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TRS working president KT Rama Rao came down heavily on Telangana BJP Chief Bandi Sanjay's comments on flood relief and paying challans. KT Rama Rao asked, "they won't tell anything what they will do for Hyderabad. To attract youth, he is making irresponsible statements about challans. In Delhi they brought Motor Vehicle Act under ageis of Nitin Gadkari to avoid road accidents and traffic violations. But here, he says challans won't be there. Why are you not paying challans in Gujarat, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh? They think people of Hyderabad are mad?"



He said that BJP is providing enough entertainment for the next week with all 'good programs'. He said, "Today they did a Dharna at Baghya Lakshmi temple. There is Birla Mandir, Tadbund Hanuman temple, Balkampet Yellamma

temple. But they want to go to Charminar temple because it is all about Hindu Muslim, India and Pakistan. They know only this and won't tell what they will do for Hyderabad". He challenged BJP leaders if they can get Rs 1 lakh crore package for Hyderabad.

He said that The Telangana government provided services free of cost even though the Center collected money in the form of charges from migrant workers during lockdown. He said that the state government helped people during flood but the Center did not give any money. He said, "BJP wants to give Rs 25,000 as relief if they win. They don't give what is requested". He said that a century was missed in the last GHMC election by a single ball and won 99wards. KTR directed the leaders to hit the century this time.

Ramulamma, Kavitha not 'star campaigners'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Contrary to expectations, actor-politician Vijayashanthi and MLC K Kavitha do not figure among 'star campaigners' in the lists submitted on Friday by TPCC and TRS respectively for the GHMC elections. However, former cricketer and party working president Mohd Azharuddin finds a place in TPCC list.

TPCC has announced its star campaigners' list for the GHMC elections. The party applied for the requisite passes at the State Election Commission office. However, the TPCC did not include the name of TPCC Campaign Committee chairperson Vijayashanthi, who had found a place in the recently formed Medak constituency election committee. Vijayashanthi is expected to join the Bharatiya Janata Party any moment. The TPCC star campaigners include party unit chief N Uttam Kumar Reddy, CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, working president and Malkajigiri MP A Revanth Reddy, working president and former MP Ponnam Prabhakar, working president and former MP Mohd Azharuddin, working president Jetti Kusuma Kumar,



Bhongir MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, AICC secretary and former MP V Hanumantha Rao, former LoP Shabbir Ali, City Congress president and former MP M Anjan Kumar Yadav. The Telangana Rashtra Samithi too declared its star campaigners for the GHMC

elections on Friday evening. The pink party submitted the list of its star campaigners to the State Election Commission, seeking star campaigner passes to them. Curiously, newly elected Nizamabad local bodies' MLC K Kavitha's name did not figure in the star cam-

paigners' list. However, Kavitha is the in-charge of Gandhi Nagar division. She is striving for the victory of TRS party candidate Muta Padma Naresh.

Chief Minister and TRS party president K Chandrasekhar Rao, KT Ramarao, T Harish Rao, Md. Mahamood Ali, Eatata Rajender, Talasani Srinivas Yadav, Koppuka Eshwar, Sabitha Indra Reddy, Puvvada Ajay Kumar and Sathyavathi Rathod are the star campaigners of the TRS party. On behalf of the party, general secretary M Srinivas Reddy applied for the star campaigner passes.

Star campaigner: Its implications

'Star campaigners' are those persons (usually celebrities or prominent faces) who are nominated by parties to campaign in a given set of constituencies. These persons are usually popular faces within the party. There is no specific definition according to law or the ECI. Actors, celebrities and senior political party members are the ones who are nominated to be star campaigners. This is because they are believed to be

more capable than others to attract votes for the political party concerned. **How much does a star campaigner cost?** Section 77 (b) of The Representation of People's Act, 1951 says that most of the expenses incurred by the campaigner "shall not be deemed to be an expenditure in connection with the election". In other words, all expenses will be borne by the respective

political party. **A case for PMs** The MCC states that if the star campaigner is a PM or a former PM, then expenses incurred for bullet-proof vehicles required by centrally appointed security personnel will be borne by the government. If another political dignitary accompanies this candidate, then 50 per cent of expenses incurred for security arrangements will be borne by the candidate.

BJP, TRS engage in verbal duel

KCR's remarks against Modi objectionable

Hyderabad: Telangana BJP on Friday lodged complaint with the State Election Commission (SEC) seeking action against Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao for making defamatory statements against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In the complaint, the Telangana BJP alleged that Chief Minister of Telangana K Chandrasekhar Rao, during his press conference made abusive and unwarranted comments against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The comments are totally in bad taste and unbecoming of a Chief Minister against the Prime Minister. All the said comments have been widely circulated in print and electronic media and during the said press conference held on the eve of GHMC elections, the Chief Minister of sticking to the issues concerning GHMC elections was so harsh against the Central Government while criticising the policies of BJP Government at Centre. The Chief Minister accused the Central Government of mismanaging the economy with its policies," it said in the complaint. In the letter, Telangana BJP general secretary, G Premender Reddy mentioned that Chief Minister falsely alleged that the PSU's are being destroyed. "Without any basis, KCR charged that the BJP is focusing on creating communal tensions in the country for political gains. KCR said the BJP has done tremendous damage to the farmers and working class without any iota of truth," it said.



People will give befitting reply to BJP in polls

Hyderabad: The TRS on Friday condemned the comments of BJP State president and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar terming Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao as anti-national. The TRS also objected to the way the BJP MPs were bad-mouthing the TRS leadership throwing all the basic courtesies to the wind.

Rytu Bandhu Samithi Chief Palla Rajeshwar Reddy said that calling for scrapping of challans issued for traffic violations was nothing but violation of law. "You are the anti-national who is calling for violation of a law that is enacted by the Union government. Being an MP, are you suggesting that people can drink and drive?" Rajeshwar Reddy asked. He reminded the BJP leader that it was the Centre that hiked the fine amount for traffic violations and several other States had been charging higher fines than Telangana State. Stating that it was a fact that the BJP had written to the EC urging it to stop the financial assistance distributed to flood affected families in Hyderabad, he said: "People of the city will teach BJP a befitting lesson for snatching away the much-needed assistance when they need it most. The same BJP which was instrumental in the abrupt stoppage of distribution of Rs 10,000 is crying wolf and blaming TRS for not distributing flood relief now," he added.



Centre may send teams to States, UTs reporting rise in Covid cases

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre is contemplating sending high-level multidisciplinary teams to states and union territories that are reporting a rise in COVID-19 cases, the Health Ministry said on Friday.

The Centre had on Thursday rushed high-level teams to districts of Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Manipur to support these states' efforts towards strengthening containment, surveillance, testing and efficient clinical management of coronavirus positive cases.

In a statement issued on Friday, the Health Ministry said the Centre is also contemplating sending such teams to other states and UTs that are witnessing a surge in COVID-19 positive cases.

"The Union government has advised the State/UT governments to adopt aggressive and widespread testing to ensure that the missed out



and undetected positive COVID-19 cases are promptly identified for timely and effective tracing, containment and subsequent treatment," it said.

The ministry on Thursday had said with the spike in daily new COVID-19 cases and fatalities in Delhi, the spillover effect is being observed in the NCR regions

and within Haryana and Rajasthan where the number of coronavirus positive patients is on the rise.

On Friday, the total number of coronavirus cases in India mounted to 90,04,365 and the death toll to 1,32,162, with the infection claiming 584 lives in a span of 24 hours, as per the health ministry data updated at 8 am.

Door-to-door survey in Delhi containment zones amid Covid spike

New Delhi: Amid a surge in coronavirus cases in the national capital, a door-to-door survey for identifying and testing people symptomatic for COVID-19 in containment and densely packed areas of the city commenced on Friday.

The survey will be completed within five days and will cover over 57 lakh people in containment zones, dense areas and identified clusters of virus transmission, officials said. Delhi Health minister Satyendar Jain told reporters that the survey is aimed at identifying and testing symptomatic people living in containment zones and densely packed areas.

District officials said all the containment zones and super spreader areas are being covered through teams including teachers, municipal corporation staff, Asha workers

and civil defence volunteers.

"All protocols will be followed to test all symptomatic persons. The survey will be completed within 5 days," said a district magistrate. There are currently over 4500 containment zones in Delhi.

Following a meeting between Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, it was decided that the survey in the city will be conducted by teams of AIIMS, Delhi government and municipal corporations, and all the symptomatic people found in the survey would be tested and provided necessary treatment. Around 9500 surveillance teams have been constituted and deployed for conducting a door-to-door survey. Each team has a target to survey 50 households every day, officials added.

Schools in Mumbai to remain closed till Dec 31, says BMC

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Friday announced that schools in the city will remain closed till December 31, a change from the earlier decision to reopen them from November 23, as the metropolis witnesses an upward trend in COVID-19 cases.

However, schools in other cities of Maharashtra can reopen as per schedule taking into account local conditions and the prevailing pandemic situation, an official said.

Schools in Maharashtra, which are shut since March due to the coronavirus outbreak, were set to reopen for Classes 9 to 12 from November 23, post Diwali-holidays.

"COVID-19 cases are on the rise in the city. Some



schools were used as testing and quarantine facilities amid the pandemic.

"To prevent further spread of the infection, we have decided to keep schools closed till December 31," Mumbai mayor Kishori Pednekar said.

After recording 409 new coronavirus cases on November 16, the lowest daily count since April, the city registered 541, 871 and 924 fresh infections on November 17, 18 and 19, respectively.

Meanwhile, schools in other cities of the state can reopen as per schedule, the official said.

"Schools in other parts of the state can be reopened from November 23 if local conditions are favourable," said the senior official from the school education department.

If there are no cases or very few infections, then local authorities such as municipal commissioners or district collectors are empowered to reopen schools, he added.

MVA realised it can't waive power bills, says Fadnavis

PNS ■ NAGPUR

Senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Friday attacked the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, saying it has now realised that it cannot fulfil the promise of waiving power bills.

His statement comes days after state Energy Minister Nitin Raut said that the government will not be able to provide any relaxation in the inflated electricity bills that consumers received and that they will have to make full payment of the bills.

Earlier this month, Raut had hinted at a major relief to the consumers facing the issue of inflated power bills, saying that a Diwali gift was in the offing.

Talking to reporters in Nagpur, Fadnavis said, "Earlier, they said that power bills will be waived."

But now they realised that it is not possible."

The former Maharashtra chief minister asserted that all the three state-run power companies performed in an excellent manner during the previous BJP government led by him, when Chandrashekhar Bawankule was the energy minister. "We purchased power at a



very cheap rate...We gave concession to the poor and farmers during our rule. If you (the government) have the courage, you also do it," the Leader of Opposition in the state Legislative Assembly said.

Minister Raut had on Thursday said that the state power firms were making huge losses, and it was a "mess" created by the previous BJP regime

Minimum temperatures dip across Rajasthan

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Night temperatures have dipped in several areas of Rajasthan with Mount Abu, the only hill station in the state, recording a low of 2 degrees Celsius, the meteorological department said here on Friday.

Churu recorded a minimum temperature of 5.7 degrees Celsius, Sikar 6 degrees Celsius, Pilani 7.1 degrees Celsius, Sriganganagar 9.8 degrees Celsius and Bikaner recorded a low of 10 degrees Celsius, it added.

The maximum temperatures recorded in most of the cities were 30 degrees Celsius or lower, a weather department official said.

The department's forecast said night temperatures were likely to fall further in the next 24 hours.



INDIA CORNER

Jaishankar hosts farewell lunch for envoys of Dominican Republic, Fiji

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday hosted a lunch to bid farewell to the High Commissioners and Ambassadors of the Dominican Republic, Fiji and Angola, and thanked them for their contribution to the bilateral ties. Jaishankar also welcomed the recently arrived envoys from Bangladesh, Trinidad and Tobago, the Maldives, Senegal, North Korea, Hungary, Chad and Tajikistan. Hosted a lunch to bid farewell to the High Commissioners/Ambassadors of Dominican Republic, Fiji and Angola. Thank them for their contribution to our bilateral relations," Jaishankar tweeted. And welcomed the recently arrived ones from Bangladesh, Trinidad & Tobago, Maldives, Senegal, DPRK, Hungary, Chad & Tajikistan. Confident they will have an enjoyable stay," he said in another tweet.



SC to hear plea for regulation to ensure UPI platform data not exploited



The Supreme Court Friday said it would hear on November 23 the plea filed by Rajya Sabha MP Binoy Viswam seeking direction to the RBI for framing regulation to ensure that data collected on UPI platforms is not "exploited" or used in any manner other

than for processing payments. The matter came up for hearing before a bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian which listed it for hearing next week. On October 15, the apex court had sought responses from the Centre, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), NPCI and others including Google Inc, Facebook Inc, WhatsApp and Amazon Inc on the plea.

Actress sexual assault case: HC junks plea for change of court

The Kerala High Court on Friday rejected pleas filed by the actress who was allegedly sexually assaulted here in 2017 and the state government seeking to transfer trial in the case, in which popular Malayalam actor Dileep is among the accused, from the current court. Dismissing the pleas, the court said unless the court and the prosecutor work in sync it results in the guilty escaping the clutches of law and innocent being punished. Justice V G Arun said he was confident that in the endeavour to seek truth and render justice, the special prosecutor and defence lawyer shall work in tandem. The high court, which had deferred the trial in the case when the pleas came up early this month, directed the trial court to resume the in-camera trial on Monday. The judge also rejected the prayer sought by the state and counsel for the actress for a stay of the judgment for a period of one week to file an appeal before the Supreme Court, observing that he has become 'functus officio' after the pronouncement of the judgment.



Kannada outfits to stage bandh opposing Maratha board move

Despite government warning, pro-Kannada organisations on Friday decided to go ahead with the Karnataka Bandh on December 5 in protest against the formation of the Maratha Development Authority (MDA). Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa had on November 13 announced setting up the MDA, earmarking Rs 50 crore for the overall development of the Maratha population in the state. The move was seen in some quarters as an attempt to woo the sizeable community members in Basavakalyan Assembly segment in Bidar district in north Karnataka and Belagavi Lok Sabha constituency bordering Maharashtra where by-elections are due. The decision has not gone down well with several pro-Kannada organisations. The consortium of the pro-Kannada organisations such as KCVP and Karnataka Rakshana Vedike (Shivaram Gowda faction) passed a resolution opposing the government move and deciding to stage the bandh.



Wait continues for cabinet exercise in Karnataka

PNS ■ BENGALURU

As the wait continues for expansion or reshuffle of cabinet in Karnataka, Deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi said on Friday the high command is likely to communicate their decision in about a week's time. "CM (B S Yediyurappa) has made national president J P Nadda aware about all related matters here.

Nadda ji has informed the CM he will discuss with the Prime Minister and Amit Shah (Union Home minister) and will convey the decision...It will come in four to six days," Laxman Savadi told reporters at Kalaburagi. Responding to a question on some ministerial aspirants meeting BJP state president Nalin Kumar Kateel, he said, "they (MLAs) have freedom to express their feelings with the president and the Chief Minister. They have expressed their

opinion and the CM and the president will look into it." Yediyurappa after his meeting with Nadda in Delhi yesterday on the cabinet exercise, had said the party national president has sought a couple of days time to consult other leaders on the matter.

Developments in Delhi on Wednesday was a repetition of sorts for Yediyurappa, as he was sent back with a similar reply by Nadda, when the Chief Minister had gone with a proposal to take up cabinet expansion exercise in September, ahead of the monsoon session of the state legislature. Political activities have intensified within the ruling BJP camp in the state after Yediyurappa on November 10 indicated that cabinet reshuffle was on the cards after the party's victory in the bypolls to two assembly constituencies.

The Chief Minister had then

hinted about reshuffle by dropping or inducting some Ministers. The cabinet expansion or reshuffle is expected to be a tightrope walk for Yediyurappa, considering that there are too many aspirants.

Several legislators have openly declared their aspirations and political hobnobbing is also taking place within the BJP circles.

A few aspirants had met BJP state president Kateel on Thursday, apparently aimed at securing their place during the cabinet exercise this time. On the other hand, 8-time MLA Umesh Katti, who has been sulking on being denied a chance earlier, met Yediyurappa on Friday.

Meanwhile in what is being dubbed as related development, Water Resources Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi has met BJP national general secretary B L Santosh in New Delhi.

'Maintain vigil in dts bordering Delhi'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday directed senior officials to maintain special vigil in districts adjoining Delhi in view of the spike in COVID-19 cases there.

The chief minister has asked senior officials to maintain vigil in Meerut, Gautam Buddh Nagar and Ghaziabad besides Lucknow, Kanpur Nagar, Prayagraj and Gorakhpur, an official spokesperson said.

The chief minister also directed officials to take special caution in these districts in view of the rising COVID-19 cases in Delhi.

The chief minister has asked the medical education minister and health minister to



review the health services in Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddh Nagar, the spokesperson said.

Asking the Integrated Command and Control Centre to remain alert, the chief minister said surveillance and contact tracing should also remain effective. The chief minister said coronavirus positive patients who are in the high risk group should not be allowed home quarantine and should be admitted to COVID hospitals.

BJP disturbing communal harmony, says Gehlot

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Friday said "love jihad" is a term manufactured by the BJP to divide the nation and disturb its communal harmony. He said the marriage is a matter of personal liberty and bringing a law to curb it is completely unconstitutional, he said.

It will not stand the scrutiny by any court of law, he added. "Jihad has no place in love. They are creating an environment in the nation where consenting adults would be at the mercy of state power. Marriage is a personal decision and they are putting curbs on it which is like snatching away the personal liberty," Gehlot tweeted.

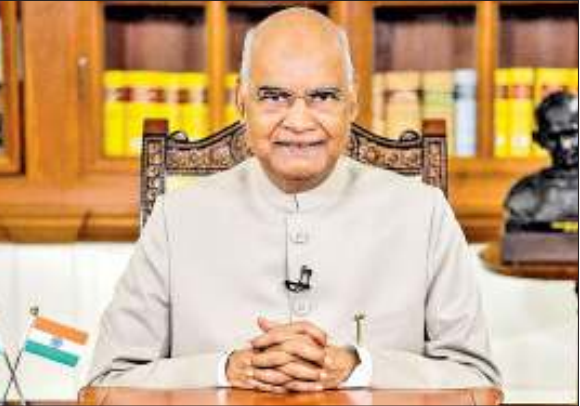
'Intl community will emerge stronger'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday expressed optimism that the international community was very close to finding a solution to the coronavirus pandemic and will emerge stronger and more resilient from the crisis.

According to an official statement, President Kovind, while addressing an event, remarked that the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates enhanced global cooperation to ensure collective health and economic well-being of humankind.

He further expressed his optimism that the international community was very close to finding a solution to the pandemic and will emerge stronger and more resilient from the crisis," the statement issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan said.



In a virtual ceremony, Kovind accepted credentials from the Hungarian envoy Andras Laszlo Kiraly, High Commissioner of the Maldives Hussain Niyaz, Ambassador of Chad Soungui Ahmed and Ambassador of Tajikistan Lukmon.

On the occasion, the President conveyed his good wishes to the envoys on their appointment, the statement said. He noted that India enjoys warm and friendly relations with all the four countries and that the ties were deeply rooted in a common vision of

President Ram Nath Kovind expressed his optimism that the international community was very close to finding a solution to the pandemic and will emerge stronger

peace and prosperity, it said.

Kovind also thanked their governments for supporting India's candidature for the non-permanent seat of UN Security Council for the term 2021-22, the statement said.

Chouhan equates Gupkar alliance with 'intelligence' outfit

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday likened the Gupkar alliance in Jammu and Kashmir to an "intelligence organisation" whose members he said were "spying" for China and Pakistan.

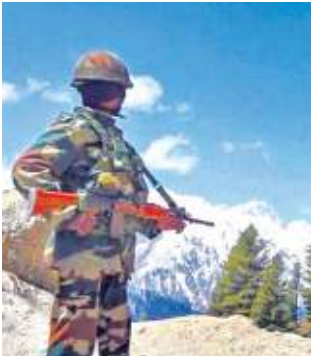
The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) is a conglomerate of political parties in Jammu and Kashmir. The amalgam, which has political parties like the NC and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), was formed to seek restoration of Article 370 in J&K, scrapped by the Centre last year. "What should I call it...? Gupkar sangathan or guptachar (spy) sangathan. These are people

spying for China and Pakistan, Chouhan told reporters here. This is not an alliance...these leaders of Gupkar sangathan have grabbed land worth more than Rs 25,000 crore in Jammu and Kashmir, he alleged.

"Be it the National Conference or the PDP, children of their leaders have studied abroad. They gave stones to the children of Kashmir. They lived a luxurious life and had freedom to loot Kashmir, the BJP chief minister alleged. Asked about the BJP's alliance with the PDP in the past, Chouhan said his party cant stay with people having an "anti-national" outlook and that is why it walked out of the coalition.

China's new game

Bhutan is most certain to emerge as the next flashpoint as Beijing makes territorial ingress near Doklam

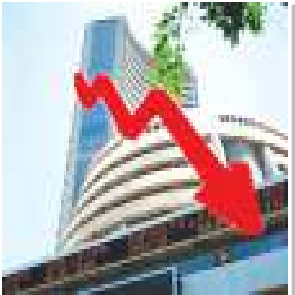


China isn't expected to concede any territorial advantage it has along its shared border with India and its continued depredations only prove the predictability of its acquisitive strategies and the futility of expecting talks to tame its expansionist ambition. That's why the report that it had infringed on Bhutan's sovereignty and set up a permanent settlement 2 km within its border, close to Doklam, didn't quite come as a surprise though subsequently this was denied by Bhutan's ambassador. Beijing has anyway mastered the art of smart tradeoffs with our allies. But satellite images have confirmed the report. The news of the Chinese settlement very close to Doklam was first shared by CGTN news producer Shen Shiwei, a media organisation considered to be the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) stooge, but was later deleted. He had posted pictures of a neat residential settlement complete with amenities. Perhaps this was part of China's information propaganda war, creating a perception of and the desire for the goodness of the Chinese way of life and intimidating bordering nations to subscribe to territorial and economic transactions loaded in its favour. But that doesn't mean that it has lost sight of either Bhutan, where it has already ingressed into a wildlife sanctuary, or Doklam in particular. And given reports of the Chinese takeover of Nepal's bordering villages, the wolf warrior tactic is playing out both in the strategic and information domain. China will never give up Doklam though it simmered down tension with India after the standoff in 2017. That's because this patch of land is crucial for ensuring its unhindered road connectivity from Chumbi Valley to bordering areas of India and Bhutan. Without this cushion, it would be constricted by both India and Bhutan on either side and wouldn't like their hawk eyes on it. Similarly, the Chinese consolidation around Doklam threatens India's chicken neck access to the Northeast, particularly Arunachal Pradesh that China insists is "south Tibet." Beijing's desperation is evident from the fact that in 1996, it "offered" to "give up" its claims to the 495 sq km of land in the Pasamlung and Jakarlung valleys of Bhutan in return for 269 sq km in Doklam. And despite a breather to India, hoping to continue a frenemy relationship with Narendra Modi than any other Indian leader and, therefore, cooling down till the latter's re-election, it has positioned itself close to the site within a year. Its over-adventurism at Galwan eroded that understanding between the two leaders and its continued intransigence has only worsened equations. In fact, this is a pincer attack of sorts, drawing us to the eastern front and compounding pressure on us to vacate the Chushul heights in Ladakh, a strategic perch that allows us a privileged view of the Chinese road to Aksai Chin. China is revving up defence infrastructure along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Post-Galwan, it has firmed up positions along the central, Sikkim and eastern sectors. It has been ramping up surface-to-air missile sites, increased the number of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and expanded air bases in Tibet.

Bhutan is most certain to emerge as the next flashpoint as China has never forgotten how the former chose to get close to India during the Tibetan annexation. China further refused to recognise the traditional watershed principle that had decided the boundaries between Bhutan and Tibet. And claimed there were perceptual differences over territory in much the same manner of its argument with India. Since 1981, we have had countless rounds of talks with China at different levels and 22 between Special Representatives alone since 2003. Still we have not resolved our territorial dispute, China now seeking legitimacy for its 1959 claim line. Already, it has browbeaten India at the talks table on Ladakh by calling for a buffer zone, which means our forces cannot patrol up to the points they used to because of the Chinese insistence on a no man's land. This would allow it to build resources on its side unmonitored and reverse any disengagement move at a short notice. This clause also makes Indian vigilance difficult besides stretching our alertness at all times. And now by pushing us off Chushul in exchange for withdrawing from some areas it has claimed, it is forcing us into a deal. India should not agree to any position that doesn't guarantee status quo ante across all sectors of the LAC. Both sides have considerable reasons to de-escalate. India, which is dealing with the pandemic spiral and rebuilding a battered economy, can't afford to devote significant resources to the military at this particular juncture. On the other hand, the Chinese Government wants to focus on its growing GDP, the only major economy to register a growth in a pandemic-hit year. However, earlier in September, after the meeting of the foreign ministers of the two countries, the Chinese Communist Party mouthpiece, *Global Times*, noted that the implementation of the agreement depended on whether India is able to keep up its end of the bargain. It said: "Unless India followed through, this would be little more than what he called paper talk." And on November 12, it claimed that reports of India and China having finalised a detailed disengagement were "inaccurate" at this stage. Till there is no signed agreement between the two sides on the logistics of the retreat, not much can be said. For now, India is being rightfully cautious. China has stepped up aggression in Hong Kong, virtually quietening the pro-democracy activists, is heaving down on Taiwan and is threatening Australia with brutal economic decisions for refusing entry of Huawei in 5G operations and investments. Beijing has never believed in "good faith" diplomacy. It will step up its multi-pronged offensive against us and choke our allies, too. It has already got to Bhutan.

No instant shot

Our pandemic-hit economy will continue to misfire for some time but that doesn't mean analysts can write us off



A report by the global forecasting firm, Oxford Economics, predicting that India will be one of the worst-hit economies even after the worst impact of the pandemic is beyond us, has given Government baiters a new stick to beat it with. However, one must remember that several previous predictions of doom and gloom for India, either in terms of its caseload and number of deaths, have been proven to be premature fear-mongering. While the economic relief packages have been admittedly coming slow and staggered, one must not forget that several prominent economists have argued that India has not rushed into any action and is waiting out to see what long-term impacts the Coronavirus will have before taking major action on reviving aspects of the economy. Currently, some structural reforms have been made to spur development. So one should treat all reports of what will happen four years in the future with a major pinch of salt.

It is true that manufacturing and services have been hard hit by the pandemic and while ratings agencies and the Government might quibble about the exact figures, India's economy will contract by around a tenth this year. Many sectors, such as aviation, travel and tourism, will take a good five-six years to return to prosperity that they had known and we are yet to see the worst of the jobs impact on the economy as various moratoriums come to an end. There are slight glimmers of hope though, including increased car and two-wheeler sales over the past few months. But there is also no doubt that a new tsunami of cases is upon us, whether we recognise it in the data or not, particularly in Delhi where public carelessness might have a fatal impact with specialised hospital beds beginning to run short. This has led to much speculation that Government authorities in India, like their counterparts across Europe, might need to declare a second shutdown. It would be prudent for forecasting firms, none of which saw the pandemic coming, to wait and watch as well and at least wait until the worst of the Coronavirus is past us before sounding the Doomsday alarms.

Seeding a new market

The Indian seed industry, as a sub-sector of the agri-inputs industry, has been the most vibrant in terms of innovation and growth over the past four decades



INDRA SHEKHAR SINGH

The Indian seed industry has made rapid progress over the past 50 years, maturing because of the ceaseless efforts of thousands of men and women, who have created a strong R&D base and given us a competitive advantage in ensuring quality. India is endowed with diverse agro-climatic conditions, high level of technology expertise, trained and skilled manpower, suitable land and abundant sunshine for agriculture. The country, therefore, has immense potential to emerge as the leading provider of seeds to the world. We can export varieties for all kinds of field crops, vegetables, forage crops and flowers.

However, considering the developments in terms of the new and emerging disruptive business operating models and processes aligned with innovative technology interventions, there is a need to invest in concrete initiatives for further strengthening the Indian seed industry as part of "Atmanirbhar Krishi".

The Indian seed industry, as a sub-sector of the agri-inputs industry, has been the most vibrant in terms of innovation and growth over the past four decades, contributing to a significant increase in productivity and profitability of farmers in India. The well-balanced seed quality legislative framework, set up by the Seed Act, the New Seed Policy, 1988 and National Seed Policy in 2002, boosted private sector participation in a sector that had its foundations laid by public sector seed systems. However, much needs to be done in terms of further reforms and policy interventions.

The role of new technologies, like molecular-marker based selection approaches to fast-track breeding programmes for development of new/superior plant varieties, needs to be further strengthened as an integral part of the seed industry. Also biotechnological and molecular approaches can improve the quality assurance systems. An emerging area, which utilises biotechnology and nanotechnologies and can contribute significantly to productivity and profitability of farmers, is seed treatment with biological inoculants. This can also be promoted on a large scale as part of seed-applied technologies.

The Indian seed industry can



become a globally competitive, export-oriented and self-reliant industry, especially for several Asian, African, East European and South American countries, which share similar agro-climatic conditions like India as, with respect to international trade, most countries allow seed imports subject to the following: (a) Import permit based on sanitary and phytosanitary certificates and (b) Variety evaluation in the importing country to ascertain its suitability to the agro climatic conditions.

Currently, there are no significant export incentives available to the seed sector though the export potential is estimated at more than \$ 5 billion per year based on various industry estimates. India can offer seeds for export to many countries with suitable sub-tropical and tropical agro-climatic regions in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and so on at affordable prices similar to our pharma and agro-chemical sectors. The following incentives can help.

Incentive to the extent of 20 per cent of the seed value that is exported must be considered because in sectors like pharma and garments, similar incentives have been available for a long time to encourage exports in the initial stages. These incentives can be gradually brought down to 10 per cent after five years. A provision of ₹100 crore may be adequate for the next five years and ₹100 crore for the next six to 10 years.

Reimbursement of the cost of variety evaluation in any for-

CURRENTLY, THERE ARE NO SIGNIFICANT EXPORT INCENTIVES AVAILABLE TO THE SEED SECTOR THOUGH THE EXPORT POTENTIAL IS ESTIMATED AT MORE THAN \$ 5 BILLION PER YEAR BASED ON VARIOUS INDUSTRY ESTIMATES. INDIA CAN OFFER SEEDS FOR EXPORT TO MANY COUNTRIES WITH SUITABLE SUB-TROPICAL AND TROPICAL AGRO-CLIMATIC REGIONS IN ASIA, AFRICA, EASTERN EUROPE AND SO ON

eign country is a progressive policy. It may be considered here, too, as the seed companies have to incur heavy expenses for variety evaluation, which is a pre-condition for obtaining export orders. This expense needs to be reimbursed at least to the extent of 75 per cent by the Government. A provision of about ₹100 crore may be adequate for the next 10 years for meeting plant variety evaluation expenses for export purposes. Seed manufacturers add to economies of the importing countries and help get more foreign reserves into the country. Hence they should be rewarded with up to 30 per cent subsidy.

India has lacked a seed export promotion council for a long time. The Government, under the trade and export promotion council, should institute one with industry representatives and ensure that seed exports amount to 10 per cent of total agriculture exports.

India has three major seed hubs in the country. But given our vast agro-climate, we can cater to demands from Africa to ASEAN countries. The Government needs to allow Indian and foreign seed companies to breed seeds for export purposes in special agro-zones. These zones may function like SEZs. They need to be equipped with dry docks, good transportation, seed testing facilities and so on to facilitate swift exports. A single window clearance counter can be established for fast tracking permissions.

An "Atmanirbhar Krishi" or

self-reliant seed sector needs the SAARC markets and good economic relations between SAARC countries. The Government and industry need to step forward and create a SAARC seed forum, which will help ease-of-doing-business in the sub-continent and also provide avenues for international trading without restrictions. This body should strictly be an economic one for policy and regulatory advocacy among the SAARC countries. The Indian seed sector will grow immensely if we can spearhead this drive.

Finally, climate change is causing a rapid shift in the demands of seeds globally. Very soon, many nations won't have the financial resources to evade this crisis. But we can be a hub for seed research for the world. Our versatile climate allows us to research and co-evolve new varieties that may be suited for many countries. For even one or two varieties at the right time can change the fate of the nation and bring millions of dollars into India. Hence the Government needs to provide development grants to Indian R&D companies so that they can track future challenges, assess demand and create a seed bank for Africa, Latin America and ASEAN countries. The Government may also partner with African nations to out-source their seed R&D to us. This would boost innovation here while providing lesser developed nations an access to cheaper research and seeds.

(The author is Director, Policy and Outreach, National Seed Association of India)

SOUND BITE

The Oxford AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine should be available for healthcare workers and elderly people by February 2021 and by April for the general public. It will be 2024 for everybody.

Serum Institute of India, CEO
—Adar Poonawalla



The people of Pakistan and the Government have only one concern and that is what you are feeling in Afghanistan, that we want peace.

Pakistan PM
—Imran Khan



I have always been very connected with the ISL. I have enjoyed it because born in Calcutta and from a very young age, I have seen football only.

Former cricketer
—Sourav Ganguly



I was planning on taking to the road and telling stories in an hour of stand-up. Stand-up comics, they are the best truth tellers we have. If I can get away with this, then I'd love to.

Hollywood actor
—Matthew McConaughey



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Irresponsible media

Sir — It should ease our minds that the Supreme Court is seized of the blatant misuse of media freedom by some TV news channels and is keen on nudging the Government to take steps to rectify the situation. Indeed, it requires urgent attention since drawing a false equivalence between "free speech" and "hate speech" and between "virulent nationalism" and "civic nationalism," certain channels continue to peddle rabidly communal stuff. This is devoured with relish by many viewers. But then, mass viewership or popular consumption is not a good enough reason to allow them to present news stories in adversarial terms and spread the poison of religious hatred. There is a fine line between informing the public and polarising society. One of the media's roles is to edify and unite people and not to divide them or cater to their baser instincts.

On-air bigotry is just as bad. Loosely describing participants in the Tablighi Jamaat conference as "intentional superspreaders", the induction of Muslim youth into civil services as "UPSC jihad" and

Govt must provide free vaccine

It's good news that the world is close to a vaccine for the COVID-19 pandemic. Pfizer and Moderna have achieved a high degree of efficacy at over 90 per cent, using radical technologies which have the potential to tackle other critical diseases. Union Health Minister Harsha Vardhan recently said that the vaccine will be available in three to four months and that India has made arrangements to vaccinate 250-300 million people in the first phase.

However, the politics of the vaccine — especially as major powers seek to derive geopolitical advantage from it — will matter. The procurement of vaccines, especially for India, will hinge on agreements it is able to strike both bilaterally and multilaterally, while leveraging its own domestic production capacity.

The proper storage and distribution of the



affordability of the vaccines will matter the most. It would be wisest for the Government to pay up and provide either discounted or free shots for the people, given that this will not just save lives but act as the single-most important stimulus to bring the economy back on track. Tracking and building each element of the vaccine architecture should be the single-most important governance priority over the next year.

However, most critically, the country now needs more of good and ethical journalism for us to be a vibrant democracy.

David Milton
Maruthanathan

N Sadhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru

Cong must wake up

Sir — Three months ago, the Congress "letter writers" shocked

the nation by asking party chief Sonia Gandhi to revitalise the party and restore its organisational democracy, indecisive leadership being their top concern. Sonia Gandhi did a cosmetic rejig of the party, leaving no doubt who was the boss. Now, Kapil Sibal has fired a fresh salvo. In a newspaper interview, he has questioned the "nomination culture" of the party. The Congress Working Committee (CWC) is packed with Gandhi loyalists. Independent-minded leaders have no place in it. So an election to the CWC looks far-fetched. Till men and women with their own mind find a place in the highest decision-making body, the party will continue to find itself in a hole.

Sibal wants more "dialogue" within the party, a tough ask. In Congress, there are no discussions, only orders. How can a national party hope to capture power at the Centre without some of the States in its kitty? This is something the Congress needs to think about.

Ganapathi Bhat
Akola

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Curb antibiotic pollution, now

Left unchecked, drug-resistant bacteria due to antibiotic pollution have the potential to unleash a much larger and deadlier pandemic



KOTA SRIRAJ

There was a time when antibiotic resistance in human beings and animal pathogens was not common. But today, multi-drug resistant bacteria have become fairly commonplace, posing a major challenge to our healthcare providers and increasing human fatality rates. Scientific evidence is suggestive of the fact that antibiotic resistance genes and antibiotics in the environment are playing a major role in perpetuating a new health crisis. Some of the major sources are waste from large-scale animal farms, waste water from antibiotic manufacturing firms and refuse from hospitals. Manure, or compost especially, is a worrying source of this antibiotic contamination. With no standardisation or mandatory testing of the end product, the largely locally-produced manure and compost products that are used on a large-scale are replete with antibiotic residues and resistant bacteria.

As COVID-19 rages on, the probability of large-scale drug resistant infections suddenly seems very possible. According to the publication, *Review on Antimicrobial Resistance*, 7,00,000 people die each year globally due to resistant infections and this figure is only set to grow in the coming days. It further estimates that by 2050, a whopping 10 million lives would be at risk globally due to resistant strains of infections that would progressively weaken the immune system to such a level that the human body would find it difficult to defend itself against even small diseases such as urinary tract infections. This is because human bodies will become colonised by these harmful bacteria. Antibiotics also provide a selection pressure for environmental bacteria to maintain antibiotic resistance mechanisms.

Thankfully, there is an increasing awareness the world over concerning the spike in the presence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in the environment. In the US, urban river bodies and river bed sediments in cities like Baltimore are already showing heightened levels of antibiotics. Following this, the city municipal councils, in association with the environment authorities in the US, are taking extraordinary measures to contain the pollution in local water bodies. India must look at the global developments and immediately undertake initiatives to understand the depth of antibiotic pollution in its own environment. This is critical because antibiotic pollution-triggered superbug infections are already wrecking havoc, with nearly 60,000 newborns dying each year in the country due to them.

To stem the proliferation of antibiotic pollution, India will need to list all the potential contamination and breeding hotspots. According to studies, antibiotic pollution is the highest in wastewater treatment plants, as this is the place where bacteria from the environment meets with human pathogenic ones, leading to the genesis of new and virulent strains. Apart from this, India, apart from China, happens to be the world's largest manufacturer of antibiotics and is known to discharge high levels of these waste effluents into the air and the water. This contamination has been happening for decades in the country and is understood to be the epicentre of the birth of superbug infections that are resistant to all known medication.

Albeit a little too late, the authorities in the country have woken up to the threat posed by this, especially through river bodies. A draft Bill issued in January seeks to limit the concentration levels of antibiotic waste released by manufacturing units into the environment in order to ensure that the risk to human health is minimised. Though it is late in coming, this development has immediately caught the attention of the international research community specialising in antibiotic pollution of the environment. The Department of Antibiotic Resistance Research at the Gothenburg University called the Indian Government's draft Bill a "great leap forward" to contain the problem.

Though a welcome step in the right direction, the draft Bill still has a long way to go. The Government must initiate stringent crackdown on pharma units engaged in manufacturing antibiotics to regularly reveal the scale, quality and limit of their effluent discharge into the surrounding environment such as water bodies. Additionally, the information must also reflect on the official web portals of the said companies so that international and national clients are aware of the environmental accountability of the firm and transparency of data. Measures such as these will coerce these companies into following environmental and human health norms or be labelled as polluters and pay heavy fines.

Left unchecked, drug-resistant bacteria due to antibiotic pollution have the potential to unleash a much larger and deadlier pandemic. The consequences need to be understood and counter measures taken rapidly to avoid this eventuality.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)

MARRIAGE IS A PERSONAL DECISION AND THEY ARE PUTTING CURBS ON IT, WHICH IS LIKE SNATCHING AWAY PERSONAL LIBERTY.
—RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER
ASHOK GEHLOT

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



THE CM HOLDS THE HOME DEPARTMENT AND THE MATTER IS OF SERIOUS CONCERN. A STRONG LAW SHOULD BE MADE AGAINST LOVE JIHAD.
—BJP MLA
VASUDEV DEVNANI

Manage terror better

As religiously-motivated attacks increase globally, the concept that one man's terrorist can be another man's freedom fighter must be done away with



SUDHIR HINDWAN

The multiple gun attacks in Vienna are the nefarious outcome of a deliberate misinterpretation of religious identity. This kind of narrative has led to the beheading of a history teacher in France and stabbing of three innocents in Nice and so on. All these incidents are clear indicators that post-modern terrorism is likely to haunt the world in general and Europe in particular. These attacks are also a reminder of an array of socio-political and global issues which Europe has to come to terms with. Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz has already hinted towards Huntington's *Clashes of Civilisations* theory coming true. He called the recent gun attack by an Islamist terrorist "an attack of terror driven by hatred of our way of life, our democracy." This upsurge in religiously-motivated hitback attacks has marked the beginning of the pernicious era of terrorism. The rising tide of immigration and human smuggling across the borders in Europe has posed serious logistical and security challenges to France, Germany and Britain. Undoubtedly these are defining moments for the leaders of Europe. It is high time countries developed sophisticated mechanisms to handle the problem head on as it has already caused severe tension between various nations and compounded the problem of human trafficking and refugees across the globe. In certain pockets, the problems of migration and refugees have resulted in a quagmire. The influx of refugees, who have fled due to disturbances in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, has added a new dimension to the existing problem of violence and crime in Central Asian Republics. In an era of globalisation, the world is becoming small and integrated but due to its inner paradoxes, it is getting fragmented and turning out to be a highly sectarian place.

The recent incidents cannot be viewed in isolation. History bears testimony to various such tragic events. A few years ago, the bombing of civilians in Oklahoma City (which left more than 200 people dead) sent shockwaves around the world. A mysterious gas attack at the main train station in a Tokyo subway, that killed 12 people and left nearly 5,000 hospitalised, also sent dangerous signals. All such acts were a violent culmination of plans that were carefully executed by terrorists. Similarly, most countries of the world, including India, Russia, Spain, the UK, US, Italy, Israel, and China, are suffering due to terrorist activities in one way or another. Although violence in itself is condemnable, very rarely is a terrorist attack a nihilistic act bereft of any deeper undercurrents. And the structure of violence is more often than not located in society and social conditions, which not only create them but also nourish and reinforce them. Recurrence of violence is symptomatic of a society's body politic, torn asunder by varied threats and tensions.

Very often, the social conditions that generate conflict and violence have external coordinates. To many experts dealing with the terror driven by religiously-motivated thinking, it is on account of new challenges the post-modern world is experiencing because of the past mistakes of not calling a spade a spade till the spectre started creating havoc in their own backyard. To many social scientists dealing with terrorism in a globalised world, the matrix of power rests on the highly-visible, unequal structure of the international economy. Such inter-relations between socio-economic conditions in different parts of the world are becoming more and more obvious daily. At another level, the post-Cold War international political-economic order is still a victim of the power

“THE LOCAL POPULACE SHOULD COOPERATE WITH THE LAW ENFORCEMENT MACHINERY EVEN AT THE COST OF PERSONAL MISERY WHILE PROMPT AND STRICT DECISIONS SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN BY VARIOUS NATIONS FOR CONTROLLING TERRORISTS PSYCHOLOGICALLY. IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT, THE SECURITY APPARATUS AND POLICE NEED TO DIVERSIFY ACTIVITIES BY BRINGING TOGETHER TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE BASED ON MANY DECADES OF EXPERIENCE IN MAINTAINING INTERNAL SECURITY”



game that was thrust on the world by the then "Big Powers." The power network woven by the US and its allies in the entire West Asian region has provoked the ire of the opposition forces in almost every State where the US has had an interest-based relationship. Thus, as societies globalise and the curtains of opacity are raised through increased inter-societal interaction at the international level, people in the underdeveloped countries are holding the "Big Powers" responsible for their inferior socio-economic positions. There has always been a smooth international network of collaboration among the various terrorist groups supported by a few countries throughout the world. For example, take Pakistan's involvement in orchestrating terrorism in Kashmir and the Japanese Red Army's collaboration with Italy's Red Brigade. It is sometimes the wide coverage by the media which provides the rationale for terrorism and increases the problem by stimulating it. This is a classic example of how astute media management can reduce the level of moral opposition to counter-terrorism. The latest has been the obnoxious nexus between the Al Qaeda, the ISIS and LeT. Their deadly combination has laid siege to peace and security.

European nations alone have witnessed more than 8,500 terrorist incidents since 1990, representing about 29 per cent of the total global incidents. The situation has become vulnerable since 2016 and with the increasing rise in the cases of illegal migration across the European countries. The rise of modern terrorism with frightening ramifications has resulted in a demand for strengthening the national law and order machinery. Of late, the pressure on the police and security agencies has been mounting. But the existing laws still pose many problems. The use of police and paramilitary forces for combating terrorism has created an apprehension that it

might lead to the oppression of the general populace. Surprisingly, a proper legal definition of terrorism is yet to be found. The widening gap between the various governments regarding evolving a common strategy for suppression of terrorism needs to be viewed in the context of the potential for threat that it holds. Even the European convention on suppression of terrorism is restricted by Article 5 and Article 13, which refuse the extradition of a terrorist on many grounds. In an environment where terrorist violence is endemic and the world stands hopelessly divided on various laws, all countries should shun their national prerogatives for dealing with terrorism.

Many efforts have been made by a number of nations to control State-sponsored terrorism, such as through economic sanctions, but so far they have not reached a consensus either at the national or global level. During the last two decades, increasing drug smuggling and the unholy nexus between drug smugglers and terrorists have posed a serious problem to the internal State-security networks and compelled various nations to organise themselves and wage a relentless war against such a nexus. But mere implementation of vigorous drug laws cannot become effective unless the judicial procedure is modified for ensuring speedy trials. The continuing uncertainties with regard to terrorism have encouraged various countries to launch psychological warfare against terrorism.

The London Economic Summit Conference, organised by NATO States and Japan a few years ago, proved to be another landmark for the eradication of terrorism, which decided that unless we attack the roots of terrorism, only superficial relief could be seen but violence would increase in the total quantum of its impact. Creation of general awareness and

organisation of public support against terrorist acts could be of immense use.

While it is desirable to allow police and the armed forces to employ better informed judgment about local problems, there is, of course, a danger that this attempt of the Government could dilute the benefits to those deemed deserving and, thus, any possibility of peace and negotiation. Rapid international transportation and use of sophisticated weapons have helped the expansion of terrorist networks globally. Besides, the new suicide squads have left the entire security apparatus shocked.

As religiously-motivated attacks increase globally, the concept that one man's terrorist can be another man's freedom fighter must be done away with. The local populace should cooperate with the law enforcement machinery even at the cost of personal misery while prompt and strict decisions should be undertaken by various nations for controlling terrorists psychologically. In a changing environment, the security apparatus and police need to diversify activities by bringing together technical and professional expertise based on many decades of experience in maintaining internal security. In this regard, the most crucial aspect is to develop the capability to anticipate security needs.

This is possible by conducting specialised courses for monitoring security situations. Unless we attack the roots of terrorism, we would have only superficial relief and terrorism would magnify in the total quantum of its impact. The need of the hour is international cooperation to tackle the menace and forming an integrated team after minutely comprehending the inner dynamics of the problem.

(The writer is a professor of political science, Visiting Professor, University of Leuven, Belgium)

RCEP or not, India has to revive Plan process

The country needs to reorient policies for a long-term approach without ignoring short-term needs



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Keeping China out is the new trade policy of India. Its primary approach is that anything that opens the door to Chinese products is a "strict no-no." So it's no surprise that India is keeping out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) free trade agreement (FTA), an initiative New Delhi was engaged in since its inception. Theoretically, it comes at a minimum cost as India already has FTAs with all but three RCEP members.

Home Minister Amit Shah had last month told RCEP member countries that they would have to come around to accepting New Delhi's terms. "Considering India's growing stature, RCEP members can't afford to ignore it for long and will come around to agreeing to the

Government of India's terms. Meanwhile, the country has maintained successful economic relations with ASEAN by the means of FTAs," he said. The RCEP, too, has kept the doors open for India officially, if at all it wants to join the grouping without having to wait for 18 months, as stipulated for new members. As per the RCEP's decision, India can still participate as an observer.

India had taken the decision in November 2019 to keep out of the RCEP, with the partnership being seen as China-centric and due to the perception that it would boost sales of cheap Chinese products and harm the country's industries.

India's approach on the deal is the result of unfavourable trade balances that it has with several RCEP members, with some of which it already has FTAs. The Commerce Ministry says that the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) in trade with such countries was a mere 7.1 per cent. India has trade deficits with 11 of the 15 RCEP nations. This means that while the partners have access to our market, India has not penetrated theirs. Hence, it cannot further open up its

market for the advantage of others. Still India has agreements with the ASEAN, South Korea and Japan. It is negotiating deals with Australia, New Zealand and Singapore and there are treaties with Nepal and Bhutan. However, there are apprehensions that RCEP could impact the Australia-India-Japan network in the Indo-Pacific region. India and like-minded nations, particularly the Quad countries — Australia, the US and Japan — are keen to have resilient supply chains. Along with New Zealand, South Korea and Vietnam, they are negotiating with each other.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, while delivering the Ramnath Goenka Lecture in 2019, had said that India's stance was a "clear-eyed calculation" of the gains and costs of entering a new arrangement. He also said that India would continue with its "act East" policy. It should also be remembered that the RCEP decision is linked to China's aggressive postures in the South China Sea and on the Line of Actual Control, including the June 15 Galwan incident in which 20 Indian and many Chinese soldiers lost their lives. It may

be recalled that Jaishankar even in January had said that New Delhi's doors to RCEP were not closed. But in September, he said, "You cannot be a rising power without being a rising economy, and to do that you have to build your domestic capacities." His views are not very different from that of the Swadeshi Jagaran Manch, which had been opposing most FTAs and stressing on improving the domestic economy.

It certainly has not been an easy decision. India would have to weigh the gains of a bulk agreement and individual treaties. A similar concern was expressed when New Delhi chose to opt out of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2017. It was said that India might be isolating itself. Now after three years, like-minded democracies appreciate New Delhi for its prudent decision, which many now see as an exploitative Chinese diplomacy. Significantly, many members are not enjoying their stay in the BRI. There is the contrary view as well. It says that India's economic decline occurred even as China's economical and strategically important BRI went on to cover two-thirds of the

world's population.

Beijing dominates the psyche of policymakers. India is highly dependent on China for imports of lithium ion batteries, antibiotics, personal computers, colour TVs, solar cells, toys and so on. Despite the recent initiatives by the Centre to improve domestic production in many of these goods, concerns remain. What China has done is to consolidate its economy since 1979. Thus, production cost is minimum and it has a pricing mechanism that happens to be the lowest in any country in the local currency.

India has to learn the technique of creating a vibrant domestic system with a market across the world. Chinese merchandise today decides international prices. While India successfully blocked imports of idols of Ganesh, Lakshmi and other deities, it could not succeed in lowering the prices of "Made in India" products. This cannot be considered good economy. Possibly for this reason, China looms large in reports submitted by eight Groups of Ministers (GoMs) formed during the ongoing pandemic. These GoMs have called

for a balance between supporting economic performance and geopolitics and most have focussed on ways to counter China. They call for contextualising issues like Chinese aggression on communication tools, need for specialised spokespersons on issues like China and the environment and many other dependencies on Beijing.

The obsession with China is too apparent. Of late, despite all efforts, New Delhi's policy approaches are China-centric. India may have to revive the planning process it gave up in 2014 as the NITI Aayog has not been a proper replacement. The country needs to evolve a long-term policy prescription. India has to consider moving out of the growth-centric approach and replace it with progress. So RCEP or not, India has to have a holistic approach towards the economy. It needs a wider vision and approach for progress and has to imbibe policies that could give it an edge. India needs to reorient policies for a long-term approach without ignoring short-term needs.

(The writer is a senior journalist)



FOREIGN EYE



WHY ARE BABUS SO INEPT?

The Nepali bureaucracy is said to be based on nepotism and cronyism. The civil bureaucracy consumes a large portion of national revenue but has failed to perform as expected. It often seems that babus point to partisan politics in violation of neutrality. Unless the bureaucracy is made result-oriented, the structural and executive arrangements at the State and local levels make no sense to the general public. (TKP editorial)

PETROL-PRICE

Petrol price up 17 paise, diesel 22 paise after 2-month hiatus

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Petrol price on Friday was hiked by 17 paise per litre and diesel by 22 paise, as firming international oil prices broke a nearly two-month-long hiatus in price revision.

Petrol price in Delhi was hiked to Rs 81.23 per litre from Rs 81.06, according to a price notification from oil marketing companies.

Diesel rates went up from Rs 70.46 to Rs 70.68 per litre.

This is the first revision in petrol prices since September 22. Diesel rates hadn't changed since October 2.

Public sector oil marketing companies - Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd - revise rates of petrol and diesel daily based on benchmark international oil price and foreign exchange rate.

They have, however, restored to calibrating the rates since the pandemic broke out with a view to avoiding volatility in retail prices.

The 58-day hiatus in petrol price revision and 48-day status quo on diesel rates was preceded by no change in rates between June 30 and August 15 and a 52-day status quo between March 17 and June 6.

In Mumbai, the petrol price on Friday was raised to Rs 87.92 per litre from Rs 87.74, while diesel rates went up from Rs 76.86 to Rs 77.11.

Petrol now costs Rs 84.31 in Chennai and Rs 82.79 in Kolkata. Diesel costs Rs 76.17 per litre in Chennai and Rs 74.24 in Kolkata.

ATP, Infosys renew digital partnership for further 3 years

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Infosys and the ATP on Friday announced the renewal of their partnership for a further three years.

The agreement will see Infosys continue as global technology services partner and digital innovation partner of the ATP, through 2023, the Bengaluru-headquartered IT major said in a statement.

As the technology partner of the ATP since 2015, Infosys said it has been instrumental in supporting ATPs development of key digital assets and infrastructure, including ATP PlayerZone, ATP Stats Leaderboards, ATP Second Screen, and the ATP app.

"Through the extended partnership, Infosys will continue to develop and accelerate innovations in advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Data Analytics, and Cloud, leveraging its dedicated tennis platform to deliver diverse experiences for players, media, and fans across the world", the statement said.

FACEBOOK-METRICS INDICATE

Hate speech accounts for 10-11 of every 10,000 content views

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Social media giant Facebook has for the first time disclosed prevalence of hate speech on its platform, saying that out of every 10,000 content views in the third quarter, 10-11 were hate speech.

Facebook, which has 1.82 billion daily users globally, has drawn flak in the past for its handling of hate speech on the platform in India, which is among its biggest markets.

In its Community Standards Enforcement Report for September 2020 quarter, Facebook said it is including the prevalence of hate speech on its platform globally "for the first time".

"In Q3 2020, hate speech prevalence was 0.10 per cent - 0.11 per cent or 10 to 11 views of hate speech for every 10,000 views of content," it added.

Facebook said due to its investments in artificial intelligence, the company has been

able to remove more hate speech and find more of it proactively before users report it.

"Our enforcement metrics this quarter, including how much hate speech content we found proactively and how much content we took action on, indicate that we're making progress in catching harmful content," it added.

Prevalence, on the other hand, estimates the percentage of times people see violating content on its platform, Facebook explained.

During the third quarter, Facebook took action on 22.1 million pieces of hate speech content, about 95 per cent of which was proactively identified.

On Instagram, the company took action on 6.5 million pieces of hate speech content (up from 3.2 million in June quarter), about 95 per cent of which was proactively identified (up from about 85 per cent in the previous quarter), it added.



Govt requests for user data up 23% globally in H1 2020

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Government requests for Facebook user data increased 23 per cent globally in January-June 2020 with India occupying the second spot after the US in terms of such requests being made. According to Facebook's latest transparency report, total 35,560 requests were made by India in the period for 57,294 users/accounts. Some data was produced in 50 per cent cases, it added. In the first six months of 2020, government requests for user data increased by 23 per cent to 1,73,592 globally from 1,40,875 in the second half of 2019. The highest number of requests in January-June 2020 came from the US with 61,528 requests for 106,114 users/accounts, and some data was produced in 88 per cent of the cases, the report said. Germany, France and the UK followed the US and India in the tally. Facebook said it responds

to government requests for data in accordance with applicable law and its terms of service. Each and every request it receives is carefully reviewed for legal sufficiency and it may reject or require greater specificity on requests that appear overly broad or vague. "We do not provide governments with direct access or "back doors" to people's information. We believe that intentionally weakening our services in this way would undermine the security necessary to protect our users," Facebook VP and Deputy General Counsel Chris Sonderby said. During the period under review, the volume of content restrictions based on local law increased 40 per cent from 15,826 to 22,120 globally. The increase was in part related to COVID-19- related restrictions, Facebook said. India saw 824 pieces of content being restricted in the same period.

RUPEE-CLOSE

Rupee settles 11 paise higher at 74.16 against US dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated by 11 paise to settle at 74.16 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, supported by positive domestic equities and sustained foreign fund inflows.

At the interbank forex market, the domestic unit opened at 74.15 against the US dollar and touched an intra-day high of 74.09 and a low of 74.21. It finally settled at 74.16 against the greenback, registering an increase of 11 paise over its previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 74.27 against US dollar.

"The rupee is currently drawing a lot of support from equity inflows and the fact that

the dollar globally is on the backfoot," said Sugandha Sachdeva V P - Metals, Energy & Currency Research, Religare Broking.

Sachdeva further said that "going forward, we think that the rupee has scope to further appreciate till 73.80. However, beyond that, the RBI would step in to curtail its move, while dollar index may also rebound given the uncertain growth outlook in the US. That should put some downward pressure on the rupee".

The domestic unit is expected to trade in the 73.80 to 75 band till the end of this month, Sachdeva noted.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.08 per cent higher at 92.36.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex closed 282.29 points higher at 43,882.25, while the broader NSE Nifty rose 87.35 points to settle at 12,859.05.

Foreign institutional investors were net buyers in the capital market as they purchased shares worth Rs 1,180.61 crore on a net basis on Thursday, according to provisional exchange data.

L&T FINANCE-ESSEL

L&T Finance invokes shares of three Essel Group companies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

L&T Finance Ltd has invoked shares of three Essel Group companies -- Zee Media Corporation, Zee Learn and Siti Network Ltd -- and appropriated them against loan outstanding amount.

As per regulatory filings, L&T Finance invoked and appropriated against loan outstanding amount 1.29 crore shares constituting 2.74 per cent stake of Zee Media Corporation on November 18.

Zee Media Corporation (formerly Zee News Ltd) is a news network with 10 news channels in six different languages.

As per BSE data, on quarter ended September 30, 2020, shareholding of promoter and promoter group firm in Zee Media Corporation stood at 25.85 per cent, out of which 99.65 per cent stake is pledged or encumbered.

Sensex jumps 282 pts, Nifty up 87 points

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex surged 282 points on Friday, tracking gains in HDFC Bank, Kotak Bank and Bajaj Finance amid positive cues from global markets and sustained foreign fund inflows.

After a highly volatile session, the 30-share BSE index ended 282.29 points or 0.65 per cent higher at 43,882.25.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty rose 87.35 points or 0.68 per cent to 12,859.05.

Bajaj Finserv was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying over 9 per cent, followed by Titan, Bajaj Finance, Kotak Bank, Bharti Airtel, Nestle India and NTPC.

On the other hand, Reliance Industries, IndusInd Bank, Sun Pharma, Axis Bank, ONGC and HUL were among the laggards.

"The BSE Sensex is closing higher by about 1 per cent in this Diwali week," said Sanjeev Zarbade, VP PCG Research, Kotak Securities.

"With the end of the earnings season, focus will shift back to economic recovery and market valuations," he said, adding that risk to the markets is from a resurgence of COVID-19 infections in India.

TAX ABUSE BY MNCs

India losing \$10.3 bn in taxes per year

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is losing over USD 10.3 billion (about Rs 75,000 crore) in taxes every year owing to global tax abuse by MNCs and evasion by private individuals, a report said on Friday.

The State of Tax Justice report said globally countries are losing a total of over USD 427 billion in taxes each year to international corporate tax abuse and private tax evasion. This is costing countries altogether the equivalent of nearly 34 million nurses' annual salaries every year -- or one nurse's annual salary every second.

With regard to India, the report said USD 10.3 billion, or 0.41 per cent of the USD 3 trillion GDP, is lost in taxes every year to global tax abuse.

Of this, over USD 10 billion is lost to tax abuse by multinational corporations (MNCs) and USD 200 million to tax evasion committed by private individuals.

The social impact of the lost tax is equivalent to 44.70 per cent of the health budget and 10.68 per cent of education spending. It also equals paying yearly salaries of over 42.30 lakh nurses.



With regard to India, the report said USD 10.3 billion, or 0.41 per cent of the USD 3 trillion GDP, is lost in taxes every year to global tax abuse

It further said India is most vulnerable to illicit financial flows in the form of outward FDI and listed Mauritius, Singapore and the Netherlands as the trading partners which are most responsible for this vulnerability.

MONEY MATTERS

SunSource Energy bags projects in Andaman & Nicobar



SunSource Energy on Friday said it has won an order to develop a 4 MW floating solar project and a 2 MW battery storage system in Andaman and Nicobar. SunSource Energy, a leading distributed solar energy company, will develop a 4 MWac grid connected floating solar PV power project, along with 2 MW/1 MWh Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), a company statement said. Once commissioned, it will be one of the India's largest floating + storage project in Andaman which will in turn reduce the existing reliance on diesel, the company claimed. It will be situated at the Reservoir of Kalpong river, Kalpong Hydroelectric Project (KHEP) Dam, Diglipur, North Andaman, a District of Andaman and Nicobar Islands which will power the island that will significantly power the entire region, thus increasing power reliability.

Sebi panel proposes measures to address information asymmetry



To address information asymmetry amongst shareholders, a Sebi panel has recommended that listed companies should make available audio and video recordings of post-earning conference calls on their websites as well as stock exchanges within 24 hours or

before the next trading day. The recommendations have been made in a report on disclosures pertaining to analyst meets, investor meets and conference calls, prepared by a sub-group headed by HDFC Vice Chairman and CEO Keki Mistry. The sub-group was formed by the Primary Markets Advisory Committee (PMAC), which also discussed the report this month. The panel has also suggested that written transcripts of post-earning conference calls should be made available on websites of listed companies and respective stock exchanges within five working days after such calls. Further, listed companies should make available audio/ video recordings and the written transcripts on their websites for at least eight years in addition to the details disseminated on respective stock exchanges.

Essel Group sells cruise biz to Sant Chatwal



The Zee Group has exited its fledgling cruise business and sold the cruise line brand Jalesh Cruises to Waterways Leisure for an undisclosed sum. Zee was running the business under Zen Cruises, which in fact was the India's general sales agent for Jalesh Cruises of

Mauritius, according to a statement. Like hotels, airlines and cinemas, cruise shipping has also been shut since the coronavirus pandemic hit the world early February. On top of that, the Zee group has been facing liquidity problems at some of the group entities. Waterways Leisure is part of the US-based NRI Sant Chatwal-promoted Dreams Hotel Group. The deal also includes the sale of Jalesh's entire digital interface and technology backend, the software developed for customer acquisition, and the database of customers, travel agents and partner network. Waterways has also hired existing executives and employees of Zen and Jurgen Bailom will continue as the president & chief executive.

PMFAI pitches for hike in import duty on pesticides to 20-30 pc



Pesticides Manufacturers and Formulators Association of India (PMFAI) on Friday urged the government to increase the import duty on technical and finished pesticides to 20-30 per cent to protect the domestic agro-chemicals industry. Currently, 10 per cent customs duty is levied on import of technical grade and finished pesticide formulations. Before 1991, a customs duty of 40 per cent was levied on intermediates and raw material and technical grade pesticides used for manufacturing of formulations. However, in 2007, import duties on technical grade pesticide and finished formulation were brought at par. "There are a lot of anomalies in the current customs duty regime that favours the imports of pesticides rather than manufacturing in India. This gives an unfair advantage to MNCs and importers and defeats the vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'," PMFAI President Pradip Dave said in a statement. The government must amend the current structure of customs duty and increase them to 30 per cent and 20 per cent for imports of finished pesticide formulations and technical grade products, respectively, he said.

INFLATION-RETAIL-RURAL

Retail inflation up marginally for rural workers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Retail inflation for farm workers and rural labourers rose marginally to 6.59 per cent and 6.45 per cent, respectively, in October due to higher prices of certain food items, marking the first increase in the rates price rise in 2020.

Retail inflation for farm workers based on the Consumer Price Index-Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) was 6.25 per cent while inflation based on Consumer Price Index-Rural Labourers (CPI-RL) was 6.10 per cent in September 2020, a Labour Ministry statement said.

Inflation based on food indices of CPI-AL and CPI-RL



stood at 7.96 per cent and 7.92 per cent, respectively, in October, a tad higher than 7.65

per cent and 7.61 per cent, respectively, in September this year.

The rise in CPI-AL varied from state to state. In case of agricultural labourers, it recorded an increase of 1 to 24 points in 20 states.

Tamil Nadu with 1,242 points topped the index table whereas Himachal Pradesh with 830 points stood at the bottom.

In case of rural labourers, the CPI-RL recorded an increase of 1 to 24 points in 20 states. Tamil Nadu with 1,226 points topped the index table whereas Himachal Pradesh with 877 points stood at the bottom.

Amongst states, the maximum increase in the Consumer Price Index Numbers for Agricultural

Labourers and Rural Labourers was seen in West Bengal (+24 points) mainly due to rise in the prices of rice, pulses, mustard-oil, milk, onion, chillies-green, bus fare, vegetables and fruits etc.

"The increase in CPI-AL and CPI-RL will have a positive impact on the wages of the workers in rural sector," Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar said.

Director General Labour Bureau D S Negi said, "The inflation based on CPI-AL and RL has increased marginally for the first time in 2020. This is mainly on account of increase in the prices of arhar dal, mustard oil, onion and vegetables etc."

Hyderabad



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Saturday
November 21, 2020

'HYDERABAD, TOO GOOD TO MISS'

A native of Barkasinghanpura, Bihar, but born in Shillong, Meghalaya, Rahul Ojha did his schooling in various parts of India owing to his father's job in the Navy. He came to Hyderabad to pursue his higher education and fell in love with it, so much so, that he committed to it for life. Rahul talks to The Pioneer's K RAMYA SREE about his ventures, owning a house here, why the city is special and more

Rahul is a member of Deccan Jeeps and many other drive clubs that host adventure trails and long road journeys. He is also an active member of TechieRide, an NGO, started with CarPooling, which later reached to an extent where it extended its support to all Go green activities, blood donation, helping rural children in getting a higher education. TechieRide members have actively been involved in relief measures during the Covid-hit pandemic and recent floods in Hyderabad.

Rahul moved to Hyderabad to do his post-graduation and he fell in love with this place so much that he decided to settle down here because of its diverse nature. With a passion for travel and adventure, he explored domestic destinations across the length and breadth of India from Kashmir to Kerala and North East to Gujarat. Sharing his association with Hyderabad, he said, "My association with

Hyderabad dates back to 2004. It was a time when Hyderabad is turning towards the cosmopolitan culture. It had a different kind of charm back then."

Rahul, who moved here to do his post-graduation, was hesitant to move down south having lived in many states across north India, fearing weather extremities. He says, "Initially, I was apprehensive about moving to Hyderabad fearing weather conditions. After moving here, I realised, Hyderabad has the best weather conditions, it's neither too hot nor cold. Despite getting an opportunity to go outside this place, my wife and I didn't want to take that step as we found this place very peaceful. Life here is very easy going."

He fell in love with this place very much, even as a student, because of the widespread food menu this place offers that satisfies everyone's taste buds even for a vegetarian that he is.

Having been living here for 15 years, Rahul

My first job, marriage, and the birth of my daughter, everything happened in Hyderabad and that makes this city even more special to me.



loves the welcoming culture of people. He explains, "Being an outsider, you don't feel alienated here. People are welcoming and this is a diverse city. You need not necessarily learn the local language to survive here. To top it, Hyderabad is centrally located and is easy to travel across India."

He further goes on to add, "Hyderabad has a rich history and culture and we should preserve them. Having said

that, traffic sense in Hyderabad needs to be improved. People need to imbibe traffic rules."

His first job, marriage, and the birth of his daughter, everything happened in Hyderabad and that makes this city even more special to him. For Rahul, Hyderabad is his home and he doesn't want to move out of this place as he made everything here for himself including buying a house. He says he is a proud Hyderabadi who knows the length and breadth of the city.



'Hope my role in *Mismatched* will inspire women to go back to college'

Vidya Malvade will be next seen in the Netflix original *Mismatched*, which shows the world through the eyes of a woman who is trying to do something newly discovered. Vidya garnered the praises of critics and the audience alike for her shows like *Kaali 2* and *Flesh*, which were released during the lockdown. Now, she is exploring and making some brave choices! She will be essaying the character of a woman who wants to traverse and learn more. Vidya, who identifies with the character of Zeenat, says, "There's something for everyone in this series. Zeenat's character is very close to me in my real life as well. Her journey in the show is about finding herself whilst trying to fit in with the millennial teens in the college which builds for many laughs and funny moments. Her hunger to learn and explore uncharted territories to follow a long-lost dream regardless of age, economic standing, or marital status all for creating a new life independently which is so different from the one she has left behind. Isn't it inspiring? I do hope her journey will inspire a few women to go back to college and fulfill their long lost dreams too."

Everyone's excited to see the *Chak De* girl in the upcoming web show and it sounds very interesting with the cast and plot. The web show will also star YouTube sensation Prajakta Koli and Rohit Saraf. Based on the novel *When Dimple Met Rishi* penned by author Sandhya Menon, Vidya will be cast opposite Rannvijay Singha. Fans can't wait to watch this exciting pair set the screen on fire!



Ishtiyak aiming for the moon after *Ludo*

Ishtiyak Khan, who earned his much deserved fame with the film *Ludo* that's the talk of the town, in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL, talks about working with A-listers like Abhishek Bachchan, being directed by Anurag Basu, the government's intent to regulate OTT and more.

Like how in a board game four players race their four tokens from start to finish according to the roll of a dice, Anurag Basu too has brought this classic game to life with actor Ishtiyak in the top trending movies of Netflix right now — *Ludo*. Since the time Ishtiyak Khan joined the movie industry, the world of staging has only helped him accomplish many of his goals. His slightly short stature in comparison with the hulks of the industry never hindered his personality from shining through.

The film, which is garnering so much value, an Anurag Basu production, always shoots for multiple principal characters than giving precedence to a sole protagonist and featuring four different parallel plots. Ishtiyak believes it shows his collectivism towards the community of filmmaking. "The unification of different plot lines and character arcs is the key characteristic of Anurag Da's films, whether it's a location, an event, a theme that ties the film or characters coming together. I find his unrehearsed process extremely novel and refreshing as he's someone who gives a lot of freedom to us in exploring," adds Ishtiyak.

Like how splitting a room with your sibling can be one of the most testing experiences ever but also one of the most rewarding one, in the very same way to be a part of an ensemble cast having A-listers in it, the 44-year old actor tells us how there is constant self-doubt surrounding you whether your role is gashed to give prominence to



an actor like a star like Abhishek Bachchan, but those fears came were allayed when he went shooting. He further says, "Anurag Da could easily weave the plot-lines in such a manner that he could have given distinction to the scenes acted out by the actors who are on top of their game right now, however, he refrained from doing that. He emphasised the interconnectivity of all the characters equally from the bigger celebs to the supporting cast, even when the characters are strangers to one another in the film. Every character has a strong underlying theme interwoven between the plots that are unifying each of them."

Ishtiyak is acing his role wearing the khaki and looking dapper as ever. Notable personalities from all nooks and corner have already been raving about his role in *Ludo* anticipating what is he up to next, he's been getting numerous appreciation phone calls and text messages about his

honesty being reflected in his performance and that's making him stand out despite having a minimal role in the movie including so many talents. "When we set out to create a big-budget film, we rarely do so in a vacuum. So we were working with all sorts of talent and crew, all for bringing one particular vision to life. Anurag Da is such a jovial man that he believes in spreading as much as glee he can by making it a care-free environment. There's a small child hidden in a 46-year-old man who wants his crew and cast to be jolly all the time and mind you without any superiority complex. Our working together was the deciding factor between success and failure hence by navigating the murky waters into a creative environment while keeping all of us organised and happy, *Ludo* is a success on OTT today," the actor reveals.

Crediting to the factor that

how first hand, the sort of fame that is accrued to an actor showing up on an OTT platform is something else, he feels that earlier A-listed directors weren't taking web seriously but owing to the hardening situations of the pandemic now, OTT is non-perishable, there is no added burden of appointment viewing and a web platform like Netflix who is having a deep pocket brings the audience closer to cinema dynamics. "From YouTubers to mass entertainers, everybody can showcase their flair, basically all of us get to make the same leap which is an interesting potent here. It's a fair array! No star is a different commodity here, everyone is given their justified screen timing. I don't know till when will the OTT era last, nonetheless with the web, we got a sense that there is certain elbow room for experimentation," he adds.

Giving a peek into the move to regulate OTT platforms, he voices, "I am of the opinion that to some extent it's advisable for the I&B ministry to play moral police for OTT as there is no limit to what digital platforms are streaming in terms of bold content. The regulatory approach of OTT streaming media shouldn't be any distinctive from offline broadcasting media. The government's intent to regulate OTT should not be confused with a restriction on nudity, language or violence but on content that counters its ideology, policy or killing any opposing narrative," he concludes.

Ludo is good old-fashioned, light-hearted fun and should be on your must watch list!

what's brewing?



Photos by SV Chary



Pooja

Photos by SV Chary

GLITZ AND GLAM
Actress Mannara Chopra and Femina Miss India Andhra 2019 Nikita Ganwani, graced the curtain raiser of Sutraa, a luxury expo on Thursday. The edition will be open to all on November 24-25 at Hotel Taj Krishna to showcase exclusive wedding and festive wear, jewellery, home decor, footwear, and more.

Sushmita Sen's daughter Renee set for debut in short film

Renee Sen, daughter of actress Sushmita Sen, will make her debut as an actress with the short film, *Suttabaazi*.

Directed by Kabeer Khurana, the film tells the story of a 19-year-old named Diya, played by Renee, who is a clandestine smoker and is stuck with her nagging parents during lockdown. The trailer of the film was launched on Thursday, which happened to be Sushmita's birthday.

"My mother has always taught me the importance of merit, hard work and joy of doing things your way. Yes, *Suttabaazi* might not be a conventional choice but I always dreamt of starting out on my own with something different," Renee said.

"It's such a fun and relatable film, and moreover a beautiful story. I am really excited to launch it on my mother's birthday which makes it all the more special," she added. Talking about the film, Kabeer said, "This project belongs to the cast and crew behind this film, who have worked relentlessly over the past month to put it together." The film will release in December.



Had the best time shooting for 'We Can Be Heroes': Priyanka Chopra Jonas

Actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas says she had a great time working on upcoming Netflix feature *We Can Be Heroes* and is looking forward to audiences reaction to the film.

Billed as an action-adventure, *We Can Be Heroes* features Chopra as nemesis to a group of children who team up to save the planet and their superhero parents who are kidnapped by the aliens.

The film is written, directed and produced by Robert Rodriguez, who helmed the blockbuster hit *Alita: Battle Angel*.

Chopra on Thursday shared the teaser of the movie on Twitter and reminisced her time on the sets.

"I had the best time shooting this movie, especially with



Robert Rodriguez and these amazing super kids!! Loved playing their nemesis.... Who do you think is going to win, them or me?! Streaming on Netflix New Years Day," she tweeted.

Apart from Chopra, the film features actors Pedro Pascal, Christian Slater, Boyd Holbrook, Sung Kang and veteran actor Christopher McDonald.

Child stars Akira Akbar, Nathan Blair, Andrew Diaz, Andy Walken and Hala Finley are also part of the cast.

We Can Be Heroes is set to premiere on Netflix on January 1, 2021.

Chopra has previously played antagonist in her Hollywood debut movie *Baywatch* (2017) and Hindi film *Aitraaz* (2004).

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



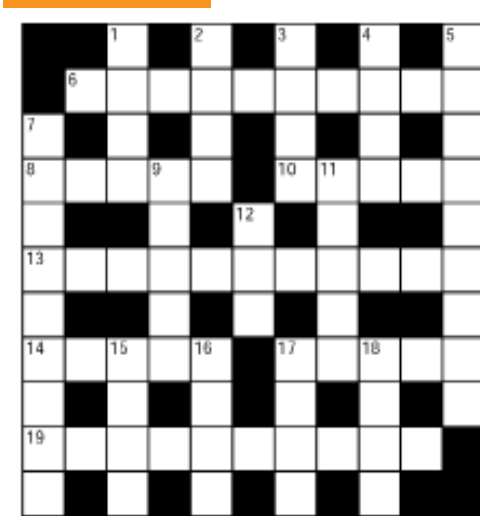
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- The total number of people in a city or country
- The starboard side
- The head of a city council
- People who don't eat meat
- Baggy
- Depart
- A sudden shaking of the ground

DOWN

- Living
- Resign from a job
- Peaceful
- Very small
- Took one's clothes off

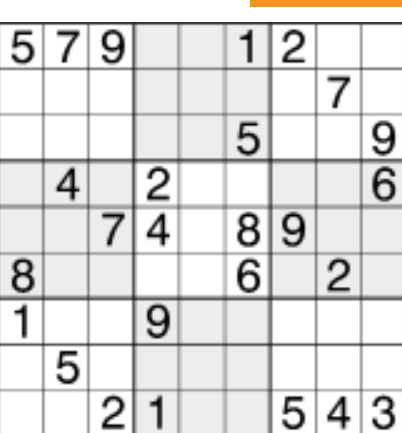
7 Went on a journey

- The back part of the feet
- Living
- Candle substance
- Belonging to us
- Sound rebound
- Very noisy
- Enquires

SOLUTION



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution



Rules

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

Sharwa to don khaki again

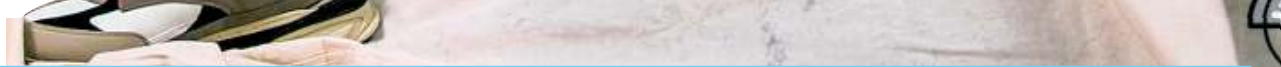
Sharwanand, who earlier this year said that he will be following the Akshay Kumar template of allotting 50 days and doing multiple films in a year, will be continuing the same next year as well. With projects like *Sreekaram* and Shree Karthik's Telugu-Tamil bilingual just days away from a wrap up, the actor will dive into the filming of Ajay Bhupathi's *Mahasamudram* next. He will follow it up with Kishore Tirumala's *Aadaaloo Meeku Johaaru*, which rolls in January. Now, we hear that he has taken up debutant Sriram Reddy's project as well, with his favourite banner UV Creations set to produce. Reddy has earlier assisted Sriram Aditya for *Bhale Manchi Roju*.

A source close to the development tells us, "The film is a cop story with a difference. UV agreed to produce it three years ago itself. Initially, they approached Gopichand to spearhead but it didn't work out. Sharwa was later given the narration and he liked it. He gave his verbal nod but didn't immediately allot dates as he was already occupied with a slew of commitments. With the project staring at a delay, Reddy recently had a word with UV to know if he has to wait further. When producers Vamsi and Pramod reached out to Sharwa, he had told them they can begin the principal photography in summer next year."

The source adds, "It's his characteri-

Keen to have at least three releases a year, Sharwanand has given his consent to headline first-time director Sriram Reddy's cop drama. UV Creations will produce it, finds **NAGARAJ GOUD**

sation and the overall story that appealed to Sharwa the most. While he already played a cop in Radha without much luck, Reddy though has ensured the story ticks all the boxes. The pre-production will begin shortly."



Komalee Prasad lands a role in *HIT 2*

Before he remakes *HIT* in Hindi with Rajkumar Rao, filmmaker Sailesh Kolanu needs to first complete *HIT 2* in Telugu. Known to work at a fast clip, he has already started assembling his team for the project, a joint production venture between Nani and Prashanti Tipirneni. To this end, the latest we hear is that he has signed on Komalee Prasad to play a key role. While some characters from the first part will be repeated in the sequel, Komalee's is a new addition. The actress has been a part of projects like *Anukunnadi Okati* and *Loser* earlier. She is shooting for Hushaaru director Sree Harsha's *Rowdy Boys* right now.

A source says, "Sailesh was keen on a Telugu girl for the sequel and he was pleased when Komalee aced the audition. She will be seen as a cop in the thriller. The shoot will kick off after Vishwak Sen wraps up *Paagal*."

HIT told the story of a cop Vikram Rudraraju (Vishwak) who is investigating a couple of missing cases. Speaking to us sometime back, Sailesh informed that he doesn't see a point of increasing the canvas for the sequel just because the first one minted money. "I've established the world of Homicide Intervention Team (HIT) already, so I don't see a point in making the canvas bigger for the second part. I believe many franchises have failed because they tried to increase the canvas for no reason. I don't want to make the same mistake again. It will be same world but the conflicts will be stronger and the problems bigger," he had told us.

— NG



Rana launches title poster of Anasuya Bharadwaj, Ashwin Viraj's *Thank You Brother*

The coronavirus pandemic is a devastating blow for the world economy and entertainment industry is no exception. Ramesh Raparathi is coming up with a film titled *Thank You Brother* based on fictional events in corona times, as the title poster suggests.

The film stars Anasuya Bhardwaj and Ashwin Viraj in the lead roles.

Actor Rana Daggubati unveiled the title poster and extended luck to the director and his friend Ramesh for the film.

The poster shows a mask lying on the ground outside a lift. Surprisingly, the title of the film also shows the image of a pregnant lady that

may be hinting about the storyline which might be based on pregnancy.

Magunta Sarath Chandra Reddy and Tharakanth Bommireddy are bankrolling the project while Guna Balasubramanian is the music director.

Thank You Brother is a drama film laced with thrilling moments.

According to reports the film is done with its shooting and currently post-production works are in progress.



Rajkumar Santoshi launching Hyd girl Amrin in Hindi

Pustakamlo Konni Pageelu Missing director and producer Sajid Qureshi is introducing his daughter Amrin Qureshi under his Inbox Pictures as a leading lady in *Bad Boys*, which is the official remake of Telugu hit *Cinema Choopista Maava*. She is cast opposite Mithun Chakraborty's son Namashi Chakraborty in the film, to be directed by acclaimed director Rajkumar Santoshi. It is already on sets, with the makers targeting a summer release.

That's not all. Qureshi is also remaking Telugu super hit *Julayi* in Hindi with both his daughter and Namashi in the lead roles. Tony D'Souza, who directed *Blue and Boss*, will helm it. It will roll in January. According to a release, Amrin's goal is to prove herself in Hindi and later become a successful heroine in all the south languages.



Acting is always a test: Goparaju Ramana

For his hot-headed role of Kondal Rao, a father who is unhappy with his son's (played by Anand

Deverakonda) choice of moving away from their village Kolakaluru to establish his hotel in Guntur, in *Middle Class Melodies*, Goparaju Ramana has been winning a ton of accolades. The film dropped on Amazon Prime Video on Thursday night and it took hardly little time for social media to hail him as a new discovery. Admittedly, he has been flooded with phone calls. "As I come from a theatre background, connoisseurs of theatre, cinema and people who are your own are ringing me and congratulating," he tells us in a conversation.

Goparaju has been an acclaimed theatre artiste for the past 50 years, while it's been 25 years since he started dabbling both on the small and big

screens. He played one of the leads in *Grahamam* and his association with Indraganti Mohana Krishna continued in films like *Mayabazaar*, *Golconda High School* and *Ashta Chemma*, where he played small roles. He even played a minuscule part of Nandamuri Balakrishna's guru in his 100th film *Gautamiputra Satakarni*. But it wasn't until yesterday that the Telugu film industry took notice of his potential.

"Director Vinod Anantoju thought I'd exceed as Kondal Rao and offered it to me. On sets he encouraged me to get it right. In fact, from all of his actors, he never missed a single emotion and that showed his command on the characters. When we missed our way, he would direct us to the right path," the actor recalls.

He continues, "Vinod has a bright future ahead and Bhavya Creations should be lauded to have introduced him. If more youngsters come, they will at least introduce two new actors in their films."

Despite his experience in the theatre, for him acting is always a test. He equates performing for a scene to that of nervously attending an exam — even after you gave 50 tests previously. "As an actor your job is to do what the director expects of you. I believe we are students for life. Even if my son Vijay Goparaju directs a play (in fact Vijay directs most of his dad's plays),

I have to heed him. If we meet his vision of the role, we become successful artistes," he points out, adding that he never felt that Kondal Rao would land him in such appreciation. "Producer Ananda Prasad, executive producer Anne Ravi and the director kept telling that I would earn a good name from the project. The tremendous response from the audience, however, was something I didn't anticipate."

He is hopeful that the film will give him a new lease of life in Telugu cinema. "The theatre artistes' number has dwindled significantly over years. If my stint in the film continues to receive more attention, it will encourage 10 writers and artistes to survive on theatre. That's my only wish," he concludes.

— NG



KL good enough to fill Rohit's void: Maxi

Aussie all-rounder feels Hitman's absence will help hosts but backs his IPL teammate to perform well

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Rohit Sharma's absence from the upcoming white ball series is a big "positive" for Australia but KL Rahul is as good a player to fill in the void, feels dashing batsman Glenn Maxwell.

Rahul will be Virat Kohli's deputy in the white-ball leg since regular vice-captain Rohit is recuperating from a hamstring injury sustained during IPL.

"He (Rohit) is a class performer, so consistent as an opening batsman with a couple of (three) double hundreds. So anytime he is not in the line-up against you, it is a positive," Maxwell said.

The three-match ODI series begins on November 27 followed by a T20I series.

For Maxwell, KL Rahul is as good a back-up as any team can wish for.

"But in saying that, India have still got back-ups, more than capable of playing that role. We saw KL Rahul, the performance that he put on during the last IPL was extraordinary. Whether he opens the batting or not, I am sure he will be just as good a player," Maxwell added.

In Rohit's absence, it is expected that Mayank Agarwal will open the innings along with Shikhar Dhawan as Rahul, who will keep wickets is expected to bat middle-order.

However Maxwell is a big fan of Agarwal-Rahul opening pair that did really well during the first phase of IPL.

"Well, I would say they (Mayank-Rahul) are the two lovely guys, I have



Indian limited overs Vice-captain Rohit Sharma chats with KL Rahul during India's match against Windies in 2019

BCCI/Twitter

ever met. It was a pleasure to spend the change room (with them), two very good players, they score all-round the wicket and have got very limited weaknesses," Maxwell was all praise

for them.

But Maxwell sounded out a warning for his IPL teammates that Australia's bowling attack will certainly put them under pressure.

"I suppose ODI cricket might be a bit different (compared T20). Hopefully, with our bowling attack, we can put some pressure on them and with bounce in the pitches and bigger

grounds as well, they play into our hands. They are good performers, and good players," a confident Maxwell asserted.

For India, key in the upcoming series will be Mohammed Shami's skills as both a "new ball and old ball" bowler.

"A guy like Mohammed Shami, whom I have played with in the recent IPL and played with him in Delhi, as well. (I) saw the skill that he has.

"He has got good skills at the end (death overs) as well as with the new ball. His ability to get moving on pitches will be key to them," said Maxwell.

According to Maxwell, he along with another in-form player Marcus Stoinis, would be the two all-rounders as well as designated finishers in the batting line-up.

"...The way we are probably going to set our team up is myself and Marcus Stoinis or potentially another all-rounder making up for the other 10 overs (for fifth bowler), the one without our four front-line bowlers.

"I suppose I can contribute wherever I can with the ball. With the bat, as it was against England, I will be trying to finish off games and do as well as I can down the order," he said.

Steve Smith didn't play the away ODI series against England due to concussion suffered during a net session and his presence is sure to ease Indian team's headache, said the Victorian all-rounder.

"To have someone like Steve Smith coming back to our side, it is going to be a big plus for us, a big headache for India. Smith has always scored runs against them," he said.

Keeping Kohli quiet key to success: Cummins

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia speedster Pat Cummins expectedly considers Virat Kohli the "big" wicket he would target in the upcoming series against India and said that keeping the visiting captain quiet would be crucial to the home team's chances.

"I think every side has that one or two batters and they are the big wickets. Most teams have their captain — Joe Root for England, Kane Williamson for New Zealand. You feel like if you get their wickets that goes a long way in winning the game," Cummins told Fox Cricket.

"He (Kohli) is always a big one. You commentators talk about him non-stop, so hopefully, we can keep him quiet," he added.

Cummins, who has been named in both the white and red-ball squads as vice-captain, is one of the 11 Australian players currently quarantining in Sydney after returning from the UAE where he played for Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL.

Their quarantine period will end on the eve of the opening ODI against India at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Cummins said Australia is well prepared to give India a tough fight in the series.

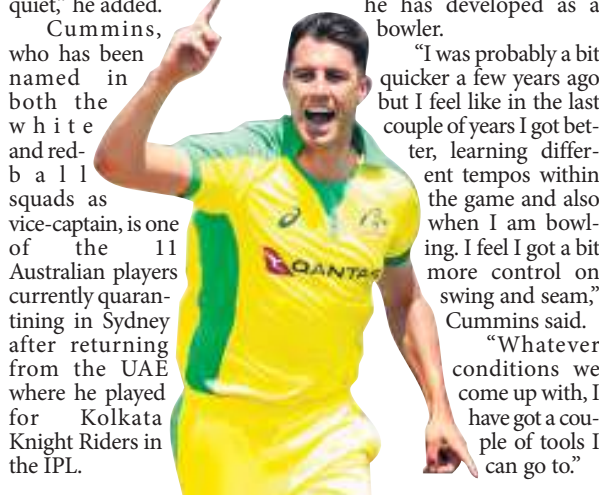
"It's going to be huge. Obviously, we're back here on home soil. Other than spending a lot of times in hotels and bubbles I feel like our preparation has actually been really good.

"We went over to the UK and had a good tour there. Most of the boys here have been playing 14 T20 matches in the last few weeks and the other guys coming in will be playing shrewd cricket. So, it feels like we are all firing up and got a lot of stuff behind us," he said.

The imposing pacer said that over the last couple of years, he has developed as a bowler.

"I was probably a bit quicker a few years ago but I feel like in the last couple of years I got better, learning different tempos within the game and also when I am bowling. I feel I got a bit more control on swing and seam," Cummins said.

"Whatever conditions we come up with, I have got a couple of tools I can go to."



Bowlers will decide fate of Ind-Oz series: Zaheer

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former left-arm pacer Zaheer Khan believes bowlers will decide the fate of this summer's India-Australia contest as both the teams boast of some of the world's finest bowlers in their squads.

With the likes of Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammad Shami, Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins, to name a few, up their ranks, both India and Australia have formidable bowling attacks.

"The Australian pitches have always had good bounce and pace, so I think the area which will decide the ODIs, T20Is and Tests will be the bowlers and how well the team bowls as a unit to restrict the opponent to a lower total on the scoreboard," said Zaheer, who was part of the 2011 World Cup winning Indian team.

"When someone talks about the top line bowlers in the world right now, the names of the players that come to our mind will all be on the pitch in this series," he added.

Zaheer also said that India are set to face a stern test in Australia this summer due to the presence of Steve Smith and David Warner.

India had defeated Australia 2-1 in their last Test series Down Under in 2018-19 in the absence of Warner and Smith, as both the players were serving an year-long ban.

"Now with the return of Steve Smith and David Warner

to the Australian side, the Indian team is definitely going to face a stiffer competition than their previous tour Down Under," the former India fast bowler said.

"There are no favourites going into the series as both the sides have quality batting and bowling line-up in their squad and that is what will make the upcoming tour interesting and exciting to watch."

Zaheer's thoughts were echoed by Australian pace legend Glenn McGrath, who also feels that the Virat Kohli-led side will face a tough competition this time around.

"The Indian cricket team will face a much tougher Australian team now that Smith and Warner are back but the Indian team is equally strong and have an aggressive mentality and determination to win the series," said McGrath, who has staggering 563 Test wickets.

"The current Indian team has got the confidence of playing in Australian conditions now and they know how to do it as they've been successful here in the last tour."

Former India batsman Sanjay Manjrekar too feels the same. "Australia's Test team will be stronger than it was on India's previous tour. The experience of Smith and Warner will add muscle to the Aussie side but I believe India's bowling attack is ready to have their names carved in the history of Indian cricket by winning a consecutive series Down Under," he said.



Ticket frenzy for Aus-Ind ties

2 ODIs & 3 T20Is sold out in one-day

Melbourne: Tickets for five of the upcoming six limited-overs fixtures between Australia and India beginning next week, have been sold out in less than a day after being released, Cricket Australia informed on Friday.

The limited-overs series will begin with the three ODIs from November 27. Limited tickets to the first ODI at the SCG, however, remain with approximately 1,900 public seats left.

Tickets for the four matches at the Sydney Cricket and two at Canberra's Manuka Oval went on sale to the general public on Friday morning and by midday the only seats up for grabs were for the first ODI at the SCG.

It should be noted that both SCG and Manuka Oval will be at 50 per cent capacity for the series due to restrictions put in place amid Covid-19 pandemic. IANS

Split captaincy cannot work in our culture: Kapil

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

"An MNC cannot have two CEOs," said former India skipper Kapil Dev on Friday, making his stance clear on the raging debate over whether the national cricket team should go for split captaincy.

Ever since Rohit Sharma guided Mumbai Indians to a fifth IPL title, a debate on split captaincy has gathered momentum with several former players suggesting that the opener be handed the leadership of at least the T20 side.

"In our culture it is not going to happen that way. In one company you make two CEOs? No. If Kohli is going to play T20s and he is good enough. Let him be there. Even though I would like to see other people coming out. But it's difficult," said Kapil.

"Our 80 per cent, 70 per cent of the team across formats is same team. They don't like captains having different theory. It may bring more differences between the players who look up to the captain.

"If you have two captains, players might think he is going to be my captain in Tests. I will not annoy him."

Talking about the art of fast bowling, the 1983 World Cup-winning former skipper said fast bowlers opting for too many variations saddens him.



Ravi Shastri chats with Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli

PTI

"I am not happy with fast bowlers (these days). The first ball cannot be cross seam. Players in IPL realised that swing is more important than pace. Sandeep (Sharma), who bowled 120 kph, was tougher because he was moving the ball," he explained.

Percentage of points to decide final WTC standings

NEW DELHI: India on Thursday slipped to the second position in the standings of the ongoing World Test Championship (WTC) after the ICC decided to rank teams "in order of percentage of points earned" from the contested matches.

Australia (296 points from 3 series) toppled India (360 from 4 series) in the standing after the revision with a percentage of 82.22 compared to the latter's 75 per cent.

With the global Covid-19 pandemic disrupting cricket, just under half of the WTC

matches have been played, with that estimated to rise to more than 85% by the end of the competition window."

According to current regulations, incomplete matches are treated as draw but after due deliberation, the ICC Cricket Committee, headed by Anil Kumble, recommended that the final WTC standings should be determined on the basis of matches played, which was approved by the Board.

"Both the Cricket Committee and Chief Executives Committee sup-

ported the approach of ranking teams based on completed matches and points earned as this reflects their performance and doesn't disadvantage teams that have been unable to compete all of their matches through no fault of their own," ICC Chief Executive said.

"We explored a whole range of options, but our Members felt strongly that we should proceed as planned with the first ever World Test Championship Final in June next year." PNS

Lockdown in S Aus provides best chance to host 1st Test

Adelaide: The six-day lockdown in South Australia to contain Covid-19 cases has improved Adelaide's chances of remaining the venue of the first Day/Night Test between India and Australia from December 17 even though the situation remains fluid, the state's top medical officer has said.

South Australia has closed its borders after a sudden surge in Covid-19 positive cases, which stand at an overall 551 right now.

South Australia's chief public health officer Nicola Spurrer, during a press conference, admitted that there are no guarantees.

"I can't tell you exactly...I don't have a crystal ball," Spurrer told reporters.

"But what we are doing now is putting us in the best position possible to be able to have that cricket match," she said with a note of positivity.

A lockdown will help get back to normal life including having a cricket match of great significance.

"The reason we are doing what we are doing, which is pretty drastic...Is because we want to get back to the state of having just a few restrictions and to be able to do things like have the cricket." PTI

ICC postpone women's T20 WC from 2022 to 23

PTI ■ DUBAI

The South African edition of the Women's T20 World Cup was on Thursday postponed by three months to February 2023 to avoid a cluster a big-ticket events in 2022 and manage players' workload, ICC announced on Thursday.

The tournament was scheduled in November 2022 but will now be held in February 2023.

In August this year, the ICC had postponed the 50 over Women's World Cup slated in New Zealand from 2021 to 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and women's T20 cricket is also set to make its debut in the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

"The Board confirmed that the ICC Women's T20 World Cup will move from its current slot at the end of 2022 to 9-26 February 2023," ICC said in a statement.

If not postponed, the year would have "three major events in 2022 with the Commonwealth Games in July 2022 and the ICC Women's T20 World Cup due to be held in November 2022."

"As there are currently no major women's events scheduled to take place in 2023 the Board confirmed the switch for the T20 World Cup to better support player preparation and to continue to build the momentum around the women's game beyond 2022," the apex body said.

The ICC said the decision was taken keeping in mind the workload of the players and also considering long term interest of women's cricket.

Koeman defends Messi's angry outburst

AP ■ BARCELONA

Forced to handle yet another difficult situation regarding Lionel Messi, Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman demanded more "respect" for his disgruntled star.

Koeman said he understood why Messi was visibly angry when journalists asked him about the criticism directed at him by a former agent of teammate Antoine Griezmann when Messi arrived in Spain on Wednesday after a long flight.

"I need to defend Leo because if something happened to me after a trip of 15 hours in a plane back to Barcelona — you go outside and there is a lot of press asking that type of question — I would be dangerous and hate them as well," Koeman said on Friday.

"We have to respect people like Messi more. And from what I have seen on the field and in training, there is no problem between (Messi and

Griezmann)."

Eric Olhats, Griezmann's agent until 2016, told France Football magazine last week that Messi has marginalized Griezmann in his "regime of terror" at the club where the Argentine supposedly "controls everything."

When journalists asked Messi for his response, he wearily answered: "To be honest, I'm a bit tired of always being the problem for everything in this club."

That set off another round of alarm bells at the Camp Nou about Messi's future.

Many are concerned that the latest unpleasant episode is yet another reason for Messi to go through with his plan to leave the

club. With his contract expiring at the end of this season, Messi will be free to negotiate with other clubs in January.

There is widespread speculation he could be tempted to reunite with former coach Pep Guardiola at Manchester City.

Koeman said that while he does not feel it is his job to convince Messi to stay, he is confident the 33-year-old forward will prolong his 20-year stint at Barcelona.

"I hope he will stay in Barcelona," Koeman said. "I think it is unbelievable what he has done for this club, but he is the main person to make a decision about his future."

Barcelona will visit Atlético Madrid, the league's only unbeaten team, on Saturday.



ATK Mohun Bagan start off with ISL campaign 1-0 win

PTI ■ BAMBOLIM

In their new avatar, ATK Mohun Bagan kicked off the seventh season of the Indian Super League on a high, defeating Kerala Blasters by a solitary goal here on Friday.

Fijian hitman Roy Krishna, who was ATK's top goal scorer with 15 goals last season, struck the all important goal after a 67 minute deadlock to give the all important three points for the green-and-maroon brigade.

The Yellow Brigade playing with a heavy defensive lineup of 4-2-3-1 managed to thwart ATKMB throughout the first half but after the hour mark they left a loose ball as the Fijian International pounced on it with a calm and composed finish.

All eyes were on the 131-year-old legacy club Mohun

Bagan as they were making their ISL debut following their 'marriage' with three-time defending champions ATK.

The match had an interesting sub-plot as Kibu Vicuna, who had guided Mohun Bagan to their fifth I-League title last season, sat in the opposite dugout in KBFC jersey, while the most successful ISL coach Antonio Lopez Habas was at the helm of ATKMB.

KBFC, who were the designated home team, looked more threatening and came out with an attacking intent in the second-half.

But KBFC were made to pay for it as Roy Krishna made amends for his three misses in the first half with his poacher goal to become the difference between the two sides.

That goal was enough for ATKMB to sink Kerala Blasters' hearts.

Djoker downs Zverev, sets up Thiem semis

AFP ■ LONDON

Novak Djokovic out-battled Alexander Zverev to qualify for the last four at the ATP Finals on Friday, staying on track to match Roger Federer's record of six titles at the end-of-season event.

The Serbian top seed, who was beaten comprehensively by Daniil Medvedev in his second round-robin match, was again below his best at London's O2 Arena but did enough to win 6-3, 7-6 (7/4).

The five-time winner finishes second in Group Tokyo 2020 behind Medvedev and will play third-seed Dominic Thiem in the semi-finals on Saturday.

Second-seed Rafael Nadal, seeking his first win at the elite eight-man event, will face Medvedev in the other semi-final after finishing second in Group London 2020.



Djokovic broke Germany's Zverev at the first time of asking in the empty stadium and raced into a 3-0 lead, threatening to run away with the match — a repeat of the 2018 final, which Zverev won in straight sets.

The 33-year-old looked focused after his uncharacteristic mauling by Medvedev, serving himself out of trouble when he found himself trail-

ing 15-40 in the seventh game.

That proved to be the last chance for Zverev in the set and 17-time Grand Slam winner Djokovic hammered a backhand winner down the line to take it 6-3.

Djokovic handed Zverev a break point in the fourth game of the second set after double-faulting but the German could not capitalise.

The 23-year-old fifth seed saved two break points on his serve in the following game, letting out a roar as he kept his nose in front.

The set went to a tie-break. Zverev earned an early mini-break but Djokovic levelled and the pressure was back on the German, who faltered to hand the Serbian victory.

The O2 Arena is hosting the event for the 12th and final season before the championships move to Turin.

