

**COMEDIAN BHARTI SINGH
ARRESTED BY NCB IN DRUG CASE**

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Saturday arrested comedian Bharti Singh following seizure of ganja (cannabis) from her house in suburban Andheri, an official said. The NCB searched Singh's house and office in the morning as part of its probe into alleged drug use in the Hindi film industry. A team led by Sameer Wankhede, the central agency's zonal director, carried out a search at Singh's residence at Lokhandwala Complex as well as her production house based on a tip-off, a release said. It recovered 86.5 grams of ganja during the search, the release added.

**SAUDI ARABIA HOSTS G20 SUMMIT
IN A FIRST FOR AN ARAB NATION**

Saudi Arabia hosts the G20 summit Saturday in a first for an Arab nation, with the downsized virtual forum dominated by efforts to tackle the coronavirus pandemic and a crippling economic crisis. The two-day meeting of the world's wealthiest nations comes as President Donald Trump refuses to concede a bitter election and campaigners criticise what they call the G20's inadequate response to the worst global recession in decades. World leaders will huddle virtually as international efforts intensify for a large-scale roll out of coronavirus vaccines after a breakthrough in trials, and as calls grow for G20 nations to plug funding shortfalls.

**INDIAN-AMERICAN DISCOVERS LIKELY
TREATMENT TO STOP COVID DEATHS**

An Indian-American doctor and scientist has discovered a potential strategy to prevent life-threatening inflammation, lung damage and organ failure in patients diagnosed with COVID-19. Published online in the journal Cell, the research coming from the lab of Dr Thirumala-Devi Kanneganti, an Indian-born researcher working at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Tennessee, identified the drugs after discovering that the hyperinflammatory immune response associated with COVID-19 leads to tissue damage and multi-organ failure in mice by triggering inflammatory cell death pathways. The researchers detailed how the inflammatory cell death signaling pathway worked, which led to potential therapies to disrupt the process.

**INDIAN-AMERICAN MALA ADIGA
IS JILL BIDEN'S POLICY DIRECTOR**

US President-elect Joe Biden on Friday appointed an Indian-American, Mala Adiga, the policy director of his wife Jill Biden, who will be the First Lady. Ms Adiga has served as a senior advisor to Jill Biden and a senior policy advisor on the Biden-Kamala Harris campaign. Previously, Ms Adiga was director for Higher Education and Military Families at the Biden Foundation. In Obama's administration, she served as the deputy assistant secretary of state for Academic Programs at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, in the Secretary of State's Office of Global Women's Issues as CoS and senior advisor to the Ambassador-at-Large, besides as director for human rights.



BJP launches bid for Tirupati LS seat, pins hope on faith

■ Jagan favouring only one religion, YSRCP, TDP have no right to seek votes, says Satya Kumar

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Accusing Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy of favouring one particular religion, BJP national secretary Y Satya Kumar on Saturday said that "there was a possibility of Tirumala seven hills being invaded during the YSRCP rule."

Satya Kumar appealed to voters to ensure that the BJP candidate wins the by-election in Tirupati and thus safeguard the seven hills.

"Development in AP is nil. Each passing day, the State government is exploring new avenues for corruption," Satya Kumar claimed, alleging that Jaganmohan Reddy was not able to govern the state and has failed miserably in providing



employment to the jobless. The BJP leader alleged that Jaganmohan Reddy was trying to benefit the YSRCP leaders by setting up toll plazas. "All corruption of Jagan would be

exposed soon. The ruling party has no right to ask for votes in the Tirupati by-elections," Satya Kumar said. "The development that has taken place and is taking place

in the spiritual city Tirupati is only with the funds released by the Central Government. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is giving special attention on developing the temple city Tirupati," he said.

Satya Kumar further alleged that the TDP and YSRCP did not prevent the non-inclusion of Special Category Status in the AP Reorganisation Act.

"Only the BJP and Jana Sena have the right to ask for votes in the Tirupati Lok Sabha by-election. The BJP state president Somu Veerajulu and Janasena chief Pawan Kalyan will meet soon to announce the candidate for the by-elections and the BJP would win the by-poll and gift the victory to the Prime Minister," he added.



India aims to
reduce carbon
footprint by
30-35%: Modi

8



Kerala govt seeks
nod of Guv, Speaker
for probe against
oppn leader

5

TODAY**ALMANAC****Month & Paksham:**

Ashwin & Krishna Paksha
Panchangam

Tithi: Ashvini: 10:50 pm

Nakshatram: Dhanishtha: 11:09 am

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start
any important work)

Rahukalam: 04:12 pm - 05:35 pm

Yamagandam: 12:02 pm - 01:25 pm

Varjyam: 06:56 pm - 08:39 pm

Gulika: 02:49 pm - 04:12 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 05:18 am - 07:02 am

Ahijit Muhurtham: 11:40 am - 12:24 pm

**VIJAYAWADA
WEATHER**

Forecast: Partly cloudy

Temp: 32/22

Humidity: 71%

Sunrise: 06:24am

Sunset: 05:39pm

Current Weather Conditions
Updated November 21, 2020 5:00 PM

OBTUSE ANGLE

Make State future-proof, interlink rivers, says Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday asserted that the interlinking and optimisation of the rivers would help in fully meeting the future water requirements for irrigation, drinking and industrial needs of the people.

Naidu said that the interlinking of rivers would be crucial for ushering in growth and prosperity for all sections of people.

Considering the significance of rivers in the growth of civilisation, festivals like 'Tungabhadra Pushkarams' were being organised since ages, he said.

The TDP chief called upon the pilgrims coming from different places to take health safety measures and all



Coronavirus preventive steps during their visits to the Pushkaram ghats. The Tungabhadra Pushkarams mark the bright future and opportunities that lie ahead for the Telugu people everywhere, he said.

Naidu said that life originated and survived thanks to

the bounty of the rivers only. Worshipping nature as such has been part of many civilisations.

The Pushkarams, which come every 12 days, was being celebrated with much fervour by all devotees.

The TDP chief said that the previous TDP Government had started work on interlinking of five rivers with the sole objective of harnessing the river waters for rapid growth of the State.

It would be very important to respect the rivers by giving 'Jala Harati' (invocation) and by taking up 'Jala Samrakshana' (protection) steps. Priority should be given to protection of natural resources, welfare of farmers and poor and the prosperity of all sections of society, he said.



Vizag's Dr Subramanyam is new IMA AP President

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Retired professor of NeuroSurgery and Chief Neurosurgeon at the King George Hospital (KGH), Dr N Subramanyam, was sworn in as Indian Medical Association (IMA) state president on Saturday.

2

AP asks SC to lift HC stay on Vizag guest house

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The state government on Saturday moved the Supreme Court challenging the stay order granted by the Andhra Pradesh High Court on the construction of a government guest house in Visakhapatnam.

The petition was admitted and it is likely to come for hearing next week.

The government had earlier directed to construct a guest house in Vizag city to enable Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy to carry out his official



activities from Executive Capital Visakhapatnam in the

wake of delay in the process of three capitals in AP.

NEW BEGINNINGS

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy virtually lays the foundation stone for four fishing harbours and 25 aqua hubs from his camp office at Tadepalli, on Saturday, World Fisheries Day.

GVMC wields the hammer on Go Karting centre run by Ganta's aide

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The drive to demolish illegal structures in Vizag by GVMC continued on Saturday with the town planning officials razing a Go Karting centre in Mangamaripeta on Bheemili beach road run by TDP's Vizag North MLA and former minister, Ganta Srinivas Rao's close associate Boddeti Kashi Viswanadham.

GVMC officials said that the Go Karting centre was being run in violation of CRZ norms.

District revenue officials had a few days ago demolished the boundary wall of a prime property belonging to Ganta Srinivas Rao's family member, saying that it was built on government land.

A few days earlier, VMRDA authorities had evicted a restaurant run by another TDP



leader T Harshavardhan Prasad. Last month district administration had recovered land by demolishing the boundary wall of GITAM University in Rushikonda. GVMC had also demolished a toilet in the residence of TDP leader Sabbam Hari in Seethammadhara.

Sheds, walls and other constructions on the Go Karting centre premises in an extent of

4 acre were on Saturday demolished by the GVMC staff. Viswanadham alleged that the GVMC demolished the structures without serving any notices.

He added that they had taken the four-acre land on lease from private individuals and were running the Go Karting centre. Viswanadham also said that there were no permanent structures.

Fake GST input tax racket busted

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The zonal unit of the director general of GST Intelligence based in Visakhapatnam has busted a major fake input tax credit racket in the gold bullion market and arrested a person on Saturday.

The arrested accused has been remanded to judicial custody.

Joint director Mayank Sharma, in a release here said various dummy and non-operating firms created with fictitious addresses in and around Guntur were identified and simultaneous searches were carried out in various

places in Andhra Pradesh.

These searches revealed that the racketeers behind these fake firms have passed on fake credit of around Rs 8 crore to various bullion trading in Andhra Pradesh.

The kingpin behind this racket, a 25-year-old man from Guntur, was traced after sustained investigation and was arrested.

The officials of GST intelligence wing also attached gold and silver worth Rs 1.8 crore to protect the government revenue. Further investigation was on, the release said.

2



Poet par excellence Devi Priya passes away

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Well-known Telugu poet, journalist, scriptwriter and Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award winner Shaik Khaja Hussain, popularly known as Devi Priya, passed away on Saturday morning.

The renowned poet was 70 when he breathed his last in Hyderabad, following a brief illness. Devi Priya was born in Tadikonda in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.

He bagged the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2017, for his book Gaali Rangu. His "Running Commentary" on contemporary politics in Udayam Telugu daily was very popular and thought-provoking.

2

'ALL AND SUNDRY'

Fighting an election so soon after his party's defeat in the Dubbak Assembly bypoll mirroring the public mood is a risk that Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) president K. Chandrashekhara Rao has taken. Advancing the dates of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections was aimed at catching rivals off guard and averting a snowballing effect of the Dubbak outcome on other polls in the pipeline. It is tempting to compare and contrast KCR's anxiety to complete the GHMC poll process in 14-days flat with neighbouring Andhra's use of everything in the rule book and beyond to stall the long over-

Winning the Mayor's post not enough for TRS

due gram panchayat elections. The Andhra government and the State Election Commissioner are embroiled in a long and ugly battle over the timing of the elections, exposing how the spirit underlying the 73rd and 74th Constitution amendments can be sacrificed at the altar of ego and political expediency. As he did before the 2018 Assembly elections, KCR has again mooted the idea of floating an anti-BJP coalition of regional parties. By positioning himself as the leader of the anti-BJP grouping, he seeks to reap immediate rewards in the GHMC elections in which the saffron party is his main challenger. At the national level, he will face competition on this count

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because there are regional parties in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bihar, which wield greater influence. KCR is trying to rope in some of them but, significantly, the YSR Congress and Telugu Desam do not figure in his probable list of invitees for the conclave in December. What advantage he will derive at the national level is dif-

ficult to fathom beyond causing collateral damage to the Congress, a party already under attack from leaders within like Kapil Sibal and P. Chidambaram and from Shivanand Tiwari of ally, RJD, after its debacle in Bihar. It may be a pointer to his plan to move over to Delhi where he has 17 Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha members, after vacating the Chief Minister's chair in his son's



S NAGESH KUMAR
Former Resident Editor,
The Hindu

favour. These moves of KCR would be watched keenly. Inside Parliament, the TRS supported the BJP over the Triple Talaq Bill, the RTI Amendment Bill and the Inter-State River Water Disputes

(Amendment) Bill, though the latter were seen as undermining the States' rights. It, however, opposed the Citizenship Amendment Bill. These developments have not stopped KCR from playing the victim card and slamming the Centre for failing to devolve funds to States properly. KCR and son K. T. Rama Rao have turned their party's municipal campaign into a tirade against the Centre on issues like privatisation of railways and proposals for disinvestment of public sector units, including the LIC. Apart from getting support from employees of railways and PSUs, their focus on national issues helps in diverting criticism over the mismanagement of rescue and relief operations during the October

floods and their aftermath. The amount of Rs. 500 crore distributed without prior enumeration at the rate of Rs.10,000 to each affected family was poorly targeted and ridden with corruption. The government even received a rap on the knuckles from the High Court for not maintaining disciplined queues when cash was distributed amid the pandemic. Rama Rao gave a progress report on the various sectors on which the TRS government spent Rs. 67,000 crore. The cable-stayed bridge at Durgam Cheruvu, new flyovers in the western part of the city, expansion of Metro Rail and facilitation of Amazon, Google, Apple and Facebook as well as maintenance of communal harmony are also significant achieve-

ments. But Hyderabad remains woefully short of transport, road and drainage infrastructure some of which stood exposed by the recent rains and floods. Never having been in power in the city or in the State, BJP has little to showcase, whereas the Congress can take credit for either initiating or completing mega-infrastructure projects like the Shamshabad airport, PV Narasimha Rao flyover and the Outer Ring Road. The BJP is, thus attempting to shift the poll narrative to a communal one by describing KCR and MIM as anti-Hindu. But what exactly will constitute a moral victory? If the TRS retains its 99 seats, minus a few seats for the incumbency factor and its defeat in Dubbak, the party can pride itself. But, if the tally slides below the half way mark of 75 and the TRS wins the Mayoral elections, it will have much to ponder.

Jagan races against time to complete Polavaram project

■ CM banks heavily on completion of Polavaram for better poll prospects in 2024

SNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

The Polavaram multipurpose project has yet again become a political rallying point in Andhra Pradesh going by the heated exchange of words between leaders of the ruling and opposition parties over the recent rider from the Centre on funding the national project.

In the midst of the raging controversy, work on the mega project in Andhra Pradesh is said to be on track and going on at a brisk pace.

Apart from providing irrigation water to lakhs of ayacut and drinking water to thousands of villages and meeting Vizag's industrial needs, completion of Polavaram project works during his tenure will also bring huge political dividends to Chief Minister and YSRCP supremo YS Jaganmohan Reddy in the next polls.

As in the second week of November, around 71.83 per cent of the Polavaram works, including right and left main canals have been completed.

Recently, senior officials of the state irrigation department had also presented a report card on the progress of the works to the Chief Minister.

A look at the status of the project works show that a major portion of concrete work is nearing completion.

Despite floods and Covid-19 pandemic, works were carried carefully with good engineering methods. Around 1 lakh cubic meters of concrete work was done alone during the Covid hardship.

As per the irrigation department, 2,01,434 cubic meters of spillway concrete work is completed. Spillway piers construction of 52 meters has also been completed. Construction of 192 Girders was also accom-

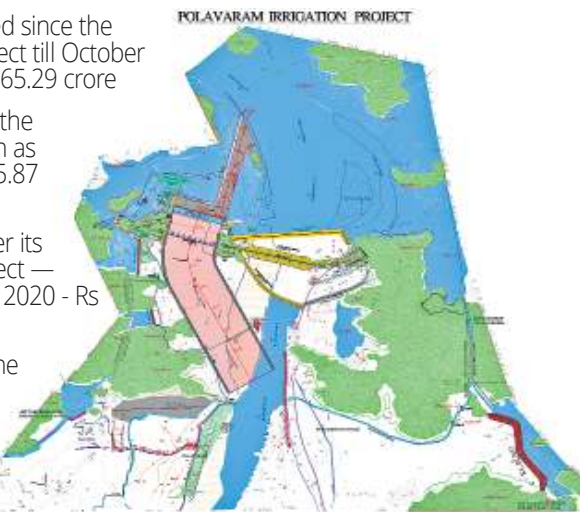


■ Total expenditure incurred since the inception of Polavaram project till October 31, 2020 (Tentative)- Rs 17,665.29 crore

■ Expenditure incurred on the project before its declaration as National Project- Rs Rs 5,135.87 crore.

■ Expenditure incurred after its declaration as National Project — April 1, 2014 to October 31, 2020 - Rs 12,529.42 crore

■ Amount reimbursed to the Government of Andhra Pradesh by the Polavaram Project Authority (PPA) - Rs 8,507.26 crore



plished in a very short time. These 108 girders are installed on 28 spillway piers.

While the total capacity of the spillway concrete is 19,327 lakh cubic meters, the earlier contractors had completed 15.41 lakh cubic meters of work. After the work was entrusted in November last year Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Ltd (MEIL) had so far completed 2.1 lakh

cubic meters of concrete work.

"The crucial construction of 25 Trunnion Beams out of 48 beams is completed and the balance beams will be finished very soon. Preliminary work of setting of gates at completed Trunnion Beams are in process. Nearly 21 lakh cusecs of floodwater went from the spillway and the construction work on the slab

above was done. Construction work on the flood-damaged upper cofferdam is in full swing," Polavaram project contractor Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Ltd. (MEIL) general manager Satish Babu Angara told The Pioneer.

He added that the project is being built in such a manner that it can sustain water flow of 50 lakh cusecs which is

much higher than Three-Gorges Dam in China.

This concrete spillway dam will provide irrigation facilities for more than 7 lakh acres of land and drinking water facilities.

Polavaram is a multipurpose Project that, once completed, can provide water even if there is drought for four consecutive years in AP.

About 80 tmc ft of water from the Godavari can also be diverted to the Krishna River at the top of the Prakasam Barrage through the Polavaram right canal after which surplus Krishna river waters can be supplied to the drought-stricken Rayalaseema region, said a senior official of the state irrigation department.

In 2019, after Jaganmohan Reddy took over as Chief Minister of the state assured that Polavaram dam will be completed within a short period under his watch.

He issued orders for re-tendering of the project as the previous company was not completing the construction works as per schedule.

Vizag's Dr Subramanyam is new IMA AP President

Continued from Page 1

The 6th Annual Conference of IMA, AP chapter was held on virtual platform and hosted by IMA, Visakhapatnam chapter. Other members of the state executive were also sworn in.

State medical and health minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas also attended the conference. In his Presidential address, Dr Subrahmanyam thanked the members of IMA for electing him and assured that he will do his best for the protection and welfare of all the members of IMA with his vast experience of three decades of Government ser-

vice and four decades of service to the IMA.

Dr Subrahmanyam said that IMA will maintain cordial relations with the Government. Certain long-standing pending issues which were unresolved were brought to the notice of the Minister and MPs that attended the conference.

Dr Subrahmanyam said that as the government is providing medical and health benefits that cost above Rs 1,000 to beneficiaries that under AarogyaSri and as only bigger hospitals are empanelled in the scheme, smaller hospitals are affected.

He requested for the empanelment of smaller hos-

pitals in AarogyaSri. He also requested for issuing fire safety clearances for hospital buildings of less than 15 meters.

Dr Subrahmanyam requested for a single window facility for licenses to hospitals.

"It is unfortunate that the promises made by the Government are not fulfilled for these healthcare workers. Doctors and healthcare workers recruited on contract basis for Covid work were not paid salaries for many months. For proper Covid control, public awareness is important. I request Government agencies to take stringent measures for the erring public," he said.

Poet par excellence...

Continued from Page 1

Later, Devi Priya continued the Running Commentary for a couple of vernacular news channels. He is known for his political satirical cartoons and poetry.

Poetic precision was the primary strength of Devi Priya and he used to draw a thin line between direct and ornamental poetry. He attributes his love for mythological epics to his poetic evolution.

Apart from penning poetry, he has also written several lyrics for Telugu movies. His song Jambhal Bhari Bhai penned for Maa Bhoomi was

very popular.

Devi Priya authored several books including Gareebi Geetaalu, Amma Chettu Chepa Chiluka, and others.

During his stint as a journalist, Devi Priya was instrumental in making noted Telugu poet Sri Sri write his autobiography.

Governor Biswabasan Harichandan, in a message conveyed his profound grief and sadness at the passing away of Shaik Khaja Hussain.

Harichandan prayed for Dei Priya's soul to rest in peace and expressed his heartfelt condolences to members of the bereaved family.

Fake GST input tax...

Continued from Page 1

The GST officials recently intensified their efforts on curbing fake ITC rackets which led to a lot of tax evasion.

In November alone, seven cases were booked involving detection of 32 dummy and non-existing GST registrations. These detections involved fake transactions to the tune of Rs 400 crore involving in duty evasion of Rs 28 crore. Two people have also been arrested in these cases.

Laddha for Central service

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government on Saturday issued orders to the DGP to relieve 1998 batch IG rank senior IPS officer Mahesh Chandra Laddha from state service to enable him to go on Central deputation for five years.

On deputation, Laddha will join central services as IG in CRPF.

The State government issued orders acting upon the letter from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Currently,



Laddha is serving as IG (Personnel) at Mangalagiri headquarters of the state police force.

"Government, after careful

examination of the matter, hereby place the services of Mahesh Chandra Laddha, IPS (RR:98) at the disposal of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi for appointment to the post of IG in CRPF on deputation basis for a period of 5 (five) years from the date of joining of the post or until further orders, whichever is earlier. The DGP is requested to relieve the Member of Service by making internal arrangements to the post of IGP," the order said.

46,232 new Covid cases take tally to 90.50L

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's Covid-19 caseload rose to 90.50 lakh, while the number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to over 84.78 lakh pushing the national recovery rate to 93.67 per cent, according to the Union Health Ministry data on Saturday.

The total coronavirus cases mounted to 90,50,597 with 46,232 infections being reported in a day, while the death toll climbed to 1,32,726 with 564 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The number of active cases remained below five lakh for the 11th consecutive day. There are 4,39,747 active cases of coronavirus infection in the country as on date, which comprises 4.86 per cent of the total caseload, as per the data.



The total recoveries have surged to 84,78,124 pushing the national recovery rate to 93.67 per cent, while the Covid-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.47 per cent.

India's Covid-19 tally had

crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23 and 40 lakh on September 5.

It went past 50 lakh on September 16, 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11 and crossed 80 lakh

on October 29.

According to ICMR, over 13.06 crore samples have been tested till November 20 with 10,66,022 samples being tested on Friday.

The 564 new fatalities

included 155 from Maharashtra, 118 from Delhi, 50 from West Bengal, 28 from Kerala, 25 from Haryana and 20 from Uttar Pradesh.

The total 1,32,726 deaths reported so far in the country includes 46,511 from Maharashtra, 11,621 from Karnataka, 11,568 from Tamil Nadu, 8,159 from Delhi, 7,923 from West Bengal, 7,500 from Uttar Pradesh, 6,920 from Andhra Pradesh, 4,572 from Punjab and 3,837 from Gujarat. The health ministry said more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

AP records 1,160 new Covid cases

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh reported 1,160 new coronavirus cases, taking the caseload to 8,61,092 in the 24 hours ending 9 am on Saturday.

The overall Covid-19 positivity rate stood at 9 per cent and so far 95.43 lakh sample tests have been conducted.

The latest bulletin said 1,765 patients had recovered and another seven succumbed.

The active cases fell below the 15,000 mark to 14,770 with overall recoveries crossing 8,39,395 and deaths 6,927, it said.

The five current hotspot

districts East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Chittoor and Guntur reported less than 200 fresh cases each while the balance eight added less than 100 each in 24 hours.

East Godavari district still has the highest number of 4,640 active Covid-19 cases after 1,16,219 recoveries and 631 deaths. Five districts have between 1,000 and 2,000 active cases, two between 500 and 1,000 and five have less than 500 active cases each.

In 24 hours Chittoor reported two fresh fatalities and five districts one each, according to the bulletin.

CAPSULE

State to distribute 25 lakh mosquito nets to tribals

VIJAYAWADA: The State Government has decided to distribute 25.16 lakh mosquito nets to tribal families for protection from mosquitoes this season. Deputy Chief Minister P Pushpa Srivani said that tribals are prone to mosquito-borne diseases in the winter season hence the Government decided to distribute mosquito nets to 25.16 lakh families to protect them malaria, chikungunya, dengue fever and other diseases in seven ITDA areas of the States. Srivani said that it was unfortunate that despite falling ill, many people were reluctant to use mosquito nets. "We will be creating awareness about the benefits of such nets," she said. The mosquito nets would be distributed to 4,06,200 families in Srikakulam district, 5,21,400 in Vizianagaram district, 7,69,650 in Visakhapatnam district, 4,93,350 in East Godavari district, 2,52,445 in West Godavari district, 57,900 in Nellore district and to 15,100 tribal families in Kurnool district.

SBI, Amaravati distributes school kits to 4,100 students

VIJAYAWADA: To coincide with Children's Day and Diwali, the State Bank of India, Amaravati Circle has distributed school kits to 4,100 students identified from 33 schools across the State, as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility. Each student was given a T-Shirt with a cap, a two-layer face mask and a schoolbag consisting of a lunch box, crayon box, pencil box and eight notebooks. All these children are studying in non-aided schools run by charitable organisations, NGOs etc. These kits were distributed to the students, including special and visually impaired children. Each Regional Office in the Amaravati Circle had identified one school, mostly in semi-urban and rural areas for the purpose which has been received well and appreciated by the local community. Chief General Manager, SBI, Amaravati Circle Sanjay Sahay launched this one-week programme through online meeting with the teams and interacted with the children. General Manager (Coastal Network) Manikantan Nair, General Manager (Rayalaseema Network) Vinita Bhattacharjee, General Manager (FIMM Network) Khadri Gundurao and Deputy General Manager and Circle Development Officer V Premji also participated.

CM starts work on 4 fishing harbours, 25 aqua hubs



Collectors and other officials participate in a videoconference with Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Saturday.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Saturday virtually laid foundation stone for the construction of four fishing harbours and 25 aqua hubs coinciding with World Fisheries Day. He said that construction work will begin from December 15, after the bidding process is completed. In the first phase, four harbours are to be constructed with an estimated cost of Rs 1,510 crore at Juvvaladinne in Nellore district, Uppada in East Godavari, Nizampatnam in Guntur, and Machilipatnam in Krishna district along with 25 aqua hubs. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said during his 3,648 km padayatra, the fishing community had narrated their woes and he was witness to the dire conditions they faced. "Despite having the second-longest coastline of 974 km, due to lack of facilities there was migration of fishermen to other states and sometimes they were caught in

international waters and were jailed in other countries," the Chief Minister said. Moved by their plight besides Navaratnalu, Matsyakara Bharosa was launched and steps are being taken to develop fishing harbours and aquahubs to provide employment and marketing facilities to aqua products. To boost aquaculture in Andhra Pradesh and better the lives of fishermen, the State government proposed to develop eight fishing harbours, aqua hubs and infrastructure facilities for marketing of aqua products at Janata bazars at a cost of Rs 3,500 crore. The State Government would develop an aqua hub in each constituency, wherever required, with an outlay of Rs 225 crore. Four fishing harbours and 25 aqua hubs were taken up in the first phase. The Chief Minister stated that the government enhanced the Matsakara Bharosa from Rs 4,000 to Rs 10,000 and directly credited Rs 102 crore into the accounts of 1.02 lakh

fishermen in 2019 to compensate the annual fishing ban period. Extending support to them during the Covid, Rs 110 crore was disbursed in May 2020, six months before the actual date-line, benefiting 1.10 lakh fishermen. The government had increased the fuel subsidy from Rs 6 to Rs 9 per litre that can be redeemed instantly at 87 recognised petrol bunks and also provided power at Rs 1.50 per unit and the total subsidy of Rs 720 crore being borne by the Government. In case of accidental death, the State has enhanced the ex gratia from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh to support the bereaved family in their time of hardship. He asserted that the previous government completely neglected the welfare of fishermen and aquaculture in the State. The Chief Minister said that the lives of aqua farmers will be completely changed in the coming one year.

Krishna adjudged 'best marine district'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Collector A Md Imtiaz on Saturday informed that Krishna district has been selected as the best marine district by the Central government and would be given an award. Chairing a videoconference on the occasion of World Fisheries Day, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy chaired a review meeting with Ministers, representatives of fishermen's associations, aqua farmers and district collectors. The collector participated in the videoconference from Machilipatnam and said the initiative shown by the Chief Minister of supporting the families of fishermen even during the Corona pandemic was commendable. Aqua products like fish and shrimps to the tune of about 6,500 tonnes were produced during the pandemic period, Imtiaz said. He said that 460 e-passes have been issued for transportation. The collector said that there are 1,63,000 fishermen in 64 coastal villages in the district, while 39,000 are dependent on fishing for their livelihood. The setting up of fishing harbours at an estimated cost of Rs 550 crore and sanctioning Rs 348 crore had brought joy and happiness to the families of the fishermen as their long pending dream was being realised, the collector said. An aqua farmer, Kanumuri Prasad, said that Chief Minister Jaganmohan Reddy was very supportive of the fishermen families.

Thieves break into SBI branch, steal Rs 85 lakh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Unidentified thieves made off with Rs 85 lakh in cash from State Bank of India Nadikudi branch in Dachepalli Mandal of Guntur district on Saturday. According to the police, the bank manager and other staff found that the safe was broken open and Rs 85 lakh in cash was missing when they reached the bank on Saturday morning. The staff immediately lodged a complaint with the police. Guntur rural SP Vishal Gunni rushed to the bank with the police team and began checking the bank premises and adjacent areas. The SP said that the police are suspecting the involvement of a professional gang in

the robbery. The SP said that the thieves might have conducted a reconnaissance and removed the CCTV cables before committing the theft. He said that the thieves sprinkled chilli powder to mislead police sniffer dogs. The officer said that five special teams have been formed to trace the culprits. He appealed to people to give information to the police on WhatsApp number 8866268899 or directly to the nearest police station if they notice any persons wandering in suspicious conditions in their areas and if they observe persons from outside areas. Vishal Gunni announced that police would give reward to the information giving persons and their names will be kept a secret.

Naidu was an abject failure as Chief Minister: Ambati

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Reiterating that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has been working for the welfare of the weaker sections by implementing various welfare schemes and winning laurels from all sections, YSRCP MLA Ambati Rambabu on Saturday accused TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu of neglecting all sections of people during his tenure and said that he was a failure. Speaking to the media here, Ambati said that the Chief Minister witnessed the dire conditions of fishermen across the state and laid special focus on their welfare by developing infrastructure and marketing facilities for aqua farmers.



"The Chief Minister has laid special focus on the uplift of weaker sections as there has been no change in their lives," the veteran YSRCP leader said. He said Jaganmohan Reddy, during his 14-month long padayatra, was with people and understood their problems and has been focusing on implementing welfare schemes after coming to power.

Ambati criticised Naidu, accusing him of being an abject "failure in providing succour to the weaker sections" during his five-year tenure and said the policies taken by the TDP supremo had affected the livelihoods of many people. "It was due to Naidu's failures that the people rejected him and gave 151 Assembly seats and 22 LS seats to YSRCP. It will be 18 months YSRCP coming into power on November 30 and the Chief Minister has received praise from all sections of the society for his welfare governance," Ambati said. "Government hospitals, Government schools, as also 108 and 104 services, were neglected by the previous government.

Sri City gets ISO accreditation certifications

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Sri City, one of the most flourishing Special Economic Zones in the country in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh, received accreditation certifications for Quality Management System and Environmental Management System from the International Standardisation Organisation. "The certification is an important milestone for Sri City. We set highest standards to better respond to client and other stakeholder requirements, honour their expecta-

tions and return value to the society and the environment," Sri City Managing Director Ravindra Sannareddy said in a statement. At the national level, Sri City previously bagged the Indian Green Building Councils prestigious Green City 'Gold' rating and Assocham's Green and Eco-friendly Movement (GEM) Sustainability Certification in recognition of its excellence in sustainability, he said. Ravindra congratulated the Sri City team over the ISO recognition.



Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy called the Information and Public Relations Minister Perni Venkatramaiah (Nani), whose mother passed away on November 19, and consoled the family members. The Chief Minister paid homage to the portrait of Nageshwaramma, mother of the Minister, at their residence here on Saturday.

YSRCP's vulgar words can't mask incompetence: TDP MLC

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Telugu Desam Party MLC M Satyanarayana Raju on Saturday advised the ruling party leaders in general and Ministers in particular to control their words and stop using unparliamentary language against their political rivals. "Minister Kodali Srivenkateswara Rao's words reveal that he has unlimited arrogance and unchecked frustration considering the rising public heartburn against the Jaganmohan Reddy Government's flawed policies," Satyanarayana Raju said. He asserted that leaders of the TDP would not be cowed down or scared by the meaningless and unwarranted statements made by Ministers like

Kodali Nani. "As a responsible Opposition party, the TDP would continue to expose the misdeeds and wrong policies of the ruling YSRCP," Satyanarayana Raju said. He warned that if Kodali Nani would not control his words, the TDP would give a fitting response to him. "All sections of the people are unhappy with the mis-governance of the YSRCP. The voters are eager and are waiting for the earliest opportunity to give a rude shock to the Chief Minister," Satyanarayana Raju said. The TDP leader challenged the ruling party to cooperate with the State Election Commissioner to conduct the local body elections as early as possible.

SRM alumni placed among top 2 pc scientists in the world by US varsity

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Assistant Professor Imran Pancha of SRM University-AP here has been placed among the top two percent scientists and researchers in the world in biotechnology by the prestigious Stanford University. Pancha found a place in PLOS Biology, published by Stanford University Researchers, among highly-cited researchers in 22 differ-

ent fields across the globe. He was one among the 1,074 scientists in biotechnology, a release from SRM here said. From India, 77 scientists and faculty members were recognised in different faculties. Overall, of the top 1,60,000

scientists from different fields of Science and Technology in the world, India has 2,313. Pancha obtained his doctoral degree from CSIR-Central Salt and Marine Chemicals Research Institute, Bhavnagar, after graduating from Bhavnagar University. He has also worked as a post-doctoral fellow at Japanese Society for Promotion of Science, Japan, before joining SRM University-AP.

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

DRDO chairman Dr G Sathesh Reddy on Saturday inaugurated the newly-commissioned "air launch test facility" at NSTL in the presence of NSTL Director OR Nandagopan and DG (naval systems & materials) Dr Samir V Kamat. Scientist 'G' and project director (air systems), RVS Subrahmanyam, elaborated about various systems in the facility pertaining to aircraft and

helicopter of Indian navy emphasising its usefulness towards faster execution of various defence projects of NSTL. The air launch test facility will also be made available for use to the industry. The DRDO Chairman congratulated "Team NSTL" for establishment of this unique facility, successful trial and wished them success in future endeavours. Senior officers and staff of NSTL also attended the function.



DRDO chairman Dr G. Sathesh Reddy flags off the first Varunastra, the heavyweight Torpedo, being delivered to the Indian Navy, at BDL, Visakhapatnam Unit on Saturday.



LOCKDOWN IMPACT

Bumper yield but no labour; farmers in no mood to celebrate this year

C PRADEEP KUMAR ■ VIJAYAWADA

Impact of the reverse migration that was witnessed across the country during the Covid-induced lockdown is now being felt in Andhra Pradesh. Acute shortage of agriculture labour is leaving farmers spending sleepless nights during harvest time of the current kharif season. Despite bountiful rainfall, suitable climatic conditions and bumper yield, farmers have to

suffer as there is shortage of agricultural labour and untimely winds that have disrupted the harvesting process. From the beginning of the kharif season, the farmers had a tough time in getting agriculture labour, even for sowing of the crop. During the sowing period, the lockdown was strictly imposed and with the fear of virus, most of the workforce had remained confined to their homes. The only thing the landowning farmers could do was to lure

the labour with pay perks and much cajoling. To their immense relief, there were abundant rains during the monsoon. Their happiness continued through October-end with the plentiful rains. November came, and brought along heavy winds, causing crop lodging in many places across the district. Crop lodging is the bending over of the stems near ground level of grain crops, which makes them very difficult to harvest, and can dramatically reduce yield.

According to officials, sowing was carried out in 3.26 lakh hectare in Krishna district during Kharif season. Of this, paddy was cultivated in 2.48 lakh hectares. Generally lodging occurs for paddy and more than 25 percent crop lodging was reported over a large extent of fields in the district. Harvesting is done using both manual and mechanised methods. Either way, the farmers with small extent of cultivable land are the worst sufferers if crop lodging happens.

Mechanised harvesting is done for large extent on agricultural land and only manual harvesting will be done for a smaller extent. M Jeevan Rao, a farmer, spoke to The Pioneer and said that despite various schemes like Rythu Barosa from the government to support the farmers, they face hardship in one or the other form. "The cost of harvesting was high these days due to shortage of labour and due to fear of Covid," Jeevan Rao said. Crop lodging was also a set-

back and now they are being forced to pay more for harvesting, he added. T Mohan Rao, JD Agriculture said that there was a good yield in the district with good rainfall. Due to the heavy breeze, about 20 percent crop lodging occurred in the district. For farmers who suffered crop lodging, the government was providing 33 per cent input subsidy after enumeration and Rs 15,000 per hectare was given to the farmers, the JD, Agriculture, added.





Govt to launch fitness app in Jan next year

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Sports Secretary Ravi Mittal on Saturday said the government is planning to launch an application in January next year to help people check and improve their fitness level.

"We are developing a fit India app next year. It will be like other health app but the main thing will be that everyone will be able to evaluate their fitness," Mittal said during a Airtel Delhi Half Marathon press conference.

"We will be launching this app sometime in January. I would like to request all the participants in the event to come to this app and check their fitness. If you check your fitness every month, it will improve your fitness."

Some of the world's top runners,

including defending champions Ethiopia's Andamlak Belihu and Tsehay Gemechu, will take part in the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon, one of the first global sporting events to be hosted by India during the COVID-19 pandemic. Extending his best wishes to the event, Mittal said: "Events like this will help us to understand that things are slowly getting normal, if we have to win medals in Olympics, we have to change ourselves, how long can we stop ourselves for COVID. So these events will help in strengthening our mind." "I would like to request procam to organise more such marathons before the Olympics, so we can strengthen his mind. We can sponsor them if necessary, fund will not be a problem."

Healthcare spending 'abysmally low': Parl panel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid rising COVID-19 cases, inadequate beds in government hospitals and absence of specific guidelines for COVID treatment resulted in private hospitals charging exorbitant fees, a parliamentary panel on Saturday said, asserting that a sustainable pricing model could have averted many deaths.

Chairperson of the parliamentary standing committee on health Ram Gopal Yadav submitted the report on 'Outbreak of Pandemic Covid-19 and its Management', to Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu.

This is the first report by any parliamentary committee on the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Underlining that healthcare spending in the country with a population of 1.3 billion is "abysmally low", the panel said fragility of Indian health ecosystem posed a big hurdle in generating an effective response against the pandemic.

"The committee, therefore, strongly recommends the government to increase its investments in the public healthcare



Underlining that healthcare spending in the country with a population of 1.3 billion is "abysmally low", the panel said fragility of Indian health ecosystem posed a big hurdle in generating an effective response against the pandemic

system and make consistent efforts to achieve the National Health Policy targets of expenditure up to 2.5 per cent of GDP within two years as the set time frame of year 2025 is far away and the public health cannot be jeopardised till that

time schedule," the report stated. The National Health Policy 2017 has set a target of government expenditure on healthcare up to 2.5 per cent of GDP by 2025 from just 1.15 per cent in 2017. Stating that the public had to undergo trauma

and distress due to absence of a dedicated healthcare system, the committee observed that the number of government hospital beds in the country were not adequate to handle the increasing number of COVID and non-COVID patients.

"... Cost of health service delivery increased due to absence of specific guidelines for COVID treatment in private hospitals as a result of which patients were charged exorbitant fees," the committee noted in the report.

Stressing on the need for better partnership between the government and private hospitals in wake of the pandemic and shortage of state-run healthcare facilities, the report said, "The Committee is of the view that arriving at a sustainable pricing model to treat COVID patients could have averted many deaths."

INDIA CORNER

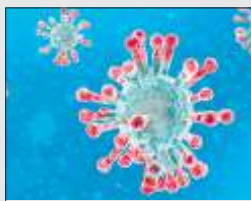
Custodial death issue rocks Odisha Assembly for second day

The alleged custodial deaths in Puri and Baramitrapur continued to rock the Odisha Assembly for the second consecutive day on Saturday with opposition BJP and Congress demanding stringent action against the erring police personnel including senior officers. The issue was raised by Leader of Opposition P K Naik of BJP as soon as the House assembled for the day. He rejected the state government's action of transferring Puri SP Akleshwar Singh and demanded his suspension. "K Ramesh was picked up by police at the instruction of SP Ramesh was hacked to death at the police station. However, the SP says that Ramesh died following a scuffle with police. His transfer is just eyewash to divert public attention. A detailed discussion should be conducted through a motion in the House," Naik said.



15 security personnel among 66 new Covid patients in Mizoram

Mizoram's COVID-19 tally rose to 3,607 on Saturday as 66 more people, including 15 security personnel, tested positive for the infection, an official statement said. Aizawl district reported the highest number of new cases at 46, followed by Lawngtlai (eight) and Serchhip (six), the statement issued by the state Information and Public Relations Department said. Forty-two infections were detected during RT-PCR tests, seven during TrueNat and 17 during rapid antigen tests, it said. Eleven policemen, three Assam Rifles personnel and one Army jawan are among the new patients, the statement said. The state now has 491 active coronavirus cases, while 3,111 people have recovered from disease.



Man booked for harassment 'dies by suicide' in UP's Sitapur

A young man booked for allegedly harassing a woman constable has killed himself by consuming a poisonous substance here, with his family claiming he was falsely accused of the offence and humiliated by police. The victim, Prabhas Tiwari, was on Wednesday taken to a police station for allegedly harassing a police constable at a marketplace and booked, Superintendent of Police, Sitapur, R P Singh said, adding he was later released after signing a bond. The SP said Tiwari consumed a poisonous substance on Friday night and was admitted to the district hospital in Sitapur and then referred to King George's Medical University in Lucknow where he died. A family member of the deceased alleged he was upset over being falsely accused of harassment and beaten up at the police station. A suicide note left by Tiwari states he was humiliated and made to pay Rs 10,000 by the police for his release. The SP said he has ordered Assistant Superintendent of Police Rajeev Dikshit to probe the case as well as the allegations levelled by the family. The body will be handed over to the family after autopsy.



Seven charred to death in car-dumper truck collision

Seven persons, including three children, were charred to death on Saturday when their car caught fire after colliding with a dumper truck in Gujarat's Surendranagar district, police said. Occupants of the car, all members of two families, were returning to their homes in Patan district when the incident occurred in early hours near Kherva village, deputy superintendent of police P K Patel told reporters. A woman was rescued from the SUV and admitted to a hospital, the officer said, adding that she is the lone survivor. "Members of two families had gone on a three-day trip, and were on their way from the temple town of Chotila in Surendranagar district when the accident occurred," the DySP said. The deceased are identified as Ramesh Nai (38), his wife Kailashben (35) and their children Sunni (12) and Shital (8)—all from Korda village, and their relatives Hareesh Nai (35), his wife Sejalben (32) and son Harshil (6), who hailed from Nanapura village, he said, adding that investigation is underway.



India lodges protest on attack planned by JeM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Saturday summoned the Charge d'Affaires of the Pakistan High Commission and lodged a strong protest with him over attempts by Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed to carry out attacks in Jammu and Kashmir ahead of local elections there.

Referring to the Nagrota incident, the ministry said the huge cache of arms, ammunition and explosive material indicate detailed planning for a "major attack to destabilise the peace and security" in the UT of J&K, in particular, to derail the ongoing democratic exercise of conduct of local district development council polls. "Pakistan CdA was summoned



by the Ministry of External Affairs, and a strong protest was lodged at the attempted attack, which was only prevented from happening by the alertness of the Indian security forces," the MEA said. In a statement, it said India is "firmly and resolutely" committed to take all necessary measures to safe-

guard its national security in the fight against terrorism.

"It was demanded that Pakistan desists from its policy of supporting terrorists and terror groups operating from its territory and dismantle the terror infrastructure operated by terrorist outfits to launch attacks in other countries," it

said. Four suspected JeM terrorists, who were hiding in a truck, were killed by security forces in Nagrota on Thursday morning.

"A major terror attack was foiled by Indian security forces in Nagrota, Jammu and Kashmir on November 19. Initial reports indicate the attackers to be members of Pakistan based JeM, a terrorist organization proscribed by the United Nations and several countries," the MEA said.

It said serious concerns were also conveyed at continued terror attacks by JeM against India, adding the terror outfit has been part of several attacks in India in the past including the Pulwama attack in February 2019.



PNS ■ CHENNAI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday sprang a surprise here when he virtually broke protocol to get out of his vehicle and walk on the busy GST Road outside the airport to greet supporters, minutes after he landed here for a two-day visit of the city.

Shah, who thanked the metropolis for its love, said it was "great" to be in Tamil Nadu.

Shah is slated to attend a Tamil Nadu government event later in the day, where he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for projects worth over Rs 67,000 crore, including phase II of Chennai Metro Rail. Soon after his arrival from Delhi, Shah was received by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami, his deputy O Panneerselvam, senior cabinet members and BJP State President L Murugan among

others, before proceeding to the city hotel where he will be put up. However, after exiting the airport, Shah's car suddenly stopped and the BJP veteran got out, before walking a short distance, waving at scores of BJP and AIADMK workers who had gathered to receive him with their respective party flags.

Accompanied by BJP National General Secretary and party in-charge of poll-bound Tamil Nadu, CT Ravi, and Murugan, with his security detail in tow, the Home Minister warmly waved at the overjoyed supporters who had thronged the airport since the morning.

A heavy security cover has been provided in the city following Shah's visit, during which he will meet state BJP functionaries and possibly discuss Tamil Nadu elections, due next April-May, before leaving on Sunday morning.

Security being provided to select few: Farooq

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and president of newly cobbled up People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) Farooq Abdullah on Saturday objected to the treatment meted out to the amalgam candidates, saying security is being used as

a pretext to impede and customize democracy in the Union territory.

In a two-page letter to J-K Election Commissioner K K Sharma, Abdullah, who is at present a Lok Sabha member from Srinagar, said providing security to a select few and literally interning the rest is a gross interference in democracy. "I

am taking the liberty of writing to you about the upcoming DDC elections. A strange and a unique feature has come to the fore. Candidates put up by the PAGD are immediately whisked away to 'secure locations' in the name of security and confined to those 'secure locations'. They are not allowed to canvass, they are completely out of touch

with those from whom they are supposed to seek votes," Abdullah said in the letter.

He said the parties part of the PAGD have been in power in the past and have had the opportunity to head and run the government and are aware of the challenges posed in the realm of security in a place beset by violence.

Mehbooba accuses Centre of 'sabotaging' non BJP parties

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Saturday accused the Centre of "sabotaging" the participation of political parties other than the BJP in the District Development Council (DDC) polls in Jammu and Kashmir by not allowing them to campaign freely.

Mehbooba's allegations came as major political parties in the Valley, including the NC and the PDP, blame lack of a level-playing field for the elec-



tions, accusing the administration of locking up their candidates in accommodations at several places and not allowing them to campaign. "GOI sab-

otaging participation of non BJP parties in DDC polls. PDPs Bashir Ahmed despite having adequate security has been detained at Pahalgam on the pretext of security. Today is the last day for filing nominations & have spoken to DC Anantnag for his release @manojsinha_," the PDP chief said on Twitter. Police have said the candidates were being provided collective security and put up in secure areas as providing security to every candidate was difficult.

India's first moss garden comes up near Nainital

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

India's first moss garden has been developed at Khurpatal in Nainital district, officials said on Saturday.

Approved in July last year under the CAMPA scheme by the Research Advisory Committee of Uttarakhand Forest Department, the moss garden, the first in the country, was inaugurated on Friday by renowned water conservation activist Rajendra Singh, Chief Conservator of Forest Sanjiv Chaturvedi said.

The main aim behind developing the garden was to conserve the various species of



moss and other bryophytes and to make people aware of its significance in the environment besides creating a recreation centre for tourists, Chaturvedi who heads the research wing of the state forest

department, said.

Moss Garden, Khurpatal houses around 30 different species of moss and certain other bryophyte species.

Two of the moss species found here i.e. Hyophila invo-

luta (Cement Moss) and Brachythecium Buchanani figure in International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) red list, Chaturvedi said. It has a moss trail of 1.2 km on which different moss species and scientific information about them is displayed, he said.

It has an interpretation centre in which different aspects of moss are displayed through models including a First World War painting showing use of Sphagnum moss as a dressing for wounds as it absorbs liquids about three times more quickly than cotton, is cooler, softer, and less

irritating than cotton, besides having antiseptic properties.

It also produces sterile environment by keeping the pH level around wounds low and thus inhibiting the growth of bacteria, the CCF said.

The garden also boasts of a dinosaur model showing existence of moss since the Jurassic era, ornaments made of live moss which are very popular in Japan, moss terrarium depicting live moss ecosystem and nest of birds using moss for temperature regulation and antibacterial purposes.

Poems and caricatures related to moss are also displayed at the garden.

Working with Hero to ensure smooth transition: Harley Davidson

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

American cult-bike maker Harley-Davidson on Saturday said it is working with its new partner Hero MotoCorp to "ensure a smooth transition" for its customers in India, including after-sale services and warranty.

Last month, Harley-Davidson and Hero MotoCorp announced their partnership for the Indian market.

They have inked a distribution agreement, under which Hero MotoCorp will sell and service Harley-Davidson motorcycles. It will also sell parts and accessories and general merchandise riding gear and apparel through a network of brand-exclusive Harley-Davidson dealers and Hero's existing dealership network in India.

Harley-Davidson MD Sajeev Rajasekharan said in a statement, "As we change our business model in India, we are pleased to be continuing our journey in the country together with Hero MotoCorp. We are working closely with Hero to ensure a smooth transition for our riders." The firm has assured them that Harley-Davidson motorcycle, parts and accessories and general merchandise sales, as well as after-sale services, warranty and H.O.G. activities will continue from January 2021 onwards, he added.

India aims to reduce carbon footprint by 30-35%: Modi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the country was moving forward with the goal of reducing its carbon footprint by 30 to 35 per cent.

He also said that efforts were on to increase the use of natural gas by four times in this decade and to double the oil refining capacity in the next five years.

The prime minister said this while addressing the eighth convocation of Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University (PDPU) here via video conference.

"Today, the country is moving forward with the goal of reducing its carbon footprint by 30 to 35 per cent. When I told this to the world, it expressed surprise and wondered if India could achieve this," he said.

"Our effort is to increase the share of natural gas in our energy needs by four times in this decade. Work is also on to nearly double the oil refining capacity in the coming five years," he added.

He also expressed confidence that the country will achieve its renewable energy generation target "before time".

"Today, per unit cost (of solar power) has come down to less than Rs 2 from Rs 12-13 earlier. Today, solar power has become the country's priority. We have made a commitment



to generate 175 gigawatt renewable energy and I am confident that we will achieve this before 2022," he said.

"Also, our renewable energy target of 450 gigawatt by 2030, a big aim, will be achieved before time...I am confident of that," he said.

Modi said that the oil and gas sector will see an investment of crores of rupees in this decade, which will create opportunities for the graduating students of the university in the fields of research, manufacturing and others.

He also said that work is underway to strengthen the start-ups ecosystem related to the energy security sector, and a special fund has been allocated for the purpose.

"If you have any idea, product or any concept which you want to incubate, then this fund will be a good opportu-

nity for you, and a gift from the government," he said.

The PM said that despite the hardships caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the graduating students should remember that their strength and capacities are much bigger than the challenges, and asked them not to lose confidence.

"What is more important than problems is your purpose, preference and your commitment. This is not that you are facing a challenge for the first time in your life, or that this is the last challenge. It is not the case that a successful person does not have problems. But those who accept the challenges and defeat them are the ones who succeed," he said.

He asked the students to recall the period of the country's Independence movement and how people sacrificed their lives for it. He asked them to

Modi said that the oil and gas sector will see an investment of crores of rupees in this decade, which will create opportunities for the graduating students of the university in the fields of research, manufacturing and others

similarly become a soldier for 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.

He said that those who succeed in life possess a sense of responsibility.

"There is a lot to do for the country, but your commitment, your aim should not be fragmented. You see that only they become successful in life who do something with a sense of responsibility...Failures are those who live with a sense of burden. The youth of the 21st century should go ahead with a clean slate. The concept that 'nothing will change' will have to be cleaned..." he said.

The PM asked the students to take sustained efforts as it will bring about positive results.

He said the 'Clean India' programme was an example of this, and said small efforts of crores of people turned it into a movement.

During his address, he also recalled how his decision to segregate domestic and agriculture feeders made it possible for the households to get 24-

hour electricity in Gujarat.

Modi inaugurated five state-of-the-art facilities to mark the eighth convocation of the PDPU.

The facilities he unveiled at the university are a 45 -MW production of monocrystalline solar photovoltaic panel, a tech business incubator, a sports complex, and a Translational Research Centre at the PDPU, as well as an Indo-EU bilateral project under Horizon 2020 'India-h2o' for industrial waste and desalination.

Modi also suggested the state government to change the name of the Petroleum University to Energy University.

"Looking at the requirement of the country and the world, and the way the university has taken its shape, I would request the state government to, if required, change the law, to better convert its name as an Energy University. Its expansion as Energy University will benefit the country a lot," he said.

Unilever to introduce anti-Covid mouthwash in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Global FMCG major Unilever on Saturday said it will bring to India its mouthwash formulation, which, it claims, will reduce 99.9 per cent of coronavirus after 30 seconds of rinsing.

"Unilever has confirmed that preliminary lab test results show that mouthwash formulation containing CPC Technology reduces 99.9 per cent of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, after 30 seconds of rinsing," the company said in a statement.

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose, which has been detected before, during, and after the acute phase of illness, as well as in asymptomatic cases. "Therefore,



reducing the viral load in the mouth could help to reduce transmission. The findings indicate that mouthwash could become an important addition to other everyday protective measures like handwashing, physical distancing and mask wearing," it added.

Unilever Oral Care Research and Development Head Glyn

Roberts said, "While we are clear that this is not a cure or proven way to prevent the transmission of coronavirus, our results are promising."

Roberts added that given the critical stage of the pandemic, the company feels it is important to share the results of the mouthwash.

This technology will be

brought to India by Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL), Unilever's arm, in Pepsodent Germicheck Mouth Rinse Liquid, which will be launched in India in December 2020, the company said.

Unilever said the test for its mouthwash containing CPC (cetylpyridinium chloride) technology was conducted by an independent and internationally accredited testing facility, Microbac Laboratories, on behalf of Unilever Research Laboratories in the US.

CPC is a widely used cosmetic ingredient, also used by the dental industry, and is known for its antibacterial and anti-virus benefits.

The test focussed on both 30 and 60 seconds rinse times, aiming to replicate the real-life use of mouthwash in an in-vitro context.

Petrol, diesel price hiked for second day

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Petrol price on Saturday was hiked by 15 paise per litre and diesel by 20 paise, the second straight day of increase in rates after firming international oil rates broke nearly a two-month-long hiatus in price revision.

The price of petrol in Delhi was hiked to Rs 81.38 per litre from Rs 81.23, according to a notification from oil marketing companies. Diesel rates went up from Rs 70.68 to Rs 70.88 per litre. On Friday, petrol price was raised by 17 paise per litre and diesel by 22 paise. This is the first revision in petrol prices since September 22. Diesel rates

had not 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, resorted 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 the 48-day status quo on diesel rates were preceded by no change in rates between June 30 and August 15 and a 85-day status quo between March 17 and June 6.

FIGHT AGAINST COVID

India entered crucial phase, says Ambani

PTI ■ GANDHINAGAR,

Reliance Industries Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh Ambani on Saturday said India has entered a crucial phase in its fight against coronavirus and cannot afford to let the guard down at this juncture.

He said the bold reforms undertaken by the government will lead to swift recovery and rapid progress in the years to come.

The remarks come amid growing number of COVID-19 cases in certain pockets of the country, which has led authorities to re-introduce restrictions on movements like in the case of Ahmedabad and also mull restricting travel to cities like the national capital.

"India has entered a crucial phase in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic. We cannot afford to let our guard down at this juncture," Ambani, who is also the president of the Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University (PDPU), said at the institute's eighth convocation.

He added that India is an

ancient land which has faced many adversities in the past and has emerged much stronger each time, because resilience is deep-rooted in the people and the culture.

Ambani, who addressed the gathering virtually, said he sees "explosive and exponential growth" in the post-COVID era and asked the graduating students to venture out with hope and confidence without being anxious.

Growth will create unprecedented opportunities and in the next two decades, India will be among the top-three economies of the world, he said. Ambani, whose company is heavily invested in the oil business and runs one of the largest refineries in the world, said the challenge facing the world currently is whether we can produce energy to sustain our economies without harming the environment.

By the middle of the century, the world will use twice as much energy as we do today and India's per-capita energy needs will be more than twice in the next two decades, he said.



APEC leaders agree on free trade

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Leaders from the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, including US President Donald Trump, have pledged to work toward free, open and non-discriminatory trade and investment to revive their coronavirus-battered economies.

The leaders cast aside differences to issue their first joint statement on Friday since 2017, in which they agreed to further deepen regional integration by working toward a massive free trade agreement involving the 21 APEC economies.

This year's host, Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, told a news conference that the US-China trade war that had hampered talks in the past has "been eclipsed" by the



COVID-19 pandemic.

With growth in the Asia-Pacific region expected to slump 2.7% this year, from a 3.6% growth in 2019, he said APEC's focus was on accelerating economic recovery and developing an affordable vaccine.

"The health risks and its impact on the global economic ecosystem has been the major priority agenda for all APEC economies this year," he said.

APEC, whose members account for 60% of global GDP, has also "pledged to

refrain from backtracking and resorting to protectionist measures to keep markets and borders open," he added.

The APEC leaders' meeting was the first since 2018 after last year's host, Chile, cancelled the annual summit due to violent domestic protests. But at the Papua New Guinea summit in 2018, APEC leaders failed to issue a joint statement for the first time amid a US-China row over trade policies.

Trump's participation Friday, his first since 2017, came as a surprise as he challenges the outcome of the US presidential election, won by Joe Biden. Last weekend, Trump skipped the East Asia Summits and withdrew from speaking at an APEC CEO meeting earlier Friday.

Hong Kong bans AI flights for 5th time over Covid cases

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hong Kong has banned Air India flights from Delhi till December 3 after a few passengers on its flight tested positive for the novel coronavirus post-arrival earlier this week, an official said on Friday.

This is the fifth time Air India's flights from India have been banned by the Hong Kong government for bringing passengers who tested positive for the pathogen after arrival.

Passengers from India can arrive in Hong Kong only if they have a coronavirus-negative certificate from a test done within 72 hours prior to the journey. All international passengers are required to undergo a post-flight COVID-19

test at the airport, according to rules issued by the city state's government in July.

The previous bans on the airline's Delhi-Hong Kong flights were from August 18-31, September 20-October 3 and October 17-30, and on its Mumbai-Hong Kong flights during October 28-November 10. A few passengers on a Delhi-Hong Kong flight of Air India earlier this week tested positive for COVID-19 post-arrival," the government official said. "Consequently, the airline's Delhi-Hong Kong flights have been banned till December 3."

In a statement to PTI, an Air India spokesperson said the airline had been barred from operating any flights



between Delhi and Hong Kong between November 20 and December 3.

However, the spokesperson added that the national carrier did not have any flight

scheduled to Hong Kong during this period.

Besides India, a pre-flight COVID-negative certificate is mandatory for all passengers from Bangladesh,

MONEY MATTERS

Indian Bank, Canara, Axis, South Indian Bank buy stakes in IBBIC

Canara Bank, Axis Bank, Indian Bank and South Indian Bank on Friday said they have acquired 6.67 per cent stake each in financial technology firm IBBIC. IBBIC Private Limited is proposed to be incorporated as a financial technology company with an objective of providing a platform for exploring, building and implementing Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) solutions for the Indian financial services sector, the banks said in separate filings to exchanges. The company name is subject to approval of the Registrar of Companies, Mumbai, they added. All these banks have acquired 6.67 per cent stake each (representing 50,000 equity shares) in IBBIC for a cash consideration of Rs 5 lakh.



Majesco announces Rs 631 crore share buyback plan

Insurance technology firm Majesco on Friday announced a share buyback plan of up to Rs 631.26 crore. The buyback will open on November 27 and close on December 11. Maximum number of Equity Shares proposed to be bought back i.e. 74,70,540 equity shares multiplied by the buyback price i.e. Rs 845 aggregating up to Rs 631,26,06,300. The buyback size does not include any transaction costs," the offer document filed on the stock exchanges said. The buyback represents 24.78 per cent of the total paid-up capital of the company. Shares of Majesco closed 0.9 per cent up at Rs 934.35 on BSE on Friday.



Bharti Airtel to acquire 5.2 pc stake in Avaada MHBuldhana for Rs 4.55 cr

Bharti Airtel on Friday said it will acquire 5.2 per cent stake in solar power company Avaada MHBuldhana for Rs 4.55 crore in an all-cash deal. Avaada MHBuldhana Private Limited is a newly-formed company and developing a captive generating solar power plant in Maharashtra which will become operational by March 2021. It is a subsidiary of AEPL. AEPL has developed a portfolio of over 1 gigawatt solar and wind projects across the country and the first independent power producer to cross 1 GW installed capacity milestone in India. The company has entered into an agreement on November 19 for acquisition of equity shares in Avaada MHBuldhana Private Limited a special purpose vehicle formed for the purpose of owning and operating the captive power plant, in terms of the regulatory requirement for captive power consumption under electricity laws," it added.



US to soon announce meeting to encourage trade, dev in South Asia

US Special Representative for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad has said that Washington will soon announce a high-level meeting of representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan to encourage trade and development in the South and Central Asian region. The US, which will also participate in the meeting, is also launching a fund to encourage investments in the region, the Dawn newspaper reported on Saturday.



Ambassador Khalilzad is the Trump administration's Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation and has played a key role in negotiating a peace deal with the Taliban. The deal, signed in Qatar in February, provided for the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, effectively drawing curtains to Washington's 18-year war in the country.

'Awareness making investors make informed decisions'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Amid growing retail participation in equity markets, Sebi Chairman Ajay Tyagi on Friday said investor awareness programmes and education play an important role in helping new investors make informed decisions.

Also, he advised investors not to get lured by false promises and unsolicited advice.

Tyagi said trends in the participation of retail investors are encouraging in terms of growth in the number of demat accounts as also mutu-

al fund portfolios.

"There is a need for new investors to make informed investment decisions. Thus, investors awareness and education play an important role in educating the investor," Tyagi said in a message while announcing Sebi's participation in the World Investor Week. The World Investor Week (WIW), organised by the International Organisation of Securities Commissions (IOSCO), will be observed during November 23-29. The theme for this year's celebrations is 'Investors Awareness: A key to financial well being'.

The previous bans on the airline's Delhi-Hong Kong flights were from August 18-31, September 20-October 3 and October 17-30, and on its Mumbai-Hong Kong flights during October 28-November 10.

Ethiopia, France, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia, South Africa, the UK and the US, according to the Hong Kong government's rules.

An airline operating a flight to Hong Kong from these countries has to submit a form before departure, stating that all passengers onboard have COVID-negative certificates.

Another mandatory COVID-19 test is carried out for passengers after landing in Hong Kong and reports of this test may be at variance from the reports of tests conducted 72 hours before taking the flight, the spokesperson mentioned. Scheduled international passenger flights continue to remain suspended in India since March 23 due to the pandemic.



MAKING WORLD GREENER

SHALINI SAKSENA chats up remote sensing data scientist and a PhD student in environmental science and sustainable development to bring you a report on their innovative ideas and research. In a first, these women from India are proud winners of Green Talent Competition 2020

‘Need better Government policies’



Nidhi Singh, 32
PhD Student
Institute of
Environment and
Sustainable
Development, BHU

Born and brought up in Varanasi, this PhD student always wanted to pursue a career in environmental sciences. When she was doing her PhD, it was a project that studied the effect of climate change on agriculture. During a discussion, she found that there was little work done on the impact of climate change on health. This made her shift her focus of study. Nidhi Singh, who has been doing her research for the last five years tells you that it has not been easy to collect the data. “Back in 2016, there were only a few reviews, one can say there was a big void from India that showed the impact of air pollution and climate change on health. We knew that there was an impact on health from studies from other countries, but no data from India,” Singh says. What got her interested in pursuing a PhD is her father who did his research in Psychological. “As a child, what he did fascinated me and I knew that I wanted to do something similar. I chose Science in Class XI as I wanted to be a doctor but I couldn’t. So environment beckoned me,” Singh recalls. However, to submit her thesis, it has not been easy. “Getting data was a challenge. Hospitals are unable to maintain a proper data. But we managed to get data from the

Municipal Corporation of Varanasi. That data had gender, age, place and date of death and cause of death. In 70 per cent cases, it read cerebrovascular death. I had to struggle to ascertain the actual cause of death. If we had specific data, my research would have better impact due to the findings. Also, there is no single body that keeps a record of proper cause of death; this is a limiting factor. There are no studies that directly indicate that Diabetes or even BP could be attributed to air pollution. Each city has different pollution levels depending on the weather. For proper conclusion we need better monitoring,” Singh opines. Since she lives in Varanasi, her primary focus involved two areas. First, the impact of heat and cold wave and second, impact of air pollution on mortality. In the first instance, she found that impact of heat wave was more pronounced here and the elderly and male were more vulnerable. Her second area of study involved black carbon, the first kind of study on this from India. In fact, both her studies are pioneer works from the country. “I used black carbon and PM2.5 and PM 10 and gases like NO2, SO2 and ozone. We wanted to study the impact of these on mortality. We found black carbon is the most important pollutant that increases the risk of mortality and is in fact most lethal of them. This was followed by SO2, NO2 and then particular matter. These are good findings and can help the Government to base their policies and include black carbon in order to define quality of air pollution,” Singh tells you. Also, the entire Indo-Gangetic region due to its geographical position makes cities in this area highly polluted and densely populated. “Many people, due to socio-economic conditions, are unable to take required steps to avoid extreme temperatures or air pollution. Again, these findings are important and immediate action is needed by the Government to take corrective steps,” Singh says. Her recommendation based on her research, for her city for now, better traffic rules, doing away with outdated vehicles, introducing LPG and doing away with burning fossil fuel and creating awareness among the public of the impact of air pollution

THERE ARE NO STUDIES THAT DIRECTLY INDICATE THAT DIABETES OR EVEN BP COULD BE ATTRIBUTED TO AIR POLLUTION. FOR PROPER CONCLUSION WE NEED BETTER MONITORING

Out with the old. Bring in the new



Parmita Ghosh, 25
Remote Sensing Data
Scientist
CORTEVA Agriscience

What if it was possible to predict that a disease was about to hit your lush crop? What if there was a way to pinpoint the exact time to harvest your crop to get the most out of it? What if there was a way to predict how the weather will affect your crop in a particular year and necessary steps one could take to prevent damage? This and much more is now possible due to the remote sensing data that is available and there are scientists who can read these numbers and help farmers. Meet one such scientist who won the Green Talent Award this year — Parmita Ghosh who has done her bachelors in agricultural engineering and masters in Geoinformatics. This young scientist who has been working with Corteva Agriscience in Hyderabad for the last one year tells you that her expertise is in remote data science agriculture, her company is a big player in this field and hence chose to be associated with them. “Working with this organisation will help me reach the farmer who can benefit from my research. Solutions I develop directly go to the farmer,” Ghosh says. She tells you that her work involves developing solutions that she gets from the remote sensing data assist the farmer in his cropping pattern like which crop to grow and when to sow the seed, how to save resources and then to generate an alert system for any risk that can arise due to a disease attack and take timely measures to protect their yield. For example, for a farmer in Punjab growing wheat, what Ghosh can do sitting in Hyderabad is monitor the entire wheat season and if there is any crop pests or if the crop needs

irrigation, she can, via the satellite images, monitor the health of the crop and check for any stress and inform the farmer accordingly who can then take preventive steps. What is even better is that Ghosh can even predict the yield so that the farmer can plan post-harvest activities much in advance. However, all the information that Ghosh has at her finger tips is not necessarily welcomed by the farmers. “There have been times when we have sent alerts to them but they are just not ready to accept our advice because they have been following ageold practices and beliefs. To educate farmers, we have ground staff who visit the farmers regularly. This instills some confidence in the advisory. There are so many new crop diseases today, diseases that their forefathers have not even heard of or seen. Take foliar new worms; this is new to India. So some farmers today depend on the advisory given to them and slowly they gain confidence in our methods,” Ghosh says. She agrees that it is easier to bring the younger farmer to the fold since we are living in the era of digital technology and so are they. “These young farmers are looking for methods to increase their yield. They are also aware of the alert system. Workshops that we hold regularly helps the traditional farmer to adapt to using technology to help them,” Ghosh tells you. While she has only been in the profession for a year, she tells you that there are a few basic problems that India’s farmers face. “More than the use of technology, it is the reachability of technology to each farmer,” Ghosh says. The good part is that the data models are available countrywide depending on cropping patterns and kind of diseases that may be indigenous to that region. There are, of course, challenges that come when monitoring the satellite and getting the numbers and algorithm correct. But regular monitoring and taking into account the unpredictability of Mother Nature, we are able to get the number right up to 95 per cent. The advice we give therefore comes with riders,” Ghosh says.

THERE ARE SO MANY NEW CROP DISEASES TODAY. TAKE FOLIAR NEW WORMS; THIS IS NEW TO INDIA. SO SOME FARMERS TODAY DEPEND ON THE ADVISORY GIVEN TO THEM AND SLOWLY THEY GAIN CONFIDENCE IN OUR METHODS

WHAT THE AWARD MEANS

Every year, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) hosts the prestigious Green Talents – International Forum for High Potentials in Sustainable Development to promote the international exchange of innovative green ideas from various fields of research.

The award, under the patronage of Minister Anja Karliczek, honours young researchers each year. The winners come from numerous countries and scientific disciplines and are recognised for their outstanding achievements in making our societies more sustainable. Selected by a jury of German experts,

the award winners are granted unique access to the country’s research elite. The Green Talents Competition focuses on outstanding young scientists, who are active in the field of sustainable development. The BMBF fosters interdisciplinary approaches in this regard.



The programme offers a unique opportunity to become part of an exceptional world-wide network of outstanding young minds and German institutions. The first part of the prize consists of an invitation to a two-week science forum in Germany, where one will be introduced to renowned research

facilities and have individual meetings with experts. One will learn about collaborations and experience the country’s excellent research infrastructure at close hand. A workshop on research and funding opportunities will provide with further information for your future research stay

in Germany. The journey will culminate in a festive award ceremony hosted by a high-level representative from the BMBF. One will have the opportunity to return to Germany for up to three months to conduct a research stay at an institute of one’s choice the year after the science forum.





IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BUILD
ONE'S OWN HAPPINESS ON
THE UNHAPPINESS OF OTHERS
—DAISAKU IKEDA

Vijayawada, November 22, 2020

tarot 8



YOUR
WEEK
AHEAD

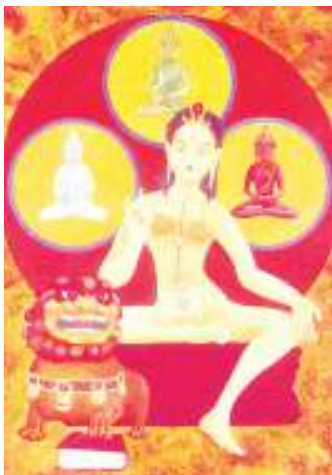
MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week is all about right action at any given moment. You may feel you are the master of your destiny. You have a shining personality and are likely embark on a new path. By being in tune with the environment and with others, you never go wrong with the judgment. Professionally, there is a good chance of realising your potentials and opportunities. There is a need to be attentive and alert. For some of you, a feeling of stagnation, dissatisfaction is taking a toll on you. Your career is on the stake. There is a need to socialise, and to reconnect with the people. Connections and conversations sometimes prove rewarding. On the personal front, a new love interest is possible. The existing relations will bloom too.

Lucky number 12
Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Tuesday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week health looks promising. This is a great time to try a new health care approach, especially preventative care. Exercise, eat well, and make sure that you get enough sleep. Don't hesitate to try a new healer or seek a second opinion, should the need arises. On the career front, additional duties and responsibilities may cause work pressure to increase. If you are in such a situation, don't hesitate to ask for help or delegate workloads. This way your efficiency will increase and the outcome will be decent. On the personal front, you will enjoy unconditional love and affection this week. There is purity in relationships. Those looking for love, soul mate in their life, this is the time to embrace the opportunity with open arms.

Lucky number 15
Lucky colour Sky Blue
Lucky day Thursday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This week you will feel healthy, free and may experience a change of perspective. Negativity replaces optimism. New possibilities can be foreseen. This is also a time to utilise your creative energies. On the work front, you will find great success. Promotion or hike in status is very likely which will make you confident, secure and well-established. You are self-disciplined, energetic and would exert dynamic control over life. You are a motivator and an inspiration to your colleagues. This is the time when your intelligence, wisdom and experience will pay you rich dividends. On the personal front, your dynamic personality exudes charm. Love is in the air. Appreciate your spouse. Sweet words will rejuvenate your relationship.

Lucky number 18
Lucky colour Silver
Lucky day Wednesday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week your passion for creative pursuits will consume your time and energy. You spend your time fruitfully. You are inspired and productive in your pursuits. There is satisfaction and a positive environment surrounds you, helping you to enjoy the bliss of good health. On the career front, there is a wake-up call for you to change yourself for the better, to get the realisation, to get over the period of confusion or misunderstanding. Do not stress over things. Stop thinking too much and start letting things simply be. Wait for the good times. On the personal front, you have to be presentable, witty, enthusiastic and ready to win the heart of your loved one. There could be challenges, accusations and your spouse may be demanding.

Lucky number 14
Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Thursday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

You are healthy, smart and reflect a good personality this week. You prefer to stay active and are constantly attempting to make things happen. You know how to utilise your skills to create the world you want. Your skill of being able to talk your way through and adaptability to any situation is at its best. On the work front, you may feel stagnated. If you feel there is no chance of growth in the present organisation that you are working with, then consider switching your job. The time is right. You are a creative and logical person. You would be an asset to any company. Just realise your potential. On the relationship front, you will enjoy an entertaining and rewarding week. You will spend happy and quality time with your loved ones.

Lucky number 19
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Tuesday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week some water-borne diseases may trouble you. You are a sensitive person, therefore, keep yourself safe from any kind of infection. Alcohol, unsafe water, injuries should be avoided. If you feel physically low, take timely action. It is not advisable to ignore your health. On the work front, a recent period of confusion could be the reason for your current conflict. You feel indecisive, under-confident as a person. You need to come out of illusion and false intuitions. There may have been misdoings, but they will eventually be revealed. There are internal conflicts that need to be resolved soon. On the personal front, you will feel optimistic, upbeat, and hopeful about your relationships. Committed relationships may rise to new and better heights soon.

Lucky number 8
Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Friday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This will be a very hectic week for you. Do not get physically violent, otherwise, you could hurt yourself. You are highly perceptive and intuitive too. You need to control your emotions and ambitions. Avoid aggression and any kind of arguments with the people around you. On the professional front, there may be serious problems at your workplace. This doesn't have to be the end of the world or the end of your job, but ignoring these problems will not make them go away. You have reached a point where you can now see what is best for you. Take some quiet time to decide your next move. On the personal front, this is a very good week for you. Warmth and affection of the near and dear ones will increase.

Lucky number 20
Lucky colour Mauve
Lucky day Monday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week you need to get a thorough check-up of your health. Stress may be overpowering you and be causing health problems. Be sure that you are paying adequate attention to diet, exercise, and sleep. Keep a positive attitude. You may need some time alone. You will find depth and wisdom in solitude. On the career front, you have excellent energy to accomplish work. Financially you will feel secure. The money will come from more than one source. You may consider investing in property at this point. A new project could be assigned to you, making you busier and financially richer. The week is not very good in terms of a relationship. Troubles may arise in existing relationships. You tend to find faults in your partner. Trust and faith are missing. Work on this aspect.

Lucky number 11
Lucky colour Beige
Lucky day Sunday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week you are sentimental, emotional and may get worried over small issues. Physically you remain healthy, but mental tension, anxiety could cause concern. You may even turn moody, temperamental, and unsocial. You wish to be left alone. Spiritualism, meditation and other yogic practices could help you gain your balance. On the work front, you have to put your best foot forward. Whether it is your energy, time or money investment, you have worked with full dedication and now waiting for the dividends. A good message which could enhance your career is foreseen. On the personal front, relationships are smooth and easy-going. People around you feel relaxed. Romance, love and a new excitement are in the air.

Lucky number 2
Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Sunday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week you will experience new energy, stamina with good health. You are a very positive and grounded person. Put your energy in creative pursuits. You never know what your creations during this time might come to. You will enjoy yourself and this task will deepen and enrich your life. On the career front, some old acquaintances may prove beneficial for your professional life. If you are looking for a job, old connections, associations will bring a smile on your face. Recommendation and favour will work well for you, giving you an upper hand. Open your eyes, be alert, and remember lost opportunities are never regained. On the personal front, relationships may be troubling, and you will feel frustrated. The unhealthy mind of your near and dear ones may hurt your feelings.

Lucky number 6
Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Friday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week your determination and strong will power would help you overcome health challenges, and put you in the right direction for a disciplined life. Alcohol, junk and spicy food should be avoided. Routine exercises, morning walk and planned diet would work wonders for you. Stick to it. Timely medical care will cure you of your existing ailments. Professionally, you will establish your strength. This is a rewarding week in terms of your profession and job. People will listen to you and respect your views. Those who are in a job may have the reason to feel pride after the accomplishment of an important project. On the personal front, you feel blessed, looked after and share cherishable moments with the loved ones.

Lucky number 13
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Saturday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week your generosity, kindness, concern, and care for others would be appreciated. Health remains good for you, and you may devote good time in looking after your ailing parents, relative or a friend. You are likely to follow meditation, Yoga and Pranayam and other practices. You feel relaxed, calm, and in tune with your body, mind, and soul. On the career front, expect fairly a good period. New venues for money earning could be opened for you. A new job opportunity with better prospects will excite you, and those who are unemployed will be getting an opening for themselves, too. Old connections and association will be helpful. On the personal front, prestige, glory, and status in the society shall enhance. Relatives will appreciate your endeavours.

Lucky number 7
Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Saturday

Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShezaim Institute of Tarot and Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 9873283331



ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Know what you are worth

A girl was vying for an Engineering course. She, however, could not get through her 12th examination in the first attempt. In her second attempt, she scored good marks but could not get through the Engineering entrance test. Frustrated, she came along with her father asking: "Sir, I wish to take up Engineering course. Please suggest a *puja* that may help me successfully get through entrance test next year."

"Instead of wasting one whole year, waiting for another chance to get into Engineering, why don't you look for another alternative options available?" I asked. "Sir, I am good at Mathematics and other Science subjects. So, I can do well in this discipline," the girl responded. "If I look at your track record, you failed your 12th examination, scoring poorly in Mathematics. Of course, you improved your score in your next attempt. But have you analysed why you failed in your first attempt?" I asked. "May be my time was bad." She replied.

Well, you can't simply blame time or destiny indications for your failure. Better look into your own fault line. A look at your chart reveals that the basic reason for your failure has been lack of

focus. Your monkey mind keeps flirting with varying ideas, which you keep breeding non-stop. Being so deeply engaged in those thoughts, mostly irrelevant, your mind doesn't allow the space necessary to be focused towards your studies. Consequently, you fail to absorb what you have studied, and with obvious consequences. This inherent habit tendency will chase you even in the future, not allowing you time and mind space necessary to do justice to your studies, unless otherwise consciously addressed.

It will not be out of place to mention here that consistency is the key to any discipline of science. One missing link in between, and you are lost. But there are subjects, which you can absorb well with just a short spell of attention. Better look for other options that you can cope with. The problem these days is that often children, and even their parents get drawn towards the ongoing trend. If Engineering followed by Management is the going thing, parents get tempted to push their children towards that course. Seldom do they care to identify child's indwelling potential. Often desire trend comes in conflict with inlaid potential. Consequently, the child fails to put in



one's qualitative best, and when they fail to make it to their desired destination, they end up frustrated.

"Agreed sir, I realise that I lack focus. But isn't there a *puja* that can help me overcome this weakness?" Asked the girl. Well, the problem is with your mind-trend. So, it can be corrected through a mental process only. And habit dies hard. So you need to continuously work upon your inherent infirmities. It is difficult to digest that a *pundit* can enter your mind space by conducting a *puja*, to make necessary amend. You can yourself do it better by following a method I am going to suggest. Whatever discipline you take, focused attention will always help you. But at the same time, you should also check upon your own worth. "What does the chart suggest?" asked the girl's father.

Lagna lord Mars is in the *lagna* itself that makes out a very strong headed girl and stubborn also. Incidentally Mars happens to be the 3rd cusp sub-lord, identified with natural inclinations. Mars occupies the constellation owned by Mercury, which is placed in the 7th house. Linkage of Mars to Mercury suggests that she would be inclined towards Engineering. But Mars being opposite

Mercury means that she is a restive character. She suffers from attention deficiency.

Mercury is placed adverse to mischievous Neptune as well, which accounts for her insensible reasoning and judgement. Mind signifying Moon is posited in an airy sign Libra, and placed adverse to Rahu. So, she though has a fertile mind who would be continuously breeding thoughts, but shall be engaged in unnecessary brooding and contemplating over them. With this state of mind, you can't do justice to the callings of Engineering or any science discipline.

To figure out a course corresponding to her inherent worth, the 4th cusp coordinates will throw light. 4th lord Saturn is in a Venus owned sign Taurus. The constellation lord is Jupiter in a Mercury owned sign Gemini. The 4th sub-lord is again Venus. Saturn, Jupiter, Venus and Mercury seen in togetherness point to Commerce, Insurance, Psychology, philosophy, and office management.

The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Connect with him at
Tel: 91-11-9818037273/9871037272
Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com

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the pioneer agenda



In this world,
everyone wants to
know everything
about you, and I
think that's funny
— Leighton Meester

FROM THE INSIDE

Accounting for Karma
The law of karma provides a system of justice in which one is rewarded for good karma and punished for bad ones

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Know what you are worth
You can't simply blame time or destiny indications for your failure. Better look into your own fault lines

As we learn to live with Covid-19 around, things have been particularly harsh for children who are finding themselves trapped and are struggling to get back to normal, writes KAARTIK GUPTA, as he suggests measures to ensure that our children remain healthy and emerge stronger from this crisis

THE CRISIS CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Till now, the year 2020 has been a difficult one to say the least. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed everything around us. How we meet and greet others, type of clothes we wear, how we stand and even sit in public places, how often we go out; basically everything has changed. Months of uncertainty, lockdown, reports of chaos caused due to the pandemic all over media, restricted movements and forced isolations have taken a toll on the mental and emotional health of a large number of people.

As per recent reports, there has been a significant rise in people seeking psychological help over the past few months. Anxiety, Depression, increased incidents of domestic violence, substance abuse, stress due to loss of livelihood and financial crisis, escalation in the number of suicides were some of the grave issues for which people sought psychological help. People of all ages have been deeply impacted due to the changed world order.

As the nation is in a gradual phase of unlock at present, most of the workforce and economy has opened up. People have resumed work with varied work days and shifts. However, children are still stuck at homes. They are unable to go to their respective schools and colleges as Covid cases continue to rise and thus as a safety measure, educational institutions have not yet been given the nod to operate completely. Students, at different educational levels, are forced to continue with online classes. Some have even appeared for online exams, while few others wait for the technical glitches to be sorted. These have been challenging times especially for children as not just they had to adapt to a very different method of learning, they have also been deprived of the fun times they share with their friends in school and college. Those belonging to the lower socio-economic strata have found it even more difficult to keep up with the teaching due to lack of resources like smartphones, laptops and slower internet speed.

Problems faced by children due to the pandemic include:

- **Online learning:** Technological advancements made it possible for students to continue with their studies even from the space and safety of their own homes. Online classes, e-lectures, webinars replaced regular classrooms and lecture halls. However, it came with the side-effects of reduced attention span, virtual absenteeism as students would login for class but would be watching or playing something else rather than listening to their teachers, lack of writing skills as all the assignments or projects had to be virtually completed and submitted. Poor internet connectivity, concurrent online classes of sibling, lack of smartphone also affected the children's ability to attend e-schools/colleges. In addition to this, time-bound assignment submissions and exams heightened the child's anxiety if in case he/she is unable to upload the document for a reason beyond his/her control. Back-to-back classes also affected the children's ability to pay attention to what is being taught.
- **Restricted outdoor activity:** Childhood is a period where an individual grows not just by learning things at school, but also by engaging in play activities with his/her peers. It is a treasured time of the day and almost all children look forward to going out and playing with their friends. But the pandemic forced them to stay indoors and thus restricted their ability to play with friends and siblings. This has been one of the most important factors for children having more psychological and behavioural issues during the past few months. Regular exercise and playing activities ensure adequate production and secretion of endorphins and

growth hormones which are vital for a child's overall health and well-being.

- **Lack of privacy:** With everyone being at home for most part of the day, one's personal space has also been compromised to a certain extent. This is especially true for adolescents as more family time, less time with friends has been tough on some teenagers. Although, many have utilised this time well to bond with their family members, some found it difficult which often led to an increase in arguments and conflicts at home.
- **Increased screen time:** Ask any parent of a teenager or even a child and they will tell you how fed up they are due to their child's excessive phone/laptop usage. Social media, OTT platforms, messaging apps, online games; this cocktail is any parents' worst enemy and ironically their child's go to thing. Excessive screen time has been an issue for a very long time now, but due to the pandemic when even studies started happening online things just went from bad to worse for children and adolescents. As per a recent pre-Covid times study, an adolescent on an average spends around 6-7 hours watching or using phone/laptop screen; much higher than the healthy usage. Children and adolescents are completely hooked onto the screen which has adverse effects on their psychological well-being.
- **Restricted socialisation:** Due to the pandemic, our social interactions and gatherings have been severely affected. Humans are social animals and we need to socialise for us to feel safe and secure. Adolescents and young adults, especially the ones in their last school or college year, are apprehensive if they would be able to meet their friends and teachers properly one final time before they pass out from the educational institutions. Children have reported feeling isolated and lonely during the past few months as they have not been able to go and meet their friends in person.
- **Increased risk of child abuse:** The pandemic has increased the prevalence of many common sources of family stress, placing children at risk of abuse and neglect. As per recent reports, the incidents of domestic violence and abuse had significantly gone up during the lockdown period placing children at a greater risk and adversely affecting their impressionable minds. A child who has been a victim or even a witness to abuse at home can experience a variety of psychological and emotional issues both as a child and even later on as an adult. Providing a safe and nurturing home environment for a child to grow in is each one's responsibility and we need to take adequate steps to ensure the same. Any incident of abuse needs to be reported to the police and Child Welfare Committee so that the child can be immediately secured and the perpetrators be punished.

As the number of new cases has lessened over the past few weeks and we all learn to live with Covid-19 around, things are slowly getting back to normal; a new normal. As a child/adolescent going through any of the above mentioned issues, you can take the following measures to ensure that you remain healthy and emerge stronger from this crisis:

- **Communication:** Talk to your parents, siblings or friends about how you are feeling about the current scenario. Confide in the one you trust. Share whatever you are feeling or thinking about, no matter how trivial you might think it may sound to them. As a parent, be patient and a good listener to your child/adolescent. Hear them out and try to understand what he/she is going through. Encourage them to talk about their feelings, their thoughts, any apprehensions or anything they are worried about. Listen to understand, rather than to reply. Provide a caring, supportive and non-judgmental environment at home for him/her to feel safe and secure at home. Do not



AS PER RECENT REPORTS, THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT RISE IN PEOPLE SEEKING PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS. ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, INCREASED INCIDENTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, STRESS DUE TO LOSS OF LIVELIHOOD AND FINANCIAL CRISIS, ESCALATION IN THE NUMBER OF SUICIDES WERE SOME OF THE GRAVE ISSUES FOR WHICH PEOPLE SOUGHT PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP. PEOPLE OF ALL AGES HAVE BEEN DEEPLY IMPACTED DUE TO THE CHANGED WORLD ORDER



- dismiss their fears or thoughts as illogical, even if they seem so to you.
- **Get involved at home:** Use the current situation to your benefit and try to get involved with some tasks at home. Learn new skills, take up responsibilities and help out at home in whatever way you can.
 - **Limit screen time:** It might be difficult with online classes but reduce your screen time as much as possible. Attend classes sincerely rather than trying to multi-task or fool your teacher as you are the only one who'll suffer because of it. Take short breaks between classes. Always sit on a chair or floor and do your work; use your bed only for sleeping. Be mindful of your posture, as long usage of phone/laptop can lead to problems like cervical spondylitis.
 - **Read books:** Do not limit your learning only through phone/laptop. Put in the extra effort and prepare through books as well; reading thoroughly helps in concept clarity and thus can be better recalled during exams.
 - **Maintain a routine:** Having a structured day will lessen the anxiety or boredom you may feel. Go to bed and wake up at the same time everyday, do some physical exercise for half an hour at least, eat healthy home cooked food. Fix a time for your studies and engage in your hobbies regularly.
 - **Socialise but responsibly:** Gradual unlocking of the country has begun and thus it has become easier to meet your friends. Once in a while you can go out and meet your friends for lunch or dinner provided you are following the safety guidelines laid down by the government for prevention of spread of Covid-19. It will be a good change for you and you can catch up with your friends in person after many months. If not

this, you always have the option of being in touch with them over video calls or normal phone calls. The important thing is to be in touch with your loved ones and not be withdrawn or isolated.

- **Avoid substance use:** Teenage is a time when the individual wants to explore and experiment different things in life. The new found sense of independence and an emotional roller-coaster driven by the hormonal changes can tempt one to seek thrill even at the expense of their well-being. Substance or drug use, which can rapidly develop into an abuse, is a major issue which plagues our children and adolescents. With the glorification of such activities in popular songs and movies, it poses a major threat as engaging in such things is wrongly considered to be cool and youngsters give into it just to be a part of a group. Please be advised to stay away from such stuff and use your intelligence and smartness wisely.
- **Seek Professional Help:** If you notice a significant change in your child's behaviour which is affecting his/her personal, social, academic/occupational functioning please be advised to consult your nearest Mental Health Professional like Clinical Psychologist, Child Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Psychiatric Social Worker or Counsellor.

When the going gets tough, the tough get going! Let us all do our bit to ensure that we all emerge stronger and wiser from this pandemic.

The author is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist at AKGsOVITHAMS Medical Centres at Pitampura and Satya Niketan. He provides psychotherapy, counselling, psychological assessment, and de-addiction counselling to people of all age groups



THE BODY BENEFITS
FROM MOVEMENT, AND
THE MIND BENEFITS
FROM STILLNESS
— SAKYONG MIPHAM

ACCOUNTING FOR KARMA

The law of karma provides a system of justice in which one is rewarded for good karma and punished for bad ones, writes **SANT RAJINDER SINGH**

Karma is like opening a bank account. We have choices on how much money we want to put in to add to our balance or how much we wish to withdraw. We can choose to put different investments that result in interest to increase what we have available in our account. We can also choose to use credit card in which we pay interest on what we spend. The choice is ours to make.

Similarly, we have a karmic account. Each day we can choose whether we want to engage in thoughts, words, and deeds that are going to result in good that comes back to us. We can also engage in thoughts, words, and deeds, for which we must pay the consequences. Beyond creating good and bad karmic accounts, we can also choose to do things that create a balance of zero so that we do not have to return to this world to either reap the benefits or pay the consequences.

CAN WE REDUCE OUR KARMA? WHAT ARE NEH-KARMAS?

We can reduce our karmas by living mindfully of the karmic law. That means doing things that do not incur good or bad karma. However, if we are still not living life in a *neh*-karma or karma-less way, it is better to have good karma than bad karma. There are many examples of people who can directly see the rewards that came back to them from a deed of good karma. Many times, we cannot read the correlation between what we have done what we received in return. Sometimes the effects span several lifetimes. At other times, what happens to us is a result of something we set in motion years ago.

Everything we do is recorded in the karmic accounts. There is a strict accounting of our every thought, word and deed. It is wise to make sure that we do not commit any actions, thoughts or words that can rebound to us with consequence. Instead, we must have thoughts, words, and deeds that are good so that good can come back to us.

CAN WE MAKE BETTER CHOICES TO SPEED UP OUR JOURNEY BACK TO GOD?

However, if we are on the spiritual path, we do not want to return to this world to reap the rewards of what we do. There is a better plan. We can do good but do so without having to come back to reap the rewards. The solution is to do good in the Name of God, without wanting any reward for ourselves. This means we are doing good in the



world, but the credit is being passed on to God. We do not want material gains for what we do. We only want to accumulate spiritual benefits and the love and pleasure of God. These are termed acts that are *neh*-karma or karma-free.

How can this be done? We can have good thoughts, words, and deeds in life but we pass on the credit to God. We do good things because it is the right thing to do, not to make name for ourselves or earn money. We say good things to others because it is the kind and loving thing to do, just out of goodness of our heart, without expecting anything in return. We think good things about others as an expression of the spiritual love we are developing in which we recognise all people as members of the same family of God.

We still do good, but our deeds are selfless without us wanting any material rewards. We do get benefits, but they are of the spirit. These benefits come in the form of spiritual progress, the love of God, earning the pleasure of God, and the burning of our karmas without creating new ones.

Another activity in which we can spend our time without creating more karma is Meditation. When we sit with a still mind we are not creating more karma. Sitting in meditation but think-

ing critical and hurtful thoughts of others is not karma-less meditation. It is sitting and thinking thoughts that create more karma. That is why *simran* or repetition of the name of God is an important helping factor in preventing karma in meditation.

If we repeat the name of God, our mind is focused and does not have a chance to create karma by thinking negative thoughts against anyone. *Simran* helps us forget the past hurt or future worries, helps us to focus on being in the present moment in which we are meditating to progress on the spiritual journey back to God. The analogy is like keeping our car in neutral at a red light. We are not using up our gas, but we also not moving in any direction.

THE REALITIES OF THE KARMIC LAW SHOULD SINK INTO US SO THAT WE MAKE BETTER CHOICES IN OUR THOUGHTS, WORDS, AND DEEDS. IF WE WANT TO MAKE SPIRITUAL PROGRESS, THE ROADMAP IS LAID OUT FOR US AND IS OUR CHOICE AS TO WHETHER WE PUT OUR CAR INTO DRIVE AND MOVE FORWARDS, STAY IN NEUTRAL AND REMAIN IDLE, OR DRIVE IN REVERSE

LAW OF KARMA AND JOURNEY OF OUR SOUL

The soul undergoes a long journey through various forms of creation from the moment is separated from God until it returns to God. This journey involves transmigration of the soul in which it accumulates karma, a record of all its thoughts, words, and deeds. Karmas accumulated can be good or bad: good thoughts, words, and deeds, or bad thoughts, words, and

deeds. The law of karma, or the law of action and reaction, provides a system of justice in which one is rewarded for good karmas and punished for bad karmas. A soul must pay off all karma to get back to God.

The realities of the karmic law should sink into us so that we make better choices in our thoughts, words, and deeds. If we want to make spiritual progress, the roadmap is laid out for us and is our choice as to whether we put our car into drive and move forwards, stay in neutral and remain idle, or drive in reverse. Our free will means the choice is ours to make.

Let us remember that whatever we do will come back to us, whether good or bad. Let us also realise that others, especially our children, are watching us and will model their behaviour upon ours. Let's be aware of the effect of our thoughts, words, and deeds and ensure that we do not do anything that will come back to us as karmic debt in the future. It is better if we do everything good in the Name of God without wanting any material rewards. In this way, we will not be creating karma and we will find that we will wind up our karmas, reunite with God, and enjoy eternal peace and happiness.

The writer is a spiritual leader



HIDDEN SOULS
PRAMOD PATHAK

Rama's lessons to remember



The legend goes that Diwali is celebrated to mark Lord Rama's return to Ayodhya after slaying Ravana. We have been celebrating Diwali for ages. But it is important to remember that more than Rama's victory, it is the values he stood for that needs to be recapitulated and imbibed. Lord Rama lives not only as an incarnation of God born to end evil prevailing in the world during those times. Lord Rama lives as *Maryada Purushottam*, the noblest among human beings who stood for certain values and principles, rather epitomised them. Let this Diwali remind us of those values and, may be, give us the will and the ability to practise those. Rama and *Ramayana* need to be the source of strength and sustenance for us to practise righteousness. Thinking of those principles that Rama stood for may then be a timely reminder to help us reinvent ourselves. The sum and substance of Rama's character lie in this one story that has been narrated and recounted time and again. The story goes that when Rama returned to Ayodhya after killing the mighty demon king, who was the most powerful of the kings on the globe in those days, people were dismayed. So the citizens of Ayodhya asked out of disbelief how Rama could kill someone as invincible as Ravana. The reply that the Lord gave is worth pondering over. Lord Rama very humbly said that I did not kill Ravana. It is the 'I' that killed Ravana. I, the bloated ego doused in arrogance. It was the ego of Ravana that proved his undoing. In fact, one big difference between Rama and Ravana was humility. Rama was humility incarnate whereas Ravana was all pride and haughtiness. In the present times, what we are seeing all around us is that humility as a value has become almost extinct, and arrogance and pride are driving human behaviour. Even the corona impact has not done much to dampen the human ego, though it did show man his place. Rama's principles were driven by ethics. This, however, was also shown by all his kinsmen, but Rama still stood apart. He not only chose to keep his father's promise even though he could have avoided it, given the ground swell of opinion that was in his favour. Look how people conduct themselves to retain power today. What happened in the US Presidential election is a pointer. Prudence and ethical wisdom are two entirely different things. Prudence is about knowing which side of the bread is buttered while ethical wisdom is knowing when to say no to the buttered side. Even when Rama was in exile, his brother, Bharat, and people of Ayodhya pleaded to him to reconsider his decision. But that did not deter him from his principled resolve. Rama's commitment to carry out his father's promise even after the latter's demise is a lesson in values. Rama's pursuit of *dharma* was above everything. And the entire *Ramayana* reflects this. Rama knew the essence of *dharma* and he also had the will to uphold it. He was an ideal representation of man who combined values, virtues and vision. Rama's victory over Ravana is certainly to be rejoiced. But his principled conduct offers more valuable lessons.

Pathak is a professor of management, writer, and an acclaimed public speaker. He can be reached at ppathak.ism@gmail.com

Find your peace post a fight

If we handle our disagreements in the right way, we can help our own selves to bounce back and emerge with a stronger bond, says **DR ANJU SHARMA**

Disagreements can arise in any relationships. The consequence of such disagreements sometimes leads to arguments, that are the worst moments to come across. But if we handle such situations in the right way, we can help us to bounce back with a stronger bond. Here are some tips to deal with anxiety after arguments with loved ones:

GIVE SOME TIME AND SPACE

After an argument, you should give some time and space to each other. This is important to resolve the conflict. To avoid further heated arguments, give a breathing room by stepping away for a glass of water or a breathing exercise. This will give time to calm down the emotionally charged up individuals.

FIGURE OUT THE ROOT CAUSE OF ANXIETY

When you are away from your loved one giving time to cool down, try to understand the reason behind the other person's behaviour. If they are being anxious, then understand what triggered their anxiety level and what you can do to calm down the situation.

COMMUNICATE, DO NOT ARGUE

When the time is right, extend the olive branch. Talk to each other calmly and discuss each other's point of view. Talking and apologising to each other means that you acknowledge that both of you have been hurt and want to heal the relationship.

BE A GOOD LISTENER

During the fight, both the individuals are trying hard to get their respective point across and this makes the situation worse. To resolve the argument, try to listen to your loved ones' perspective. If you still disagree with the other person's perspective, then you can acknowledge their emotional hurt and



pacify with statements like 'I am sorry (topic) made you feel bad'. Most importantly, do not get into defensive mode when the other person is speaking about your role in the argument.

HUG AND MAKEUP

One of the most important steps is before or while communicating, hug the

person and rub the spinal cord. Massaging the spine will help in the flow of hormones and calms down the cells of the body. It relaxes the stressed muscles and the person will settle for better communication.

The writer is a renowned Psychic reformer, Sound & Energy Master, Wellness-Holistic Coach and the founder of Musical Healing Band, *Sound of Infinity*

Ten questions to ask self

For good life, we need God's blessings. There is no other way to exist well, writes **AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI** as he encourages us to look within

There are some questions that each one of us must answer for our own well being. The first question being: "Do you accept that you are small?" If you don't, you are far removed from reality. For example, if you consider yourself very big or important and you come down with a contagious disease. Just watch the reaction of all near and dear ones. They will try to help surely but only after making sure that they are safe. The wise persons take shelter of the omnipotent God. I do so because I have realised that without a good connection with God, I am helpless.

The next question is: "Are you part of the creation or an independent entity?" Lord Krishna states in the *Bhagavad Gita* that we all are parts of God. (15.7) He knows because He is the creator. When you accept this fact, then, others become equally important to you. You need to cooperate with them. Only then, you will get their help. The third question is: "If you don't, then, can you exist on your own?" My experience tells me that I cannot. It has been estimated that human beings need help from upwards of twenty persons to exist well on a daily basis. The fourth question is: "Do you know everything you need to know?" Only a silly person would answer in the affirmative, because there is so much knowledge. Therefore, wise persons take shelter of the omniscient God, who provides the required information through intuitions, etc. or arranges through some other sources like human beings, media, etc.

The fifth question is: "Can you do whatever you desire?" My answer is a firm no. I am very limited in what I can accomplish on my own. Therefore, I have chosen to take shelter of God, and



I seek His help very frequently. God guides and helps as only He can. Suppose I need some favour from some person and he is not keen to oblige. God can and does change that person's mind if God feels that it is for general good, not just for my selfish reasons. The sixth question is: "Can you control results?" Unfortunately, the answer will be in negative mostly than positive, such is the nature of this changing world. Therefore, Lord Krishna has instructed us to not try to predetermine result. (2.47) But one thing is certain and that is one can cross all impediments by God's grace, which can be attained by developing God consciousness. (18.58) There are many ways the same can be achieved.

The seventh question is: "What does taking shelter mean to you?" To me it means turning to God and praying for His guidance and help for whatever is troubling me. God is very merciful. He guides and helps. The eighth question is: "What do you really want

in life?" One seeks the benevolence of God so one's family should remain healthy, peaceful and happy. The ninth question: "What does the word protection mean to you?" We need to be safe from whatever could threaten us, on which we have no control. For example, we need assurance that no one should physically harm us. That brings us to the last question: "Can you gain at will whatever you need by way of resources to exist well?" The answer has to be a firm no, because we need so many types of resources throughout our lives. However, God has promised in the *Gita* that for His advanced devotees. (9.22)

What did you learn by answering these questions? My experience tells me that for a high quality of life, I need God's shelter. I have found no other way to exist well. God must guide and help me at all times. For me, this is an absolutely necessity.

Bishnoi is a spiritual writer and can be reached at spiritual@ajitbishnoi.com

HOME THEATRE

Predictable & boring



MISMATCHED
Netflix
***ing: Prajakta Koli, Rohit Saraf, Muskaan Jafari, Devyani Shorey, Taaruk Raina, Vihaan Samat, Rannvijay Singh, Suhasini Mulay, Vidya Malvade**
Rated: 5/10

This film is based on Sandhya Menon's book *When Dimple Met Rishi* and the series has been written by Gazal Dhaliwal and directed by Akarsh Khurana and Nipun Dharmadhikari. On the face of it, *Mismatched* is a light rom-com and at the heart of it are diverse students. This is something that the younger viewers are going to identify with. But then given the theme and the story of the movie, this one is totally for the teenagers — those between the ages of 16 to 19 — young, angry, rebelling, want to have fun, experimenting and just being themselves away from the prying eyes of their parents.

Then there is the lead pair. A girl who only has one thing in mind — to excel and have a career — unlike her mother who only wants to see her daughter married. The boy, a romantic and a

Bollywood movie fan is looking for a wife. Yes, at 18. Sounds bizarre. But it is funny to see how he goes about winning his girl.

But this is make-belief and there has to be drama and nothing comes easy in reel life or real. There are bound to be twists and turns and there are several here.

But if you are the kind of person who likes to watch shows that have a clear-cut ending, this one be avoided since it is season one and given by how things end here, season 2 is definitely on the cards. When? Time will tell. Also, those who are always looking for meaningful content, this is predictable and somewhat boring, at least it will be for the adults. The teenagers are sure to find a connection and see themselves in at least one of the several characters.

While it is interesting to see diverse characters, since the focus is on the lead all the time, the back stories of the others have not been explored even when each has one. This means that there isn't much depth to the characters, at least for now.

Overall, one can binge watch these six episodes.— Shalini Sakseena

A fun Christmas watch

THE PRINCESS SWITCH: SWITCHED AGAIN
Netflix
***ing: Vanessa Hudgens, Sam Palladio, Mark Fleischmann, Mia Lloyd, Nick Sagar, Suanne Braun, Lachlan Nieboer**
Rated: 6/10

Those who saw the original, this sequel will only be a takeoff where things left off. However, one does have to see the first one to enjoy this rather cute but preposterous love story. Preposterous because not only are there three Vanessa Hudgens but they switch again just so one from the original pair is able to spend time with her ex and they need closure while everyone around them is hell bent on getting them together

because they look sweet together.

Preposterous because one of the three Hudgens' is a villain and wants the crown for herself, steals all the jewels and disappear to a non-extradition country! Her own millions have sadly disappeared and her minions are not below stealing or kidnapping from the royalty even though she is one.

But it is a Christmas movie as well and everything has to be sweet and cute with plenty of love thrown in for good measure.

Also, one can't have a Christmas movie where the halls and the entire façade doesn't scream Christmas in bold letters. With everything warm and fuzzy around you, all you have to do is sit back with a mug of hot chocolate and enjoy this one.

— Shalini Sakseena

Sets the Christmas mood

HOLIDAY HOME MAKEOVER WITH MR CHRISTMAS
Netflix
***ing: Benjamin Bradley**
Rated: 6/10

Even though Christmas is more than a month away, people will tell you that there isn't enough time to ensure things are in place if you want to get into the spirit of this festival. *Holiday Home Makeover with Mr Christmas* with Benjamin Bradley who is known in the industry and his clients as a designer of incredibly detailed, atmospheric and beautiful interiors is a series just right for you if you want to know how things are done.

If you don't know how to do it right, then also, the show is interesting to

watch. So much so that one actually wants to go out there but all the decorations there are so make one's home welcoming and full of the festival spirit with family and friends and good food to eat.

One can always tweak it to Indian tastes and we do love a festival and love to celebrate it with all its trimmings — tree, food and OTT decorations. And even if you don't have to go all overboard, Bradley gives little gems of advice on how one can still celebrate without being ostentatious and staying away from the commercial aspect of this festival.

But it is difficult to stay grounded when he goes around doing the absolutely beautiful home transformation. All one wants is to enjoy the brilliance of the reveal.

— Shalini Sakseena

A SIMPLE MURDER
SonyLiv, 7 Episodes
***ing: Mohd Zeeshan Ayyub, Priya Anand and others**
Rated: 5/10

A lot of content is being generated on the OTT platform and in a hurry at that. Reason is simple, once the cinemas open and start getting populated the relegation of alternate

NOT SO SIMPLE AFTER ALL

entertainment avenues will become a natural process. Of course, committed OTT viewers will stay and carry on with their web series but the vertical surge of viewership will recede — equally vertically once life returns to normal.

Sensing this as no rocket science,

the producers are dishing out jiffies and also getting lapped up by home bound bored viewers. *A Simple Murder*, in that sense is not so much of a drag, but calling it run-of-the-mill small budget series would not be an exaggeration.

Greed is of course at the centre of

the story revolving around a proposed *supari* killing but on actual show is the degeneration of society at large. Be it marital relationship, adultery, sexual harassment at office, political criminal nexus, contract killing or, for that matter, even honour killing and inter-religion marriages, there is a peep into

TELLY TALE

FUN FILLED DIWALI WITH ABHIGYA

While the pandemic might have posed its own challenges for all of us this year, Diwali brought with it a ray of hope. To delight its viewers, Zee TV had a special Diwali surprise in store for audiences with a three-hour special



episode of *Kumkum Bhagya*, *Jashn Milan Ka*. Fans of the show had been waiting with bated breath for Pragma to return to Abhi's house. With the festival marking a new beginning for the audience's favourite on-screen *jodi*, viewers got a chance to witness Pragma receiving a *bahu*-like welcome from Dadi, followed by Abhi Pragma performing the Diwali rituals together with hope in their hearts.

The fun and entertainment quotient of the show doubled up as Abhi calls for a Diwali celebration at his house and joining him were all the popular Zee TV faces like Karan-Preeta (Dheeraaj Dhoopar and Shraddha Arya), Ranbir-Prachi (Krishna Kaul and Mugdha Chapekar), Agasty-Chhoti Guddan (Savi Thakur and Kanika Mann) and Rishabh-Shrishti (Manit Joura and Anjum Fakhri) along with TV stars like Krystle D'Souza, Surbhi Jyoti, Avinash Mishra, Vrushika Mehta and Deepika Singh.

During the shoot of *Jashn Milan Ka*, Sriti Jha and Shabir Ahluwalia's passionate act left everyone mesmerised. The *Kumkum Bhagya* stars swayed to romantic songs like *Ve Maahi* and *Tu Hi Yaar Mera* and we have to say that their chemistry was out of this world. But what was surprising was that our favourite Abhi and Pragma pulled off this flawless act without any prior rehearsals. Their steps, their co-ordination and their expressions were all on point as these seasoned actors danced in sync and complemented each other extremely well.

Talking about their *Jashn Milan Ka* act, Shabir Ahluwalia revealed: "It was absolutely fun performing with Sriti once again. We've done several acts together, but this one was special. However, we

didn't get any time at all to rehearse. First of all, we were shooting for *Kumkum Bhagya* back-to-back and after that, we wanted to avoid contact with a lot of people as much as possible during the pandemic. Hence, we came directly to the set on the day of the shoot, we went over the steps with our choreographers and then went for the take. It all went smoothly, and it was really fun."

Sriti Jha also added: "It was a beautiful act, and we had some really amazing songs, and the choreography was simple and sweet. So, it was easy to get into the groove of things without much effort. It is always great dancing with Shabir and we had lots of fun while shooting for *Jashn Milan Ka*."

While Sriti and Shabir have reunited, Alia (Reyhnna Pandit) is planning a new twist. What will happen next in *AbhiGya*'s life?

INDIAN IDOLS MEET KAPIL

With *Indian Idol Season 12* on the anvil, this weekend, *The Kapil Sharma Show* will extend a warm welcome to the judges Himesh Reshammiya and Vishal Dadlani along with the charming host of the show, Aditya Narayan. Apart from all the fun and banter, there is a little surprise in store for the viewers. The viewers will be privy to some of the *Indian Idol* aspirants of this season — Mohd Danish, Shanmukha Priya, Sireesha Bhagavatula, Ashish Kulkarni and Anjali Gakwad. These talented singers had the



entire cast of *TKSS* in awe with their unique *jugalbandi*!

If this is a teaser, then we can't keep calm for the upcoming *Indian Idol S12* which is all set to premiere on November 28 and will air every Sat-Sun from 8 pm onwards.

RAJU SRIVASTAV IS A FAN OF HAPPY

Known for his incredible comic timing and excellent mass appeal, ace comedian, Raju Srivastav recently disclosed how much he loves and enjoys watching &TV's *Bhabiji Ghar Par Hai* and *Happu Ki Ultan Paltan*, both which have a strong Kanpur flavour in dialect and narrative. Raju being a Kanpur native, is a 'High Voltage Fan' of both these shows.

On his two favourite shows, Raju Srivastav says: "I am from Kanpur as you all know, and my family and I thoroughly enjoy watching the two shows. *Dono hi*



shows *mein ek apnapan hai aur dhansu Kanpuria jumble hain joh sabhi ko hasate hain*. We have till date never missed a single episode. I especially love Happu Singh and his family, their constant *nok-jhoks* and typical Kanpuria one-liners — *Niyochchavar Kar Do, Arrey Dada, Gurde Chheel Denge, Guiyaan Ke Khet Mein, Kantaap, Nimbu Nichod Denge, Bhaukal, Chiraand*, are my favourites. *Sabhi kirdaron ka chikai karne ka andaaz nirala hain. Mein toh Kehta Hoon, agar aap UP ya Delhi ke nivasi hain toh you are very lucky as now both these shows are now available in all the pay packs of Den cable. Dono shows ke naye episodes dekh kar aap sabhi haste-haste lotpot ho jayegein!*"

Replying to Raju ji, Daroga Happu Singh (Yogesh Tripathi) from &TV's *Happu Ki Ultan Paltan* says: "Thank you, Raju ji, for your immense love and encouragement. We are quite humbled and feel elated to be admired by our own *kanpur ke, aur bharat ke itne bade aur mashqoor haasy abhineta. Ab iss Khushi ke saath, hum ek aur khushi bhi jod dete hain. Toh khoob haste rahiye aur &TV ke shows ko apne poore परिवार se saath roz maahe se dekhte rahiye.*"

AECL SEASON 3 IS HERE

After the successful completion of IPL 2020, the fun is yet to continue for the cricket lovers. As the fans are eager to watch their favourite celebrities and artists, battling it out on the ground with bat and ball, Artist Event Cricket League (AECL) is soon to commence their upcoming Season 3 of the league.

Formed in 2019, AECL has been a mega success with eight and 16 teams participating in the respective seasons. Eminent and renowned personalities including Sapna Choudhary, Hussain Kuwajerwala, Millind Gaba, Shibani Kashyap, Ashok Mastie, Tarun Dutt and DJ Sumit Sethi were present along with the founder/MD of AECL Ashish Mathur to officially announce the launch.

The matches will be played with a tennis ball with 12 overs for each side during the league stage and 15 overs for each side during the knockout stages.

Taut and gripping

YOUR HONOR
Voot Select
***ing: Bryan Cranston, Hunter Doohan, Michael Stuhlbarg**
Rated: 7/10

Bollywood needs to take a leaf out of this miniseries to know how to make a show that will keep you glued to your screens from the word go. But then one can't expect anything less from *Your Honor* given that it stars Bryan Cranston. Those who have seen *Breaking Bad*, Cranston will be a familiar face. The show that has 10 episodes is based on the Israeli series *Kvodo* created by Ron Ninio and Shlomo Mashiach.

Interestingly, despite the fact that it is a thriller,

the pace is slow even though there is so much happening all at the same time. It is amazing to see how the makers have slowed the storyline without compromising on the tautness and the whole nail-biting thing to know what comes next.

There are so many characters and their stories and each intertwined rather beautifully to bring you a tale of a father's love for his son and how a parent would go to any lengths to protect their child whatever be the cost, even it means at the cost of one's profession and belief.

It is definitely a show that is not to be missed. Unfortunately, one will have to wait and see what the final outcome of this one will be since only half will be aired from December 6, 2020. The series will also air on Zee Cafe.

— Shalini Sakseena

Reality bites, and how!

DAS CAPITAL — GULAMON KI RAJDHANI
On Cinemapreneur
***ing:Yashpal Sharma & others**
Rated: 5.5/10

If you don't mind added depression in these Corona days, *Das Capital* will grip you with a dark drama embedded in a complete loss of faith in humanity and humanness. Seeped in corruption, our society has nowhere to go except to hell and there is no gentle way of saying this. *Das Capital* encases the total ruin of man's integrity, his existential compulsions and his ugly will to survive the life and times of modernity, whatever it takes. And if it takes selling his loving wife's dead body to skeleton sellers, so be it.

Yashpal Sharma gives a stellar performance throwing up all this dirt at you with such convincing depression that you would be part of his society to not get affected.

This story of poverty, corruption and all that a rural society is beset with unfolds in the

villages of Bihar where the BDO is king and king-maker, a shark who has no qualms in biting away the last flesh of decency from a trait called scruples. He makes money and down the line the racket eats up the insides of everybody — the common man, the clerks and even the crops and vegetation of the area.

What gets you in the end is the fact that all this is reality and it happens all the time as so-called well meaning administrators, politicians and NGOs look the other way, if at all they are not party to the chain of organised corruption.

Yashpal as a reserve quota clerk trying to make ends meet gives a reality slap to the audience with his topline performance which brings tears to your eyes along with his.

You cry with him, for him and ultimately for yourself for living in such torrid times where the life and death of a common man is of no consequence whatsoever.

Das Capital is a very gripping drama but too negative to take in, in such negative times.

all aspects of what urban jungles are all about.

Showcasing such wholesome negativity comes with obvious baggage and that's what *A Simple Murder* carries with a lot of unease.

The characterisation and the actors chosen for it complement each other with excellence but for a story to carry on through the seven episodes and then into a second season, there needs to be something more.

‘You should be able to convince audience’

RATI PANDEY, who plays Adi Parashakti on Dangal TV's *Devi Adi Parashakti*, speaks with SHALINI SAKSENA about her fear of getting back to shoot, why she chose to do reality shows and her Bollywood plans

■ How tough was it to come back to shoot after lockdown opened?

As much as I was excited to be back on set but there was also a sense of fear. Actors don't have the luxury to always wear a mask so that was something I was scared of. But I was sure that our producers took all the precautions and sanitised the sets frequently. Our shots were also spaced out and only the people required were allowed on the sets. So yes, it was fun yet different.

■ How's your equation with the co-stars? Is there a bit of awkwardness due to social distancing that needs to be maintained?

The equation was nice as I knew Kanan and Tarun and are good friends. Before the lockdown we had a really good time but after the lockdown we had to shoot separately to follow social distancing. We hardly met. We miss each other while shooting.

■ Is the costume heavy to walk around in? How much time does it take to be ready?

Definitely the costume is heavy. It used to take two hours to get ready. We have assumed our Gods and Goddesses wearing heavy jewellery so I had to follow that according to the genre of the show. Also, after the lockdown I had to do my own make-up and it used to take time as we had to sanitise our rooms and maintain hygiene. It has already been four months and I have now started getting used to this.

■ You have been part of many reality shows as well. What was the attraction?

I have not been a part of many reality shows apart from two or three probably. It's a really different experience altogether. Working for daily soaps is a bit stressful, you are always sleep deprived and it's kind of monotonous. So, it was a really good break from that genre. The good thing about reality shows is that you get to be yourself and as an individual you get to show your own talent. I love dance shows but I don't think I'll be a part of any conversational show.

■ Did you have apprehensions in taking up Shaadi Mubarak?

I was a little apprehensive about the character as it was an elderly one. When I watched the show, I came to know that it was a central character and there will be a love angle and it's an interesting concept. The lead of the show is a wedding planner so we get to do a lot of new things daily as we interact with different characters and



The costume is heavy. It used to take two hours to get ready. We have assumed our Gods and Goddesses wearing heavy jewellery so I had to follow that. Also, after the lockdown I had to do my own make-up and it took time as we had to follow proper hygiene as well

it's a mixture of lot of emotions and relationships. It's a different show.

■ How easy is it to play Preeti Jindal?

I don't consider any character as easy as I am still a learner in this industry. Even today I am nervous on the first day of shoots. It takes time for me to get into the skin of the character. But yes, now I am at ease. The main concern with Preeti Jindal was that it was a replacement and I have never replaced anyone before. It was a challenge as the audience has seen the character as some other person. I am sure I will leave a mark but let's hope the audience accepts me.

■ Is it okay to draw comparisons when actors are replaced?

Everybody has their own individuality and personality and pattern of performing. Comparing is like an expectation for the actor to be a mimicry artist. The most important aspect is to get into the skin of the character and then add in your element. You should be able to convince the audience by your performance and that is what matters.

■ You have hosted shows as well. How has the experience been?

I have hosted a couple of shows and I love doing it. I would love to get such opportunities. It is very different from acting. I feel actors should not be bound to acting. They must explore all fields of this fraternity. So, I would love to do it again.

■ What about Bollywood plans?

Every actor dream's to be in Bollywood. So yes, still looking forward. Let's see what's there.



VOICE OF MINORITIES

ROWING UP WITH POLITICIANS...

I was born in 1957 at Machareddy village in Kamareddy district of Telangana State. My father was into politics in Kamareddy district. We had a Congress office in our house and I grew up seeing all Congress leaders visiting our house. During the 1950s, 60s and 70s, due to bad roads, water from nalas and lakes would overflow onto the roads during monsoon, due to which, leaders who could not pass through that road would rest at the Congress office in our house. Even as a child, I got the opportunity of sitting close to established leaders, listen to their conversations, and serve the food prepared at our house to these leaders. I did my Intermediate in Hyderabad; later returned to Kamareddy and did my B.Com. As an undergraduate student, I was deeply involved in college activities and I was the games secretary. I was very active in Youth Congress and held positions like general secretary, vice president and more. While I was the general secretary of the Youth Congress, Rajiv Gandhi *garu* gave me an MLA ticket in 1989. I was made a Minister as well in the same year.

AN ACTIVE SPORTSMAN...

I used to play a lot of Basketball, Badminton and every other possible sport, except cricket. Back then, we did not have

mobile phones or other technologies. After coming back home from school, I would leave my bag at home and straightaway run to the playgrounds and play till 7 pm every day. From football to hockey, we played everything. Even senior citizens would come to cheer us whenever we had matches. They would tell us that if our team wins, they would give us a glass of milk. I actively took part in school and college sports.

WANTED TO BECOME AN ENGINEER...

I always wanted to become an engineer and go to Saudi. I didn't get engineering seat and that changed my whole perspective towards life. My friend and I scored 68 per cent. Since I was an OC and my friend was BC, he got a seat in JNTU. Ever since, this thought struck me: Why not include Muslims in BCs? Muslims are considered OC, but when we step out, most of the low-rung daily-wage workers are Muslims. I felt we are losing out on great opportunities because of this reservation system.

DONATING BLOOD...

After I was made a Minister in the Channa Reddy government, I was given Wakf board. After the communal riots that took place in Hyderabad then, I was the first Minister to donate blood in Osmania Hospital. Channa Reddy *garu* liked what I did and he elevated me. He gave four additional portfolios to me — Fisheries, Khadi and Village industries, Sugar and Small-scale industries. Even I was surprised to see many big IAS officers coming to meet me and work with me.

A HAPPY MAN WITH A HAPPY FAMILY...

I was married in 1981. I have three children — two daughters and a son. All of them are highly educated. My elder daughter has done her M Pharma and is married to a highly qualified doctor. Next is son. He had a hydro power plant in Himachal. He has now shifted to Hyderabad after he incurred losses in business. My younger daughter did her law in Nalsar. She is a topper of Nalsar University who broke Nalsar records. All three children have three children each. Every Saturday all nine grand children visit me and spend their weekend with me. I'm a happy man with a happy family.

LOVE FOR WRITING...

Whenever I get free time, I do a lot of research. I go back and hear my speeches and others' speeches that inspire me. I pen down all my speeches. I wrote a two-part book of all my speeches. I first wrote it in Urdu, but on the suggestion of a well-wisher, I have written it in English as well.

CREATING HISTORY...

During the Vijay Bhaskar Reddy government, I created history by establishing the Minorities Welfare Department. Those days when I called for review meetings, no principal secretary, general secretary, would attend them, because it was all about minorities; only deputy secretaries and others of that level would attend. I was furious as I felt we were the neglected class. During a social gathering, I asked one of the Revenue Department IAS officers as to why they wouldn't attend Wakf review meetings. He said, "Wakf board's income is Rs 99 lakh. I have a department of Rs 2,000 crore, I don't have time for Wakf board meeting." Later, I asked the Officer of Education Department on why they wouldn't attend Urdu Academy review meeting, he said, "Our education budget is Rs 1,400 crore and yours is just Rs 3 lakh budget." Likewise, we were looked down by all secretaries. I told the then Chief Minister what's happening with me and suggested to him that we should create a department for minorities. Luckily, the Chief Secretary was present at the meeting and he liked my proposal. He met me over breakfast the next day. In 1992, for the first time, the Minorities Welfare Department was created and Wakf, Haj, Urdu Academy, etc came under one umbrella. I was made the Minister for Minorities' Welfare — a first in the country. In 1993, we received the first budget for minorities of Rs 3 crore. Now it is Rs 3,000 crore.

A GOOD CHEF...

I'm a good chef. In Hyderabad, many chefs are Muslims. They all come to my house seeking suggestions about masalas and others. I personally choose everything for my house. We prefer natural ingredients. From oil to masalas, everything is made at our house. Daal, corn, ginger and such items are purchased from places exclusively known for it.

EXTENDING 4% RESERVATION FOR MINORITY STUDENTS...

Vijay Bhaskar Reddy *garu's* tenure, I proposed to add Muslims among BCs. He said okay and in 1994, Muslims, Kapus and 12 other communities were added to BCs. Meanwhile, in 1994 the government included Muslims, Kapus etc in scholarship list. Later, Chandrababu Naidu became the CM and he removed scholarship schemes for Muslims and Kapus. Subsequently, I sought reservation for Muslims. Under GO 33, Muslims were given five per cent reservation. This GO challenged BJP and other governments. A three-bench judge rejected the GO, citing some valid reasons. Under the revised GO, from 5 per cent, we came down to 4 per cent. After appointing various judges and revising and fighting the GO for a long time, the Supreme Court gave a stay order that the 4 per cent reservation will continue until the seven-judge Constitution bench takes a joint decision. With this reservation, our higher education literacy per cent went to 4% from 1%. Simultaneously, secondary education percentage went up from 0.1% to 8%. Many Muslim students who had never dreamt of studying beyond Class X have now become doctors, engineers, civil servants and what not. I'm now called the Champion of 4% Muslim reservation.

SHORT TAKES

What are you grateful for: For God, my parents and my voters.
How do you deal with anger: I don't generally get angry with anything. Even if I get, I first speak about it with my wife. My wife always tells me to keep calm and not speak anything when I'm angry.
What do you think is essential for a state: Education, hospitals and playgrounds.
Hangout with family: I have watched only one film with my wife in my entire married life. When we get free time, I hang out with my family at my house over a good feast.
What do you plan to do next: Until my health cooperates with me, I want to help people and extend my help to the health sector.
What do you think about the current political scenario in Telangana: I feel really sad looking at the leading party. From MLCs, to MLAs to MPICs and ZPTCs, they are luring everybody with money. This defection culture is very disappointing. The entire political system has collapsed. We lived with values in our career. The current generation has no value system because of this defection culture.
Do you plan an autobiography: I will surely write one after a while.
A compliment public give you often: Shabbir is everyone's leader and Champion of the Muslim reservation.

Mohammed Ali Shabbir has served as Leader of the Opposition in the Telangana Legislative Council. Born in Telangana's Kamareddy district, Shabbir has occupied key government positions and has represented his district several times since 1989, when he was elected as the first-ever Minister for Minorities' Welfare. During his stint as Minister in the Y S Rajasekhara Reddy government, he extended 4% reservation for students from minority communities. As Minister for NRIs, he got 25,000 people from Dubai jail to India. As a teen he had aspired to become an engineer and politics was never his cup of tea then, Shabbir Ali tells *The Pioneer's* correspondent K RAMYA SREE and goes down memory lane to share incidents from his childhood, hobbies, writing, and more.



First row, Mohammed Ali Shabbir (centre) is joined by wife Nafees Parveen (second from left), daughters Nishat Parveen (extreme left), Shazia Parveen (extreme right) and grand daughter Syeda Numa. In top row, Dr Syed Akbar Hassan (the eldest son-in-law, top left), son Mohammed Ilyas, with Shabbir's grandson, Shoaib in his arms, followed by wife Syeda Ayisha (daughter-in-law), and youngest son-in-law Mohsin Khan (extreme right)



Shabbir swearing in during Rajashekar Reddy Ministry



Top: Shabbir with Rahul Gandhi
Below: Shabbir with Rajiv Gandhi



A HELPING WIFE...

My wife is a lot into social service. She loves to help poor children in getting education. People who come to my house for help want to meet my wife first, not me. They know she is going to help them for sure. Especially when it is someone's wedding, she gifts them whatever she could as per her capacity, from gold to money to a saree. She has a pile of expensive sarees at home, from which she gives to girls who are getting married. She is someone who doesn't want to go on vacations or expensive holidays; instead, she wants to use that money to help others. In Kamareddy, whoever dies, be it a Muslim or a Hindu, we give them Rs 5,000 from our trust.

JAILED TWICE...

Before I secured an MLA ticket, I was in jail for 29 days in 1988. One of the leaders in the Assembly passed a comment alleging Rajiv's involvement in Indira Gandhi's death. We, as members of the Youth Congress, about 200 members, trespassed into the Assembly and started protesting. The then Speaker Narayana

Rao *garu* adjourned the House, held a special session, and punished us with 30-day imprisonment. Earlier, I was jailed for 14 days in Kerala for entering Assembly premises. We were 31 members who were taken into custody and I was the A1. We fought a legal battle for 29 days for a bail. From the High Court to division bench of the Supreme Court, we approached everyone.

Later, in Supreme Court, a three-judge bench dismissed our case and we were released on bail on the 29th day. We had elections in 1989 and Rajiv Gandhi was particular about giving MLA ticket and including us in the

Cabinet. At the age of 31, I never thought I would become an MLA and a Minister. I consider myself very lucky for what happened then.



ESCAPING MAJOR NAXALITE BLAST...

In 1997, I was going to unveil the statue of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. There was a naxalite blast that took place and six people died on the spot. I had a miraculous escape then, despite our vehicle being damaged heavily. I could see body parts hung on trees, some parts lying on ground in a pool of blood. It was a depressing scene. That was a turning point. I felt, God didn't take my life because he wanted me to do something good to people. Since then I have been serving people in some or the other way. I feel happy when people come to me and tell me how the reservation for minorities helped them in their career. When I was giving a speech in Banswada, a government doctor wanted to speak at the meeting. We gave the mike to him and his speech gave goose bumps to everyone. He said, "My father sells soaps. I have done my MBBS, MD and now I am working as a doctor in a government hospital. It happened only because of YS Rajasekhara Reddy and Shabbir Ali. If not for them, I don't know what I would be doing in my life. After I heard that Shabbir *sahab* is coming to Banswada, I applied for a leave and came to this place because I want to thank him for giving me this life." This was very touching and it is something I can never forget in my life.