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VIJAYAWADA, FRIDAY NOVEMBER 27, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

KASI-YAZURVED
TEAM UP FOR
ROMANTIC-COMEDY

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OXFORD VACCINE FACES MORE QUESTIONS
AFTER ASTRAZENECA ADMITS ERROR

AstraZeneca Plc and the University of Oxford, among the front-runners in the quest to deliver a Covid-19 vaccine, face mounting questions about their trial results after acknowledging a manufacturing error. While an announcement Monday by Astra and Oxford showed their shot was 70% effective on average in a late-stage study, the scant details released by the UK partners have sparked worries about whether regulators would clear it. In a later statement, Oxford said a difference in manufacturing processes led to some participants being given a half dose instead of a full one. Astra and Oxford said their vaccine was 90% effective when a half-dose was given before a full-dose booster, and that two full doses showed an efficacy of 62%.

BIHAR BJP MLA FILES CASE AGAINST
LALU YADAV OVER "POACHING" ATTEMPT

A case was filed against Rashtriya Janata Dal's jailed president Lalu Yadav in Patna today by the BJP MLA who he had allegedly called while in custody and offered a ministerial berth in exchange for helping the opposition in defeating the NDAs candidate for assembly Speaker's post. Former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi, who had flagged the alleged telephone call on his Twitter handle on Tuesday night, shared the information along with the contents of the FIR lodged by Lalan Kumar Paswan, on the social media. According to the information shared by Sushil Modi, the Pirpainti MLA has lodged his FIR at the vigilance police station under the Prevention of Corruption Act and relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code.

DISNEY INCREASES PLANNED LAYOFFS
TO 32K AS COVID HITS PARKS

Walt Disney Co said on Wednesday it would lay off about 32,000 workers, primarily at its theme parks, an increase from the 28,000 it announced in September, as the company struggles with limited customers due to the coronavirus pandemic. The layoffs will be in the first half of 2021, the company said in a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission. A spokesman for Disney confirmed that the latest figures include the 28,000 layoffs announced earlier. Earlier this month, Disney said it was furloughing additional workers from its theme park in Southern California due to uncertainty over when the state would allow parks to reopen.

AIR INDIA RESCHEDULING FOR PASSENGERS
HELD UP BY FARMERS' PROTESTS

Air India has said passengers affected due to traffic disruption on Thursday amid closure of the borders of the national capital region (NCR) will be allowed to reschedule their flights for free. People coming to the national capital from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh faced traffic snarls at several border crossings as the Delhi Police intensified vehicle checking in view of the 'Delhi Chalo' march by farmers from Punjab against the Centre's farm laws. "In view of traffic disruption in NCR region due to closure of Delhi borders, we are allowing no-show waiver & one free reschedule to passengers who couldn't report for their flights," Air India said on Twitter. "Waiver will be valid for flights scheduled out of Delhi airport only for 26th November 2020," it added.

Nivar brings widespread rainfall;
AP escapes relatively unscathed

■ Rain brings down mercury sharply ■ Chittoor, Nellore record 30 cm rainfall ■ Two persons swept away, feared dead

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Severe cyclonic storm Nivar triggered heavy to heavy rainfall in many parts of Andhra Pradesh on Thursday and also sharply brought down temperatures, throwing normal life out of gear in the State.

In Chittoor, one man was feared to have been swept away by the floodwater while two others were rescued by NDRF personnel. In Nellore, another man reportedly died of electrocution.

Nellore and Chittoor bore the brunt of the storm as about 30 cm of rainfall was recorded in some mandals in the two districts.

Cyclone Nivar made a midnight landfall near Pudukcherry. The tropical storm weakened from a "very severe cyclonic storm" to a "severe cyclonic storm" with a wind speed of 100-110 km per hour, gusting up to 120 km per hour.

Resultantly, many villages plunged into darkness as power supply was cut off. Roads were inundated due to the incessant rains in South Andhra.

The cyclone weakened into deep depression over South Rayalaseema and its neighbourhood.

Nellore, Chittoor, Kadapa, Krishna, Prakasam and East Godavari districts received heavy to extremely heavy rainfall at more than 177 places, according to the State Disaster Management Authority.

Most of the places in the state received moderate to heavy rainfall under Nivar's impact.

Winds with a speed of 45-65 kmph lashed Nellore and Chittoor districts bordering Tamil Nadu.

Tirumala Hills, the abode of Lord Venkateswara, has been receiving almost continuous rain since Wednesday, causing a lot of hardship to hundreds of devotees stranded there.

2



Jagan takes stock of Nivar impact on State

VIJAYAWADA: Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Thursday directed officials to take all necessary measures to minimise the impact of Cyclone Nivar on the State. Chairing a review meeting at his camp office here, the Chief Minister ordered officials to support the family of a person who died due to electric shock in Nellore district. He asked officials to enumerate damage to crops after the cyclone-induced rains stop and to be ready to provide immediate relief. The officials briefed the Chief Minister about the impact



of cyclone and heavy rains. They said Cyclone Nivar made landfall and the intensity was decreasing. Erpedu, Srikalahasti, Satyavedu of Chittoor district and the whole of Nellore district witnessed heavy rainfall and rains battered

some parts of YSR Kadapa and Anantapur districts. Nellore district received an average rainfall of 7 cm. The CMO officials said there would be inflow into Penna River while the Somasila project was full to the brim and water would be released depending upon the inflows. There has been crop damage at some places and damage assessment will be done as soon as the rains subside, the officials informed the Chief Minister, adding that steps were being taken to rescue those trapped near the Mallemadugu Reservoir in Renigunta.

2

Electricity dept
remains on
high alert

VIJAYAWADA: In view of heavy rainfall in parts of the State due to cyclone Nivar, Energy Secretary Srikanth Nagulapalli on Thursday alerted officials to be cautious and prepared to face any eventuality. The Energy Secretary took stock of situation and discussed with CMDs of power discoms — S Nagalakshmi, H Haranatha Rao, J Padma Janardhana Reddy and K Praveen Kumar, grid and transmission management, APTRANSCO and senior engineers asked them to remain alert and take all necessary measures in advance. Officials of SPDCL informed the secretary that power infrastructure, including 33 kv lines (154 km), 11 kv lines (426 km), seventy five 33 kv poles, six hundred 11 kv poles, 400 LT poles were damaged in 57 mandals due to the cyclone. The SPDCL staff have restored infrastructure in 38 mandals and the cost of damage was estimated Rs 1.21 crore. There were no considerable damages of equipment in the jurisdiction of EPDCL and CPDCL. Srikanth said that Energy Minister Balineni Srinivasa Reddy enquired about the preparedness of the department and asked to closely watch the situation and keep all staff from village to State level alert to face any eventuality.

2

Rayalaseema gets more rainfall than coastal AP

SUMIT ONKA
■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The generally drought-prone districts in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh have received more rains than the coastal districts.

The state has recorded 1,000 mm rainfall against the normal of 824 mm with 20 percent excess rainfall.

After a bountiful monsoon, Cyclone Nivar has brought to some parts of the State more rainfall than to other regions. Chittoor recorded 31.8

percent excess rain than normal while Kadapa and Kurnool 57 percent and 49.4 percent excess respectively from this June. Anantapur also received 46.6 percent surplus rains.

Among the coastal districts, the highest surplus rainfall of 36 percent was recorded in West Godavari.

In sharp contrast, Rayalaseema most of the time figures on the list of the driest regions in the country.

2

CM moots third
port for Vizag
district at Rambilli

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The state government is believed to be seriously contemplating developing a port near Rambilli in Visakhapatnam district.

The district already has two ports — one owned by the Union Government, and Gangavaram, the other one, is privately owned. If the idea of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy takes shape, Visakhapatnam will have a third port at Rambilli, 50 km from Vizag city.

While reviewing industries and ports projects in the state on Thursday, Jagan had directed the officials to look into the possibilities of building a port in Rambilli area so that it would reduce the pressure on the Visakhapatnam port and also reduce pollution.

The move comes in the backdrop of citizen's groups often raising the issue of pollution caused by Vizag port close to the city as it handled 'dirty/dusty cargo'.

There have been demands that the pollution-causing dusty cargo handling be shifted to a faraway place by developing a new port, similar to how the Chennai port shifted its dirty/dusty cargo handling to Kamarajar port in Ennore.

However, past experiences show that it won't be so easy for the state government to push its idea to develop a port at Rambilli.

Earlier, the Indian Navy was said to have objected to a proposal for developing a

Ramayapatnam,
Bhavanapadu
port tenders
by December 15

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Work on developing three ports in the State is expected to begin in the coming year. Officials, during a review meeting held on Thursday, informed Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy that they would finalise tenders and hand over the works of Ramayapatnam port by December 15 and works would begin in February next year (2021).

An estimated 15 Million Tonnes Per Annum (MTPA) of cargo would be handled with four berths in the first phase at Ramayapatnam Port. The officials said they would finalise tenders and hand over the works of Bhavanapadu port by December 15 and works would begin in March next.

2

major port near Nakkapalli close to Rambilli, which has strategic importance.

The Navy is developing an alternative naval base 'Naval Alternative Operations Base' in Rambilli that will house its nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers in the years to come.

2

Cops break up farmers'
march on Delhi

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Police on Thursday used water cannons and tear gas shells to disperse thousands of farmers marching towards New Delhi in a protest against legislation they fear would end price support for their produce, officials said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has defended the bills enacted in September as a way to rid the vast agricul-

ture sector of antiquated procurement procedures and to allow farmers to sell to institutional buyers and big international retailers. But farm groups in the northern state of Punjab said the government was trying to end a decades-old policy of providing them with an assured minimum price for producing staples, such as wheat and rice, and turning India into a food surplus nation.

2

Assembly winter
sessions from Nov 30

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The winter sessions of the State Legislature — the Assembly and Legislative Council will commence from November 30. State Legislature Secretary B Balakrishnamacharyulu on Thursday issued the notification on convening of the fifth session of the 15th State Assembly on November 30 at 9 am.

The session is likely to be held for five days. However, Assembly Speaker Tammineni Sitaram is expected to take a decision on the duration of the session and also the agenda at the Business Advisory Council

(BAC) meeting that will be held on Monday, November 3.

The Government plans to introduce several Bills for enactment in both the Houses. Opposition parties had already started criticising the government, saying that the winter session has been convened only to pass the Bills while not enough time is being allowed for any meaningful debates or discussions on people centric issues.

Meanwhile, the State Cabinet will meet on Friday and may discuss the Bills to be introduced in the ensuing winter session and also the strategy for Covid vaccination programme.

Vizag soon to be home to Rare Earth Magnet plant

SNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

Vizag will soon be home to yet another strategically important, and also India's first-of-its-kind, Rare Earth Permanent Magnet (REPM) plant that will produce Samarium Cobalt (SmCo).

The REPM plant will come up in the Vizag campus of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC). The proposed REPM production facilities by state-run Indian Rare Earths Ltd (IREL) will be of strategic importance to the nation and is a Make-in-India initiative.

SmCo magnets are used by the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), defence and space sectors due to their superior properties for strategic



purposes. To establish REPM plant to produce 3 Tonnage Per Annum (TPA) SmCo magnets a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) under DAE was formed and Indian Rare Earth Ltd (IREL) is the management agent of the SPV.

IREL had recently received environmental clearance for REPM project from Ministry of Environment, Forests (MoEF) and M/s MECON Limited, Bengaluru has been appointed as consulting firm for detailed engineering. Work

As per a market analysis, the global permanent magnets market size was valued at USD 20.74 billion in 2019

The value is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.9 pc from 2020 to 2027.

has also commenced.

IREL's REPM plant is coming up based on the technology developed by Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) and Defence Research Laboratory (DMRL), Hyderabad.

IREL has also entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with BARC, DMRL and International Advanced Research Centre for powder metallurgy and new material (ARI) for development of rare earth permanent magnet rings.

While DMRL has the necessary technology for production of rare earth magnets, BARC has developed the technology for manufacturing RE Phosphors.

Noticeably Japan and India have reached a basic agreement to jointly develop rare earths, used in the production of several high-tech goods from weapons to cell phones.

2

Capital account
convertibility will
continue: Das

8

'Need strong police
force to prevent
terror attacks'

5

Gushing torrents in
Seshachalam
ranges are a prayer
answered

2

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Kartik & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam

Tithi: Dwadashi 07:45 am

Nakshatram: Ashwini 12:22 am (Next Day)

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

Rahukalam: 10:40 am — 12:03 pm

Yamagandam: 02:49 pm — 04:12 pm

Varjyam: 07:52 pm — 09:40 pm

Gulika: 07:54 am — 09:17 am

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 04:16 pm — 06:04 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:41 am — 12:25 pm

VIJAYAWADA
WEATHER

Forecast: Rain
Temp: 24/21
Humidity: 96%
Sunrise: 06:27 am
Sunset: 05:39 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated November 26, 2020 5:00 PM

Investors wait, watch as AP delays unveiling new IT policy

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Even as the Adani Integrated Data Centre Park takes shape after the State Government allotting land in Vizag, inordinate delay in launching of the IT Policy-2020-24 is forcing investors to adopt a wait-and-watch approach.

The AP IT Policy, AP Electronic Policy, Innovation and Start-up Policy framed in 2014 lapsed in 2020.

Moreover, the incentives promised by the previous regime are yet to be released to the IT sector.

In a recent industrial meeting organised in Vizag, senior leaders in the YSRCP Government said “the draft is ready and it’s just a matter of time before the policy is unveiled”.

The State Government had earlier issued a GO pertaining to release of incentives to IT units in January this year. A ‘Consultative Committee on Information Technology



Industry (CCITI)’ would be formed with the representatives of IT/Electronics industry and the other stakeholders, the government had said, adding that the CCITI would administer the release of incentives in a speedy, time-bound and transparent manner.

The pending incentive amount would amount to around Rs 50 crore for the IT industry.

IT Association of AP (ITAAP) member RL Narayana said: “What we see is that the IT units are eagerly waiting for the incentives as

promised by the TDP government and also the assurance of the incumbent government in January. Besides, all eyes are on the final draft of the new IT policy. Investors would be definitely willing to see the policy first before playing their investment card.

AP IT department had invited IT Association of Andhra Pradesh and other stakeholders in order to elicit suggestions for the drafting of IT policy, he added. Narayana opined that the state government bring the new IT Policy complementing the benefits announced for the IT sector in the Union Budget-2020-21.

“IT/ITes units in Andhra Pradesh are upbeat over the plan of the state government to make Vizag executive capital. Executive Capital tag would give a fillip to the IT ecosystem in Visakhapatnam. IT units would always evince interest to set up their shops close to the power corridor,” he said.

Andhra Pradesh topped in the country in generating BPO and IT-enabled services under India BPO Promotion Scheme (IBPS) initiated by the Union Government’s body Software Technology Parks of India (STPI), he said, adding that the executive capital tag would further spur its growth.

Ramayapatnam, Bhavanapadu port tenders...

Continued from Page 1

An estimated 25 MTPA of cargo would be handled with four berths in first phase in the Bhavanapadu port and hand over works of Machilipatnam port would be by February 15 next year (2021) and works would begin in April next. Also, 26 MTPA of cargo would be handled with six berths in the first phase in Machilipatnam port, the officials said.

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy said that priority should be given to construction of ports and fishing harbours.

He listed as priority projects the construction of three ports and eight fishing harbours, development of Kopparthi industrial Cluster,

Bhogapuram airport, construction of beach road from Bhogapuram airport to Visakhapatnam City, construction of Metro Rail at Visakhapatnam and supplying drinking water from Polavaram to Visakhapatnam through pipeline.

He asked the officials to prepare a DPR for Polavaram - Visakhapatnam drinking water supply project.

The Chief Minister said Bhavanapadu, Machilipatnam and Ramayapatnam ports should be completed within two and half years.

The officials explained the development of works at Achuthapuram cluster and Nakkapalli Cluster of Vishakhapatnam Node in Visakhapatnam - Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC).

They explained the activities in Srikalahasti and Erpedu nodes and stressed the necessity of Air Cargo.

The Chief Minister directed the officials to focus on developing air cargo facilities at Tirupati, Nellore and Kadapa airports.

The officials explained the progress of works in Orvakalu node. The Chief Minister said that industries should use desalination water as much as possible and added that desalination water costs only Rs 0.04 per litre and it would save drinking water. The Chief Minister instructed them to set up Sewage Sanitation Centres (SPTs) in industrial corridors and industrial areas to ensure groundwater is not polluted due to effluents released from industries.

Nivar brings widespread rainfall; AP escapes relatively

Continued from Page 1

In Nellore district, among the worst hit places in AP, at least 3,363 people were shifted to 115 relief camps from vulnerable areas, according to district Collector Chakradhar Babu. The Swarnamukhi river in SPS Nellore district was in spate while the Somasila reservoir received an inflow of 65,000 cusecs. Sandbags were placed at several places to divert the flood waters.

Holidays have been declared for educational institutions till Monday.

NDRF personnel rescued two farmers, while another went missing after they were trapped in floodwaters in Chittoor district. The incident occurred at Diksha in Yerpedu mandal.



Mallemadugu reservoir is in spate due to the Cyclone Nivar induced heavy rainfall. The farmers were caught in the floodwaters.

In a picture going viral, the

farmers are seen holding on to branches of trees to save themselves. Timely action by the police, fire brigadiers and the NDRF team helped rescue the farmers.

CM moots third port for Vizag district at Rambilli

Continued from Page 1

Vizag is already headquarters of Eastern Naval Command (ENC).

In the past, the AP government, under the Centre’s Maritime Agenda of 2010-20, had approached the Union Government for a second major port to tap the foreign trade potential the State’s 972 km-long coastline offers. The Visakhapatnam port is the only major port in the state.

Three places were shortlisted for the proposed port, Nakkapalli in Vizag district, Ramayapatnam in Prakasam district and Dugarajapatnam in Nellore district.

The high-level committee appointed by the Union Government visited three places in 2013 and submitted its report to the Centre recommending Ramayapatnam though Nakkapalli close to Rambilli is technically feasible.



Rayalaseema gets...

Continued from Page 1

The drought-prone Rayalaseema region — Kurnool, Kadapa, Anantapur, Chittoor — is known as the rain-shadow area after receiving good rainfall.

The eastern parts of south peninsular India, south of 16 degrees north latitude, do not get enough rain, as they are shielded by the Western Ghats

and hence they are called ‘rain shadow areas’. Rayalaseema also comes under the area.

When the moisture-laden monsoon doesn’t always bring any rains to this region, absence of any sea system and the east-west shear wind moving towards the north and not along the Rayalaseema region (below 13 degrees of the latitude) adds to its woes.



Kanchikamakoti Peetham head pontiff Swamy Vijayendra Saraswathi at Tulasi Vivaham held at Vasantha Mandapam atop Tirumala temple of Lord Venkateswara on Thursday

Pontiff extols virtues of Tulasi plant

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Tulasi Vivaham is observed for the well being of all living beings in the universe, Sri Sri Sri Vijayendra Saraswathi Swamy of Kanchikamakoti Peetham said on Thursday, after gracing the celestial fete conducted at Vasantha Mandapam.

The pontiff said that Tulasi Vivaham occupies an important place in the Hindu Sanatana Dharma.

“In the life cycle of a human being, the marital phase has a significant role to play. Tulsi has got both the spiritual and medicinal values in it. Hence, Tulasi (basil) is considered the most sacred plant in every Hindu household. Women offer regular pujas to the tulasi plant with utmost reverence seeking prosperity and longevity of their husband’s life,” he added.

Later he appreciated the Karthika Masa Deeksha programme organised by TTD authorities in Vasantha Mandapam and said these activities will glorify Hindu Sanatana Dharma.

Earlier, the pontiff participated in Tulasi Dhaatri Sahita Damodara Archanam, Kalyanam and Puja programmes. The idols of the deities were brought to Vasantha Mandapam and Agama Advisor Mohana Rangacharyulu explained the importance of the day.

Later, the celestial wedding was performed to the Tulasi and Amla plant.

An idol of Goddess

Tulasi was the special attraction. TTD additional EO AV Dharma Reddy, Agama Advisor Sundaravaran, chief priest Venugopala Deekshitulu and others were present.

Gushing torrents in Seshachalam ranges are a prayer answered



Priests performing special pujas to Chakraatheertham in Tirumala on the occasion of Chakraatheerth Muktoti on Thursday. A team of archakas, temple staff performed the celestial puja to the holy waters by offering turmeric, vermillion, flowers and Harati.

Among the important torrents located in the lush green hills of Seshachalam ranges, Chakraatheertham is considered to be on the most sacred theerthams located in Tirumala.

Due to incessant rainfalls from the past two days, the Chakraatheertham is gushing.

As the Chakraatheertham Muktoti fell on Thursday, a team of archakas and temple staff performed special prayers to the holy waters by offering turmeric, vermillion, flowers and Harati. After many years, this torrent is in its full swing during its Muktoti.

Meanwhile, all five dams in Tirumala are brimming with water and the TTD authorities have lifted the gates of Gogarbham and Papavinasanam dams.

In the last 24 hours, starting from 8 am of Wednesday,

rainfall recorded in Papavinasanam is 313mm (697.14 FRL) as against its capacity of 698.85 FRL at Gogarbham - 247 mm (2894 FRL and its full to its capacity), Akasaganga is 176 mm (865 FRL and it is also brimming) while at Kumaradhara and Pasupudhara, the rainfall recorded was 155 mm each (capacity of the dams is 898.24 FRL and both are full).

The beauty of the Seven Hills enhanced with the torrents flashing out at different points both in up and down ghat roads due to the nonstop downpour in the last two days providing a cynosure to the visiting pilgrims and denizens. The Malavadi Gundem, Pancha Theerthams, Kapilartheertham are seen gushing from the top of the mountains due to the non-stop rains of the last two days.

Electricity dept remains on...

Continued from Page 1

“Senior officials in Rayalaseema and parts of South Coastal Andhra should be on high alert as these areas may be hit by heavy rains and gales,” the Minister said.

Srikant asked officials to keep the staff and officials in the districts of Chittoor, YSR Kadapa, Nellore and Prakasam districts as the IMD

forecasted heavy rains to extremely heavy rains in those four districts and strong surface winds with 50 to 60 kms in Chittoor district.

He said that the officials need to ensure men and material required are kept ready at strategic locations to meet any eventuality and for rectification of works in case of any breakdown.



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GOLD	
₹ 49,760 (10 gm)	
SILVER	
₹ 64,000 (1kg)	
₹ 200	

CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
Dressed/With Skin	₹158
Without Skin	₹180
Broiler at Farm	₹109

EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	438
HYDERABAD	420
VISAKHAPATNAM	435
RETAIL PRICE	₹4.38

HC pulls up TS Govt for low testing

■ Court had directed 50K tests per day

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Thursday issued contempt notice against a senior state health official for not complying with its order that 50,000 COVID diagnostic tests be conducted daily and one lakh tests once a week.

Hearing a batch of PILs on COVID pandemic, a division bench, headed by Chief Justice Raghuvendra Singh Chauhan, issued the notice to Director of Public Health Dr G Srinivasa Rao asking him to explain within two weeks why contempt proceedings should not be initiated against him for not

complying with its orders.

The official submitted before the court that testing was being done for the people coming to the testing centres and that they cannot compel a citizen to be screened for the virus.

The court said the tests were not conducted as per its directions and it was nothing but contempt as it asked him to explain.

It further directed the state government to increase the number of RT-PCR labs from existing 17 to 23 and also to increase the number of mobile testing vans and the area covered by them.

Vizag soon to be home to Rare Earth Magnet plant

Continued from Page 1

“Presently India is dependent on the imports of Rare Earth value added products. Dependence on import of these SmCo magnets will impede our country’s growth in atomic energy, defence, space and other strategic sectors. This project is first of its kind in the country and the technology for RE metal alloy (SmCo5) and RE Permanent Magnet (SmCo5 & Sm2Co17) have been developed by BARC and DMRL indigenously,” said Environmental Clearance (EC) copy issued by MoEF.

The REPM Plant will come up in a 2.92 acre plot in

■ Key factors driving the permanent magnets market growth include increasing demand for electronics, such as computers, laptops, music systems, televisions, and smartphones.

■ The medical industry is a vital segment of the market and with increasing Covid-19 cases across the globe, the demand for ventilators is rising significantly, which is boosting the market growth

BARC’s Vizag campus.

SmCo magnets have superior qualities in terms of high magnetic strength, corrosion resistance, device miniaturisa-

tion capability and stability at high temperatures. This IREL Plant will supply the SmCo magnets in a continuous manner of various strategic projects. Product output of the project will be fully utilised by DAE/DMRL to meet the strategic needs of the country. REPM are essentially required by India for meeting strategic objectives pertaining to the Atomic Energy programme.

Apart from its usage in strategic applications, SmCo and other REPM products like Ferrite, Neodymium Iron Boron (NdFeB) and Aluminium Nickel Cobalt (Alnico) have the good market world over for their commercial usage.

State keeps recording low positivity rate

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Despite almost the same number of tests being conducted daily, Covid-19 positive cases continue to stay around the thousand cases mark, indicating a declining infection and positivity rate.

A total of 1,031 new Covid-19 cases were reported in Andhra Pradesh on Thursday, taking the gross to 8,65,705. The lowest one-day spike of just 21 infections was recorded in Kurnool district. The death toll increased to 6,970 with eight more people succumbing to the virus.

After 98.55 lakh samples

tests so far, the overall infection positivity rate in the state declined to 8.78 per cent.

According to the latest media bulletin released by the State Command Control Room, 67,269 samples were tested in the 24 hours ending Thursday 9 am.

Guntur district registered the highest number of cases (172), followed by Krishna (162), West Godavari (126), East Godavari (117) and Chittoor district reported 102 cases. Less than 100 people tested Covid-19 positive in eight districts of the state on Thursday.

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JAGAN DOING FULL JUSTICE TO THE CONSTITUTION, SAY YSRCP LEADERS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP supremo and Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Thursday paid rich tributes to Dr BR Ambedkar to mark the National Constitution Day, at his camp office here. Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy, Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney, MP Nandigam Suresh, MLA Meruga Nagarjuna and several high-ranking officials were present. At the YSRCP's central office, TTD chairman YV Subba Reddy said that India has become a great democratic nation due to the efforts of BR Ambedkar who authored a Constitution that guarantees fundamental rights to all citizens.

Drawing inspiration from the Constitution, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has been working towards social justice by implementing various welfare schemes in the most transparent manner, Subba Reddy said. He went on to criticise the previous TDP government, accusing it of having violated the Constitution by inducting members of the opposition party into the State cabinet.

Referring to TDP leaders, he said that some are still going against the Constitution by trying to influence the constitutional bodies and managing the systems.

Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharita said that that Ambedkar had worked to eradicate untouchability in the country and thus brought the Constitution that safeguards the interests of the weaker sections and supports people of backward classes.

She said that the Chief Minister had given a place in the Cabinet to all sections,



besides implementing 50 per cent reservation to women.

The government is moving ahead with a number of welfare

schemes to ensure that all sections get benefited in accordance with the Constitution

and emerge as a role model for other states in the country.

Reiterating that the State government is working on the lines of BR Ambedkar ideology, Minister for Education Adimulapu Suresh said that the public has witnessed the land scam in Amaravati and now with Supreme Court order, they feel that justice has been done. The government is dedicated to provide transparent governance leaving no scope for corruption, he added.

Police dept has surrendered to political bosses: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national general secretary and former minister Nara Lokesh on Thursday accused the Guntur Urban police of acting against the interests of the SCs and Dalit communities by making wrongful arrests and using intimidation tactics against them.

Lokesh alleged that the police wrongfully arrested TDP activist Maniratnam on charges of making a post on social media about the Ponnur MLA.

The ruling party was afraid of the TDP cadres and such arrests reflected the cowardly activities of the government, he said.

In a statement here on Thursday, Lokesh said that instead of doing justice to the aggrieved party, the police were taking action that would harm the SCs.

"If the Guntur Urban SP had any courage, he should



make public the CCTV footage at the Pedakakani police station to ascertain whether Maniratnam was arrested or not," he said.

Lokesh released a photograph of the released Maniratnam at the police station.

Earlier, the former minister slammed the ruling party leaders for trying to grab the hotel and the site belonging to a poor BC woman at Satuluru in Chilakaluripeta assembly constituency.

The YSRCP leaders set their sights on the property of a lonely woman who had to earn her livelihood for protecting her two children.

Nara Lokesh demanded immediate action against the ruling party leaders who were harassing the hapless woman and saving their family.

The ongoing atrocities revealed how the common people had no security and right to live under the present atrocious regime.

Constitution Day celebrated in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As a part of 71st Constitution Day celebrations, Naval personnel of Indian Navy Ships, submarines, Naval Air Stations and shore Establishments and Defence Civilians of Eastern Naval Command joined the Nation in celebrating the Constitution Day by reading of the Preamble and the Fundamental Duties enshrined in the Constitution on Thursday.

The Visakhapatnam Port Trust (VPT) to celebrate Constitution Day on Thursday. On the occasion President Ram Nath Kovind administered Constitution Day Pledge.

K. Rama Mohana Rao, IAS, Chairman, Visakhapatnam Port Trust (VPT), along with Secretary and other department heads participated and took pledge virtually at Administration Office Building, VPT.



Simultaneously, the Deputy HoDs along with staff administered pledge in their respective departments.

Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University (DSNLU) Vice-Chancellor, Prof S. Surya Prakash read out the Preamble of Indian Constitution and all the staff followed him. Prof. Bhavani Prasad Panda, in-charge registrar of the University, Academic Director Dr Dayananda Murthy, teaching and non-teaching members were present.

Non-stop attacks on Constitution under Jagan rule, alleges Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national president and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday paid rich tributes to Dr BR Ambedkar and other stalwarts on the occasion of Constitution Day being celebrated across the country.

Naidu recalled the outstanding services rendered by our forefathers in laying strong foundations to the vibrant Indian democracy which became an inspiration for many other countries in the world.

"Unfortunately, it's painful to see Andhra Pradesh becoming a stage for the non-stop violations of the Constitution and unchecked atrocities against all sections of citizens," he said.

The TDP chief deplored that all the four pillars of democracy - legislature, executive, judiciary and the media - are under threat in the present regime.

"It's the responsibility of every citizen to protect these institutions from the chaotic forces. Those who had to



uphold the spirit of the Constitution were undermining it, which was highly unpardonable. However well placed they may be, everybody should abide by the Constitution," Naidu added.

Extending his greetings on the 71st Constitution Day to all Telugu people, Naidu said liberty, freedom and fraternity were the foundations of a democracy.

"It's painful that in AP, all dissenting voices are being suppressed, the media muzzled, fundamental rights trampled upon and false cases and illegal detentions resorted to. The flagrant violation of

Constitutional rights was evident from how the atrocities cases were booked against the SCs themselves," the former chief minister said.

The TDP chief expressed concern that the farmers were handcuffed even as joint suicides were committed, unable to bear harassment from the ruling party leaders.

"Gang rapes and attacks on the Opposition have become the order of the day. The general public should strongly oppose the suppression of the aspirations and hopes of our elders for shaping a bright future for the young generations," he observed.

Maoist leader killed in exchange of fire

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In an exchange of fire between security personnel and the Naxalites along the Andhra-Odisha border, a Maoist leader was killed and another injured in Malkangiri on Thursday.

Based on credible information about the movement of the Reds, BSF jawans launched a combing operation at Jantri forest in Swabhimana Anchal, a remote place in Malkangiri, said Malkangiri Sp Rishikesh Khilari.

The security personnel retaliated to the firing, killing one of the rebels on the spot.

One Naxalite suffered injuries, while the rest managed to flee the scene, Khilari said. The dead Maoist has been identified as Kishor.

Police intensified combing operations in the area to flush out left wing extremists from Swabhimana Anchal.

Odisha DGP Abhay tweeted, "There was an exchange of fire between security forces and Maoists today in Swabhimana Anchal. The body of a Maoist with an AK 47 has been recovered and one injured Maoist is being evacuated. Security force personnel are safe. Well done security forces (sic)".

18-yr-old killed in mishap

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A teenager died in a road accident at Punjagutta on Wednesday morning.

The victim identified as Zaheer Ali Khan, 18, a resident of Old Malakpet was going on a motorcycle along with his cousin Abbas Mirza.

When they reached the Raj Bhavan road, the bike skidded and they fell on the road. Both of them sustained injuries and were rushed to a hospital where Zaheer was pronounced dead by the doctors. Abbas escaped with minor injuries.

Offsite mock drill for Ammonia gas leak organised in Mulagada

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Coromandel International Limited on Thursday arranged an off-site emergency mock drill on ammonia toxic gas release scenario at Mulagada village, in the vicinity of the company, as per the instructions of district Collector V. Vinay Chand.

For the last one week, emergency preparedness awareness creation activities were being carried out for Mulagada and nearby villages involving village leaders, village secretaries at staff and volunteers.

These included team interaction, display banners on Do's and Don'ts in local language and also extensive cognisance through audio visuals display by mobile vehicle.

As part of the Mock Drill, at

Precautions

- Wet cloth to be used as mask
- Move perpendicular to the wind direction
- Move to the ground floor and

- not to move upstairs.
- If not close all doors and windows stay inside the house until rescue arrives.

3.25 pm, Ammonia release scenario was postulated in the plant premises which in turn led to an offsite emergency in nearby Mulagada village. Ambulances and fire tender reached the incident spot from Coromandel.

As part of mutual aid, ambulances and fire tender from Andhra Petrochemicals Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited and also St. Ann's Hospital aided in rescue operations.

Mulagada residents were evacuated by Coromandel res-

cue team to the nearest assembly point.

Departments from district crisis group and government officials from Police, village secretariat team and Non-Governmental Organisations participated in the mock drill.

J Siva Shankar Reddy, Joint Chief Inspector of Factories lauded Coromandel for conducting off site mock drill in a systematic manner and creating very good awareness to the community members through their various awareness programmes.

Realtors optimistic as interest in realty picks up

C PRADEEP KUMAR
■ VIJAYAWADA

About a year after the State Government revealed the proposal to decentralise administration, the realty sector in Krishna district, particularly Vijayawada city and its peripheral areas, is witnessing potential investors.

However, while the number of people going around the lands put up for sale has increased, this has not yet translated into sales.

For about the last one month now, increased footfall is being seen at real estate ventures and gated communities in and around Vijayawada. The realty sector had collapsed last December after the announcement of the three capitals by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

Perhaps it's because of the fluctuating markets or perhaps its return of investor confidence, but a drive around the peripheries of the city shows that the number of cars zooming in and out of real estate ventures has increased.

"After lockdown, registration activity restarted on July 14, the date announced by the Centre for 'Unlock'. However, there is



not much difference in the number of registrations per month before lockdown after 'Unlock,' said K Srinivas, Registrar, Gandhi Nagar Sub-Registrar office.

He said that on average 800 registrations are being done at the office per month during the last two months. "This is about 10 per cent less compared to last year," Srinivas said.

Then what explains the increase in footfalls to real estate ventures?

It may have to do with the

buzz about the increase in the number of districts in AP, possibly to 26 from the present 13. An official announcement is expected in January and if the State Government does go ahead with the plan, the reorganisation will come into effect from January 26.

"People are optimistic that smaller districts would lead to a real estate boom. However, no one is quite sure if this would happen, but investor interest has been piqued," said a realtor.

The possibility that Krishna district, that has its headquarters in Machilipatnam, will be carved into two and Vijayawada district would come into being is enough for some potential buyers. They may not be willing to invest in real estate right now, but they are more than willing to go about and identify some parcel of land that they believe would pay dividends in the long term.

Even landowners in the towns and villages surrounding

Vijayawada city are optimistic and many are planning real estate ventures and gated township ventures.

Earlier, after the announcement of three capital for the State — with Visakhapatnam as the executive capital, Amaravati as administrative capital and Kurnool as judicial capital — the real estate business in and around Amaravati came to a standstill. Covid-19 pandemic pushed it into a deeper crisis.

Realtors are hoping that the good old days return soon.

Varsha Construction and Developers CEO D Swarupa Ponnari said that after lifting of the lockdown, business is slowly picking up. "All through November, we had some good enquiries from potential customers. More people are expressing interest. It's only a matter of time before this translates into deals," Ponnari said.

D Ratnakar, a financier, said that in the present circumstances, it's better to invest in land than lending money on interest. He said that even FDs in banks are not safe these days as some banks have pulled down their shutters.

'We Love Reading' campaign launched; to focus on students

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Education Adimulapu Suresh launched the 'We Love Reading' campaign at Venkateswara Vignana mandiram in Guntur here on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has laid special focus on inculcating the habit of reading among the students and thus introduced the campaign.

'We Love Reading', a one-year reading fluency campaign takes place in four phases - Preparatory, Foundation, Advanced and Valedictory - to improve the reading skills of children from Classes III to IX.

Speaking on the occasion, Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharita urged students to inculcate the habit of reading books and newspapers on a daily basis to gain knowledge and build personality. She said that the government pri-

oritised the education sector and implemented various welfare schemes like Amma Vodi, Vidhya Kanuka, Vasati Deevana, Vidhya Deevana and was also bringing a new vibe to state-run schools through Nadu-Nedu.

The campaign aims at transforming non-readers to readers by cultivating the habit of reading.

We Love Reading campaign focuses on developing foundational literacy skills both conceptual and skill-based knowledge among students and intends to build advanced skills after the foundation.

The advanced skills include phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, reading fluency, vocabulary among others. Awareness will be created on using e-books and digital libraries wherever infrastructure is available.

The main activities to be taken up in this campaign are, classroom reading, school book bank, community reading centre, reading festivals

and most importantly providing two library periods, one for Telugu reading and the other is for English.

As part of classroom reading, a reading corner with all the available library books and reading cards will be made available in each classroom. Similarly with school book banks, where books of all kinds will be collected from teachers, students and even donors, for reading.

The programme is based on a survey provided by ASER data which says that 77.6 percent of third standards and 52.2 percent of fifth standard students are not able to read class two books and speaks about how the reading skills have deteriorated over a period of time.

So far, about 45,359 schools registered under the Readers Clubs and 72 percent of these schools have libraries. The existing school libraries and available village libraries will be strengthened and utilised for this initiative.

6 States/UTs contributed 60.72% of 44,489 fresh COVID cases: HM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union health ministry on Thursday said 60.72 per cent of the 44,489 fresh COVID-19 cases registered in a span of 24 hours have been contributed by six states and UTs, with Kerala leading the tally followed by Maharashtra, Delhi, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

It said 60.50 per cent of the 524 latest fatalities are concentrated in six states and Union territories—Delhi, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.

Kerala leads the tally with 6,491 new COVID-19 cases registered in a span of 24 hours, while Maharashtra has reported 6,159 new cases followed by Delhi with 5,246



new cases.

Delhi with 99 deaths reported the maximum new fatalities. Maharashtra saw a fatality count of 65 followed by West Bengal with 51 deaths, the ministry said.

India's present active

COVID-19 caseload at 4,52,344 is 4.88 per cent of the total coronavirus cases, and has been sustained below the 5 per cent mark.

According to the ministry, 65 per cent of the active cases are in eight states and UTs

which have contributed to the maximum daily new cases and deaths. It said 61 per cent of the total COVID-19 deaths are concentrated in these eight states/UTs.

The case fatality rates of Punjab (3.16 per cent), Maharashtra (2.60 per cent), West Bengal (1.75 per cent) and Delhi (1.60 per cent) are higher than the national average of 1.46 per cent, the ministry said.

Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Kerala have a case fatality rate of 1.43 per cent, 1.02 per cent, 0.87 per cent and 0.37 per cent, respectively.

Delhi has 29,169 COVID-19 cases per million followed by Kerala with 16,201 cases, Maharashtra with 14,584 and

Haryana with 7,959 cases per million population.

Their cases per million figures are higher as compared to the national average of 6,715.

The total COVID-19 recovered cases in India are nearing 87 lakh (86,79,138) and the national recovery rate stands at 93.66 per cent. A total of 36,367 recoveries have been registered in a span of 24 hours in the country, the ministry said. Fifteen states and UTs have a recovery rate more than the national average, it said.

India's COVID-19 caseload increased to 92.66 lakh with 44,489 new infections being reported in a day, while the death toll climbed to 1,35,223 with 524 new fatalities, the ministry data updated at 8 am on Thursday showed.

Nivar weakens into cyclonic storm

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The severe cyclonic storm Nivar weakened into a cyclonic storm over coastal Tamil Nadu and it is set to further weaken into a deep depression, the India Meteorological Department said on Thursday. "Severe cyclonic storm Nivar weakened into a cyclonic storm over north coastal Tamil Nadu. The cyclonic storm Nivar would continue to move north-westwards and weaken further into a deep depression during next 06 hours and into a depression by subsequent 06 hours," the IMD said on its twitter handle. Very severe cyclonic storm



Nivar made landfall near Puducherry in the wee hours of today even as heavy rains lashed Tamil Nadu and the union territory leading to

inundation and uprooting of trees. Nivar also weakened into a severe cyclonic storm after it crossed coast near Puducherry.

India has highest bribery rate in Asia

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has the highest bribery rate in Asia and the most number of people who use personal connections to access public services, according to a new report by corruption watchdog Transparency International.

The Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) – Asia, found that nearly 50 per cent of those who paid bribes were asked to, while 32 per cent of those who used personal connections said they would not receive the service otherwise.

The report is based upon the survey which was conducted between June 17 and July 17 this year in India with a sample size of 2,000.

"With the highest bribery rate (39 per cent) in the region, India also has the highest rate of people using personal connections to access public services (46 per cent)," the report said.

Bribery in public services continues to plague India. Slow and complicated bureaucratic process, unnecessary



red tape and unclear regulatory frameworks force citizens to seek out alternate solutions to access basic services through networks of familiarity and petty corruption, the report said.

"Both national and state governments need to streamline administrative processes for public services, implement preventative measures to combat bribery and nepotism, and invest in user-friendly online platforms to deliver essential public services quickly and effectively," the report said.

Although reporting cases of corruption is critical to curbing the spread, a majority of citizens in India (63 per cent) think that if they report corruption, they will suffer retaliation, it said.

Haryana sets up panel to draft law on 'love jihad'

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana's Home Minister Anil Vij on Thursday said the state government has set up a three-member committee to draft a law against "love jihad", a term used by BJP leaders to describe religious conversions in the guise of marriage.

The minister's statement comes days after the Uttar Pradesh government cleared a draft ordinance against conversion through force or fraudulent means.

But even before the UP ordinance was cleared, Vij had announced that a committee was being set up in Haryana to frame a new law.

The Haryana committee will also study laws enacted by other states on the issue, Vij said.

He tweeted that the "drafting committee formed to frame law on love jihad" in Haryana will be made up of state Home Secretary T L Satyaprakash, Additional Director General of Police Navdeep Singh Virk and Additional Advocate General



Deepak Manchanda.

Earlier this month, Vij had told the Haryana Assembly that the state government is considering a law against "love jihad" and has sought information from Himachal Pradesh.

The Himachal Pradesh Assembly had passed a bill last year against conversion by force, inducement or through a marriage solemnised for the "sole purpose" of adopting a new religion.

The minister was then replying to a calling attention motion in the House on the murder of a young woman in

Ballabhgarh.

"Anyone can marry anyone, anyone can fall in love with anyone. But if there is a conspiracy for changing religion by trapping someone in love, then it is very important to stop that conspiracy. We will take whatever steps are required," he had said.

Recently, he also praised the Yogi Adityanath-led BJP government in Uttar Pradesh for approving a draft ordinance to deal with religious conversion for the sake of marriage, which could land violators in jail for up to 10 years if the woman is a minor.

ED arrests alleged associate of Sena MLA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Amit Chandole, an alleged associate of Shiv Sena MLA Pratap Sarnaik, in connection with its money laundering case against a security service provider company and others, official sources said on Thursday.

They said Chandole has been arrested late Wednesday under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and is expected to be produced before a local court for custody.

He was questioned by the ED on Wednesday.

The agency, they said, is probing Chandole's role and alleged suspect dealings with Sarnaik, Tops Group security providing service and its promoter Rahul Nanda, they said.

Nanda, as per media reports, had denied any wrongdoing.

Searches at ten premises of Sarnaik, Nanda and few others were launched by the ED on November 24 in neighbouring



Thane and Mumbai.

A particular instance of the company providing security guards to a Maharashtra government organisation during 2014-15 is also under the ED scanner, they said.

The agency, sources claimed, has also seized a debit card, issued by a foreign bank in the name of Sarnaik, during the raids and its address is that of a Pakistani man based abroad.

The MLA will soon be questioned in this context, they said. The Shiv Sena had earlier called the raids a "political vendetta" and said the Maharashtra government or its

leaders will not surrender to pressure from anyone.

"The searches are being conducted on the Tops group (a company in the business of providing security) promoters and related people, including some politicians," an official source had said.

The ED case has been filed after studying a Mumbai Police economic offences wing FIR filed against the promoters of the business group on charges of alleged irregularities in acquisition of some overseas assets in 2009 and the transactions of some trusts based abroad.

ED officials had also ques-

tioned the MLA's elder son Vihang.

Sarnaik, 56, represents the Ovala-Majiwada constituency in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly and is also a spokesperson for his party.

The legislator was in news when he wrote a letter seeking re-opening of an alleged abetment to suicide case of 2018 in which Republic TV's editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami was arrested by the Mumbai Police recently. Goswami is now out on bail.

"Sarnaik took a firm stand in connection with a channel and in the Anvay Naik suicide case. Hence, such suppressive action...the entire Shiv Sena is with Sarnaik. The ED's action is a political matter," Raut said.

Sarnaik had also demanded a unanimous resolution in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly for legal action against actress Kangana Ranaut, who, he said, has "maligned" the image of Maharashtra and Mumbai through her tweets.

Temperatures settle above normal in Punjab

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The minimum temperature in Haryana and Punjab on Thursday hovered few notches above normal after overnight rains in many parts of the two states, according to the weather department.

Chandigarh, the common capital of the two states, recorded a low of 13.5 degrees Celsius, four notches above normal.

Karnal in Haryana recorded a minimum of 13.5 degrees Celsius, up three notches while Ambala registered a low of 11.8 degrees Celsius, up two degrees against normal limits.

Hisar (10.2 degrees Celsius), Narnaul (11.5 degrees Celsius), Bhiwani (9 degrees Celsius) and Sirsa

Nationwide strike near total in Kerala; hits normal life

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The nationwide strike, called by various trade unions in protest against the BJP-led NDA government's economic policies, was near total in the Left-ruled Kerala on Thursday with shops downing the shutters and state-owned KSRTC buses keeping away from roads.

Normal life in the southern state was affected as the 24-hour-long agitation, called by a central committee of joint trade unions, hit all major sectors, including government offices, banking and insurance. All government offices and major business establishments remained closed across Kerala, the lone state in the



country ruled by a Marxist government. Private buses, auto rickshaws and taxis kept off from the road while private vehicles could be seen plying everywhere cutting across villages and cities.

As Sabarimala pilgrims were exempted from the strike, KSRTC buses, operated in the hill temple route, ferried devotees as usual.

In some districts, tiny shop owners could be seen complaining that the closure of business would make their life further worsen in the wake of the dull economic situation after the Coronavirus outbreak. In the wake of the widespread virus infection, major trade unions kept themselves away from organising mass rallies, in which thousands of workers in the state participated.

Instead of that, they organised protest gatherings and human chains across Kerala.

Leaders and workers took part in the state level inauguration of the protest by the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) at the Gandhi Park here, following social distancing.

Bollywood remembers 26/11 victims, martyrs

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Actors Akshay Kumar, Abhishek Bachchan, Urmila Matondkar and others on Thursday paid tributes to those who lost their lives in 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of the carnage.

On November 26, 2008, 10 Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists from Pakistan arrived by sea route in Mumbai and opened fire, killing 166 people, including 18 security personnel, and injuring several others during a 60-hour siege in the city.

Taking to Twitter, Kumar said that 26/11 is a day Mumbaiers will never forget.

"My heartfelt tribute to the martyrs and victims of the #MumbaiTerrorAttack. We will forever be indebted to our bravehearts for their supreme



sacrifice," the superstar tweeted.

Replying to Mumbai Police's tweet, about never erasing people's sacrifice from history, Bachchan wrote, "Lest we forget."

Matondkar shared a collage of the martyrs and wrote citizens will remain grateful to those who laid down their lives saving others.

"Heartfelt tribute to martyrs and victims of 26/11 #MumbaiTerrorAttack. Salute to strength and resilience of people of #MumbaiCity."

Eternally grateful for your supreme sacrifice and you are forever in our hearts," the 46-year-old actor tweeted.

Actors Ranvir Shorey and Raveena Tandon also prayed for the victims and martyrs of

the attack, saying they will never forget their sacrifice.

"Never forget. Prayers for all who laid down and lost their lives on the day," Shorey wrote.

Tandon said, "Never Forget . Never Forgive. #26/11."

Actor Randeep Hooda shared a video of the Bomb Detection Dog Squad of 26/11 attacks, which helped trace several live bombs and RDX during the terror strike.

"12 years of # Mumbai TerrorAttack! While the martyrs and victims will never be forgotten, here's an ode to the paw-some gang which is a reminder that not all heroes wear uniforms," Hooda tweeted.

The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, the Oberoi Trident, the Taj Mahal Hotel, Leopold Cafe, Cama Hospital and the Nariman House Jewish community centre, now

renamed Nariman Light House, were some of the places targeted by the terrorists.

The then Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) chief Hemant Karkare, Mumbai's Additional Police Commissioner Ashok Kamte, Senior Police Inspector Vijay Laskar and Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Tukaram Omble were among those killed in the attack.

NSG commando Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan was also killed while fighting the terrorists.

Nine terrorists were later killed by the security forces, including the National Security Guard (NSG), the country's elite commando force.

Ajmal Kasab was the only terrorist who was captured alive. He was hanged four years later on November 21, 2012.

PM pitches for ‘One Nation, One Election’, says it’s need of India

PNS ■ KEVADIA (GUJARAT)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday pitched for ‘One Nation, One Election’, saying it is the need of India as polls taking place every few months impact development works.

Addressing the concluding session of the 80th All India Presiding Officers Conference via video conference, Modi also paid homage to the victims of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks and asserted that India is fighting terrorism now with new policy and new process.

Noting that it was the biggest terror strike on India, Modi said India can never forget the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

On November 26, 2008, ten Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists from Pakistan arrived through sea and opened fire, killing 166 people, including 18 security personnel, and injuring many during the 60-hour siege in Mumbai.

Pitching strongly for ‘One Nation, One Election’, Modi said it is not just a matter of debate, this is the need of India. “Elections are held at different places every few months, the impact it has on development works is known to all. Therefore, it is a must to have deep study and deliberation on ‘One Nation, One Election,’” Modi said. The prime minister also suggested a single voters’ list for Lok Sabha, assembly



and panchayat polls, saying separate lists are a waste of resources.

Legislature, Executive and Judiciary should work with better coordination and national interest should be the basis for every decision, Modi said.

“We must remember that when politics take over people and nation-first policies, the nation has to pay adversely in such situations,” he said.

He also cited the example of delay in the completion of the Sardar Sarovar Dam, saying it kept lingering and was completed after years.

“This could have happened earlier if development was given precedence. Those who stalled it, have no repentance,” he said in a clear attack on the Congress. Underlining that

there is no place for politics of untouchability, Modi cited the example of the Statue of Unity built by his government for Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel despite him not being from the BJP or the Jana Sangh.

Constitution is our guiding light to take on challenges in the 21st century and national interest should be our basis for every decision, Modi said.

He called for raising awareness about the Constitution.

“Our Constitution has many features but one very special feature is the importance given to duties. Mahatma Gandhi was very keen about this. He saw a close link between rights and duties. He felt that once we perform our duties, rights will automatically be safeguarded,” Modi said.

India fighting terror with new policy, process, says Modi

PNS ■ KEVADIA (GUJARAT)

Asserting that India can never forget the wounds of 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said the country is fighting terrorism with a new policy and a new process.

In his valedictory address at the 80th All India Presiding Officers’ Conference, Modi remembered the 26/11 martyrs on the 12th anniversary of the Mumbai terror attack.

“Today’s date is associated with the biggest terror attack on the country. On this date in 2008, terrorists sent from Pakistan had attacked Mumbai, Modi said in his address via video-conference. “Many people died in that terror attack, and people of many nationalities were the victims. I pay my homage to

all. I bow down to the security personnel who lost their lives in the attack, Modi said.

“India cannot forget the wounds of the Mumbai terror attack, he said. “India is now fighting terrorism with a new policy and a new process,” Modi said.

He also lauded India’s security forces fighting terrorism by foiling terror plans. “I bow down to our security establishment involved in foiling big terror strikes like the 26/11 Mumbai attack. They are giving a befitting reply to terror and are involved in securing our borders, he said.

Twelve years ago, terrorists from Pakistan laid siege to India’s financial capital for three days, killing 166 people including 18 security personnel, and injuring hundreds more.

He also referred to the practice of KYC (know your customer) in the corporate world and said there should be a similar KYC drive in the form of Know Your Constitution to

popularise the Constitution and its different features.

The All India Presiding Officers Conference began in 1921, and the Gujarat event marks its centenary year.

‘Need strong police force to prevent terror attacks’

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday paid tributes to the martyrs of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack on its 12th anniversary, and said the police force needs to be so strong that terrorists do not dare to attack the state or its capital city.

Speaking at the Maharashtra Police headquarters here after paying floral tributes to the martyrs, Thackeray said though the state is facing a financial crisis, his government will take every step to strengthen the police force.

Earlier, Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari, Home Minister Anil Deshmukh and Environment Minister Aaditya Thackeray also paid respects to the martyrs, who died fighting terrorists during the attack on November 26, 2008, at the newly-built memorial at the police headquarters in south Mumbai.

Wives of some of the personnel killed in the 26/11 attack inaugurated the martyrs’ gallery at the state police headquarters here.

On the occasion, Thackeray released of coffee table book, titled ‘True Grit’ on the Maharashtra Police’s work during COVID-19 pandemic.

“We should make our force so strong that the idea of attack on Maharashtra and Mumbai does not come into the mind of terrorists, they should not dare to attack the



Speaking at Maha Police headquarters after paying floral tributes to the martyrs, Thackeray said though the state is facing a financial crisis, his government will take every step to strengthen the police force

state and Mumbai. If any terrorist comes forward, he should be killed on the spot,” he said. “We woke up about strengthening the police force after the 26/11 terror attack. As we made necessary arrangements for health facilities after COVID-19 outbreak, we can also work to strengthen our police force,” he said.

Thackeray remembered the day of the attack in 2008 when he was on a tour of Dhule and Nashik for poll rallies.

“After getting information about the attack, I had called

police inspector Vijay Salaskar and he said he had just reached home and was again rushing to the spot,” he recalled.

“I then made two-three calls to him. When he picked up the call, Salaskar said he was in front of the Taj Mahal Hotel and that the police force will enter it after a survey,” the chief minister said. Salaskar was later killed while fighting with the terrorists. “Later, I made various calls to Salakar, and till this day, he hasn’t picked up the call,” the CM said on an emotional note.

INDIA CORNER

Militant attack in J-K, two security personnel killed

Two security force personnel were killed in a militant attack on a quick reaction team (QRT) at Parimpora on the outskirts of the city on Thursday, police said. The ultras opened fire on the security forces at Khushipora in Parimpora area, a police official said. Security forces have cordoned off the area and launched a search operation to track down the assailants, he said.



Tarun Gogoi cremated with full state honours

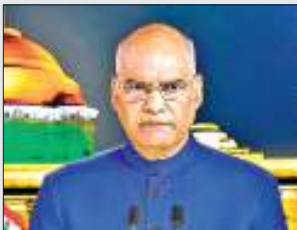


Assam bade an emotional farewell to its beloved former chief minister Tarun Gogoi on Thursday, as his final rites were performed with full state honours at the Nabagraha Cremation ground here. Amid the chanting of hymns, preceded by a gun salute and band played by the Assam Police, the state’s longest

serving chief minister’s mortal remains were consigned to flames by his son Gaurav Gogoi. Gaurav, a Lok Sabha MP, wearing the traditional ‘challeng sador’ (a shawl) and dhoti along with a face mask, lit the pyre after performing the rituals. Gogoi’s wife Dolly, daughter Chandrima, daughter-in-law Elizabeth and other family members placed sandalwood on the pyre before it was lit by Gaurav. The 84-year old three-time chief minister, twice Union minister and six-time Lok Sabha MP, died on Monday following a nearly four-month battle with COVID-19 and related complications.

President Kovind leads nation in community reading of preamble

President Ram Nath Kovind on Thursday led the nation in community reading of the preamble to the Constitution on the occasion of the Constitution Day. “The President read the preamble from Rashtrapati Bhavan which was live telecast by Doordarshan and joined by the people across the nation,” an official statement said. It was screened live at Kevadia in Gujarat too which is hosting the 80th All India Presiding Officers’ Conference. The participants also read out the preamble along with the President, the statement said. “The community reading of the Preamble, organised by the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, is the part of various activities such as webinars, exhibitions, essay competition, poster competition, quiz competition and slogan competition aimed at highlighting and reiterating the values and principles enshrined in the Constitution,” said the statement.



No holy dip in Ganga on Kartik Purnima due to Covid

People will not be allowed to take a holy dip in the Ganga river here on the occasion of Kartik Purnima on November 30 in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the district administration said on Thursday. Lakhs of devotees from different parts of the country including Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh converge on the banks of the Ganga here for a ritual bath in the river on the occasion every year. However, in compliance with the Centre’s guidelines in view of COVID-19, it has been decided to stop people from taking a bath in the river on Kartik Purnima this year as it will lead to crowding on the ghats which may cause spread of the virus, Haridwar District Magistrate C Ravishankar said. Those who violate the orders will be punished under the Epidemic Act 1897 and the Disaster Management Act 2005, he said.

WB Minister volunteers for Covid-19 vaccine trial

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim has expressed his wish to be a volunteer for the Covaxin Phase III trial scheduled to be held at the city-based National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases (NICED).

The 62-year-old minister of the Mamata Banerjee government has also spoken to the NICED officials and expressed his wish to be part of the programme.

“I want to help people. If my contribution helps in the treatment of people then I will be more than happy. I am keen to be part of the programme (Covaxin Phase III trial),” Hakim told PTI when contacted on Thursday. Hakim, who is also the chairperson of the BoA in the KMC, said that he has spoken to the NICED authorities about his



wish and they will be conducting a health check-up on him to find out whether he is “fit” to be part of the Covaxin Phase III trial at the institute.

“I have told them (authorities of the NICED) about my wish. They will conduct a health-check up on me to find out whether I am fit enough to be part of the trial or not. I am 62-

year-old and they want to check whether my health will permit this or not,” he said. It was learnt that the NICED authorities have welcomed Hakim’s willingness to join the trial and also invited Atin Ghosh, another member of Board of Administrators of KMC, in-charge of the Health wing of the civic body to be part of the trial.

Plea seeking CBI probe into Salian’s death dismissed

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday dismissed a petition seeking a court-monitored CBI probe into the death of Disha Salian, former manager of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput, and said if any person has information in the case, he/she is free to approach police. A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G S Kulkarni observed that the petitioner, Delhi-based advocate Puneet Dhandha, had no locus standi (capacity) to file such a plea. In his petition, Dhandha had sought that the case of Disha Salian’s death be transferred to the CBI and it be monitored by the HC.

Delhi records over 2K Covid deaths

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The national capital has witnessed 2,364 deaths due to coronavirus since October 28, when the daily rise in infections breached the mark of 5,000 cases for the first time, according to official data.

Amid a surge in COVID-19 cases and deaths, 99 more fatalities on Wednesday pushed the city’s total death toll due to the disease to 8,720. It was after five days that Delhi recorded single-day deaths below 100.

The city reported 98 deaths on November 19, 118 on November 20, 111 on November 21, 121 each on November 22 and 23, and 109 fatalities on November 24, according to official data.

While 131 COVID-related deaths were recorded on November 18, the highest till date, Delhi registered its highest single-day spike of 8,593 cases on November 11.

On Thursday, Delhi had recorded 7,546 cases, followed by 6,608 on Friday, 5,879 on Saturday, 6,746 on Sunday, 4,454 on Monday, 6,224 on Tuesday and 5,246 on Wednesday, according to the government data.

Late hospital admissions leading to COVID-19 cases turning critical, shortage of ICU beds, unfavourable weather and rising pollution are among the factors experts attribute to the spike in COVID-19 deaths in Delhi, health experts have said.

‘Awareness must to conserve monuments’

PNS ■ AURANGABAD

Conservation work at forts of Marathwada should be carried out without wiping out historical remains at the sites, experts said during a webinar organised by the Maharashtra state archaeology department, an official said on Thursday.

The webinar was organised on Wednesday to mark the World Heritage Week, which was observed from November 19 to 25, the official said.

Professors of history Dr Satish Kadam and Dr Madhavi Mahake spoke about conserva-



tion of monuments and social responsibility, and temples in Marathwada region. “Although conservation of

monuments is the government’s responsibility, educators need to stress on the importance of these structures to stu-

dents,” Dr Kadam said, highlighting the importance of social responsibility in preserving historical sites.

Noting that the Marathwada region is rich in historical sites, Dr Mahake said there are temples in region, which were constructed in 4-5 Century AD till the Mughal Maratha period.

Meanwhile, fort expert Sanket Kulkarni spoke about the conservation work of forts in Kandhar (Nanded), Ausa (Latur), Paranda (Osmanabad), Antur (Aurangabad), Dharur (Beed).

BJP activists clash with police in WB

PNS ■ KOLKATA

BJP workers clashed with the police on Thursday after they were stopped short of the under-construction Majerhat Bridge in the southwestern part of Kolkata.

The police erected barricades at Taratala More to prevent the saffron party cadre from marching towards the construction site, following which they staged a protest against the delay in complet-

ing the bridge. BJP activists pelted the law enforcers with stones, following which they resorted to mild lathi-charge to disperse the crowd, a police officer said, adding several members of the saffron party were detained.

BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya was scheduled to attend the protest rally but the police dispersed the crowd before he could arrive at the spot, party sources said.



NCB probe: Kshitij Prasad, drug peddler get bail

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A Mumbai court on Thursday granted bail to Kshitij Ravi Prasad, a former Dharmatic Entertainment executive producer, and a suspected drug peddler arrested by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in connection with its probe into the alleged use of drugs in Bollywood.

However, Prasad will not come out of jail today as he has also been implicated in another case, the bail plea of which will be heard on December 3, his lawyer Satish Maneshinde said.

Prasad was arrested on September 26 under provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances



evidence or investigation into the case.

Prasad earlier alleged that he was implicated in the case by the NCB after he refused to give false statements against Bollywood celebrities like director Karan Johar and others.

However, the probe agency had denied his allegations.

The NCB had submitted that Prasad gave the statement voluntarily and no false claims were inserted in it.

It alleged that Prasad, along with other accused, was part of a drug procurement and distribution racket.

Prasad was briefly associated with Dharmatic Entertainment, a sister concern of Johar’s Dharma Productions.

Vigil stepped up in Delhi’s border areas

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police personnel have been deployed in large numbers in the border areas of the national capital on Thursday and all incoming vehicles were being checked in view of the ‘Delhi Chalo’ march by Punjab farmers against the Centre’s farm laws. Five sand-laden trucks have been stationed at Singhu border to stop tractors being driven by the protesters. Also,

drones have been deployed for security purposes, police said.

While clarifying that the borders have not been sealed, officials said all pickets have been made active, while all vehicles entering the national capital were being checked.

According to officials, it was decided that Delhi Metro trains connecting the neighbouring cities in the NCR would not cross the national capital border till 2 pm on Thursday.

Farmers' protest

Had the Government chosen consensus-building over confrontation with regard to the farm Acts, things wouldn't have come to such a pass



The big question is could the farmers' march, as it manifested through the dramatic visuals of a surge of protesters fighting teargas, demolishing barricades and facing water cannons, have been avoided in COVID-stressed times? Would they have been driven to such desperation if the Government had given them a decent listen and the Agriculture Minister had not absent-ed himself from a conciliatory meeting on the recent farm Acts? And at a time when stubble burning is compound-ing the pollution and pandemic crisis across Delhi-NCR, should not that have been the point of discussion first? Honestly, the Government could have managed this bet-

ter, considering that it was well aware of the farmers' grievances and should have attempt-ed to reassure them. Instead, in its stubbornness to show it can push necessary reforms, it refused to engage with them and gifted the Opposition an agenda to beat it with. It may want to show the farmers and the Opposition in a poor light but beyond political point-scoring, who gained what, except for being exposed to a large super spreader risk? For the Government may claim that these laws will help farmers get better prices for their crops and allow them access to wider markets but the latter are wary of the corporatisation implic-it in these Acts and argue that they could be cheated out of a fair price. Yes, structurally, the laws may seem to streamline agricultural processes but the farmers are not willing to give up their right to exist on their terms. Worse, they fear that these could ultimately reduce the current system of open-ended FCI procurement by the State. Besides, they feel that entering into contracts with corporations would willy-nilly give the latter negotiating rights and greater control. And that although the older system would continue, as a weakened parallel mechanism, it would ultimately crumble before emerging monopolies. They cite how contract farming failed in the sugarcane sector with farmers chasing dues that are owed to them in crores. Of course, there's the case of PepsiCo suing farmers in Gujarat that showed the latter's vulnerability in the face of big corporations. State Governments like Punjab are obviously upset that access to another market would dry up their own revenue from their Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) *mandis* and are see-ing this as an affront to federal controls. The fear that market yards would be abolished is largely unfounded though, considering the eNAM platform connects thousands of them across 18 states and three Union Territories (UTs). But then the Government has also not tried to be educative but is confrontational. It is the devil in the detail that has our farming community up in arms. For example, a licence won't be required to trade in farm produce and anyone with a PAN card can now buy directly from the farmers "outside" their geo-graphical area. Farmers want clarity on what "outside" means and contrary to perception that they want the middlemen out, they actually have a trusted bond with their existing commission agents as the latter's licence is proof enough of credibility and delivery abil-ities, and they would not want to experiment with an untested model. Besides, they want direct payment and not through banks, which could deduct amounts as loan recovery.

The opposition to farm laws could have been avoided had the Government preferred a Standing Committee scrutiny over pushing the law unceremoniously with a voice vote in the Upper House. A GST-like consensus involving Centre and States would have helped. But there was no attempt at consensus-building, no dialogue with the farmers' unions, State Governments or the Opposition parties. Since agriculture-related issues come under the State List in Schedule VII of the Constitution, the Centre should have consulted federal governments. One just had to look at the playbook of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Government on the contentious issue of contract farming, which was envisaged in the National Agriculture Policy, 2000. Instead of bringing a Central law, it circulated a Model Agricultural Produce Marketing (Regulation) Act to the States for adoption in 2003. The ensuing UPA-I govern-ment continued the policy. Contract farming was included as an option in the National Farmers' Policy, 2007. By August the same year, 15 States had brought amendments in the APMC (Regulation) Acts based on the model legislation. The intransigence on the farm Acts is in contrast with the Government's handling of the recently enacted labour codes. Although these had some controversial provisions too, since they reduced 29 existing labour laws into four legislations, there was not much hue and cry as they were vetted by the depart-ment-related Standing Committee of the Lok Sabha. Yes, there is a need to reform agri-cultural marketing in the time of food surplus. But care should be taken to ensure that the farmers are legally protected in what is still an unequal deal. If only the Acts came with the caveat that no trade transactions would take place below the notified MSP, the farm-ers could have been easily pacified. Many experts would argue that it is easy enough to push reforms in a sector that anyway makes a very small portion of our GDP. But farmers make up 60 per cent of the country's population, a voter base that no political party can ignore. Certainly not States like Punjab and Haryana, which are heavily dependent on procurement at MSP.

In the hands of God

Diego Maradona, one of the greatest to ever kick a football on the pitch, is no longer with us. The legend lives on



The British-Indian filmmaker, Asif Kapadia, rose to fame after his superb documentary on Brazilian motorsports legend Ayrton Senna, which he fol-lowed with an equally brilliant film on British singer Amy Winehouse. But his magnum opus (so far, at least) was the movie he made on Argentine footballer Diego Armando Maradona, simply titled *Maradona*. It was the first of his documentaries where the subject was still alive to give his version of events but Kapadia's brilliance was that he pulled no punches. The documentary, which looked at Maradona's time in the southern Italian city of Naples, where he played for the local football team Napoli, shows him warts and all. He was a genius on the field and many of us in India might remember him for his spectacular performances for *La Albiceleste*, as the Argentine football team is known, not least for that match against England during the 1986 World Cup in Mexico where he produced not one, but two of the most memorable goals in foot-ball history — the first the notorious "Hand Of God" and the second where he literally ran rings around the entire English team.

Maradona was a superstar in Argentina but it was in Naples where he was a God. The city, sitting in the shadow of Vesuvius, was downtrodden and felt crushed by the eco-nomic and social success of northern Italian towns such as Milan and Turin, also home to Italy's most successful football clubs, AC Milan, Internazionale and Juventus. Into all this came Maradona from Barcelona, where he almost single-handedly lifted the football team and the city into a different sphere. The documentary explores how Maradona's suc-cess also saw his downfall. He fathered an illegitimate son and quickly found himself court-ed by the local mafia who got him hooked onto drugs. But it took a football match dur-ing the 1990 World Cup, where Maradona's Argentina beat the home team Italy in Naples, for the city to fall out of love with him despite all the success he brought. Maradona's post-football life was also extremely colourful. A visit he made to the eastern metropol-is of Kolkata, where he unveiled a statue of himself in 2010, and a tour of the southern state of Kerala, where he inaugurated a jewellery shop, have gone into popular legend in these football-mad states. Maradona's goal beating the English, whom Indians dislike almost as much as the Argentinians, will be considered a goal scored for the "little guy," which he was. He was not perfect, far from it, but because he never pretended to be perfect, he will always be considered a legend. He will be missed.



opinion

Faulty message

The official COVID awareness campaign is not targetted at real life situations that have arisen post lockdown. This has undermined preventive measures

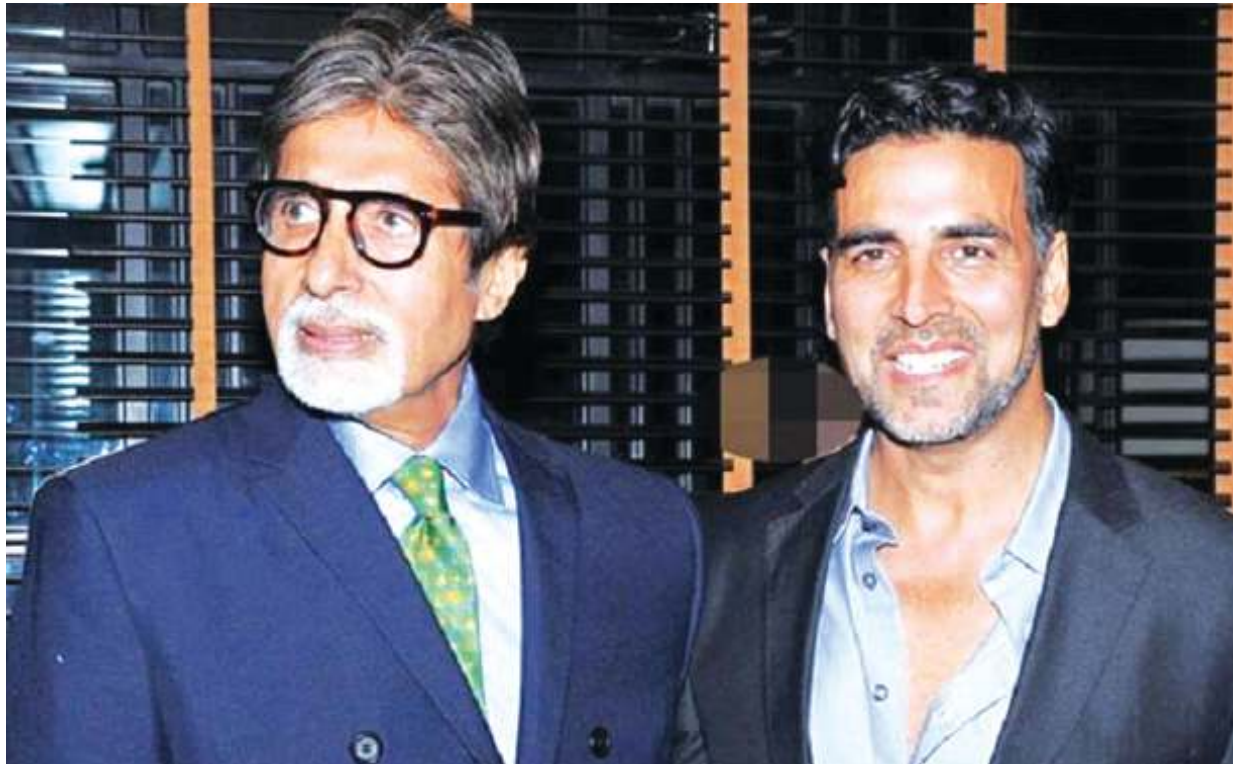


PRIYADARSHI DUTTA

A Supreme Court Bench recently reprimanded the Government on its COVID-19 containment measures and asked the Centre as well as the worst-affected States to file status reports. What's still going wrong when the national recovery rate is at an all-time high of 93 per cent plus and the number of new infections has dipped to below 40,000 per day, down from 80,000 during September? However, when the Supreme Court notes that the scenario is grim, it implies that win-ter could undermine the gains made so far, with the COVID-19 awareness campaign in the unlock period being one of the weakest links in the chain.

On October 7, Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar announced that posters, banners and stickers about COVID prevention would come up at pub-lic places, metros, auto rickshaws and public transport soon. Though this writer's world has shrunk dur-ing the last eight months, being con-fined mostly to home, still he has not noticed any such outdoor publicity material being put up in his mod-est South Delhi locality. The aware-ness campaign, since the beginning of the outbreak, is confined mostly to electronic media. Print media advertising lost its reach after many readers unsubscribed newspapers, fearing they might be Corona-infected. The other medium is mobile phone, where the COVID caller tune is frankly about force-feeding. Existing campaigns were perhaps helpful until May 31, when the total lockdown was in force. As the Unlock 1 phase began on June 1, new interactive situations began to multiply. The rate of infections got accelerated on expected lines. The awareness campaign, however, remained dated by refusing to take new situations into consideration. It, therefore, came to resemble a ser-mon and sounded preachy.

Amitabh Bachchan is the face of the Government's COVID aware-ness campaign like he had been for Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. It happens only in India that a Padma Vibhushan awardee can appear in an ad campaign for gold loans and pulse polio drops with equal zeal. Ideally, he should have been removed from the campaign after he himself contracted COVID in July. Alternatively, he should have been re-launched with a new ad script, depicting him as a COVID survivor.



However, that did not happen.

Another TV spot featuring Akshay Kumar for Doordarshan (on precautions in the Unlock era) is more appalling. It shows the actor encouraging a senior citizen to go to work by wearing a mask. This clearly militates against the Government's adviso-ry for senior citizens to avoid ven-turing outdoors. Akshay further states that the Government had made sufficient arrangements for people even if they had con-tracted COVID. This affirmation is completely out of sync with reality in most States. The cam-paign ambassador perhaps implied only the Modi Government. However, the sub-ject of public health and sanita-tion, hospitals and dispensaries is covered by the State List under the Seventh Schedule (Article 246). It is also covered under the Panchayat List under Article 243G. Broadcasting, being part of communications, is placed on the Union List under Seventh Schedule. Thus Doordarshan failed abjectly to develop a State-specific COVID awareness cam-paign reflecting local realities. While the publicity drive seems to be run by Mandi House man-darins, by employing Mumbai denizens like Amitabh Bachchan, Akshay Kumar and Sachin Tendulkar, they forgot that the brunt of healthcare is left to the States.

As Unlock phases progressed from June 1, it was expected that the awareness campaign would become more localised. An end-to-end information campaign could have helped reduce the case load. While many COVID sur-vivors volunteered to donate

A TV SPOT FEATURING AKSHAY KUMAR FOR DD (ON PRECAUTIONS IN THE UNLOCK ERA) IS APPALLING. IT SHOWS THE ACTOR ENCOURAGING A SENIOR CITIZEN TO GO TO WORK BY WEARING A MASK. THIS CLEARLY MILITATES AGAINST THE GOVT'S ADVISORY FOR SENIOR CITIZENS TO AVOID VENTURING OUTDOORS



plasma to save the lives of other patients, they could have helped more by sharing the lessons learnt. It would have helped if we could have produced an informa-tion bank, albeit maintaining strict confidentiality, about how possibly those patients contract-ed COVID. For instance, what percentage of newly-infected people observed protocols or were negligent about them. How many think they got it by using public transport, venturing out in a market place or eating out in the company of strangers at resta-urants and so on.

The Government was admittedly in a cliff stick situa-tion. It had to decide between containing rising cases and reviv-ing the economy. Emphasising one could hurt the prospect of the other. The cold season knocked earlier than usual this year and the NCT of Delhi is one of the worst-affected regions with pollution picking up. The fall-winter is also the season for festivities and weddings when the business picks up post-mon-soon. In order to replenish their depleted revenue coffers, the Centre as well as the Delhi Government chose to look the other way on a containment drill such conditions warranted. The result was the quadrupling of infections in Delhi. When Governments wrestle against their conscience, they usually win. An example of conflict between commercial and public health interests could be seen in the Delhi Government's decision to reverse its order within 24 hours on closure of Punjabi Basti market and Janata market in the Nangloi area for flouting

pandemic norms. With all large markets in Delhi open for busi-ness, the disease protocol is hardly being followed anywhere.

By November 24, India had conducted a total of 13.3 crore (13,36,82,275) tests in its 2,134 laboratories. The number, though large, represents only 10 per cent of India's estimated population. There is a strong chance that a significant segment of the untested population acts as asymptomatic carriers. A majority of people tend to feel that seemingly healthy people – whether they are colleagues, neighbours or relatives – are dis-ease-free. They tend to socialise with them even without mini-mally protective face masks. At fast food eating joints, many don't hesitate to eat (naturally without masks) alongside com-plete strangers. It hardly occurs to them that the other person could either be an asymptomatic carrier if not passing through the incubation period. The Government ad campaigns have failed to educate them upon this aspect. They have even failed to educate people on immunity-boosting methods as prescribed by the AYUSH Ministry. Taking up real-life situations in cam-paigns could have helped in stalling this surge. One could eas-ily have used animation or clay-mation if actual shooting involv-ing human beings was problem-atic. Till we drill the risk factors graphically in the common man's mind, a Bollywood star cannot do much.

(The writer is an author and independent researcher based in New Delhi. Views expressed are personal)

SOUNDBITE

It's a sad irony that on Constitution Day, the constitutional right of farmers is being oppressed in this manner. Let them pass Haryana. Manohar Lal Khattar. Let them take their voice to Delhi peacefully.



Punjab Chief Minister
—Captain Amarinder Singh

Love jihad is a hoax. It is part of a majoritarian agenda. Interfaith marriages are allowed under the Indian law, it is even encouraged by some governments.



Former Home Minister
—P Chidambaram

I believed that India wanted to bring out and talk about societal issues openly. I'm fortunate that the audience loved my brand of cinema and engaged with my beliefs.



Actor
—Ayushmann Khurrana

I think staying away from our families for nearly four months now is going to be worthwhile in the future because we are sacrificing a lot to do well in the Olympic Games.



Indian hockey midfielder
—Hardik Singh

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dangerous idea

Sir — One is amused by the oxymoronic ring of the phrase, "love jihad", which has recently been popularised by certain Right-wing groups. It is designed to denote a communal conspiracy in which Muslim men marry women from a different community after "entrap-ting them" in love affairs. As if the women are flying blind. There is nothing wrong with other inter-faith marriages, so they aren't subjected to scruti-ny. But Right-wing groups with vested interests project any incident of a Muslim man marry-ing a non-Muslim woman as part of a larger conspiracy aimed at converting our women to Islam. This leads to dramat-ic polarisation in the country, which some Hindutva groups take advantage of.

In the process, the Government is trying to inter-fere in the personal freedoms of individuals that have been guar-anteed in the Constitution of India. It is trying to solve a con-ceived problem with bad legis-lation for political gains of appealing to its voter base. In reality, the love jihad law, once passed, will give societal vigilan-

Rest in Peace Argentina's 'golden boy'

Football fans have suffered a big loss in the untim-ely death of Diego Maradona at the age of 60. Undoubtedly the best football player ever, whose wild swings in fortune came to personify the flux of his home nation Argentina, he died too early. Maradona suffered a heart attack in Tigre, Buenos Aires, after undergoing surgery to remove a blood clot from his brain earlier this month. He led Argentina to the 1986 World Cup and won league championships in Italy and at home, granting him the sort of iconic status normally reserved for war heroes.

After retiring from football, Maradona developed heart problems caused by cocaine addiction, and he endured wild weight and fitness swings that seemed to reflect his do-or-die attitude to both, the game and life. Argentina's "golden boy" is best remembered for the two goals that threw England out of the 1986 World Cup. The quarter-final in Mexico City was eagerly ant-icipated, coming as it did just four years after the Falklands War between the UK and Argentina. Maradona made sure it was a game few would forget. Six minutes into the second half, England's Steve Hodge miscued a clear-ance, sending the ball high into his own penalty area. Maradona, at five foot five inches, leaped above the six



foot high England goalkeeper Peter Shilton as he tried to punch the ball clear. Replays showed that Maradona fisted, rather than headed, the ball into the net, a foul the referee missed. The Argentine No. 10 dedicated the goal to the "hand of God." While that goal has become one of the most infamous in football history, Maradona's second in the game was voted the best of the 20th cen-tury in a 2002 vote held by FIFA, the sport's ruling body. Argentina won 2-1 and Maradona, its captain, went on to lift the World Cup after a 3-2 victory over West Germany in the final. May his soul rest in peace.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Courts must be pithy

Sir — Courts of the country give very lengthy judgments, which at times run into hun-dreds or thousands of pages. For instance, the 2019 verdict in the Ram Jannabhoomi case was so lengthy that there is a major

possibility that it was not read by the litigants themselves. It was surely beyond the under-standing of the common man.

Such interminable court orders are for libraries and are read only by researchers and select lawyers. There is a dire need for short and precise ver-

dicts so that citizens and liti-gants do not have to depend on lawyers to know their salient features. Things will improve a lot if India also adopts the practice followed in many coun-tries, where there is a limit on the number of pages in a judg-ment, the limits being different for the Supreme Court, High Courts and trial courts. Or else every lengthy verdict exceeding 50 pages should be compulso-rily accompanied by a summa-ry of the order, with a limit of say 50 pages, to be issued and posted on the court website on the date of the judgment itself.

Madhu Agrawal
Delhi

Big loss for football

Maradona's scoring prowess and skill in slaloming past opponents vaulted him into the hall of fame. But the player struggled to cope with the adu-lation and his battles with addiction became regular glob-al news. Sad that the football great left this world so early.

Ashmit Aaron
Noida

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

Read the RCEP
fine print

It leaves the regulatory door ajar for each country to force hard, localisation rules for data without being subject to scrutiny at the multilateral platform



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The world has seen a major economic negotiating bloc getting “next to a done deal” in the last fortnight, in the form of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a free trade agreement (FTA) between 10 ASEAN countries and China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. This pact, when ratified, will come to represent 30 per cent of the world’s GDP, impacting almost half of the global population. Most significantly, it is a multilateral trade agreement where China is a leading party. The RCEP has been at the negotiating table since 2012 before it went stagnant in recent years as India resisted opening its industrial and agricultural sectors to increased international competition. Subsequently, given the rise of an “abrasively ambitious and technology-aided” China, India had also pressed for localising data of each country’s citizens, unless the participating nation granted its outbound transfer. India formally withdrew from the RCEP in 2019 due to domestic demands. However, despite the November 15 agreement on the trade deal, New Delhi still has the option to join RCEP.

A post-pandemic world economy gasping to revive, a new regime in the US soon with a strong possibility of rejoining multilateral platforms for trade and strategic cooperation and the vision of a new India are some of the paradigms to be kept in mind before passing any judgment on what works best in our favour at this juncture. New Delhi not joining the RCEP has been received with mixed responses domestically, with those opposing the Government’s stance stating that an isolated India in South East Asia and our sensitivity to China’s imports may be more out of geopolitics than economic realisation. A study found that between 2007-2008 and 2015-16, India’s import of Chinese semi-finished goods and heavy machinery has had a positive impact on our industries, creating jobs and increasing competitiveness. Those who support the Government’s moves of withdrawal have equally strong positions on how importing these goods from China leads to job losses for the unskilled. In the post-pandemic economy, a huge chunk of jobs has to be created for this unskilled category.

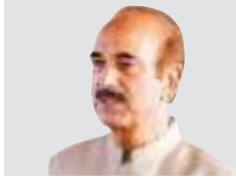
The broad tenets of the RCEP agreement aim to achieve zero tariffs on over 90 per cent traded goods between partner countries in 15 years. The economic impact may be dulled by the knowledge that most of these trading partners already have bilateral FTAs in place. However, the geopolitical impact, given a heavy Chinese presence and an ambition to create a counter bloc to the US-led Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), can’t be overlooked. It is often said that China has a huge knack for reverse mastering/engineering the skill sets developed in any successful economy and, therefore, without any significant costs of indigenous development, it can scale up and produce similar goods and services at half the rates offered by original creators. The wordings of the RCEP, in terms of borrowed texts from the CPTPP chapters and approach, seem like a similar exercise. It is here that key emerging technology policy topics like e-commerce, data localisation, as envisaged in the RCEP agreement, have to be studied carefully before India makes any decision.

Electronic commerce, an evolving area of friction on bilateral and multilateral platforms, has found a chapter in the RCEP agreement document. It borrows heavily from the CPTPP. However, on execution, it has bleaker chances as the clauses (at least in their wordings) are less enforceable, ambiguous and too tight-jacketed. The dispute resolution mechanism in case of conflict must be referred to the RCEP joint committee if all other channels of negotiations fail. The contentious issues of source code disclosure requirements, data flows across trading partners and location of data centres and computing facilities have been left for future consultations and agreements. India and the rest of the world economies, including Europe, would be watching this space closely to get cues, before trying to make any overtures. The global policy space is currently staring at tonnes of ideas being floated to control the flow of data beyond sovereign boundaries, thereby acknowledging and equating data as a physical commodity to be traded as a chip on the high tables of multilateral agreements. It would take tonnes of space to argue and potentially arrive at a middle path between different approaches to data regulation globally, except, suffice it to say, this year has been the beginning of national data colonisation policies.

Staying on with data regulations, the text for cross-border data flows and location of computation facilities in the RCEP document leave ample room for subjective and aggressive interpretations. The bloc leaves the regulatory door ajar for each country to force hard, localisation rules for data without being subject to scrutiny at the multilateral platform. This clause may seem to be played to the galleries domestically for each partner but has its own repercussions on global cooperation. India for the time-being has chosen to call for an adjournment on the multidimensional chessboard of multi-lateral trade/strategic pacts, which is a wise move. It is always better to sleep over the problem and come back with a fresh perspective before going for Sicilian defence or the Queen’s gambit.

(The writer is a policy analyst)

OUR PARTY’S STRUCTURE HAS COLLAPSED. WE NEED TO REBUILD IT AND THEN IF ANY LEADER IS ELECTED IN THAT STRUCTURE, IT WILL WORK.
—CONGRESS LEADER
GHULAM NABI AZAD



MR AZAD IS A CWC-NOMINATED MEMBER WHO CAN JUST PICK UP THE PHONE AND CALL ANYBODY IN THE PARTY INSTEAD OF SPEAKING PUBLICLY.
—CONGRESS SPOKESPERSON
PAWAN KHERA

Dynamic rulebook

While criticising the Constitution for the failure of those who are responsible for maintaining its sanctity, we are doing injustice to both, the founders and the text



ANURAG TIWARY

November has by and large been an important month in history. On November 26, 1940, Nazi Germany began walling off the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw. In November 1941, the Japanese 1st Air Fleet, also known as the *Kido Butai*, in a surprise military move, left the Kuril Islands to strike Pearl Harbour during World War II. In November 1944, a German rocket hit a Woolworth’s shop in London, killing 168 people. Simultaneously, on the same day, Himmler, a leading Nazi soldier, ordered the destruction of the Auschwitz-Birkenau crematoria. World politics was in a state of turmoil. Populist leaders, who were born from democracy, and their obsession with expansionism were being severely criticised and held accountable globally.

Back in India, the Hindu-Muslim tension and the differences between the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Muslim League (ML) were growing at an alarming rate. After a failed attempt at the Shimla Conference to mediate between the INC and the ML, the Cabinet Mission Plan was released by a three-member committee set up to decide the fate of an independent India by the Labour Party heading the Government in the UK. Since the Cabinet mission had rejected the demands made by the ML, the league was miffed and had declared the infamous “Direct Action Day”, which had led to widespread violence all across the country.

Among all this chaos, on November 26, 1949, the Constituent Assembly of India formally adopted a Constitution for an independent and democratic country. After hours of debates, discussions and discourses that were held for close to three long years by more than 350 men and women of astute credibility and a proven track record, the Constitution was adopted.

This was not an ordinary moment in India’s socio-political and constitutional history. For a majority of Indians, this was a “break from the past” moment. However, for the founding fathers, the task of framing a Constitution was far more sensitive. They had a dual role. On one hand, they had to justify to the world and future generations reading the text that India was the better of the two nations (the other being Pakistan) that were formed as a result of the Partition and on the other, they had to draft a Constitution that reflected the struggle of the founders. This second role, as Abhinav Chandrachud points out in his book, *Republic of Rhetoric*, had two competing goals — one was to transform India and the other was to keep things the same. Continuity and change were the two important aspects that rationalised the Constitution-making mandate of the Assembly. Granville Austin points out that the Constitution sought to bring about a “social revolution” while at the same time “trying to preserve national unity and stability.”

The founders were fairly optimistic Indians. They framed a Constitution that wasn’t just ahead of its time but was also a positive and radical intervention in the Indian political scene. For instance, it abolished untouchability, made it unconstitutional for anyone to be granted titles and made a provision for affirmative action for those who had been historically marginalised by society. It granted universal adult suffrage to everyone, irrespective of their religion, caste, creed, gender or race and ensured a fundamental right to equality to every citizen of this country.

All this at a time when the world was still not ready to accept these changes. For example, in the US, despite it being one of the oldest constitutional Republics around the world, it was only in 1954

“THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION IS A LIVING DOCUMENT AND IT IS GOING TO SURVIVE AND WILL CONTINUE TO STAND FOR THOSE WHO ARE VULNERABLE, DOWNTRODDEN AND HAVE BEEN HISTORICALLY SIDELINED BY A CACOPHONIC PARLIAMENT. LET’S PROMISE TO SHAPE A NATION THAT AIMS TO BUILD ON FROM WHERE THE FOUNDERS LEFT OFF”



in the Brown vs Board of Education case, when the “separate but equal” clause was held to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Black women were allowed to vote only in 1965 under the Voting Rights Act and Affirmative Action for Blacks and Browns was held to be constitutional very recently in 2003 in the Grutter vs Bollinger case. The US Supreme Court made inter-racial marriage constitutionally permissible in 1967 and gave students the right to free speech in 1969 in the Tinker vs Des Moines case.

Even as a proud India celebrated Samvidhaan Diwas yesterday, little do we know that the Assembly that framed the most egalitarian and forward-looking Constitution of its times was also criticised by several quarters. There were two kinds of criticisms that were levelled against the founders — moral and legal. The moral criticism was that the Assembly was anti-Gandhian and wasn’t a democratic one. Mahatma Gandhi had espoused the concept of village republics and had stated that power should be vested in the hands of the panchayat whereas the Constitution had followed a highly centralised top-bottom approach to governance.

The Assembly was also stated to be non-representative because a majority of its members were Hindus and members of the INC, too. It was also argued that a colonial mindset prevailed in the Assembly whereby it followed a cut-copy-paste model of framing the Constitution. The legal shortcomings rest on the argument that the Assembly’s functioning was against the State paper and the Indian Independence Act of 1947. Many also felt that the Assembly laid the foundations for a non-secular India. However, there is no doubt that these criticisms had little to no bearing on the sanctity of the document. One-half of the Constitutions across the

world don’t even get to see their 20th year. At the least, these criticisms show that dissent was very much a part of the Constitution-making process and virtually every leader in the Assembly had at one point of time or the other registered his/her concerns on issues that they felt strongly about. The Constitution was indeed adopted based on popular support and sovereignty that the Assembly enjoyed from every strata of the society. Today, the document enjoys the status of a holy book for all those who believe in its dreams for this great country.

This is not to say that we have been equally successful in curbing the menace of discrimination, inequality and religious intolerance in India. Arguably so, we might have failed, and the founders would not be very happy with the state of affairs that exist today. Gender inequality, caste-based discrimination, religious fundamentalism, lack of quality public education, criminalisation of politics, corruption, increased blue and white collar crimes, hunger, poverty, population, unemployment, climate change, stifling of dissent and increased populism in politics are concerns that continue to haunt us and our Constitutional framework even today.

But before we hold the Constitution responsible for all that pervades in our socio-political landscape today, let’s take a step back and understand the role that this text is and was supposed to be playing in democracies like the one that exists in our country. Constitutions are inherently symbolic documents and all that they do is reflect the minds and hearts of the people. This is not to say that they include all that is not morally permissible. Constitutional texts assert and reiterate the dreams that a nation saw for itself.

Seventy one years ago, our founders

dreamt of a nation that would be free from all kinds of prejudice, hate and stigmatisation. We haven’t achieved this goal. But while criticising the text for its supposed failure we forget that our anger is misplaced. This is precisely because the Indian Constitution places an extremely huge amount of trust on whom it applies, in this case the citizens of this country. While holding the Constitution accountable for the failure of the people, we are doing injustice to the text that works best only when “We, The People” act with complete honesty and uphold principles of Constitutional idealism.

The reason why Samvidhaan Diwas is important is fairly simple, it tells you a story. The story of the rising sun in the history of India’s Constitutional journey. It tells you that the Constitution was drafted by appreciating dissent and favouring intellectual discourse. It tells you that the document was framed at a time when the dynamics of global politics was being reconsidered. It tells you that even in the face of criticism, the Assembly was successful in framing a document that was forward-looking, optimistic and has until now survived the wrath of several populist governments and authoritative leaders. It tells you, most importantly, that the criticism of the Constitution is misplaced and that the failure of those who are responsible to ensure its sanctity does not necessarily mean the failure of the text itself.

The Indian Constitution is a living document and it is going to survive and will continue to stand for those who are vulnerable, downtrodden and have been historically sidelined by a cacophonous Parliament. Let’s promise to shape a nation that aims to build on from where the founders left off.

(The writer is from the National Law University, Visakhapatnam)

Love jihad is an excuse for inefficiency

Amid issues of national importance, a false narrative has been created that women are deceived and forcibly converted to Islam for marriage



MARKANDEEY KATJU

There is a lot of talk of “love jihad” these days in the country. The Uttar Pradesh (UP) Government has approved an Ordinance against it, providing for long jail sentences as well as heavy fines, and a Bill called the UP Prohibition of Unlawful Conversions Bill, 2020 is proposed to be introduced in the UP Legislature shortly. The hilly States of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand already have such laws and the Madhya Pradesh Government, too, has said that marriages to enable “forcible religious conversions” would invite an imprison-

ment of up to 10 years, extending the proposed period of maximum punishment for the alleged offence from the five years announced earlier. There is also a requirement to take the District Magistrate’s permission for converting to marry in UP. The Haryana Government, too, is proposing to bring a law against it.

The expressions “love jihad” and “forced conversion” are vague and liable to any number of interpretations. India is largely a conservative country, and most parents want their children (particularly women) to marry within their own religion. So, when the latter fall in love with someone who belongs to another religion, the parents often file a police report, alleging that their daughter was beguiled and abducted.

Whatever the term “love jihad” may mean, my experience as a lawyer for 20 years and a judge for another 20 is that in most cases, there is no such thing as a “forced conversion.” In many of the cases which came before me as a Supreme Court judge, the FIR

was usually filed by the family or the father of the woman alleging that the woman/daughter had been duped and hoodwinked, and/or abducted and forced to marry by a man from a different religion. But when I summoned the woman (and I was satisfied that she was above 18 years of age) she invariably told me that she had married the young man of her own free will and there was no coercion.

It is alleged by Right wing elements that “love jihad” is different from love marriage. According to them, a love marriage takes place because the couple genuinely love each other, whereas “love jihad” is not motivated by love but is a conversion conspiracy by Muslims. It is alleged that Muslim men often conceal their names and other particulars and beguile and dupe girls from different religions, particularly Hindus, into marriage with false allurements. To my mind, this is a bogus claim and never in my judicial experience have I found any basis for it.

I submit that “love jihad” is only

a gimmick, intended to divert public attention from the steep decline in India’s economy, appalling rise in child malnourishment, steep rise in prices of foodstuff and fuel, continuing farmers’ distress, rapes, acid attacks, rise in other crimes, corruption, pollution, major issues on the country’s borders vis-a-vis the stand-off with China and frequent skirmishes with Pakistan. Amid all these pressing issues of national importance, a false narrative and hue and cry has been created that young women are deceived, enticed and forcibly converted to Islam for marriage. There may be a few such stray instances (though not to my knowledge), but my belief, on the basis of my long judicial experience, is that almost all inter-religious marriages are voluntary love marriages. Also, no data is given of Muslim women marrying Hindu men, which is of course regarded as “ghar wapasi” (a homecoming). I need not go into the legal validity of such “love jihad” marriages though the Supreme Court in the

Shakti Vahini vs. Union of India case (2018), the Arumugam Servai vs. State of Tamil Nadu case (2011), Lata Singh vs. State of UP case (2006), and in the recent Division Bench decision of the Allahabad High Court, held inter-religious marriages valid.

But the big question is how many of such marriages take place in the country? In India’s population of 138 crore people, one can count them on one’s fingertips. So it is not that hordes of Hindu girls or women from other communities are clamouring to tie the knot with Muslim men. It is not as if such marriages are threatening to change India’s demography and make it a Muslim-majority country, as is portrayed by some people.

The real issues before the country right now are widespread poverty, starvation deaths, the raging pandemic, almost total lack of proper healthcare and good education for the masses, record, rising unemployment, lack of opportunities and so on. Since the Government has no idea how to resolve these, it does what all

other populist governments have done in the past. It seeks to divert public attention and create a bogeyman, resorting to gimmicks and stunts. “Love jihad” is the latest one (the earlier ones being abrogation of Article 370, the Citizenship Amendment Act and so on.)

This bogey has the advantage of further polarising society on religious lines, which admirably serves some vested interests and also translates into votes for others. It gives a handle to vigilante groups to harass and attack couples. “Honour killings”, which are already a menace, will become more common as the days go by.

The Roman emperors used to say, “If you cannot give the people bread, give them circuses”, and Queen Marie Antoinette of France reportedly said, “If the people do not have bread, let them eat cake.” Our own emperors say, “Since we cannot give the people bread or employment, we must give them the apparition of ‘love jihad’.”

(The writer is a former judge of the Supreme Court of India)

FOREIGN EYE



IT IS BETTER TO BE SAFE THAN SORRY

China sees the testing and disinfection of imported products as necessary to keep the virus at bay. While that will inevitably cause delays in custom clearance, such measures are necessary under the current circumstances, especially when Corona is still wreaking havoc around the world, causing thousands of deaths each day.

(China Daily editorial)

Nationwide shutdown hits normal life; 25 cr workers join agitation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Kerala, Puducherry, Odisha, Assam and Telangana witnessed complete shut down on Thursday and normal life was partially affected in many other states as more than 25 crore workers participated in the nationwide strike, according to central trade unions.

The day-long countrywide strike has been called by a joint platform of ten central trade unions to protest against the central government's new farm and labour laws, among other workers-related issues, as well as to raise various demands.

Various independent federations and associations are also part of the joint platform.

"The states of Kerala, Puducherry, Odisha, Assam and Telangana have reported complete shut down. Tamil Nadu reported complete shut down in 13 districts, while the industrial strike continues in the rest of the districts. Punjab and Haryana have reported that the state road transport buses have not left their depots in the morning," a joint state-



ment issued by the trade unions said.

Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh reported 100 per cent strike, including at BALCO, the state-

ment said. Normal life was affected in West Bengal and Tripura, and sporadic incidents of clashes were reported in West Bengal, according to reports.

Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), All

India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), All India United Trade Union Centre (AIUTUC), Trade Union Co-ordination Centre (TUCC) and Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) are part of the joint platform.

Others are All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AIC-CTU), Labour Progressive

Federation (LPF) and United Trade Union Congress (UTUC).

BJP-aligned Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) is not participating in the strike.

Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) General Secretary Harbhajan Singh Sidhu told PTI that the number of workers who joined the nationwide agitation on Thursday exceeded the expected number of 25 crore.

He also said that coal mine workers along with those from defence, railways and other public sectors are also supported the strike.

Scheme workers, electricity employees, domestic workers, construction workers, beedi workers, hawkers, vendors, agricultural workers, self employed in rural and urban India are holding demonstrations at various places, even defying police restrictions, the statement said.

At many places, the auto and taxi drivers have remained off the roads. Railway and defence employees have held demonstrations in support of the

strike at their respective places of work.

As per the statement, operations of financial institutions such as banks and insurance companies have also been affected.

Besides state government and central government employees, those from the Income Tax Department and other PSU workers are participating in the strike in a big way, the unions claimed.

"Reports of successful strike in coal and copper mines, including other mineral resource mines, have been received. The employees of postal, telecom and steel sector were also in action and gramindak sevaks observed 100 per cent strike," the statement said.

In several places, oil sector unions also observed strike. Workers also resorted to picketing in some parts of the country.

Further, the statement said that total number of workers who have joined the strike at over 25 crore exceeds the number of those participated in a similar strike on January 8.

Jubilant Life Sciences raises Rs 90 cr through commercial papers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drug firm Jubilant Life Sciences on Thursday said it has issued commercial papers worth Rs 90 crore.

Tenure of the instrument is 53 days and date of maturity is January 18, 2021, Jubilant Life Sciences said in a regulatory filing.

Commercial paper is an unsecured money market instrument issued in the form of a promissory note. It was introduced in India in 1990 to enable highly rated corporate borrowers to diversify their sources of short-term borrowings and to provide an additional instrument to investors.

Shares of Jubilant Life Sciences closed at Rs 719 per scrip on BSE, up 1.38 per cent from its previous close.



MONEY MATTERS

Adani Gas to change name to Adani Total Gas

Adani Gas Ltd, the city gas distribution firm of billionaire Gautam Adani's group, will change its name to Adani Total Gas to reflect French energy giant Total's stake in the firm. Adani Gas has through a postal ballot sought shareholders' nod to change the name as well as alter its memorandum and articles of association, according to the firm's filing to stock exchanges. After the French giant buying stake, Adani Gas is now "a joint venture company of Adani Group and TOTAL Group, France with 37.40 per cent stake by each promoter and remaining 25.20 per cent with public shareholders," it said. "In order to reflect the names of both promoter groups, it is proposed to change the name of the company from 'Adani Gas Limited' to 'Adani Total Gas Limited' to reflect the holding structure," the filing said. The Board of the firm, which retails CNG to automobiles and piped natural gas to household kitchens and industries in 15 geographical areas, had on November 3 approved the name change.



Apollo Tyres aims to launch Vredestein brand early next year



Apollo Tyres is planning to introduce its European tyre brand Vredestein in India early next year as it looks to cater to premium cars in the replacement market, according to a top company official. The home-grown tyre major had acquired the Netherlands based Vredestein Banden BV (VBBV)

for an undisclosed sum in 2009 from Russia's bankrupt largest tyre manufacturer Amtel-Vredestein NV. The Vredestein tyres are currently sold in Europe, the US, the Middle East, Africa and a few Asian countries. Apollo Tyres had introduced Vredestein tyres briefly in the Indian market in 2013 as a pilot project. However, after gauging the response at that time the company postponed the launch plans. With growth in high-end car sales and restriction on imported tyres in place, the tyre maker is now looking to manufacture the tyres locally in the country. We have seen the opportunity of launching our Vredestein brand in India. We did try it four, five years ago and we basically made our own mistakes over there.

HMD Global looking at leveraging India for exports

HMD Global, which sells Nokia brand of mobile phones, on Thursday said India is "at the heart and centre" of its business and the company is exploring if this market can be leveraged for exports as well.



HMD Global - which launched its latest Nokia 2.4 in India for Rs 10,399 - is working with various ODM (original design manufacturer) and EMS (electronic manufacturing solution) partners to meet the domestic demand for feature phones and smartphones. "We have different ODM and EMS partners who we work with in India... all of our devices as of now what we are selling are 100 per cent manufactured in India. While they are designed in Finland, all the smartphones and feature phones for India are manufactured in India," HMD Global Vice President Sanmeet Singh Kochhar told PTI. He added that the company has managed supply chain well, both in terms of components and devices. Handset vendors faced constraints in supply after the lockdown, and many players had to import devices to meet the heightened demand that was driven by trends like 'work from home' and 'study from home'. "We are evaluating how India can be at the heart and centre of our sourcing and if we can look at catering not only to the domestic demand but leverage India for exports as well," Kochhar said.

Gold, silver rise marginally

Gold prices rose marginally by Rs 17 to Rs 48,257 per 10 gram in the national capital on Thursday, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at Rs 48,240 per 10 gram. Silver prices also gained Rs 28 to Rs 59,513 per kilogram from Rs 59,485 per kilogram in the previous trade. "Spot gold prices for 24 carat in Delhi were marginally up by Rs 17 limiting upside on rupee appreciation," HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said. In the international market, gold was trading with gains at USD 1,815 per ounce, while silver was quoting flat at USD 23.42 per ounce. "Gold prices witnessed some short recovery on holiday shortened week as US markets are closed today on Thanksgiving as investors turned cautious over vaccine progress and stimulus hopes," Patel added.



Power sector employees protest against privatization of discoms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Power sector employees on Thursday held nationwide protests against the government's decision to privatize discoms, the All India Power Engineers Federation (AIPEF) said.

They also demanded withdrawal of Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2020 and scrapping of the standard bidding document (SBD).

"Lakhs of power sector employees including engineers, today held nationwide protests seeking the withdrawal of Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2020, scrapping of SBD and opposed the privatization of power distribution companies (discoms) in states and union territories," AIPEF spokesperson V K Gupta said in a statement.

Gupta said protest meetings were held in all the states and union territories, including Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Gujarat,



Madhya Pradesh, Assam, among others.

He noted that the power engineers did not join Thursday's strike called by ten central trade unions and just staged a simple protest to highlight their issues.

Gupta claimed that the government is hell-bent on creating private monopolies in the power sector with the sole motive of helping corporate houses. The SBD document pro-

poses that discoms in all the states and union territories undertake privatization.

The state government will provide subsidised bulk power for the successor entity for making it an independently financially viable entity. The assets of discoms will be leased on a token payment.

The federation opposes the proposed transfer of public assets to the private sector as this will result in a high tariff for the consumers, he said.

'5G holds huge promise for India'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The advent of 5G along with futuristic technologies like AI and IoT hold tremendous promise for India, and a collaborative approach, identification of suitable market-specific use cases and attention to data security and privacy aspects would be key to unleashing its full potential, a senior TRAI official said on Thursday.

The explosion of disruptive technologies has transformed the way people interact, socialise and businesses operate, SK Gupta, Secretary, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) said while addressing a virtual event organised by PHDCCI.

"Future of 5G is important. Collaborative development has to be done. We all should come on one platform, encourage trials for use cases, particularly for India, and that will be the key to success," SK Gupta said at a webinar on 5G Technology.

Sensex rallies 432 pts on F&O expiry

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex rallied 432 points on Thursday, tracking gains in banking and financial stocks as the November series derivatives expired amid largely positive cues from global markets.

After a volatile session, the 30-share BSE index ended 431.64 points or 0.98 per cent higher at 44,259.74.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty surged 128.60 points or 1 per cent to 12,987.

Tata Steel was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising around 5 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Auto, HDFC, HCL Tech and Titan. On the other hand, Maruti, ONGC, IndusInd Bank and Tech Mahindra were among the laggards.

Domestic equities witnessed sharp recovery led by sharp rebound in banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) stocks and metals.

BFSIs continued to be a key driving force for the market, said Binod Modi, Head-



Strategy at Reliance Securities.

"Improved prospects of earnings recovery in the backdrop of improvement in collection efficiencies, better outlook for credit costs and possibility of reversal of provisions due to resolution of select large accounts along with better valuations attracted investors in BFSIs," he noted.

Heavy buying sentiment was also seen as November derivative contracts expired, traders said.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Seoul ended with significant gains.

Stock exchanges in Europe, however, began of a tepid note.

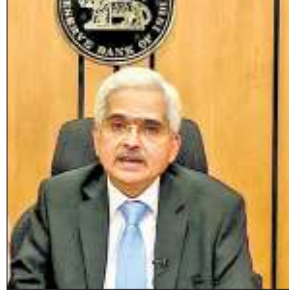
Capital account convertibility will continue: Das

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India will continue to approach capital account convertibility as "a process rather an event", Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Thursday.

The central bank chief said the capital account is convertible to a "great extent" at present and enumerated the specifics on both inward and outward flows which are allowed.

It can be noted that capital account convertibility is a very sensitive subject as it deals with liberalisation of capital transactions into and out of a country. India, which started opening up on this front with the



reforms of the early 1990s, is partially convertible right now with caps and other restrictions.

"Capital account convertibility will continue to be approached as a process rather than an event, taking cognisance of prevalent macroeco-

nom conditions," Das said, speaking at an event organised by the Foreign Exchange Dealers' Association of India (FEDAI).

He added that a long-term vision with short- and medium-term goals is the way ahead on this.

Das said foreign portfolio investment (FPI) in Indian debt markets has been expanded within calibrated macro-prudential norms and added that limits under the medium-term framework for investment by FPIs have been gradually increased and procedures rationalised.

At present, inward foreign direct investment (FDI) is allowed in most sectors and

outbound FDI by Indian incorporated entities is allowed as a multiple of their net worth, he said, pointing out that there has been a liberalisation in the external commercial borrowing framework as well to include expanding eligible borrowers.

"Internationalisation of financial markets can lower transaction costs with efficiency gains," he said.

"Over the last three decades, India has undergone a transformation from being a virtually closed economy to one that is globally connected and open to a much larger volume of international transactions and capital flows than before," he added.

India sees highest drop in work, social travels

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the global wave of COVID-19 in the past nine months, India saw the highest drop in work, social and household travels among nine countries, including China and the US, reflecting the disruptive changes brought about by the pandemic in the patterns of mobility across the world, according to survey consultancy firm EY.

The changing mobility pattern has further raised pertinent questions about the nature and shape of cities and transport networks.

"Amid this health crisis, the consumer is heavily conflicted over mobility; not having to commute to work has given many a new sense of autonomy as well as a few hours of their time back every day," EY said in a statement.

As far as India is concerned,



the survey found that the country "witnessed the highest drop in work travel of nearly 69 per cent, followed almost parallelly by social travel that declined by 59 per cent and household travel that fell by 58 per cent".

"The drops are substantial, as India which is the world's

biggest democracy with a population of 138 crore, parallels the levels of work-related decline of 70 per cent in a small country of Sweden with a population of only a crore," it added.

EY said the decline can be attributed to the strict lock-

down measures in India to control the pandemic, resulting in steep declines across travel segments.

"The survey results also indicate an overall reduction in average weekly travel time by 40 per cent from 6 hours to 3.7 hours per person," it added.

EY India Partner and Automotive Sector Leader Vinay Raghunath said, "The change in mobility industry dynamics and consumer behavior will push sector stakeholders to think through new operating models that leverage digital platforms and help ride the next wave of mobility growth."

EY had conducted a survey, as part of the Mobility Consumer Index, this month with 3,300 consumers across nine countries, including India, China, the US and the UK, to explore the impact of COVID-19 on consumer attitudes and

behavior towards mobility. Five hundred respondents from India participated in the survey.

Of the nine countries surveyed, EY said India and Singapore have witnessed the maximum decline in average weekly commute time.

"India felt the steepest decline of more than 5 hours, from 81 per cent to just 27 per cent, while in Singapore, it fell from 61 per cent to 19 per cent," it said.

EY added that a long-term decline in commuting time could mean a lower peak demand and less strain on public transport systems and road networks. It also said, "This profuse reduction in use of public transport and road networks brings forth a challenging situation for the trains, buses and subway operators that find it difficult to generate enough revenue to meet their operational costs."

'Asia needs to leverage regional coop to boost Corona recovery'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stronger regional cooperation strategies — including in health, trade, finance, and disaster risk — can help governments in Asia and the Pacific accelerate economic growth and a robust recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a new book released by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

"Regional cooperation and integration has been an effective driver for strong economic growth and a sharp reduction in poverty," ADB vice-president for knowledge management and sustainable development Bambang Susantono said in a statement.

Further, "the COVID-19 pandemic is a wake-up call to

all of us that our usual assumptions and approaches to regional cooperation and integration have to change in ways that promote resilience and sustainability," it noted.

Susantono highlighted the need for Asia and the Pacific to reassess its regional cooperation and integration strategies and pathways.

This new book, Future of Regional Cooperation in Asia and the Pacific, provides insights and a foundation for deeper and more effective regional cooperation for a world reshaped by the pandemic.

recover and rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, the book examines approaches to strengthen regional trade and investment; improve intraregional infrastructure and connectivity; reduce financial risk; coordinate health systems and approaches; and enhance coordination on cross-border issues such as climate change and ocean health.

Enhanced regional cooperation can, for example, help expand trade and investment by opening avenues and opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to participate more actively in local and global supply chains through better transportation and connectivity, it said.



There is a universal right to health, including for those who, for whatever reason, continue to engage in risky behaviour. Harm reduction refers to a range of

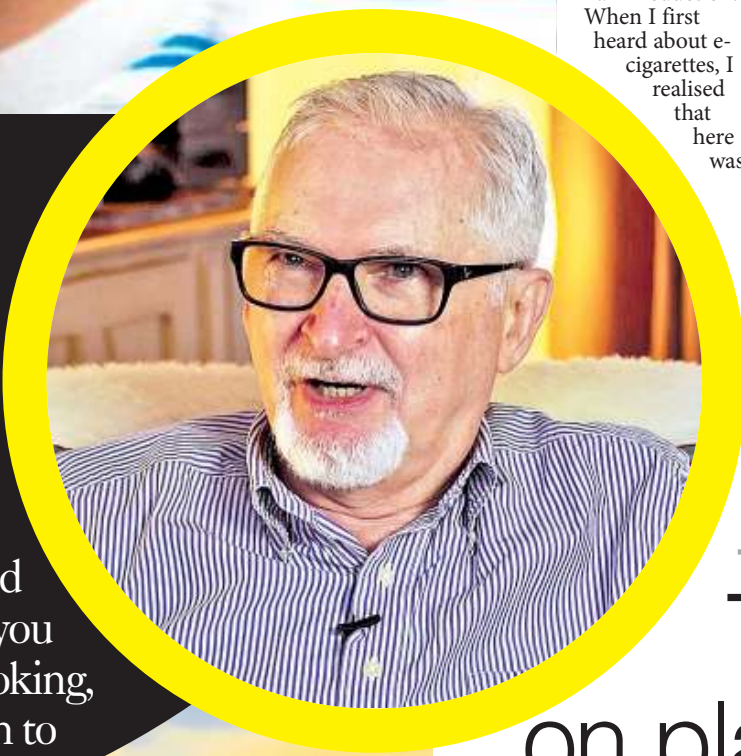
pragmatic policies, regulations and actions, which either reduce health risks by providing safer forms of products or substances or encourage less risky behaviours. Harm reduction does not focus primarily on the eradication of products or behaviours. The humane response, instead, is to reduce the risks, thereby enabling people to survive and live better — in this case through access to safer nicotine products aimed at encouraging people to switch away from cigarettes, is one of the most dangerous ways of consuming nicotine. The global smoking problem continues unabated but there are glimmers of hope too. “I’m not a smoker, I’m not a vaper but I’m an expert on harm reduction. I’m a public health social scientist who helped invent drugs harm reduction. When I first heard about e-cigarettes, I realised that here was

a golden opportunity for tobacco harm reduction. Over the last five years I have become an ardent advocate for e-cigarettes. I set up the Global Forum on Nicotine with Paddy Costall to help take forward discussion on e-cigarettes and other lower risk nicotine products,” shares Gerry Stimson, the director of Knowledge Action Change. Product innovation continues to offer a wide choice to adult consumers looking to avoid smoking. The origins of vaping lay outside the orbit of tobacco multinationals and the creative disruption caused was underlined by the success of JUUL which rapidly overtook its rivals. Some of its early marketing to the young adult end of the smoking market, clearly caused controversy but the product delivered a nicotine experience that was sought by many in the wider market of adult consumers. “There has been no help from Public Health experts, to the contrary, many of the so-called experts have been hostile to vaping and vapers. There are now new questions for science, for policy, and product standards. And when you can deliver nicotine without smoking tobacco, it begins to change our view of it. So, we wanted to create an event where people could discuss these issues,” he states further. Vaping devices, already discreet and easy to use, are becoming technologically more sophisticated, making the term e-cigarette increasingly redundant. More companies are involved in developing heated tobacco products while new non-tobacco nicotine products are also coming onto the market.

There is no such thing as absolute safety but the newer and safer nicotine product have been in wide circulation for more than a decade now with accumulated evidence that they are much less risky than combustibles. “After decades of tobacco research which failed to demonstrate adverse effects of nicotine on the developing brain, recent claims to this effect about vaping are not credible. Failing to demonstrate a gateway effect from vaping to smoking, anti-campaigners majored on nicotine addiction. However, given the lack of evidence about the physical and psychological harms of nicotine, concerns about addiction belong more to the realm of moral objections than public health. Finally and without any evidence, it has been claimed that vaping puts users more at risk from ‘COVID-19,’ adds the director who is mapping the global development of tobacco harm reduction. What’s the way forward from here? For the first time there is now a wide range of positive inducements for people to switch from smoking rather than just disincentives. Through the new Safer Nicotine Product that offers an unprecedented exit strategy that has been shown to be acceptable to smokers and at minimal cost to governments. Aspirations aside, the reality is that tobacco control could only ever help to reduce harm so the case for harm reduction has always been inherent in the mission statement for tobacco except now there is a real-world opportunity to add enormous heft to beneficial public health outcomes.

HOPE FOR QUITTERS!

Smokers have time and again heard and are irked by statements asking them to quit smoking. If you are someone who is planning to quit smoking, here is some good news. Read on to know more



TINA BHATIA on playing Stockholm syndrome victim



IN WELCOME HOME, THE ACTRESS WILL BE SEEN IN A PIVOTAL ROLE ALONG WITH HER REAL LIFE HUSBAND BOLORAM

place where they discover more enthralling and thrilling instances. Along with Tina, her real life husband Boloram Das is also playing an impactful role of a terrifying man who promises to perform horrible deeds and goes right ahead with it. “Initially, I was not a part of the film but because of an accident of the former actor who was finalised, I got on board with the team. Tina is not only my wife but my batchmate too, since NSD. So we are very familiar with each other’s work. An interesting part is that this is the first film that we are doing together and just shared only one frame together. We analyse each other’s work and at the same time help each other out. So it was a great opportunity together,” shares Tina’s real and reel life husband!

Actress Tina Bhatia, best known for playing Choti Ammi in *Gully Boy* and acclaimed for her role of Dulhin in *Gulabo Sitabo* is currently seen in *Welcome Home* streaming on SonyLiv. She is playing a pivotal role along with her real life husband in the film. While sharing her experience on playing a Stockholm’s syndrome victim she says, “I’m essaying a character named Prerna. I chose this character because it holds a prominent role in the climax and is the turning point of the film. After saying yes to the film, I came to know about Stockholm syndrome. Then I took references from the director and

did a lot of research about it since it is found to be very rare in India. It was a very challenging role for me when I got to know more peculiarities about this syndrome. Taking references and getting into the skin of the character, altogether is a new experience that I learnt. As people are suffering from this syndrome and are not fully normal, I had to maintain that throughout, as my character was a victim but not mentally retarded.” Two professors ring the wrong doorbell where the character Prerna, who is pregnant, opens the door. Her child-like manner and bruises on her body make them suspicious, due to which, they go back to the

Dating will feel different now



2020 has upended our lives in unexpected ways - redefining dating rules, navigating virtual and socially distanced dating etiquettes and different approaches to relationships and mental wellbeing in this new environment. Bumble’s recent research found that one in two claims they are ready to go on a date in real life. However, 64% of the Bumble community claim that their dating life has significantly changed post the pandemic and 70% of single Indians say they are not comfortable navigating dating in 2020. Bumble, the women-first social networking app, launched its new integrated campaign aimed at empowering and supporting its community to navigate the new rules of dating. Bumble’s new integrated campaign encourages mil-

lennials and Gen Z in India to make the first move, and aims to support the Bumble community to navigate the new rules of dating in these challenging times. The campaign spans across various touch points including five unique digital films conceptualised by *The Script Room*, which capture different stories of virtual and socially-distanced dating. Bumble kicked off the campaign with the first film, ‘For your eyes only’ last week which will be followed by others slated to

release throughout this month. Additionally, Bumble has partnered with a robust set of influencers across India to support its community to make the first move and forge meaningful connections as well as out of home branding in shopping malls in Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Pune. Speaking about the campaign, Samarпита Samaddar, Bumble India PR Director said, “Even though 2020 turned our lives upside

down, what didn’t change was the need to seek and build meaningful connections. We’ve learnt from our recent study that one in two people in India are ready to go on an in-person date now. Single Indians are navigating this new world of dating and redefining the rule book as India unlocks. With our new campaign, we want to support our Bumble community in navigating the new rules of dating and encourage them to make the first move because falling in love is still an exciting possibility in 2020! Even though your dating journey might be a little bumpy, Bumble’s got your back!”

Bumble recently also launched three new dating badges in India to help people communicate how and what kind of dates they would like to go on: virtual, socially-distanced or socially distanced with masks.

BUMBLE’S NEW INTEGRATED CAMPAIGN ENCOURAGES MILLENNIALS AND GEN Z IN INDIA TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE, AND AIMS TO SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY TO NAVIGATE THE NEW RULES OF DATING IN THESE CHALLENGING TIMES.

Singer Peter Andre turns fitness and health guru

Singer Peter Andre seems to be trying out a new career as he is going to use his fitness and health knowledge to help people. He is launching a diet and exercise channel online, where he aims to advise people on how to enjoy their food while still staying healthy, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

He said: "As well as our YouTube channel, 'Life with the Andres', I'll also be launching a fitness and cooking channel. I want to show people they can eat the foods they want and counteract it with exercise and making subtle changes."

"I've been training since I was 13, so I know all the old and new styles of training, and I can help people of all ages and abilities," he added.

The "fully qualified body pump instructor" has more to share.

"Here's a bit of trivia for you — I'm also a fully qualified body pump instructor, so you may see a class or two from me on that — but don't expect me to be wearing lycra," he said in a magazine column.

Andre had recently said he wants to be in the "best shape of (his) life" when he turns 50 in February 2023.



Priyanka Chopra: My upbringing, an amalgamation of two Indias, traditional and modern

Global icon and Bollywood superstar Priyanka Chopra Jonas says her upbringing has played a crucial role in shaping her personality.

"I am a product of traditional India and its ancient wisdom, and modern India and its urban bustle. My upbringing was always an amalgamation of the two Indias and, just as much, of East and West," she said.

The actress has started preparation for her next romantic drama, tentatively titled *Text For You*, co-starring Grammy-winner Celine Dion and actor Sam Heughan.

Through her Instagram Stories, Priyanka also revealed that she will start shooting for the project on Friday.

She shared several pictures from her prep mode, in which she is seen getting her hair and nails done before she begins work.

The photographs showed Priyanka

wearing a mask while getting a manicure. Her hair is covered in plastic sheets, hinting at new hair colour

"Prep... starting text for you on Friday," she wrote with the photos.

Written and directed by Jim Strouse, the film is an English remake of the German-language film *SMS Fur Dich*, based on Sofie Cramer's novel.

The actress is gearing up for her upcoming Netflix release *The White Tiger* along with Rajkummar Rao, and Robert Rodriguez's superhero film *We Can Be Heroes*.

Priyanka's memoir, *Unfinished: A Memoir*, is all set to release in January 2021.

Meghan Markle opens up about suffering miscarriage in July



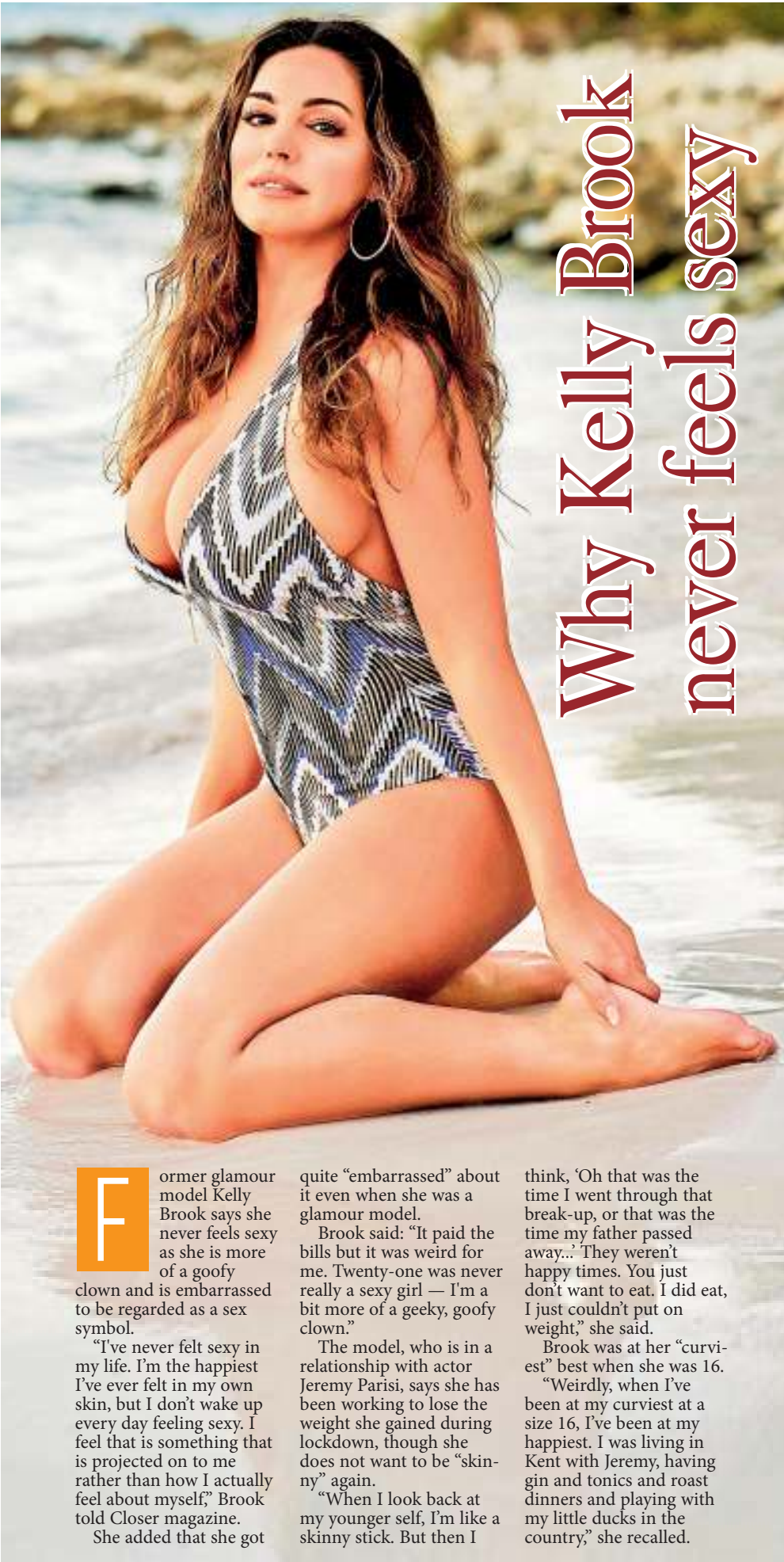
The Duchess of Sussex Meghan Markle has revealed that she suffered a miscarriage in July this year.

Meghan, wife of Harry, Duke of Sussex, opened up about the tragic incident to New York Times in an article titled "The Losses We Share". She described the experience as an "almost unbearable grief".

Meghan shared: "It was a July morning that began as ordinarily as any other day: Make breakfast. Feed the dogs. Take vitamins. Find that missing sock. Pick up the rogue crayon that rolled under the table. Throw my hair in a ponytail before getting my son from his crib. "After changing his diaper, I felt a sharp cramp. I dropped to the floor with him in my arms, humming a lullaby to keep us both calm, the cheerful tune a stark contrast to my sense that something was not right," she added.

"I knew, as I clutched my firstborn child, that I was losing my second.

Hours later, I lay in a hospital bed, holding my husband's hand. I felt the clamminess of his palm and kissed his knuckles, wet from both our tears...I tried to imagine how we'd heal," Meghan further wrote in the article.



Why Kelly Brook never feels sexy

Former glamour model Kelly Brook says she never feels sexy as she is more of a goofy clown and is embarrassed to be regarded as a sex symbol.

"I've never felt sexy in my life. I'm the happiest I've ever felt in my own skin, but I don't wake up every day feeling sexy. I feel that is something that is projected on to me rather than how I actually feel about myself," Brook told Closer magazine.

She added that she got

quite "embarrassed" about it even when she was a glamour model.

Brook said: "It paid the bills but it was weird for me. Twenty-one was never really a sexy girl — I'm a bit more of a geeky, goofy clown."

The model, who is in a relationship with actor Jeremy Parisi, says she has been working to lose the weight she gained during lockdown, though she does not want to be "skinny" again.

"When I look back at my younger self, I'm like a skinny stick. But then I


think, 'Oh that was the time I went through that break-up, or that was the time my father passed away...' They weren't happy times. You just don't want to eat. I did eat, I just couldn't put on weight," she said.

Brook was at her "curviest" best when she was 16.

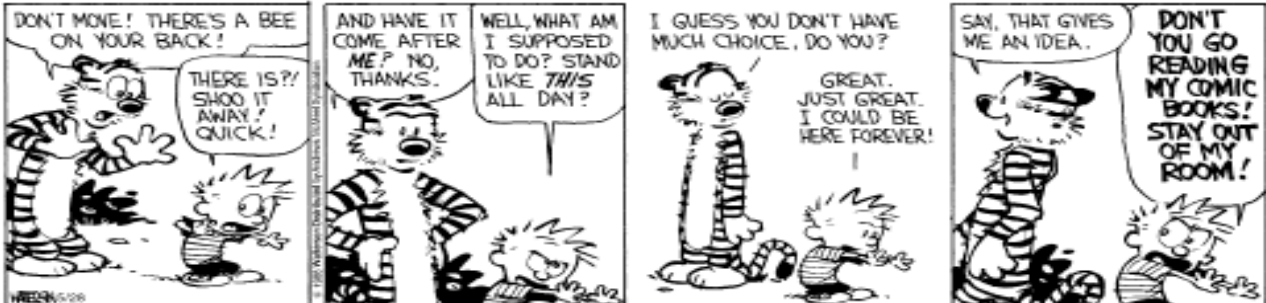
"Weirdly, when I've been at my curviest at a size 16, I've been at my happiest. I was living in Kent with Jeremy, having gin and tonics and roast dinners and playing with my little ducks in the country," she recalled.

FUN


ARCHIE




CALVIN AND HOBBS




GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

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

ACROSS

6 A traffic circle where roads cross

8 A pointy thing that indicates direction

10 Snapshot

13 A greeting (4,7)

14 Salty water from the eyes

17 Rubber covers on wheels

19 Getting better after illness

DOWN

1 Bitter-lasting

2 Cold winter crystals

3 Moist

4 A song for one singer

5 The most powerful

7 Female children

9 A command

11 Bees make this

12 A fishing pole

15 A curved support under a bridge

16 Rescue

17 Grow weary

18 Wear this on a finger

SOLUTION

A	L	M	O	S	T
P	E	T	S		
S	H	A	D	E	
C	E	N	T	R	E
J	R	O	E	T	
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NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



Rohit-less India take Oz challenge

Back in Blue for first time since coronavirus enforced break, Virat & Co venture into unknown against mighty hosts

Australia vs India
Live from 9:10am IST
SONY TEN 1, 3 & SIX NETWORK

PTI ■ SYDNEY

A new world and a different shade of retro blue awaits a circumspect Indian cricket team which re-enters the international arena without a white-ball colossus in Rohit Sharma, facing the might of a menacing Australia in the first ODI at Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday.

The absence of an injured Rohit Sharma will certainly leave a gaping hole at the top of the order, something that skipper Virat Kohli wouldn't have fancied at the onset of a gruelling two-month tour.

Kohli's men, who had been on a Covid-enforced international break since the disastrous away series against New Zealand that ended early March, now kick-start their international calendar in a series where a lot of probing questions are expected to be asked.

For those who believe in superstition, the return of the 1992 World Cup's navy blue jersey isn't a good omen as one of India's worst performances (7th in 9 teams) happened in that particular edition.

For the more pragmatic, it will be more about how Kohli's men get their combination right in the absence of Rohit, whose injury has been a topic of national debate.

Whether it's the young Shubman Gill or the slightly more experienced Mayank Agarwal, whoever partners an in-form Shikhar Dhawan, the challenge of facing a Mitchell Starc or a Pat Cummins first up will still be an onerous one.

So 'King Kohli' again has his task cut out as he gears up to combat a high quality pace attack, which is likely to be complemented by the wrist



Mohammad Shami and KL Rahul chat during India's training session at Sydney Cricket Ground

BCCI/Instagram

spin of Adam Zampa, who has at times been the Indian captain's nemesis.

Facing an Australia team in their own backyard with a Steve Smith, who is getting back his rhythm, an eternally hungry David Warner and a future great in Marnus Labuschagne isn't the best of propositions and thus some priorities will be tested.

For the next two years, 50-over cricket is the least impor-

tant format, so will it be a "win-at-all-costs" approach by Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri or a more easygoing mindset keeping the Test series in mind.

For starters, Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami could both start but the team management may have to rest one of the two alternately, keeping in mind their importance in the more traditional format.

Hence Shardul Thakur and Navdeep Saini need to up their respective games by a few notches if one of the two seniors are rested.

But do they have the wherewithal to trouble a world class Australian top-order, which can be destructive on most days?

Then there will be an acid test in store for KL Rahul, a stylish batsman, who will have to find those gaps with ease,

expect his skipper to have a ear for his suggestions and take those tricky DRS calls while successfully reading Yuzvendra Chahal's googlies behind the stumps.

An enviable template has been set by "that genius from Ranchi" and Rahul, of all people, will be the first to admit that his position is an unenviable one.

It's an inspired move to ensure an extra batting or bowling option that will lend the necessary balance to side, something that has been compromised a bit because of Hardik Pandya's inability to bowl due to an earlier case of stress fracture.

If it is Pandya's explosive hitting at No 6 or 7 that will give his captain the confidence to play two spinners, Shreyas Iyer's show at No 4 during the last tour remains a feel good factor for the visitors.

Chahal could be the man that the Australian middle-order, especially the likes of Marcus Stonis, Glenn Maxwell and Alex Carey, would be wary of.

But in the absence of a steady death bowler like Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Bumrah will once again be expected to carry the maximum workload.

The premier slinger wouldn't mind if rival skipper Aaron Finch once again find him in his nightmares.

The three ODIs will be followed by as many T20 Internationals before the Test series beginning December 17.

The series will see a return of the in-stadia crowds with Cricket Australia approving occupancy of 50 per cent of the available seats. CA had stated that the tickets have been sold out.

Shami, Bumrah might be rotated, hints Kohli

PTI ■ SYDNEY

The workload of premier fast bowlers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami is of paramount importance to India captain Virat Kohli and he said it will be closely monitored and managed during the white-ball series against Australia to keep them in good shape for the Tests.

It is expected that Shami and Bumrah, in the absence of an injured Ishant Sharma, will have to carry the bulk of the burden during the Test series and they will be rotated during the ODIs and T20 Internationals starting from Friday.

"It's a no-brainer. They have gone through a full IPL. It will be important to monitor their workload," Kohli said on the eve of the first ODI.

"You want to see how

people react to different situations. There is a fine balance that you need to maintain, something we have managed to do for the last few years," Kohli said.

"That is why our bowlers have been fit and available for the important matches most of the times for us. It is an important factor for me as a captain. It is going to be crucial."

Kohli said that youngsters will be tried out during these two series.

"Yes, we have definitely discussed those things. There are a lot of young guys in the squad.

"It is a great opportunity for them to realise something new about their game. It's a very important series for them. Definitely looking forward to seeing how they shape up."



'Lack of clarity, confusion over Rohit's injury'

PTI ■ SYDNEY

India captain Virat Kohli on Thursday didn't hide his displeasure at the Rohit Sharma injury saga stating that "confusion and lack of clarity" has led to the team management playing a "waiting game" on his availability which is not ideal.

Answering media queries online ahead of the ODI series, Kohli said Rohit was said to be unavailable before the selection committee meeting earlier this month.

"Before the selection meeting, we got a mail that he is unavailable, that he has picked up an injury during the IPL. It said that the pros and cons of the injury were explained to him and he understood and he was unavailable," Kohli said.

The Indian captain's view did open a Pandora's box about



whether he and his white ball deputy have been communicating on various sensitive issues pertaining to the team.

Rohit, who is nursing a left

hamstring injury is doing is rehab at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru and is still three weeks away from full match fitness but a 14-day hard quarantine (without training) would rule him out of the Test series, starting December 17.

He played in the IPL with-in days of being left out of the Australia tour before being subsequently added to the Test squad.

"After that (the selection meeting) he played in the IPL and we all thought he would be on that flight to Australia and we had no information on why he is not travelling with us. There has been no information, there has been lack of clarity," Kohli said.

"We have been playing the waiting game," he added.

Kohli said that Rohit's next assessment at the NCA will

happen on December 11 and right now it's a waiting game for the team sitting in Australia.

"The only other information we got is that he is in NCA and he is being assessed and he will again be assessed on 11th December. It's not ideal at all. It's been very confusing and a lot of uncertainty and lack of clarity around the situation," the skipper's irritation was palpable.

In fact, Kohli just like it has been reported, said that now Rohit and pacer Ishant Sharma, who is recovering from a side strain, arriving in Australia is not certain given the strict 14-day quarantine enforcement here.

"Right now, there is so much uncertainty and whether they are going to make it and if they are going to make it at all or not."

India have quality player in Mayank to replace Rohit: Finch



PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian skipper Aaron Finch on Thursday said India have enough quality in their ODI squad to replace a great batsman like Rohit Sharma, who is back home nursing a hamstring injury.

The in-form Mayank Agarwal is likely to open with Shikhar Dhawan in Rohit's absence in the ODI series.

"He is obviously a great player and someone who has had quite a bit of success

against us in the past. It (Rohit's injury) is unfortunate," Finch said in a virtual media interaction ahead of the series opener.

"You want to play against the best players all the time but whoever he is going to replace him, possibly Mayank, he has been in great form as well. So you take away a lot of experience but you also bring in another quality player."

Finch was Virat Kohli's teammate at Royal Challengers Bangalore during the IPL and was asked if he noticed in weaknesses in India skipper's game.

"He doesn't have too many to be honest. If you look at his record it is second to none. We have to keep looking get him out. When you go away from that and look to contain players you can sort of miss a trick there," Finch said.

"There are not too many chinks in his armour, he is probably the best one day player of all time."

6 Pak cricketers test Covid +ve

CHRISTCHURCH: Six touring Pakistan cricketers have tested positive for Covid-19 here, New Zealand Cricket announced on Thursday, alleging a breach of the bio-secure protocol by the visitors who have been asked not to train in quarantine and issued a "final warning".

A jumbo 53-strong Pakistan squad, led by Babar Azam, arrived in New Zealand on Tuesday and is serving a mandatory 14-day quarantine period as per Covid-19 protocol.

"Two of these six results have been deemed 'historical'; four have been confirmed as new," NZC said in a statement without revealing the names of the players who have tested positive for the dreaded virus.

All six members of the squad will be moved to the quarantine arm of a managed isolation facility. Pakistan are here for three T20 Internationals and two Tests. The series begins December 18 in Auckland. PTI

Atalanta stun Liverpool at Anfield

AFP ■ MUNICH/LIVERPOOL

Robert Lewandowski set Bayern Munich on the way to a 3-1 Champions League win over Salzburg on Wednesday as the holders joined Manchester City in qualifying for the last 16 with two group games to spare, while Liverpool went down to defeat and Marseille are now the owners of an unwanted record.

On a night when clubs marked news of the death of Diego Maradona by holding a minute's silence in memory of the Argentine before all Champions League games, Bayern eased to a record-extending 15th straight win in the competition.

Six-time European champions Liverpool are not yet sure of progressing to the next round after going down 2-0 to Atalanta at Anfield.

Three weeks after beating the same side 5-0 in Italy, Liverpool struggled with a weakened starting line-up, and Josip Illicic put Atalanta in



Papu Gomez, right, celebrates with teammates following Atalanta's win

AP

front on the hour mark before German international Robin Gosens got the second goal.

"A deserved defeat in a difficult game," was how Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp summed up the game.

Liverpool are top of Group D on nine points, two points clear of Atalanta and Ajax, who were 3-1 winners at home to Midtjylland.

Ajax go to Liverpool next week.

For Bayern, Lewandowski scored the opener just before half-time at an empty Allianz Arena, his 14th goal of the season and also his 71st altogether in the Champions League, leaving him level with Real Madrid great Raul in third place on the all-time list behind Cristiano Ronaldo (131) and

Lionel Messi (118).

Kingsley Coman scored Bayern's second and then crossed for Leroy Sane to head in their third, before Mergim Berisha pulled a goal back for the Austrian champions.

Marc Roca was sent off for Bayern, but they have a maximum 12 points and are guaranteed to advance as Group A winners, while Atletico Madrid sit second but continue to toil in Europe this season after being held 0-0 at home by Lokomotiv Moscow.

Pep Guardiola's City earlier secured progress as Phil Foden swept in from a Raheem Sterling back-heel to secure a 1-0 win away to Olympiakos in Greece, their fourth win out of four in Group C.

Second-place Porto are on the brink of joining them in qualifying after a 2-0 win at Marseille, which was the French side's 13th consecutive defeat in the competition stretching over three cam-

paigns going back to 2011-12. Meanwhile, Inter Milan are on the brink of being eliminated in the group stage after Arturo Vidal was sent off as they went down 2-0 at home to Real Madrid.



Eden Hazard gave the visitors an early lead from the penalty spot at San Siro for his first Champions League goal in a Real shirt, and Vidal was sent off before the break after seeing two yellow cards for dissent in quick succession.

A Rodrygo shot went in off Achraf Hakimi in the second half to make it 2-0, and Real are now on course to qualify from Group B after losing 3-2 at home to Shakhtar Donetsk in their first game.

Shakhtar lost 4-0 to Borussia Muenchengladbach, with Lars Stindl scoring a penalty and Nico Elvedi, Breel Embolo and Oscar Wendt also on target to keep the Germans on top of the group.

Diego Maradona's India connection: Playing football with Ganguly in Kolkata, now a statue in Goa

The Argentine legend was 57 when he came to Kolkata in 2017 and showed glimpses of his deft left foot and sweated it out with a bunch of school children

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI

His promise to bring "big-time" football to India remained unfulfilled as Diego Maradona died on Wednesday at the age of 60 after cheating death more than once, leaving a cricket-mad nation devastated in an appropriate reflection of his immortal status.

Many will remember the way he swayed, slithered and slalomed during his epochal World Cup triumph in 1986 in Mexico. A lot many in the 'City of Joy' will recall how a little bulky version of Maradona huffed and puffed during a charity football game in Kolkata three years ago.

He played against Indian cricket great Sourav Ganguly, who reacted to his death by saying that he lost his hero.

Shock and disbelief gripped football-crazy Kerala as fans recalled the iconic footballer, who had visited the southern state for two days in October 2012 for a private event.

The Argentine legend, who



Diego Maradona (2nd right) gestures as former Indian cricketer captain Sourav Ganguly in Kolkata

AFP/File Photo

was 57 when he came to Kolkata in 2017, had managed to dribble, show glimpses of his deft left foot and even crooned Spanish songs, as he sweated it out with a bunch of school children and bid them adieu with a promise to "bring football" to India.

In another tribute, the Goa government will install the life-

size statue of late Argentine football legend Diego Maradona in the coastal belt of North district by early next year, a senior minister said.

Maradona's statue is already under making with a Maharashtra-based artist working on the mould, Calangute MLA and state Ports Minister

Michael Lobo told PTI.

In December 2017, he turned up in shorts in Kolkata, enjoyed every bit of the maddening attention even though the gruelling session literally drained him as he was seen drenched in sweat, pouring water on his head.

But he had no complaints

and was eloquent in his three-minute Spanish speech.

"I'm here for football... It is a big step, that we take to uplift football in India," he said about his three-day private trip which was co-sponsored by a local politician among others, nearly nine years after his first visit to the city.

"The country really has good players and a football school of boys. Football wants India and India wants football. Together with the people we will bring football. I have always been very well received in India. Thanks and kiss!" he had signed off, never to come back again.

He also obliged his many die-hard fans with photographs and did not mind sitting on the pitch for that perfect frame.

He then headed straight near the packed galleries and wowed his fans with shooting some footballs in the air. Cheered on by a delirious crowd, Maradona then hummed a couple of songs.

It was not for nothing that India reacted with shock, anger

'Childhood hero' Maradona inspired me to take up football: Bhutia

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Former India captain Bhaichung Bhutia on Thursday said Argentine football legend Diego Maradona was his inspiration behind taking up the 'beautiful game' as a career option.

Paying his tribute to Maradona, who died at the age of 60 in Buenos Aires on Wednesday night following a cardiac arrest, Bhutia said from young age he always aspired to play like the football legend.

and sadness after his heart stopped beating on Wednesday.

For the football-mad fans in Kerala, 2012 was a god-sent opportunity as they could catch a glimpse of their hero from close quarters in Kannur. Such was the craze for the 1986 World Cup winner that fans had started converging at the stadium

"He (Maradona) has been one of the most inspirational players for me since the time I started watching football. I've grown up watching him and wanted to be like him," the Sikkimese Sniper told PTI.

"It was just because of him I got up early in the morning to play in those wet and muddy grounds. I was all inspired by Maradona because I wanted to play like him. Definitely he had a big impact in my career."

The Indian football legend had a chance to meet his child-

hood hero on the sidelines of an exhibition match at the Saltlake Stadium during Argentine's visit to Kolkata in December 2008.

"We just shook hands. I was very, very nervous. My heart was beating fast. To meet my childhood hero whom I had worshipped would remain as was one of my best memories," Bhutia said.

"It's the biggest loss for world football. There will be no other big player to have played the game than Maradona in this era of world football."

Maradona in Kannur stadium," he said.

Antony was lucky as he got another opportunity to meet Maradona, in Kolkata, and sing before him. "I feel his love for music is as important as football in his life," Antony said. "He was so humble and meeting him was an unforgettable experience."



Sukumar’s former assistant, *Raja Vaaru...* fame

KASI-YAZURVED TEAM UP FOR ROMANTIC-COMEDY



One-film-old Yazurved Gurram, who played the endearing Naidu in last year’s delectable romance *Raja Vaaru Rani Gaaru*, is now going solo with a road movie peppered with romance and comedy. The yet-to-be-titled film was launched in a low-key manner in Hyderabad earlier this week. Kasi Viswanath, who came close to directing Naga Shaurya last year, is making his directorial debut with the project. He assisted Sukumar from *Arya 2* and *1: Nenokkadine* and shares proximity with Allu Arjun as well. Kannada box-office smash *Love Mocktail* girl Rachana Inder is making her Telugu debut with the project, which also sees Satya and Rajkumar Kasireddy in supporting roles. Varun, a native of Kakinada, is pooling in resources.

Talking to us, Yazurved shares that after *Raja Vaaru Rani Gaaru*, he was

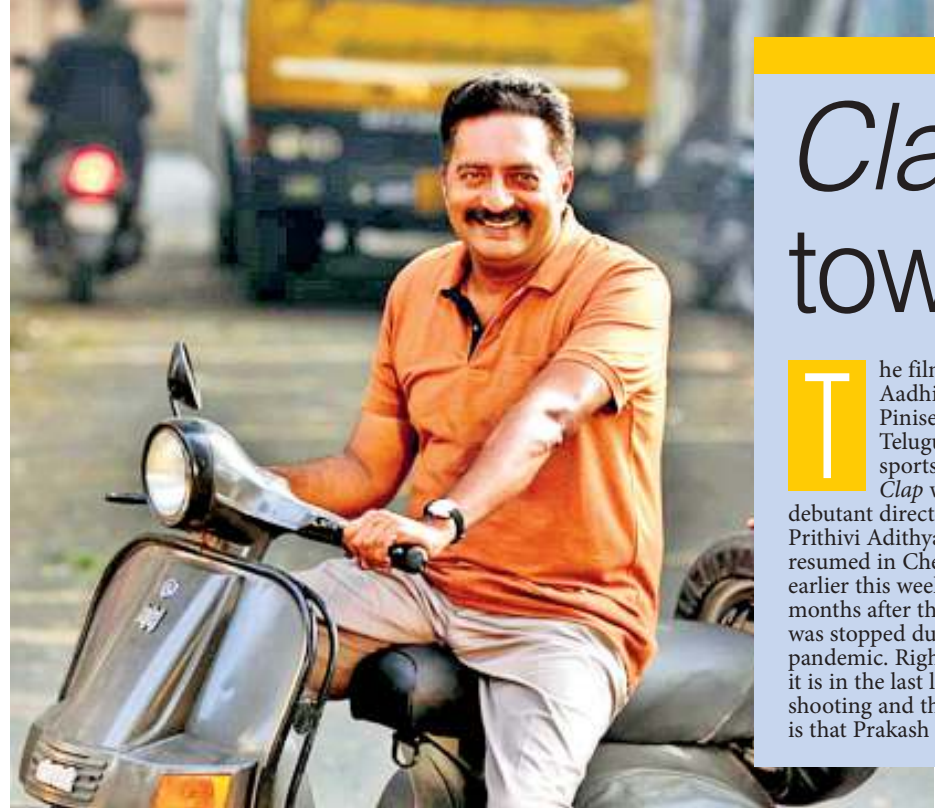
approached to spearhead four-five films but as they were messy in nature he had to turn them down politely. “In fact, I never dreamt of becoming a hero but out of the blue, Kasi garu pitched me the road movie and I felt the need to take it up. The story has come out really well. Post this project, I want to strike a balance between doing main leads and supporting roles,” he says, admitting that it feels nice to front a project but at the same time, he feels a great sense of responsibility. He goes on to mention that Kasi liked his body language, slang and dialogue delivery from *Raja Vaaru Rani Gaaru* and the lead character in the road movie demanded a similar characterisation. “And so, I was offered the film. He was unyielding on my casting and lost three producers in

To roll in Amalapuram next month, the film will also mark the Telugu debut of *Love Mocktail* girl Rachana Inder. She will be seen as a live-wire who doesn’t see eye-to-eye with Yazurved’s part, finds **NAGARAJ GOUD**

the process. I will be speaking in Godavari slang for the project and the prep has already begun. We will roll in Amalapuram on December 7 with a week’s schedule, followed by outings in and around Vizag. We will also be filming in Bengaluru for a couple of days. The idea is to wrap up the film in 26 days flat,” the actor notes.

As far as his character goes, he states that he will be seen as a simple villager, while Rachana is playing a live-wire who doesn’t

meet eye-to-eye with him. Vishwanath Reddy, who shot Manu, has been signed on the cameraman, while Partha Saradhi, who assisted Mani Sharma in the past, will deliver the musical accompaniment.



Clap inching towards completion

The filming of Aadhi Pinisetty’s Telugu-Tamil sports drama *Clap* with debutant director Prithvi Adithya has resumed in Chennai earlier this week-eight months after the shoot was stopped due to the pandemic. Right now, it is in the last leg of shooting and the latest is that Prakash Raj has

joined the sets on Wednesday for the first time. Besides the national award winner, Aadhi and other principal cast are partaking in the shoot, the makers said. Speaking about the film earlier, Aadhi, who will be seen as a 400-metres athlete, had said, “Usually after listening to a story, I speak about my dates and remuneration to

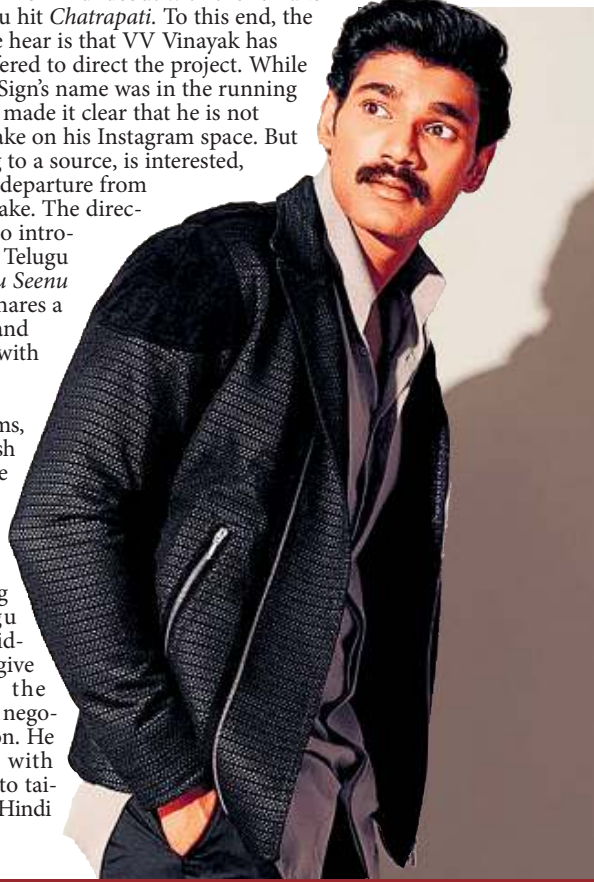
the film’s makers but with *Clap*, I simply said I’d do it. That’s how much the story got my attention. It’s a heart-touching script and though many sports films have been made in the past, this one’s going to be different.” A joint venture between IB Karthikeyan and M Raja Shekar Reddy, *Clap* sees Aakanksha

Singh and Krishna Kurup as the leading ladies, while supporting cast is stacked up with the likes of Nassar, Krishna Kurup, Ramdoss and Brahmaji. It is a maestro Ilaiyaraaja musical. Meanwhile, Prakash Raj is the latest addition to Vishal and Arya-starrer film *Enemy*, directed by Anand Shankar.

Vinayak likely to introduce Bellamkonda in Hindi

By now, its established Bellamkonda Sai Sreenivas is set for his Hindi debut with the remake of Telugu hit *Chatrapati*. To this end, the latest we hear is that VV Vinayak has been offered to direct the project. While Sujeeth Sign’s name was in the running sometime back, he made it clear that he is not taking up any remake on his Instagram space. But Vinayak, according to a source, is interested, especially after his departure from *Lucifer* Telugu remake. The director was the one who introduced Sreenivas in Telugu cinema with *Alludu Seenu* six years ago and shares a great professional and personal equation with the actor’s father Suresh.

The source informs, “In fact, it was Suresh who proposed the name of Vinayak to Hindi producers soon after it was clear that the director was not helming *Lucifer* Telugu remake. Vinayak didn’t think twice to give his consent for the remake but his fee negotiations are going on. He will be working with Vijayendra Prasad to tailor the script to suit Hindi audiences.”



Sandy signs a romantic entertainer

After playing real-life personalities like *Vangaveeti Ranga* and *George Reddy*, the usually choosy Sandeep Madhav aka Sandy will be essaying a fictional character in debutant director JV Madhu Kiran’s film. Madhu worked as a writer with KS Ravindra aka Bobby in the past. The untitled film is a romantic entertainer with commercial bells and whistles. Noted cinematographer Arunkumar Surapaneni is debuting as a producer with the project, to be made under Halcyon Movies banner. While more details are awaited, according to a release, a popular actor will be seen in a crucial role in the film.



In the footsteps of his brother

Anand Deverakonda, who is basking in the glory of *Middle Class Melodies*, has decided to follow in the footsteps of his brother Vijay on the business front as well. Having received his first paycheck for his sophomore project, Anand decided to spend it on investment. Along with his best buddies, he opened a café, Good Vibes Only, at Khajaguda, Hyderabad. “My first paycheck goes into bringing you great food off screen and supporting my gang - we grew up dreaming together of good things and great times,” he wrote on Twitter.

Vijay too is pumped up about *Middle Class Melodies* winning the appreciation of the audience and his brother opening up a café. On his part, he decided to offer a deal to all those who visit the café this weekend. “I am in good mood — #MiddleClassMelodies. My friends opening a café and you know I celebrate everything with you. So everybody is welcome, have a good time, sagam bill naadhi, big hugs and kisses meeku (sic),” he posted on Twitter addressing his followers. Anand will be next seen in *Pushpaka Vimanam* (working title), a comedy thriller, with debutant Damodar Attada.

