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



the pioneer

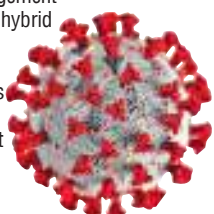
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COVID TEST RATES IN PVT LABS  
MAY COME DOWN: TS MINISTER

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.

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-HIT

Gilead's remdesivir is not recommended for patients hospitalised with Covid, 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 in the summer after early trials showed some promise.

TO AVOID DELHI POLLUTION, SONIA  
ARRIVES IN GOA WITH SON RAHUL

Interim Congress President Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi arrived in Goa on Friday afternoon, after doctors advised her to move out of Delhi for some time owing to her chest infection to avoid severe pollution in the national capital, according to party sources. After their arrival at the Dabolim International Airport, Sonia Gandhi and her son left for a south Goa resort, where she is expected to stay for a few days. Sonia Gandhi is on medication after her discharge from the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi on August 2, and her doctors are concerned about her consistent chest infection. The Air Quality Index in Delhi around 10 am on Friday was 305, which is in 'severe' category.

Retail inflation up  
marginally for rural  
workers

8

## Jagan picks physio for Tirupati LS

SNV SUDHIR  
■ VIJAYAWADA

In a surprise development, YSRCP chief YS Jaganmohan Reddy has offered a MLC seat to Balli Kalyan Chakravarthy son of late Balli Durga Prasad instead of the ticket to contest the Tirupati Lok Sabha by-poll. It's more or less a certainty that Jagan may pick his personal physiotherapist Dr Maddila Gurumurthy as the Tirupati Lok Sabha candidate from the YSRCP. Tirupati Lok Sabha seat fell vacant due to the demise of Balli Durga Prasad due to Covid-related complications.

Durga Prasad, 64, a lawyer by profession, had represented the Gudur Assembly constituency four times. "None of the family members of Durga Prasad had expressed interest to contest from the vacant seat. Dr Gurumurthy had gained confidence and trust of our party supremo YS Jaganmohan Reddy during his padayatra," a senior YSRCP functionary told The Pioneer. "He served Jagan tirelessly during the walkathon and had been always with our leader all through his padayatra. Gurumurthy is also a young professional and deserves the

It's more or less a certainty that Jagan may pick his personal physiotherapist Dr Maddila Gurumurthy as the Tirupati Lok Sabha candidate from the YSRCP. Tirupati Lok Sabha seat fell vacant due to the demise of Balli Durga Prasad due to Covid-related complications

seat. However, we are not sure if the party ticket goes to Dr Gurumurthy or not. We are also waiting for an official announcement from our party supremo," he said. Jagan on Thursday held a meeting with all the available

Cabinet ministers and senior leaders of the party to discuss the Tirupati Lok Sabha by-poll. All those who participated in Thursday's meeting left the decision of selecting the candidate to YSRCP chief. While TDP had already

announced its candidate, now all eyes are on Jagan's choice of candidate. While the Election Commission is yet to take a view on conducting the by-poll for Tirupati Lok Sabha seat, TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu had already announced the candidature of former Union minister Panabaka Lakshmi a week ago.

Panabaka unsuccessfully contested on the TDP ticket for the same seat in 2019 polls and lost to Durga Prasad by a margin of over two lakh votes. Tirupati Lok Sabha is a reserved constituency.

2



## Jaish planned 'something big' on 26/11 anniversary

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday held a review meeting with the top security brass, including Home Minister Amit Shah, as it emerged that Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorists killed in an encounter on the outskirts of Jammu, were planning a big terror operation on the anniversary of the 26/11 Mumbai attack.

Government sources said NSA Ajit Doval, foreign secretary and top intelligence officials attended the meeting in which Modi took stock of the situation.

The terrorists were planning "something big" on the anniversary of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, the sources added.

Four suspected Jaish-e-



Mohammad terrorists were killed and two policemen injured in a gun battle in Nagrota on Thursday after a truck carrying newly infiltrated militants was intercepted, police had said.

Inspector General of Police (IGP), Jammu, Mukesh Singh, had said after the encounter that the terrorists had come to execute a "big plan" which has now been foiled.

France keen to  
explore ties in  
tourism

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## Tungabhadra Pushkaralu commences

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Friday inaugurated the Tungabhadra Pushkaralu at Sankal Bagh Ghat in Kurnool and performed special puja and rituals in traditional attire at the designated muhurat to herald the 12-year event.

The Chief Minister offered flowers, silk robes and Harati to Tungabhadra river wearing a turban. He also performed pujas, yagnam and took part in other traditional rituals.

The Tungabhadra pushkaralu will take place for 12 days starting Friday and culminate on December 1. The State Government has arranged 23 pushkar ghats in Kurnool, Kodumur, Emmiganur, Nandikotkur and Mantralayam mandals.

Apart from special teams with nodal officers, 23 in-



charges have also been assigned, one for each ghat to monitor the situation. All arrangements have been made with special care to ensure the complete safety of pilgrims. Later, the Chief Minister met the relatives of Abdul Salam, the auto-rickshaw driver who committed suicide with his entire family, at APSP Guest House and assured jus-

tice and extended all support to the bereaved family. Ministers Buggana Rajendranath Reddy, Vellampalli Srinivas, Gummanoor Jayaram, Kurnool district Collector G Veerapandian, SP Fakirappa, MLAs Hafeez Khan, Katasani Rambhupal Reddy, Sudhakar and Toguru Arthur took part in the event.

CM meets relatives  
of Abdul Salam,  
assures all support

Kurnool: Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Friday met Mubunnisa, and assured her that the government will take strict action against the people responsible for the suicide of her son-in-law Abdul Salam's family. He also assured that the government will extend support to her family. Jagan met her at the APSP battalion guest house and promised to offer an outsourcing job to Mubunnisa's daughter Shajida. Likewise, he instructed officials to transfer her son-in-law Shamvali from Anantapur to Nandyal.

2

The  
Administrator's  
Dilemma

2

Like Trump,  
Jagan violating  
the law: Yanamala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Accusing the ruling party of trying to undermine the Constitution of India by challenging the autonomy of the State Election Commissioner, TDP MLC Yanamala Ramakrishnuudu on Friday said that the YSRCP Government was in violation of election-related laws.

"The State Election Commission is an independent Constitutional institution whose authority and decision-making cannot be questioned by anybody else," Yanamala said and added that the YSRCP regime's non-cooperation with the poll panel was nothing less than violation of the Constitution itself.

Stating that nepotism and favouritism were ruling the roost in AP, the veteran leader said that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's rule was like that of the defeated Donal Trump in the US. "While Trump violated American laws, Jagan has undermined the laws enshrined in India's Constitution," Yanamala said.

The senior TDP leader demanded that the results of the "forced" unanimous elections of the past be scrapped and fresh elections be held to ensure a vibrant democracy.



Yanamala said that the Government's non-cooperation was in the nature of violating the Article 243 K and 243 Z (A) and the strange arguments of the YSRC rule were indeed unfortunate and unacceptable. He clarified that the SEC was required to consult the State Government but that does not mean he should take consent before holding the polls.

Yanamala claimed that the State's Chief Secretary lacked the authority to tell the SEC whether elections can be held or not.

Yanamala asserted that the Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary had no moral right to interfere with the decisions of the Election Commission.

"Undermining the Constitution and misuse of powers amounted to murder of democracy.

Allow regional languages  
for job exams: KCR to PM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar 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.

2

## Majority of child marriages in AP among OBCs

SNV SUDHIR  
■ VIJAYAWADA

A study has found that the majority of child marriages in Andhra Pradesh take place among Other Backward Classes (OBCs), followed by Scheduled Castes (SCs), Other Castes (OCs) also known as Forward Castes and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

Andhra Pradesh is among the 12 states in India that have a higher prevalence of child marriage than the national average. As many as three districts from the state also find a place in top 100 districts in the



country having high prevalence of child marriages.

As per a report prepared by an international research pro-

## Familial ties, pressure from elders major factor

As per another report "Facing Constraints and Seizing Opportunities: Child Marriages in Andhra Pradesh" prepared by Hyderabad-based Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS), parents give top priority to consanguineous marriages where the age of the bride is no issue at all. This is linked to another factor —

protecting ancestral property which is an age-old customary practice in all communities in Andhra Pradesh. Pressure from grandparents is another factor, which is linked with traditional patriarchal supremacy and also a priority to consanguineous marriages.

2

ject 'Young Lives India' in collaboration with the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR),

Andhra Pradesh also figures in the list of 20 states in which more than 70 percent of child marriages took place in rural

areas.

The NCPCR and Young Lives team analysed the data of National Family Health Survey (NFHS)- 4 (2015-16) related to prevalence of child marriage and teenage pregnancy amongst girls in the age group 15-19 years and 20-24 years in India.

According to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006, any girl married below she attains 18 years of age and any boy married before he is 21 years old is considered a "child marriage", which is a cognizable offence.

2



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)

## Rs 616 crore subsidised loan to AP for micro-irrigation projects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Agriculture Ministry on Friday said it has given nod for subsidised loans worth Rs 3,971.31 crore for implementing micro-irrigation projects.

While Tamil Nadu has got the maximum loan of Rs 1,357.93 crore, Andhra Pradesh was allowed to borrow Rs 616.13 crore.

The interest subvented loans are being offered under Micro Irrigation Fund (MIF) created with National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) for implementing micro-irrigation projects.

This fund with a corpus of Rs 5,000 crore was operationalised in the 2019-20 fiscal



with an objective to facilitate states in availing subsidised loans for expanding coverage of micro irrigation.

In a statement, the ministry said the steering committee of MIF has approved projects for loan worth Rs 3,971.31 crore.

Out of this, maximum loan of Rs 1,357.93 crore has been approved for Tamil Nadu, followed by Rs 790.94 crore for Haryana, Rs 764.13 crore for Gujarat, Rs 616.13 crore for Andhra Pradesh, Rs 276.55 crore for West Bengal, Rs 150

crore for Punjab and Rs 15.63 crore for Uttarakhand, it said.

NABARD has so far released a total loan amount of Rs 1,754.60 crore to the states. Of this, about Rs 659.70 crore has been released to Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat.

About Rs 616.13 crore loan has been released to Andhra Pradesh, Rs 937.47 crore to Tamil Nadu, Rs 21.57 crore to Haryana and Rs 179.43 crore to Gujarat so far, it added.

Under the MIF, subsidised loans are provided for not only taking up special and innovative projects but also for incentivising micro irrigation beyond the provisions available under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (Per Drop More Crop) to encourage farmers to install micro irrigation systems.

## CM meets relatives of Abdul Salam...

Continued from Page 1

Following the Chief Minister's instructions, Anantapur DM&HO office issued orders to transfer Shamvali to Nandyal health department.

It's not clear if Jagan met Mubunnisa before inaugurating the Tungabhadra Pushkaralu or afterwards.

Circle inspector Somasekhara Reddy and head constable Gangadhar were arrested on charges of abetment to suicide of Sheikh Abdul Salam (45), his wife Noorjahan (43), son Dada Khalandar (9) and daughter Salma (14) recently.

The four committed suicide by throwing themselves under a goods train due to alleged police harassment.

## OB van worth Rs 1.2 cr donated to Tirumala shrine

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

A vehicle with digital satellite news gathering (DSNG) equipment was donated to shrine of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala, near here, on Friday.

It was donated by senior BJP leader and Karnataka Social Welfare Minister B Sriramulu, an official at the temple said.

The van, also called outside broadcasting (OB) vehicle, is fitted with state-of-the-art technology worth Rs 1.2 crore, the official told PTI.

The equipment would be used for the Sri Venkateswara Bhakti TV channel that telecasts rituals at the ancient temple and the shrine of Goddess Sree Padmavathi, he said.

The keys of the OB vehicle were handed over by a repre-



sentative of the Minister to AV Dharma Reddy, additional executive officer of Tirumala

Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) that governs the shrine, the official added.

## Summer of 2021 will be 'almost normal': Bill Gates

PNS ■ NEW YORK

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.

"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 round 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.

## CM to lay stone for 4 fishing...

Continued from Page 1

In the first phase, tenders have been called for four fishing harbours at Juvvaladinne, Nizampatnam, Machilipatnam and Uppada costing around Rs 1,510 crore, aiming to complete in the next two years with world class infrastructure. The tenders will be finalised in the second week of December.

The aquahubs will be constructed at a cost of Rs 225 crore where quality marine products will be available and they will be maintained by aqua societies.

Through the new fishing harbours, it is expected that an additional 2.37 lakh tonnes of fish and prawn catch worth nearly Rs 500 crore will be added as Gross Value Addition to the State and 85,000 direct and indirect employment would be generated.

The government will be developing these green energy harbours with modern facilities such as cold storage units, fish processing units, chill centres, boat handling, and repair facilities. It is planned to provide one or two coastal cargo berths in the fishing harbours wherever feasible to facilitate export operations.



## Jagan picks physio for Tirupati LS

Continued from Page 1

Kalyan Chakravarthy along with his other family members met Jagan on Friday and pledged his total support to the party candidate.

Municipal Administration Minister Botsa Satyanarayana, who accompanied Durga Prasad's family to the Chief Minister said that the wife and son of Durga Prasad said that Jagan extended his support to the

family and promised the MLC post to Kalyan Chakravarthy.

Durga Prasad's son said the Chief Minister has stood by his family ever since his father died due to Covid-19. He said the Chief Minister has promised MLC post for him and added his family would be forever grateful to Jagan.

He said that he would strive hard for the victory of YSRCP candidate in the upcoming by-poll.

## Familial ties, pressure from elders ...

Continued from Page 1

Preference for 'consanguineous marriages' is the major factor, widely pointed out by 53 percent of the key informants interviewed by the CESS teams. During the Focused Group Discussions (FGDs), a majority of the participants raised this issue as one of the key driving factors for child marriages.

Nearly 60 percent of the FGDs have discussed this practice. Consanguineous marriages are customary practice in many families in Andhra Pradesh. Traditionally, consanguineous marriage system is known for strengthening kinship ties between families, expanding social networks, protecting ancestral property, and ensures political strength.

Protecting ancestral properties is one of the customary practices among the rural as well as urban communities, those who are practising consanguineous marriages. Nearly 25 percent of key informants have discussed this as one of the driving factors behind child marriages.

While continuing this practice in general, parents do not give much importance to the age of girl and perform marriage with a boy from first cousin's family. Few of the parents are of the opinion that whatever dowry they give to their daughter should be within the control of their close kin.

Hence, they do not consider the age difference between bride and bridegroom while deciding to go ahead with marriage. In some cases, the age of bride will be much less than 18 years.

"In FGDs, pressure from grandparents was much discussed. About 45 percent of the FGDs highlighted this and during the discussions, particularly elderly members who participated in the FGDs stressed that, in spite of developmental, grandparents are hold value in socialisation of young and have supremacy over the family decisions," said the report by CESS.

For this study CESS teams had interviewed 175 key informants at various stages-district, mandal and village level. Similarly, 20 FGDs were conducted with selected stakeholders.

## Allow regional languages for job exams...

Continued from Page 1

"All the competitive exams for recruitment in the Central government, its departments and

undertakings through Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and all other agencies like Railway Recruitment Board, Public Sector Banks, Reserve

Bank of India, Staff Selection Commission and others, should be held in regional languages," the Telangana Chief Minister said in his letter.

VIJAYAWADA BULLION RATES	
<b>GOLD</b>	
₹ 51,240 (10 gm)	
<b>100 SILVER</b>	
₹ 66,500 (1kg)	
₹ 200	

CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
Dressed/With Skin	₹148
Without Skin	₹168
Broiler at Farm	₹102

EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	471
HYDERABAD	474
VISAKHAPATNAM	470
RETAIL PRICE	₹4.71

## Only 597 Covid-hit under ICU care in AP

■ About 90 percent of the beds specifically created for Covid care are now vacant across the State

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

With the Covid-19 infection count declining further, the hospital beds in Andhra Pradesh, especially created for the Covid treatment, are falling vacant now.

The State's Covid-19 tally touched 8,59,932 as 1,221 fresh cases were added in 24 hours ending 9 am on Friday. With 1,829 more patients getting cured, the total recoveries rose to 8,37,630, the latest bulletin said.

The number of active cases now stood at 15,382. Ten fresh fatalities pushed the toll up to 6,920.



According to the real-time Covid hospital bed details furnished by the AP government, only 597 people are going

under ICU care treatment. Moreover, of the 29,627 total beds, 3,580 are filled.

After 94.74 lakh sample

tests, the overall infection positivity rate slid to 9.08 percent while the recovery rate further improved to 97.41 percent.

Only East Godavari district reported 202 fresh cases in the last 24 hours while Krishna, Chittoor, West Godavari and Guntur added less than 200 each.

Six districts reported less than 50 new cases each while two others added less than 100 cases each in the last 24 hours, the bulletin added.

Chittoor and Krishna districts also reported two more Covid-19 deaths each while six districts added one each to their tally.

## Majority of child marriages in AP among OBCs...

Continued from Page 1

As per the report, while India's average of child marriages prevalence is 11.9 percent, Andhra Pradesh's average stands at 16.6 percent.

The child marriages prevalence among OBC groups in the state is 58 percent, 22 percent in SC groups, 13 percent among OCs and 7 percent in STs. Further analysis of NHFS-4 reveals as per India average the highest prevalence of child marriage is reported amongst Scheduled Tribe girls 15 percent followed by Scheduled Castes at 13 percent.

The report also revealed

**20 participatory Focus Group Discussions were also conducted in five districts**

that child marriage is a rural phenomenon. As much as 77.6 percent of the total child marriages that took place in Andhra Pradesh are in rural tracts whereas in urban areas, it's 22.4 percent.

There are certain states including UTs which have large pockets of child marriage within urban areas. Some of these states are Haryana (41 percent), Tamil Nadu (37 percent), Maharashtra (33 percent) and Manipur (32 percent).

Krishna, Prakasam and Vizianagaram districts with 20.3 percent, 19.8 percent and 19.3 percent respectively figure among India's top 100 districts having high prevalence of child marriages.

Consanguineous marriages, pressure from grandparents are among the major factors behind child marriages in AP.



CAPSULE  
Pushpayagam  
cynosure of  
all eyes

**VIJAYAWADA :** Floral bath with tonnes of varieties of flowers has been performed to Goddess Sri Padmavathi Devi on Friday as part of annual Pushpayagam. The fete has become the cynosure of all eyes, who witnessed live on SVBC. The Goddess seated on a special platform was rendered abhishekam with nearly four tonnes of different types of traditional, aromatic and ornamental flowers amidst chanting of Vedic hymns by priests. Earlier in the morning, Snapana Thiruman-janam was held, followed by a pro-cession of flowers from Vahana Mandapam to temple. JEO Basant Kumar, CVSO Gopinath Jetti, CE Ramesh Reddy, GM Transport Sessa Reddy, Garden wing chief Srinivasulu, and others were present.



67th All India  
Cooperative  
Week fete

**Tirupati:** The TTD organised the 67th All India Cooperative Week celebrations and cooperative training programme at the SVETA Bhavan in Tirupati on Thursday. TTD EO KS Jawahar Reddy said the weeklong Cooperation Week was celebrated as part of the birth anniversary of Prime Minister Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. Assuring that he would contribute to the growth of TTD Employees Cooperative Bank, the TTD EO said Maharashtra and Gujarat were on the frontline of the cooperative sector. Earlier, the TTD Employees Cooperative Bank president Munivenkat Reddy highlighted the activities of the Bank. Vice-President of the Bank Shiv Kumar also spoke on the significance of public, private and cooperative sectors in development of the country. Cooperative Bank treasurer Srinivasa, Directors Venkatesh, Kiran and Hemalata, Gunasekar and other employees were present.

Ankurarpanam  
performed

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Ankurarpanam for Pushpayagam was performed at Vasanta Mandapam in Tirumala on Friday. As part of this ritual, Senapati Vishwakshenulavaru was taken on a procession to the mandapam where the Ritwiks performed Mritsangrahanam and Asthanam. After wards , Ankurarpanam was carried out as per Vaikhanasa Agama by priests in Yagashala inside the temple. The TTD has cancelled Sahasra Deepalankara Seva in view of this ritual. Temple Peishkar Janganmohan Chary, priests and others took part.



# SEB to crack the whip against ganja smugglers

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) in coordination with wings of police and other departments are now chalking out plans to prepare a list of ganja smugglers and suppliers so as to identify repeated offenders. The plan is also to identify their properties and create a strategy to prevent their illegal trade.

After the Covid-19 induced lockdown was lifted, ganja smuggling cases have spiked. The recent seizures of huge quantities of ganja from various parts of Visakhapatnam district revealed a strong network with innovative methods of smuggling.

Enforcement officials have also found that some youngsters had taken to ganja trade for easy money. While police and excise officials had identified a few repeat offenders and seized their assets a few years ago, the current drive came after some delay. Earlier, assets of three smugglers -- Pothuraju



Kumaraswamy, Udi Bajji and Ghising Prem Bahudhar-- were seized by authorities under section 68F(2) of the NDPS Act, Preventive Detention (PD) Act.

A senior police officer said that despite not having any major source of income, some people in the Agency areas had been making good money, using high-end vehicles and leading luxurious lives because of their involvement in the ganja trade.

"We are chalking out plans to prepare a list of repeated ganja smugglers, who have been caught more than three times, to keep a tab on their activities and prevent smuggling. The government will give some powers to the SEB to tackle ganja trade," said SEB deputy commissioner T Srinivasa Rao.

A few years ago, enforcement officials had identified over 5,000 bank accounts of youngsters from

After the Covid-19 induced lockdown lifted, ganja smuggling cases have spiked

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Visakhapatnam Agency involved in ganja trade. They had received money from Tamil Nadu, Odisha and other States for their involvement. Officials said that besides seizure and destruction of ganja plantations, they were also chalking out plans to cut illegal sources of revenue for those involved in the trade.

## Toll tax proposal on two-lane roads

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Lorry Owners' Association appealed to the government to put an end to collecting toll tax on two-lane roads in the State. He said that due to Corona the transport sector was pushed into a deep crisis and not to levy any burden on the transport sector.

YV Eswar Rao, general secretary, AP Lorry Owners Association, said that the government was planning to come up with a GO to collect toll tax for two lane roads in the State. He said that they have been paying taxes for four lane and six lane roads across the State. For the last two years, the transport sector is in deep crisis and the Corona pandemic has shattered the crisis further. In this backdrop, collecting toll tax for two lane roads will be a heavy burden on the transport sector, he opined.

He said that at the time of vehicle purchasing, they are paying 28 per cent GST and 14



per cent road tax, they have been paying toll at the national highways. But the government is planning to collect toll tax for two lane roads will be a big setback to the lorry owners and the transport sector, they strongly oppose the government's move, he said.

He further stated that in 1997 toll notification was issued and later from 2004 they have been paying toll tax at the national highways for four lane and six lane roads. Every year the toll tariff has been changing despite paying 22.25 per cent tax on diesel and Rs 4 additional development charges, along with road cess of Rs 1.22, he added.

## Industry Restart prog to help closed units soon

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The government will soon start 'Industries Restart' programme in a bid to enable the small and medium scale units that were closed due to the Covid pandemic and are struggling to reopen them, said Kurasala Kannababu, Minister for Agriculture and in-charge minister for Visakhapatnam district.

"Most of the small scale industries were closed during the lockdown and they were never reopened. Hence, financial aid would be given to these sick industries in the restart programme that was being planned," said Kannababu, at a press conference here on Friday.

The government would run parallel the agriculture and industries, the two major platforms for large-scale employment in the State. He said an important meeting



Minister for Tourism and Culture Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao said the city has enough basic infrastructure facilities to develop as a major industrial hub of the State. He said the government was committed to improving the quality of life among the underprivileged classes

has been scheduled for Saturday in which enthusiastic entrepreneurs, industrialists and representatives of public sector undertakings would participate.

The meeting would discuss the post lockdown scenario of the industries, pollution problems in Visakhapatnam city and comprehensive development of the region. The PSU role in providing helping hand to the unemployed through CSR pro-

grammes would also be discussed, the minister added.

Minister for Tourism and Culture Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao said the city has enough basic infrastructure facilities to develop as a major industrial hub of the State. He said the government was committed to improving the quality of life among the underprivileged classes.

## TDP national V-P passes away

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former TDP MLA and party national vice-president DK Satya Prabha passed away due to cardiac arrest at a private hospital owned by her family in Bengaluru on Thursday. Satya Prabha was infected with Coronavirus and was undergoing treatment in Bengaluru since a few days. Though she had recovered from the lethal virus, later on suffered other post Covid complications and had breathed her last on Thursday night.

Satyaprabha is wife of liquor baron D K Adikeshavulu Naidu, who died a few years ago. He was also an MP and twice served as the TTD Board chairman. Satyaprabha was 70-year-old. She was a devotee of Puttappathi Satya Sai Baba. It was Sai Baba, who got her married to Adikeshavulu Naidu, who was then an assis-

tant engineer in Chittoor's Sugar Factory.

After Adikeshavulu Naidu's sudden demise in 2013, Satya Prabha had entered politics. In 2014, she contested for the Chittoor Assembly seat and won. In the 2019 elections, Satya Prabha had contested from Rajampet but she lost.

Recently TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu had nominated her as the party national vice-president. Naidu, along with other party senior leaders, condoled Satya Prabha's demise and expressed his deep sympathies to the bereaved family.

Naidu said that the departed leader had rendered praiseworthy services to people in her capacity as the former legislator of Chittoor. She strived hard to solve the drinking water problems and for the development of water tanks in the area, he said.

## Reforms aimed at new edu policy: Sanchaita

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Exhibiting the strength of support from principals of the education institutions run by MANSAS Trust, chairperson Sanchaita Gajapathi Raju said the reforms being introduced are aimed at the new education policy. She thwarted the allegations saying all are fake news.

Sanchaita tweeted: "I appreciate the initiative taken by the Correspondent & all the Principals of MANSAS to set the record straight & counter fake news. Together, we will fulfil the vision of my grandfather Maharaja PVG Raju garu, in line with the New Education Policy."

The principals echoed that the initiatives, they understand, are being misrepre-



sented and misunderstood on account of certain information and material in circulation. The stir over the privatisation kicked off when the correspondent of MANSAS Educational Institutions, KV Lakshminipathi Raju, wrote to the principal of the college on October 6 directing her to defer admissions.

**Sanchaita tweeted: "I appreciate the initiative taken by the Correspondent & all the Principals of MANSAS to set the record straight & counter fake news"**

The letters mention that MANSAS has formally submitted a proposal to "close Intermediate programmes/courses" and to "withdraw aid to MR (A) College", as a part of an exercise in "restructuring

and reorganising the academic programmes effective from 2020-21." A few days earlier, on September 25, the Regional Joint Director of Collegiate Education (RJDC) of Rajahmundry was directed by the Special Commissioner of Collegiate Education to examine the request of MANSAS Chairperson Sanchaita to convert MR College from an aided to unaided institution. The MR Degree College, which has received financial aid from the government since the 1960s, has now sought to revoke its aided status from the 2020-21 academic year. This has led to strong opposition from student organisations and citizen groups in Vizianagaram, who called this a step towards complete privatisation of the college.

## Industries need to adopt right strategy: SBI MD

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Industries need to adopt the right strategy, governance and technology to mitigate the problems of micro, small and medium enterprises, said CS Setty, Managing Director, SBI.

He appreciated the CII for organising Integrate-2020 through virtual conference-cum-exhibition and promoting the industry in view of Covid-19 pandemic.

Referring to the current scenario, he suggested to the industry to use the funds in the right direction by having a proper business module. He mentioned that SBI is working on setting up of an e-Commerce portal called Bharat Craft for the marketing of products manufactured by



micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) with the facility of financing options to meet the immediate business requirements.

R Pavana Murthy, ITS, Chief Executive Officer, Andhra Pradesh MSME Development Corporation, said that the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector has emerged as a highly vibrant and dynamic sector of the Indian

economy and in recent years. The MSME sector has consistently registered a higher growth rate compared to the overall industrial sector in the country.

MSMEs not only play a crucial role in providing large employment opportunities at comparatively lower capital cost also help in industrialisation of rural and backward areas, thereby, reducing regional imbalances, assuring more equitable distribution of national income and wealth, said R Pavana Murthy.

He stated that the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan is being hailed as a major fiscal stimulus and relief package for MSMEs to assuage India's economic predicament amidst the pandemic.

## Govt responsible for Polavaram delay: TDP

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Senior Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader Jyothula Nehru said here on Friday that the YSRCP government is responsible for the inordinate delay of Polavaram project. He said the delay being caused by the government has become a bane to all the farmers in the State.

"The YSRCP regime made tall promises to the people but it did not make any efforts to fulfil the same after coming to power," he alleged. According to the TDP leader, the ruling party did not complete even one per cent work on Polavaram in the past 18 months of its



regime. He said Jagan's regime is literally destroying the future prospects of the younger generation of the State by allegedly undermining and damaging the Polavaram project. Nehru also did not spare Irrigation Minister Anil Kumar Yadav, criticising him as someone lacking experience to ex-

Jagan's regime is literally destroying the future prospects of the younger generation of the State, alleged Jyothula Nehru

cute the project properly. "By shrinking the dam height it was clear that the YSRCP had surrendered to the Central government and merely dancing to its tunes for sheer selfishness," he claimed. He demanded the State government that the original dam height as per the first design should be retained.

## Unique knee replacement surgery at BIRRD

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Unique knee replacement operation, first of its kind, has been carried out in BIRRD ortho hospital, said honorary Director Dr Madanmohan Reddy. Successfully carried out on a 48-year-old patient Sujata of Kurnool, who had twisted knees and was unable to walk. Disclosing the operation details to the media at the hospital on Friday, along with his team comprising Dr Girija, Dr Naveen and Dr Chaitanya, he said the woman was suffering from severe knee pains from the last three years.

## ECoR adjudged as best zone

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The East Coast Railway bagged the prestigious Govind Ballabh Pant Shield-2020 for the best overall performance amongst all zones over Indian Railways. East Coast Railway General Manager Vidya Bhushan complimented the team ECoR for their strong determination and devotion to their duties with a progressive attitude.

He said that the relentless efforts of the railway men and their valuable contribution could make it possible to get Accounts & Finance Management Shield, Traffic Transportation Shield and Sales Management Shield.

These shields are the recognition of the dedication, hard work, focus and achievements of our officials, he added. Furthermore, Vidya Bhushan



mentioned that it is pertinent to recall that ECoR created history by being the first zone to load more than 200 MT (million tonnes) of freight traffic and also achieved operating ratio of 51.34.

He complimented the members of Team ECoR, who worked with commitment through the Covid-19 challenge that ensured continuation of supply chain to all corners of the country.

He asked the railway men

**East Coast Railway General Manager Vidya Bhushan complimented the team ECoR for their strong determination and devotion to their duties with a progressive attitude**

to continue their efforts to keep ECoR flag high, surpass the targets and past performance and to reach the expectations of people and the Ministry of Railways.



# Marriage between first cousins illegal, rules HC

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has said that marriage between first cousins is illegal. The court said that marriage which petitioner man wants to perform with a girl, who is his first cousin, was also per se illegal. "...the submission in the present petition that as and when she (the girl) attains the age of 18 years, they will perform marriage is also per se illegal," the judge said on Thursday while hearing the petition. The assertion came after a 21-year-old man moved the high court against state of Punjab seeking anticipatory bail in a case registered under Sections 363 (kidnapping), 366A (procurement of minor girl) of the IPC at police station Khanna City-2 in Ludhiana district on August 18. The state counsel, while opposing the bail plea, contented that the girl was a minor and



her parents had lodged the FIR as she and the man were first cousins and their fathers were brothers. The man's counsel told Justice Arvind Singh Sangwan that the petitioner had also filed a criminal writ petition, along with the girl, for protection of life and liberty. The court file of the criminal writ petition was summoned during the hearing and as per its memorandum of parties, the girl was stated to be 17 years of age

and the petitioner man had filed the petition with the submission that both of them were in a "live-in-relationship". It was stated in the petition that date of birth of the girl was August 2003 and on the date of filing the petition on September 3, 2020, she was of the age of 17 years and 14 days. Along with petition, a representation was also annexed, in which the girl had stated that her parents loved their sons but

ignored her, therefore, she decided to live with her friend (petitioner) and on that account, she was apprehending that her parents can harass them and disturb the peace of their mind. The court disposed of this petition on September 7. The state was directed to grant them protection if any threat was perceived to the man and the girl. However, the judge made it clear "that this order shall not be taken to protect the petitioners (man and the girl) from legal action for violation of law, if any, committed by them". The judge, after hearing counsel for the parties in the present petition, said, "I find that in the present petition also, the petitioner has not disclosed about the fact that he is first cousin of the girl and, therefore, the submission in the present petition that as and when she attains the age of 18 years, they will perform marriage is also per se illegal."

## NIA conducts searches in Kerala in gold smuggling case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday carried out searches in five places in Kerala in connection with the gold smuggling case, its spokesperson said here. The searches were conducted at the residences of five accused -- Mohamed Aslam, Abdul Latheef, Nazardheen Sha, Ramzan P and Muhammed Mansoor. These accused conspired with the already arrested accused and facilitated smuggling of gold through import cargo addressed to the UAE Consulate General, and its disposal, the agency said. During searches, several electronic items and documents have been seized, the spokesperson said. The NIA has so far arrested 21 people in the case so far. The NIA registered a case to probe the international ramification of the gold smuggling case pertaining to the seizure of 30 kg gold worth Rs 14.82 crore on July 5 this year at Trivandrum International Airport from the baggage addressed to the UAE Consulate in the Kerala capital.



Devotees gather to take a holy dip in the River Ganga on the occasion of Chhath Puja in Patna on Friday

## IPL TV viewership reached 31.57 million average: Star India

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Star India, the official broadcaster of Indian Premier League, claimed that there has been a 23% rise in TV viewership with a staggering 31.57 million average impressions during the marquee T20 event. The data has been sourced from Broadcast Audience Research Council

(BARC) India and the coverage in five regional languages -- Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, Tamil and Kannada has only helped the rise in viewership. According to the channel, the recently-concluded edition saw an impressive viewership growth of 24% among women and 20% among children respectively. "Season 13 witnessed innovative programming,

world-class production - both remote and on-ground," said Sanjog Gupta, Head - Sports, Star India. "This wouldn't have been possible without the fantastic work done by the team at BCCI in staging the tournament under extenuating circumstances and seamless functioning from our teams inside the bio-secure bubbles in India and UAE."

## Jaipur resident accuses biz partner of killing his wife

PNS ■ JAIPUR

A Jaipur resident has accused his business partner of strangulating his wife to death after raping her at his home in Kho Nagorian area in his absence, police said on Friday. On the man's complaint, the police have lodged an FIR against accused Mahaveer Singh Gurjar, said Kho Nagorian police station's SHO Bhawani Singh. The man told police in his complaint that on Wednesday when he was not in the city, his business partner Mahaveer Singh Gurjar visited his home and forcibly sent his son and daughter for tuition. After sending children out of the house, Gurjar raped his wife and then strangulated her, the SHO quoted the victim's husband as saying in the complaint.

## Don't hesitate to shoot armed criminals :DGP

PNS ■ DUMKA

Jharkhand police chief MV Rao said that a list of dreaded criminals in the state is being prepared and if they resist arrest with arms, they will be killed. Speaking to reporters after holding a crime review meeting here on Thursday, Rao said that a lot of police personnel hesitate to shoot, fearing litigations, but he has told the force not to worry about using weapons when needed. "For the protection of civilians, if the police shoot an armed criminal, in which the criminal is injured or he dies, then it is absolutely a lawful action. There is no need to panic. Do not back down from this," he told the state's police personnel. "If someone is walking around with an illegal weapon, he is not roaming around to play or worship it, but to take someone's life. In such a situation, if he is seen shooting, we have given clear instructions that the police should not hesitate in killing him. The law also allows this," Rao, the director-general of police, said. All criminals, who have been to jail for crimes involving illegal firearms, will be investigated, the officer said. "If he is in jail then it's fine. If he has got out of jail, then where is he, what is he doing, is he still committing a crime, etc, will be probed."

## 14 people, including 7 kids, die as car collides with truck

PNS ■ LUCKNOW/PRATAPGARH



**Pratapgarh Superintendent of Police (SP) Anurag Arya said the speeding SUV dashed into the truck parked by the road in the Manikpur police station area after one of its rear tyres got punctured near Deshraj Inara**

Fourteen people, including seven children, died when their car collided with a stationary truck on the Lucknow-Allahabad highway, around 70 km from Pratapgarh district headquarters, an official said on Friday. The road accident took place late Thursday night when the victims were returning from a wedding function in the Nawabganj area of Pratapgarh, Additional Chief Secretary, Home, Awanish Awasthi said. Pratapgarh Superintendent of Police (SP) Anurag Arya said the speeding SUV dashed into the truck parked by the road in the Manikpur police station area after one of its rear tyres got punctured near Deshraj Inara. While five bodies could be taken out initially, a JCB machine had to be used to pull out the SUV from under the truck to retrieve the remaining bodies, he said, adding the bodies have been shifted to CHC Kunda and will be sent for autopsy later in the day. It took almost two hours to pull the car out from under the truck, the SP said. Arya, who visited the spot, said the police have spoken to the family members of the victims and assured all possible help.

Awasthi said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath directed senior officials to reach the spot and extend all possible help. The CM has extended ex gratia of Rs two lakhs to each of those killed in the crash, he added. Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra expressed deep anguish over the loss of lives in the accident. "I am saddened thinking about the plight of the families of the deceased. I pray for all of them. May God give them the strength to bear the loss," she said in a Facebook post

in Hindi. A report from the district police identified the deceased as Bablu (22), Naan Bhaiya (45), Dinesh Yadav (40) and his sons Pawan (10) and Aman (7), Ram Samujh (40), Daya Ram (40), Abhimanyu (28), Mithilesh (17), Gaurav (10), Ansh (9), Sachin and Himanshu (both aged 12), and driver Paras Nath Yadav (40). All of them were residents of Jirgapur village in the Kunda police station limits and had gone to Shekhpur village to attend a wedding, the police said.

## France keen to explore ties in tourism

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

France has expressed desire to explore opportunities of collaboration in tourism and other potential sectors in the northeastern region and Jammu and Kashmir. This was conveyed by French Ambassador to India Emmanuel Lenain when he called on Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Jitendra Singh here on Friday, an official statement said. Singh also discussed with him various potential projects in the northeastern states. The ambassador conveyed to the Union Minister the desire of the government of France to explore the avenues and opportunities of collaboration in different sectors in the northeastern states as well as tourism and other potentials in Jammu and Kashmir, the statement said. Lenain recalled the fond memories of his visit to



Kashmir Valley early this year as part of a group of ambassadors. The minister spelt out different sectors in which, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, collaborative initiatives had been undertaken in the Northeast. In this regard, he referred to the Centre of Excellence Citrus Fruit Park set up in Mizoram with Israeli collaboration and the col-

laboration of Japan in some of the infrastructure projects. As for the Northeast, Singh said, there were vast areas of unexplored potential which were waiting to be explored. These, he said, include tourism, handicraft, handloom as well as food and fruit sectors. The minister said that the Prime Minister has not only given special emphasis to the development of the northeastern region

**The ambassador conveyed to the Union Minister the desire of France to explore the avenues and opportunities of collaboration in different sectors**

but also reoriented "Look East Policy" into "Act-East" policy and taken a number of steps to increase engagement with the countries across the eastern borders. In this regard, he also mentioned the Indo-Bangladesh agreement on the exchange of enclaves, which was finalised with the personal intervention of the prime minister and also his initiative to amend 100-year-old Indian Forest Act to promote bamboo products and their trade, the statement said.

## Telemedicine e-Sanjeevani completes 8 lakh consultations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The national telemedicine initiative eSanjeevani has completed eight lakh consultations, the Union Health ministry said on Friday. The top ten states which have registered the highest consultations through eSanjeevani and eSanjeevani OPD platforms are Tamil Nadu (2,59,904), Uttar Pradesh (2,19,715), Kerala (58,000), Himachal Pradesh (46,647), Madhya Pradesh (43,045), Gujarat (41,765), Andhra Pradesh (35,217), Uttarakhand (26,819), Karnataka (23,008) and Maharashtra (9,741), the ministry said in a statement. It said eSanjeevani's both variants of telemedicine -- doctor to doctor (eSanjeevani AB-HWC) and patient to doctor (eSanjeevani OPD) -- are

consistently growing in terms of users on both sides -- patients or health workers on the one end and doctors on the other. The Union Health Ministry launched the eSanjeevani AB-HWC in November 2019 and it is to be implemented at 1,55,000 Health and Wellness Centres under Ayushman Bharat Scheme in 'Hub and Spoke' model by December 2022. "eSanjeevani AB-HWC is functional at over 4,700 Health and Wellness Centres and over 17,000 doctors and health workers have been trained on its use. eSanjeevani OPD, the second variant of this ambitious initiative, was rolled out on April 13, 2020 during the first lockdown when OPDs across the country were closed to prevent COVID-19 infections," it said.

The Union Health ministry said eSanjeevani is having a significant impact among the section of populace where the travel distance, time and cost have been barriers in seeking outpatient services. "It has served as a viable and preferred option for consulting a doctor. So far 16 districts have registered more than 10,000 consultations and over 100 districts have registered more than 1,000 consultations," it said. Over 7,500 doctors have been trained and on boarded to provide telemedicine services on over 220 online OPDs on eSanjeevani OPD, it added. Over 100 telemedicine practitioners have completed more than 1,000 teleconsultations and a few of them have logged over 10,000 consultations, it said.

## Air Chief takes sortie in indigenous LCH

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria on Friday undertook his maiden flight in the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) designed and developed Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) here. The aircraft took to the skies at 11.45 hours and remained airborne for an hour, HAL said in a release. The Chief of Air Staff was accompanied by HAL's Deputy Chief Test Pilot, Wg Cdr (Retd) S P John. "It was a very good sortie. I



was able to look at the important flying characteristics and

status of sensors already installed.

The LCH is a potent platform due to excellent D&D efforts and well supported flight test team," the Air Chief said while thanking all stakeholders of the LCH project. The IAF was keenly looking forward to the induction of the aircraft, he said. "I am sure HAL will give required focus on productionisation at a fast pace," he added. R Madhavan, CMD, HAL, thanked the Air Chief and said HAL was geared up for LCH productionisation to meet all the requirements of the Air Force, the release said.

## HC seeks CBI stand on Maneka's plea challenging trial court order

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Friday sought the CBI response on BJP MP Maneka Gandhi's plea challenging a trial court order rejecting its closure report in a graft case against her and two others and directing further investigation in the matter. Justice Yogesh Khanna, while issuing notice to the CBI and seeking its stand on Gandhi's plea, also put on hold the special court's



February 4 order to the extent it directs the agency to place the material it has before the sanctioning authority for her prosecution. According to the graft case lodged against the BJP leader and two others in 2006, they had allegedly sanctioned Rs 50 lakh as a grant to a trust in a fraudulent manner. The special CBI court had said it was of the prima facie opinion that there was criminal conspiracy and criminal misconduct by a public servant and had directed the probe agency to investigate the case further. CBI had filed a closure report in the case in 2008 as well and the special court had also rejected it then and ordered further investigation. Thereafter, it again filed a closure report which was rejected by the special court in February this year, the high court was informed.

## 'Provisions in statute to take care of violence in Bengal'

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Union Minister Babul Supriyo said on Friday that the Trinamool Congress should mend its ways and desist from "intimidating voters", otherwise there are provisions in the Constitution to take care of such things. Supriyo alleged that more than 130 BJP workers have been killed in West Bengal. "The TMC should mend its ways. Only a few months are left for the elections. If the

TMC members think they can intimidate voters and engage in political violence, then there are provisions in the Constitution to take care of such things," he told a local news channel. Supriyo claimed that the people of the state have made up their mind to vote for the BJP in the assembly elections, which are likely to be held in April-May next year. "We want the people who voted TMC to power to topple."



## Sonia sets up panel on eco, foreign affairs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

**Former finance minister Chidambaram and party leaders Mallikarjun Kharge and Digvijaya Singh will be part of the economic affairs committee**

Congress president Sonia Gandhi has set up three separate committees for discussing policy issues related to economic affairs, foreign affairs and national security, with former prime minister Manmohan Singh part of all the three panels. While former finance minister P Chidambaram, and party leaders Mallikarjun Kharge and Digvijaya Singh will be part of the economic affairs committee, Jairam Ramesh will be its convener. The committee on foreign affairs will have Anand Sharma, Shashi Tharoor, Salman Khurshid and Saptagiri Ulaka. Khurshid will be the convener of the panel. The committee on national security will have leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, party leaders Veerappa Moily, Vincent H Pala and V Vaithilingam, with Pala as its convener. The Congress president has constituted three committees to consider and discuss issues

and policies related to the subjects of economic affairs, foreign affairs and national security," an official statement from AICC general secretary KC Venugopal said. Incidentally, among those nominated in the committees include senior party leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma, Veerappa Moily and Shashi Tharoor, who were part of the 23 letter-writers seeking an organisational overhaul of the Congress. While Sharma is the chairman of the AICC foreign affairs department, Shashi Tharoor heads the party's Professional Congress.



# 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



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 (Shivarama 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.

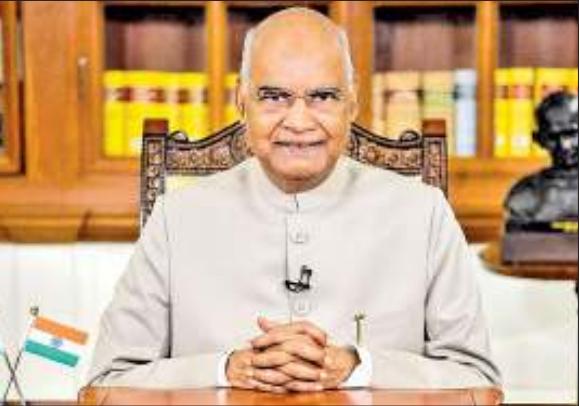
# 'Intl community will emerge stronger'

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

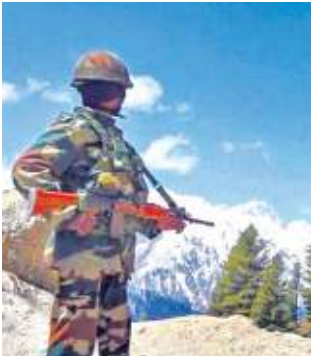
spying for China and Pakistan, Chouhan told reporters here. This is not an alliance....these leaders of Gupkar sangathan have grabbed land worth more than Rs 25,000 crore in Jammu and Kashmir, he alleged.

"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

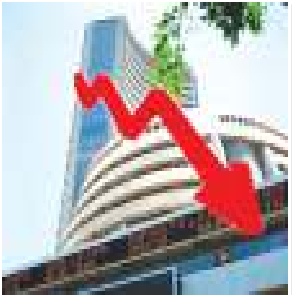


China isn't expected to concede any territorial advantage it has along its shared border with India and its continued depredations only prove the predictability of its acquisitive strategies and the futility of expecting talks to tame its expansionist ambition. That's why the report that it had infringed 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.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru

as "nationalists" and independent journalists as "anti-nationalists." The country now needs more of good and ethical journalism for us to be a vibrant democracy.

David Milton  
Maruthanathan

### 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 VP - 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.

L&T Finance also invoked and appropriated against loan outstanding amount 96.02 lakh shares constituting 2.94 per cent stake of Zee Learn on November 18.

In a separate filing, L&T Finance said it has invoked and appropriated against loan outstanding amount 5.73 crore

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."



## YASMIN KARACHIWALA

### shares pre-and post-workout diet tips

Fitness and food have a very special relationship.

Food serves as fuel for your body and has a direct impact on how your body performs.

Keeping this in mind, supplementing it with a healthy and nutritious

diet is the key, says well-known fitness and celebrity Master Instructor Yasmin Karachiwala.

When it comes to working out, your diet will always play a crucial part. So, just like how it is

important to stretch whilst you're working out to avoid injuries, what you eat before or after your workout also determines how effective your routine will be, she adds.



**Yasmin says:**  
"If you thought that eating before and after working out was all about gulping down a protein shake, you might want to give that a second thought." She shares some recommendations of what you should include in your meal plan prior to and post your workout.

#### Pre-workout

For your body to perform well, you've got to fuel up-and that means eating the right foods before your workout. Not eating before a workout can result in low blood sugar, which leads to tiredness and fatigue. Ideally, you should fuel your body about 1 to 4 hours pre-workout, depending on how your body reacts and whatever works best for you.

Making small yet impactful changes to your diet can go a long way in building overall health and add value to your workout routine. Some food items that I would like to recommend are:

#### Almonds:

Adding a handful of almonds to the diet is a good way to start, as they make for a nutritious snacking option, and eating them prior to your workout will energize you. Due to their nutrient composition, almonds are known to help with boosting energy. Moreover, almonds are rich in several nutrients such as Vitamin B2, magnesium, phosphorus etc. providing your body with the much-needed nutrition.

Top up a slice of wholegrain bread with some freshly cut avocadoes - this is a great source of carbohydrates and provides you with valuable healthy fat that

gives you an energetic boost when carbohydrate depletion occurs.

#### Post-workout

After a workout, your body is depleted of all the good fuel that has been consumed and it's important to replenish your energy after working out. Consuming the right amount of carbohydrates and protein is especially important after a workout. By consuming particular nutrients after your workouts, you improve your body composition, performance, and overall recovery. Try incorporating the following food items to your post-workout regimen:

#### Oats topped with almonds:

Oats are packed with fiber and provide you with sustained energy. They're perfect post a morning workout, cooked in water or skim milk, add a touch of honey for sweetness and top it up with some almonds. Almonds are a rich source of vitamin B2, a vitamin known for its role in energy production and reducing tiredness and fatigue, making them a tasty and healthy topping.

#### Quinoa:

Protein post a workout is essential for good payoff, for your hard work. The carbohydrates in the quinoa will help restore glycogen levels and it's also loaded with protein. Mix it up with some veggies or grilled chicken to add to it.

So, for those who are heading back to the gym after almost seven months of them being shut or for those who have been working out at home, these diet tips will add onto your fitness journey to make you stronger, leaner, fitter, and healthier.

## '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 Basu'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 Basu could easily weave the plotlines 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 Basu 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 YouTube 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!





# Matthew McConaughey plans to start career in stand-up comedy

Hollywood star Matthew McConaughey wants to start his career in stand-up comedy. According to him, he was planning a comedy tour before the pandemic. He wanted to try his career as a comic because he loves the “no-filter communication” provided by humour. “I haven’t shared this with many people but stand up is a no-filter communication. What I do as an actor, which is why I’m interested in doing stand up, is my raw expression goes through four filters before it gets to the screen,” McConaughey said on *The Russell Howard Hour*, reports *femalefirst.co.uk*. “I’m doing someone else’s script, I’m being directed by someone else, I’m being filmed by someone else, I’m being edit-

ed by someone else before it’s put in a capsule and put in front of you on screen. That’s four filters from my original expression. So that’s the goal. Where do you go where there is no filter? That’s stand-up. So the plan before Covid was, I was planning on taking to the road and telling stories in an hour of stand-up,” he added. McConaughey says he cannot wait to get started, “It sounds like a great thing to be addicted to, the ultimate buzz. You look today at stand-up comics, they are the best truth tellers we have. If I can get away with this, then I’d love to.”

## 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 some-

thing 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.



## Nawazuddin Siddiqui-Pankaj Tripathi starrer Anwar Ka Ajab Kissa set for OTT release

Ace Bengali filmmaker Buddhadeb Dasgupta helms the Hindi film *Anwar Ka Ajab Kissa*, and Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Pankaj Tripathi, who feature in the film, have opened up about their experience of working in the project. Opening up about his character in the dark comedy, Siddiqui said, “He is a detective who thinks in a completely different way — one that cannot be comprehended by the common man. He lives in a world of his own creation and follows his heart. It was a memorable experience to enact such an interesting character, and I am sure that he will find a distinct place in everyone’s hearts.” The film narrates the story of a person who seems to be in search of an invisible elixir that will bring peace to his soul.

Pankaj Tripathi, who plays a pivotal role, said, “It is a film that explores the beauty of the human mind and its intricate nature. I am happy to have been a part of this movie — one that touches your heart and leaves a smile on your face as you see it revealing different aspects.” The film also features Nikharika Singh, and is scheduled to drop on Eros Now on November 20.




## 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



#### REALITY CHECK



#### SPEED BUMP



#### CROSSWORD

	1	2	3	4	5
6					
7					
8		9		10	11
			12		
13					
14		15	16	17	18
19					


**ACROSS**  
6 The total number of people in a city or country  
8 The starboard side  
10 The head of a city council  
13 People who don't eat meat  
14 Baggy  
17 Depart  
19 A sudden shaking of the ground

**DOWN**  
1 Lengthy  
2 Resign from a job  
3 Peaceful  
4 Very small  
5 Took one's clothes off


**SOLUTION**

W	A	S	H	E	D
I	N	E	P	I	R
N	I	N	E	P	I
K	E	R	L	I	E
S	A	C	A	D	I
L	O	G	G	I	N
C	L	E	V	E	D
E	M	S	E	A	
S	A	N	D	J	O
I	N	E	D		

#### NANCY



#### GINGER MEGGS



#### SUDOKU

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		7	4		8	9		
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**Yesterday's solution**

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

**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.



# 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 increase 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.

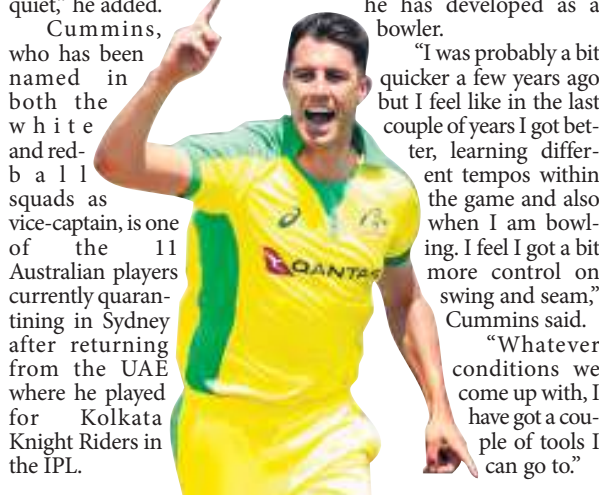
"It's going to be huge. Obviously, we're back here on home soil. Other than spending a lot of times in hotels and bubbles I feel like our preparation has actually been really good.

"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

## 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.





# Sharwa to don khaki again

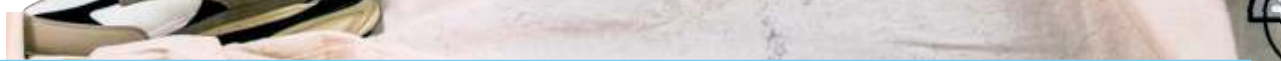
**S**harwanand, who earlier this year said that he will be following the Akshay Kumar template of allotting 50 days and doing multiple films in a year, will be continuing the same next year as well. With projects like *Sreekaram* and Shree Karthik's Telugu-Tamil bilingual just days away from a wrap up, the actor will dive into the filming of Ajay Bhupathi's *Mahasamudram* next. He will follow it up with Kishore Tirumala's *Aadaaloo Meeku Johaarlu*, 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*

**B**efore 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 *Ayinadi 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*

**T**he 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

**P**ustakamlo 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

**F**or 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

