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A WAKE-UP
CALL

MONEY 8

PROTESTING FARMERS HAVE NOT
'PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD' NEW FARM LAWS

SPORTS 11

SMITH DOES
IT AGAIN

VIJAYAWADA, MONDAY NOVEMBER 30, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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Singapore Woman Who
Had Covid Gives Birth To
Baby With Antibodies

A Singaporean woman, who was infected with the novel coronavirus in March when she was pregnant, has given birth to a baby with antibodies against the virus, offering a new clue as to whether the infection can be transferred from mother to child. The baby was born this month without COVID-19 but with the virus antibodies, the Straits Times newspaper reported on Sunday, citing the mother. "My doctor suspects I have transferred my COVID-19 antibodies to him during my pregnancy," Celine Ng-Chan told the paper. Ng-Chan had been mildly ill from the disease and was discharged from hospital after two-and-a-half weeks, the Straits Times said.

Rajinikanth To Meet Party
Leaders Today To Decide
On Taking Political Plunge

Superstar Rajinikanth, who earlier this month was urged by supporters to rethink his decision to stay away from electoral politics, will meet the district secretaries of his party - Rajini Makkal Mandram - on Monday to confirm if he will, in fact, contest in next year's Assembly polls. Sources within Team Rajini have said that is unclear if the meeting will be in-person or conducted online, in order to maintain social distancing during the Covid pandemic. Last month the actor hinted that his long-awaited entry to electoral politics may be delayed. A letter attributed to him cited doctors' concern over campaigning during the pandemic and the potential impact on Rajinikanth's health.

Transport Ministry Plans
Uniform PUC With QR
Code For All Vehicles

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways is planning to introduce uniform pollution under control (PUC) certificate for all vehicles across the country. As per the report in ETAuto, the ministry will soon be made uniform PUC certificates throughout the country and will come with QR code bearing important details. It will have specifics of the owner, vehicle and emission status. The ministry of transport issued a draft notification proposing these changes on Friday and has pursued suggestions and objections of the stakeholders. The transport Ministry has already proposed the changes in the Central Motor Vehicle Rules and will have the provision for a system generated SMS to the registered mobile number of the owner before getting the PUC done.

Eco-Friendly 'Kulhad'
To Replace Plastic
Cups At Rly Stations

Tea will be sold in environment-friendly 'kulhads' (earthen cups) in place of plastic cups at all railway stations in the country, Railway Minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday. The minister was speaking at an event organised to mark the inauguration of the newly electrified Dhigawara-Bandikui section under the North Western Railway. This initiative will be the contribution of the Railways towards a plastic-free India, Goyal said. "Tea is given in 'kulhad' at nearly 400 railway stations in the country today, and in future, it is our planning that tea will be sold only in kulhads at all railway stations in the country," he said.

YSRCP, TDP set for heated
exchanges in winter session

■ Govt has 17 Bills on Agenda; Oppn hopes to checkmate ruling party in Council

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The winter session of the Andhra Pradesh Legislature that begins here on Monday promises to be a stormy affair over a host of issues, particularly the state capital, Polavaram irrigation project and the hike in various taxes. The session is expected to be conducted till December 5, but the exact dates will be decided by the Business Advisory Committees of the respective Houses, Legislature sources said.

The Question Hour, however, is being dispensed with in both the Council and the Assembly in view of the prevailing COVID-19 situation, though the main opposition Telugu Desam Party has been demanding that it be conducted.

Interestingly, at a preparatory

Ban on media in Assembly illegal, lift it, says Naidu

TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday objected in the strongest terms the ban order on the media and the removal of the media point during the winter session of the Legislature that starts from Monday. In a letter to the Assembly Speaker, Naidu sought unconditional lifting of the ban and the restoration of the media point. "Ban on the media is against the spirit of democracy

considering the fact that it would be possible only through the media to give voice to the problems of the people," the TDP chief wrote. He asserted that the role of the media was crucial in communicating the debates and nature of proceedings in the Legislative bodies to the people. "Ban on media in the Assembly is more harmful than even GO 2,430, which was issued by the

YSRCP Government in the past to punish journalists who write stories against the Government," Naidu wrote. The TDP chief pointed out that the state and national media had also taken strong objection to GO 2,430 as it interfered with the right to freedom of expression. Even the Press Council of India found fault with the arbitrary GO at that time, he reminded.

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meeting on the eve of the Legislature session, both the Chairman of the Council MA Shariff and Assembly Speaker T Seetaram stressed on the right of members to raise questions on various issues concerning the people and asked the bureaucrats to furnish answers promptly.

The TDP also wants short duration discussions taken up on various issues of public importance like payment of MGNREGA dues, distribution of PM Aawas Yojana houses, new sand policy, installation of meters to agricultural power connections, indiscriminate borrowings by the govern-

ment, conduct of elections to local bodies and others.

The YSRCP Government, however, is coming up with a heavy agenda as it has to replace at least 11 Ordinances, promulgated since August 4, with fresh laws.

2

Adani: Forfeit
deposit of those
against recovery of
public money

8

Congress MP Karti
flays 'hero worship'
of Rajiv case
convicts

5

Delhi Cong
restructuring
to start next week

3

Mining firm fined Rs 10 crore,
continues to dig illegally

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The regional vigilance squad of the Department of Mines and Geology has imposed a penalty of around Rs 10 crore on Anjani Stone Crushers for misuse of mining permits and illegal quarrying of the road metal and gravel at Martoor under Anakapalle Mandal in Vizag district.

This was not the first time that the firm has been fined for the violation; a few days ago, officials had slapped a penalty of around Rs 4.5 crore on the same company for various violations.

The raid, led by R Pratap Reddy, on the company was part of the department's continuing drive against illegal mining activities.



Despite being slapped with hefty penalties for illegal quarrying, owners of the mining firms continue to dig for metal and gravel without requisite permits.

Pratap Reddy said that in the fresh case, Anjani Stone

Crushers firm owned by MS Reddy had obtained permission for excavation of 3,00,208 cubic meters of road metal in 6.78 hectares at Martoor under Anakapalle Mandal in the district.

2

Tiger kills
tribal girl in
Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 15-year-old tribal girl was mauled to death by a tiger in a forest area in Kumram Bheem Asifabad district on Sunday, forest officials said.

This is the second such incident in the district this month as a 21-year-old tribal man was killed by a big cat on November 11.

However, the forest officials ruled out that it was the same tiger that killed the girl on Sunday.

The latest incident took place when the girl was plucking cotton in a field near Kondapalli village, they said adding the tiger pounced on the victim and dragged her for about 30 meters.

2

Nani unhurt after mason
attacks Minister with trowel

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Transport and I&PR Minister Perni Venkataramaiah (Nani) had a narrow escape on Sunday when a mason attacked him with a trowel at his residence in Machilipatnam.

While the minister was unhurt in the attack, the incident left him visibly rattled for some time, before he regained his composure. The attack took place when Nani was involved with rituals to mark the 10th day of his mother's demise.

The attacker was identified as one Badugu Nageswara Rao, a resident of Godugupeta in Machilipatnam.

An Anganwadi teacher G Padma standing close to the Minister screamed for help and grabbed Nageswara Rao even as he tried to attack Nani again.

When the YSRCP supporters and security personnel grabbed Nageswara Rao, it was evident that he was in an inebriated condition and he began saying that he had come to see the Minister seeking



work.

Nani's shirt was torn in the incident, but he was otherwise unharmed.

The Minister later told the media that many people had come from the nearby villages to his residence to participate in the ceremony. He said that as he was leaving his residence, the mason came towards him and tried to touch his feet. He then whipped out a small trowel used for masonry work and tried to attack him in the abdomen. "The trowel brushed the belt buckle of my trouser. The man tried to attack me again but the people

around me caught him," said Nani.

The Minister said he remembered seeing his attacker on a couple of occasions earlier, but was not really sure of the reason behind the attack and said that he was safe.

District SP Ravindranath Babu said that the mason was taken into custody soon after the attack.

He said that according to the preliminary information, Nageswara Rao is the brother of Uma Devi, a TDP woman leader and he is a TDP sympathiser.

2

One crore samples
tested; 20% of AP
population screened

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Achieving the highest number tests per million per day in the country, Andhra Pradesh notched a significant milestone on Sunday with the number of tests crossing the 1 crore mark.

The number is equivalent to 20 percent of AP's project population, 5.3 crore.

"Andhra Pradesh crossed a significant milestone of testing more than one crore samples (1,00,17,126 sample tests) for Covid-19 today with tests per million per day is 1,87,587 (highest in the country) recovery rate of 98.23 percent and mortality rate is just 0.81 percent," tweeted YSRCP Parliamentary leader V. Vijayasai Reddy.

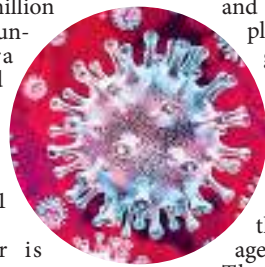
The state reported 620 Covid-19 cases on Sunday, taking the gross positives to 8, 67,683.

Over 60,000 tests per day, a majority being RT-PCR, are being conducted on a daily average.

At 1,87,587 tests per million population, AP leads the major states in the country and has so far completed screening a gross of 1,00,17,126 samples till date.

The overall infection positivity rate is 8.66 per cent against the national average of 6.73 per cent. The daily bulletin released by the Government said that 3,787 patients recovered in the past 24 hours ending 9 am on Sunday, thereby pushing the overall recoveries so far to 8,52,298. On the other hand, Covid-19 toll reached 6,988 with seven infected persons succumbing to the virus on Sunday.

The recovery rate went up 98.23 per cent from 97.86 per cent in a day. The mortality rate remained stable at 0.81 per cent. In the last 24 hours, West Godavari reported 107 and Guntur 101 fresh cases of Covid-19 while Krishna added 85 and Chittoor 64. The remaining nine districts added less than 50 new cases each.

Farmers say
'no' to talks
with riders

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rejecting the Centre's offer to hold talks once they move to the Burari ground, agitating farmers who have been staying put at Delhi's borders for four days said on Sunday they will not end the blockade and will continue their stir against the new farm laws.

After a meeting of over 30 farmer groups on Sunday, their representatives said they will not move to the Burari ground as it is an "open jail". They said the farmers will not accept any conditional dialogue and will block all five entry points to Delhi.

"The condition laid down by Home Minister Amit Shah is not acceptable to us. We will not hold any conditional talks. We reject the government's offer. The blockade will not end. We will block all five entry points to Delhi," Surjeet S Phul, Bhartiya Kisan Union's Punjab president, told reporters.

"The condition put for talks is an insult to farmers. We will never go to Burari. It is not a park but an open jail," he added.

After spending another night in the cold, thousands of farmers continued to protest against the Centre's new agri laws on the fourth consecutive day on Sunday, staying put at the Singhu and Tikri border points.

"We do not accept the condition of their (govt) proposal. We are ready to talk but will not accept any condition now," said Gurnam Singh Chadhoni, Haryana unit president for the Bhartiya Kisan Union.

Darshan Pal, Punjab president of Krantikari Kisan Union, said, "The government has invited us to talk with conditions. The environment should be created for a conversation."



High octane poll campaign for GHMC ends

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The high decibel and acrimonious campaign by political parties for the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation ended on Sunday at 6 PM, setting the stage for the December 1 "Battle for Hyderabad".

As many as 1,122 candidates are in poll fray for 150 wards in GHMC, constituting 24 Assembly segments with over



67 lakh eligible voters.

Top BJP leaders, including its president J P Nadda and Home Minister Amit Shah campaigned in the run up to

the polls, while TRS Working President KT Rama Rao shouldered the responsibility for his party.

TPCC President Uttam Kumar Reddy and senior leaders also canvassed for their party's candidates.

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi and his legislator brother Akbaruddin Owaisi participated in several rallies.

Chief Minister K Chandrababu Naidu addressed a

public meeting on November 28 here, highlighting his party's commitments for the development of the city.

Union Ministers Amit Shah, Smriti Irani, MoS Kishan Reddy and UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath were among the prominent leaders of BJP who mostly focused on the "family rule" of TRS and "undisclosed" tie up with the AIMIM.

2

Minimum winter temperature likely to be above normal

SUMIT ONKA

■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The minimum temperature in Andhra Pradesh will remain above normal during the winter, from December to February.

Since 2016, India Meteorological Department (IMD), Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) has been issuing seasonal forecast outlooks for subdivision scale temperatures

over the country for both hot and cold weather seasons.

In its map, Andhra Pradesh falls in the yellow area which denotes above normal minimum temperature.

Most of the subdivisions of south peninsular India are likely to experience below normal maximum temperatures.

Most of the subdivisions of northeast India, few subdivisions of west coast and south peninsular India are likely to

experience above normal minimum temperatures.

"The probability forecast for minimum temperature indicates that below normal minimum temperatures are likely over most subdivisions of north, northwest, central and a few subdivisions of east India. Most of the subdivisions of northeast India, few subdivisions of west coast and south peninsular India are likely to

experience above normal minimum temperatures," said the IMD.

"Currently, Sea Surface Temperatures are below normal over central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean and moderate La Niña conditions are prevailing over the equatorial Pacific Ocean. The latest forecast indicates that the moderate La Niña conditions are likely to continue at least till the end of winter season," said IMD.

Monday Mirchi

Parties out to debrief seasoned babu

Protocol, PMO and CMO

With the exit of PV Ramesh from the Andhra Pradesh government, it is now the turn of political parties to do their best to woo him into their fold. Being a senior IAS officer with vast experience in both state and central services, apart from a rewarding stint at the United Nations, PV Ramesh would naturally be a prize catch for political parties. A little bird told us that the real intention behind this sudden interest in Ramesh on the political turf is to debrief him for 'exposing' Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy. Ramesh may or may not be game for this, but he has been Jagan's aide all through this one and half years and served as additional chief secretary even after his retirement. Much to the chargin of then chief secretary L V Subramanyam, Ramesh was pampered by the Chief Minister. Political parties believe that Ramesh, having been the man Friday of the CM during the initial days, must be having juicy information related to the YSRCP government. By serenading him into their fold, every political party can uncork confidential information that Ramesh may have bottled up during his heyday. Although Ramesh has not yet bared his next move, his 'desire' to take a plunge into politics has become a hot topic of discussion among political circles. Many political parties except ruling YSRCP learnt to have extended some fancy offers to lure him.

A book the PR boss longs to read

Catering to what people want has been crucial for media. Most people, young adults mainly, are spending a lot of their precious time to know personal matters of celebrities. Yet, many of those who are neither famous nor notorious wonder why so much of today's news concerns trivia pertaining to celebrities and political bigwigs. I&PR Commissioner Arvind Kumar has been trying to figure out the logic, if any, behind media priorities. He recently expressed his desire to read a book on this curious subject. He apparently wants to dig into why the media highlights 'non-issues' concerning celebrities, their lifestyle etc; why the media is not focused or less cognizant of 'real' issues, which, from his standpoint, concerns masses -- poverty, gender justice, health, social disparities and economic issues. Unfortunately such a book, according to him, has not yet been published. He says he would certainly read if such a book ever gets written. Is the PR boss re-setting agenda for media houses? What he perhaps doesn't understand is that in today's world spin doctors and PR personnel, whether in public or private service, thrive largely by orbiting celebs and political leaders. And, these celebs and leaders know how to package real issues. And a little bird told us that could be the reason for his total concentration on municipal administration and for not giving enough time for the I&PR wing.

Bureaucrats who are past masters remain important

Governments and ministers may change, but bureaucrats who become past masters in the domains assigned to them cannot be easily blown away by the winds of change. In AP, senior bureaucrats Satish Chandra and G Sai Prasad seem to belong to this ilk. Both the babus were part of the CMO in the previous N Chandrababu Naidu regime and considered the members of Team Naidu with awe-inspiring power and authority across the state. They often came under intense fire from opposition party YSRC and were the punching bag for YSRC Rajya Sabha member V Vijaysai Reddy. After YSRC came to power, everyone thought that both the bureaucrats would be sidelined. They both were of course transferred and kept waiting for many months without any posting. Later, Satish Chandra was given charge of the School Education Department and Sai Prasad was made chairman of the AP Solar Power Corporation Ltd. Naysayers belatedly got to know that the two departments are crucial for CM Jagan, particularly because of Nadu Nedu programme and the state government's plan to install 10,000 MW of solar power in the state. The success of the two officials in implementing the two crucial programmes explains why they are the envy of their peers.

—Yours truly

YSRCP, TDP set for heated exchanges in...

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Also, an amendment to the AP Motor Vehicles Taxation Act is being brought in to enhance various transport taxes.

The government is seeking to rake in an additional revenue of Rs 400 crore through this measure.

The Government of India returned two crucial Bills, including the Disha Bill for women's protection, earlier passed by the Legislature, suggesting modifications and they need to be enacted afresh for securing the President's assent,

Legislature sources said. "In all there could be some 15-17 Bills that need to be passed in the winter session," they added.

Speaker Seetaram directed the officials concerned to keep all Bills ready on the opening day of the session.

But the TDP, which is in a majority in the 58-member Legislative Council, could once again seek to thwart the government's efforts to push through certain legislations.

Government Chief Whip G Srikanth Reddy said they were ready to discuss whatever issue the TDP wished to raise in the

Legislature. "It's Chandrababu Naidu and his son Lokesh who shied away from discussing people's problems.

But we are prepared because the YS Jaganmohan Reddy government distributed Rs 70,000 crore to the people in the times of distress," the Chief Whip pointed out.

"We are ready to conduct the session for any number of days, but they should first say how long they are ready to sit," Srikanth Reddy said, reacting to TDP's demand that the session be conducted for at least 10 days.

Better witness protection system needed: HC judges

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Two High Court judges stressed the importance of protection of witnesses and whistleblowers during a webinar organised by Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University (DSNLU), Visakhapatnam and Confederation of Alumni for National Law Universities Foundation, here on Sunday.

Kerala High Court judge Justice AKJ Nambiar said that a witness protection scheme or programme is extremely essential in any civilised nation that seeks to ensure the administration and application of 'Rule of Law' in its true sense and spirit.

Further, he observed that nations with strong witness protection schemes have better civil and social lives, as they have fairer and freer trials,



where the witnesses can give their testimonies without duress or fear.

Dr Justice Pushpendra Singh Bhati of Rajasthan High Court drew inferences from real-time situations and emphasised on the need of a witness protection scheme.

Victims or their family members, who lodge FIRs with

police at one instance get compromised later or fail to speak before the court of law during the trial. Most of this is achieved by convincing, influencing or threatening the victims and their families, Justice Bhati said.

DSNLU Vice-Chancellor Prof S Surya Prakash in his welcome address cited the case

of State of Bombay v. Salman Khan, in which the Bollywood actor was alleged to have caused the death of persons due to his act of rash and negligent driving.

The case had as many as 27 prosecution witnesses, out of which eight were direct witnesses. On the other hand, there was only one defence witness who was the alleged driver of Salman Khan.

The Sessions Court convicted the actor on five counts against which the appeal was filed at the Bombay High Court, where he was acquitted and all the depositions made by the witnesses were demolished by the judge.

The original copy of the FIR was missing and the constable who had recorded the statements of the witnesses had also died.

Nani unhurt after mason attacks Minister with...

Continued from Page 1

He said that the accused was insisting that he had come to meet the Minister seeking some work.

"Nageswara Rao is a mason from Machilipatnam. As many people came to attend the ceremony from various places, Nageswara Rao attacked the minister with a trowel he carried with him," the SP said, adding that the police are investigating the case from all angles.

Later in the evening, Home Minister Mekatothi Sucharita met Nani and enquired about the incident.

Condemning the attack, she said that thorough investigation would be conducted. DGP Gautam Sawang with other officials also met Nani and

TDP leader Kollu Ravindra refused allegations of YSRCP leaders about involvement of his party in the attack. He said that there was no connection between the TDP and Nageswara Rao.

enquired about the incident.

Meanwhile, circle inspector Venkataramana said that the attacker was in an inebriated condition and hailed from Godugupeta. He said that the police are investigating if Nageswara Rao has any criminal history.

Getting to know about the attack, Minister for Civil Supplies Kodali Srivenkateswara Rao, MLAs Jogi Ramesh and Vallabhaneni Vamsi and YSRCP leader Talashila Raghuram telephone

Nani and enquired about his well-being.

APIAC Amaravati leader Bopparaju Venkateswarlu and YV Rao condemned the attack and demanded the government to take stern action against the accused.

Meanwhile, former minister and TDP leader Kollu Ravindra refused allegations of YSRCP leaders about involvement of his party in the attack. He said that there was no connection between the TDP and Nageswara Rao.

Gold, silver prices decline; prices to stay volatile

HC UPADHYAY ■ HYDERABAD

Amidst disturbing news of the killing of Iran's leading nuclear scientist by Israel and in consequence Iran's threat to avenge the murder, geo-political equations have changed suddenly. Added to this, the defiant Donald Trump's resolve to set China right has also added fuel to fire.

Consequently, though during the week ended Saturday both gold and silver recorded a decline, these precious metals are likely to remain highly volatile. During the week under review, while gold closed at US dollars 1,787.70 (per ounce) silver too, closed at the lower level of 22.83 dollars. Similarly, platinum and palladium closed at Rs.29,000 (per 10 gm) and

Rs.52,010.67 respectively.

In foreign exchange market, Indian rupee remained strong. On the closing day, following were the exchange rates of different currencies: US dollar: Rs.74.05, British Pound: Rs.98.43, Euro: Rs.88.47, UAE Dirham: Rs.20.13, Omani Riyal: Rs.192.10, Australian Dollar: Rs.54.62, Canadian Dollar: Rs.56.92, Kuwaiti Dinar: Rs.242.07, Saudi Riyal: Rs.19.72, Hong Kong Dollar: Rs.9.54, New Zealand Dollar: Rs.51.90, Qatari Riyal: Rs.20.31, Swiss Franc: Rs.81.71, Singapore Dollar: Rs.55.26 and Japanese Yen:Rs.0.71.

Global crude oils surged ahead. Brent and NyMex closed at 48.27 and 45.53

dollars (per barrel) respectively. At home, in the MCX market crude oil ruled at Rs.3,357 (per barrel), while copper closed at Rs. 572.05 (per kg).

MCX gold and silver closed at Rs.48,106 ((per 10 gms) and Rs.59.100 (per kg). Stock market parameters Sensex and Nifty 50 closed at 44,149.72 and 12,968.95 points respectively.

Gold market has remained highly volatile in the recent times. After touching the record mark of Rs.56, 200 (per 10 gms) on August 6 this year, the standard gold has so far recorded a decline of over Rs.8,000. The decline since Diwali festival, which fell on November 14, has been to the tune of Rs.2,500.

Considering the variety of factors impacting gold price in India, it is unlikely that the price would dip further in the near future.

COMMODITIES Reports of bumper harvest of food grains and other essential agro-produce have fuelled optimism in the wholesale commodity markets. However, the adverse effects of the ongoing farmers' agitation would be felt only after a few weeks after it ends.

The principal commodity markets at the Osmanganj, Begum Bazar, Risala, Abdullah, Kishanganj, Maharajganj, Mukhtyargunj, Mir Alam Mandi Dilsukhnagar, Kukatpally, General Bazaar, Monda Market, Bowenpally and Rythu Bazaars witnessed good arrivals. With the beginning of the mar-

riage season these markets are expected to record high trade volumes in the days to come.

During the week, chillies, coriander, tamarind, turmeric, wheat, rice and sugar either remained unchanged at their respective closing levels in the last week or recorded a marginal decline. On the other hand, pulses, cereals and edibles ruled at comparatively little higher levels.

The sentiment in common vegetables was moderate. The wholesale NECC egg price in Hyderabad recorded a decline of Rs.46 at Rs.428 (per 100) during closing. The highest price of Rs.520 was recorded at Lucknow, while Hospet recorded the lowest price of Rs.415.

Shed hypocrisy and make a people-friendly Constitution

HC UPADHYAY ■ HYDERABAD

This year too, like every year, November 26 was 'celebrated' as the Constitution Day. On this day, right from the Presidents of India to the Presidents of mofussil courts read out the Preamble before select gatherings and thus, express their solidarity and allegiance to the Constitution of India, which is rightly considered as Geeta, Quran or Bible of our 'democratic' set-up. Again, in order to remind the people, called 'citizens', several dozens of seminars or webinars were conducted by various stakeholders in democracy, particularly the judiciary and the executive.

Indeed, this is a solemn occasion to ponder the book called, Constitution of India, which is the beacon light of our democracy. All laws, rules, and proce-

dures enacted by Parliament and State Assemblies and Councils must conform to the provisions of the Constitution. And, if not, they could be challenged in the High Court or the Supreme Court, which has the power to declare them ultra vires or beyond the powers of the concerned legislative body. The executive or administration is bound to enforce the laws in letter and spirit.

True, the Greek word for democracy, demokratia is made of two words, viz. demos (people) and kratos (rule) meaning the rule of the people. That is why the 16th President of America, Abraham Lincoln described the democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Any

country wedded to the principles of democracy, therefore, has to abide by this time-tested definition. Further, as the people are born and ultimately die and new generations replace them from time to time eternally, their hopes and aspirations also vary with the passage of time. In other words, the book containing the spirit of democracy ought to conform to the changing dreams, expectations, hopes and aspirations of the current generations; hence, it should be dynamic and not static. The American Constitution has been amended 27 times in last 231 years, while we have amended our Constitution 103 times in last 70 years. However, it does not mean that there are shortcomings in our Constitution that

have compelled us to amend it for so many times. It simply means that the successive governments of the day have been awake to the hopes and aspirations of people and, therefore, in order to comply with the people's wishes they deemed it proper to amend the Constitution. Therefore, there is nothing to be ashamed of if the people (meaning, the majority, of course) want a change in the Constitution and it is affected by Parliament of the day. Further, according to this logic, there is nothing and cannot be anything like 'the basic structure' of the Constitution, which cannot be changed. After all, the Constitution is just an instrument and nobody, except the people themselves, have power to sharpen, modify or discard it. The times change and so also the demands of the times. What was good, better or best yesterday

may not be the same today. The thought process of the people, real masters of the country, changes according to the socio, economic, political dynamics and the geo-political changes across the globe.

Therefore, it is high time our elected representatives changed the numbers of their glasses and respond to the dreams, hopes and aspirations of the people by going to any extent to fulfill them. Today the parties in power have the necessary mandate of the people to amend the Constitution, and still if they fail to do so because of any reasons whatsoever, the present and future generations of people will not excuse them.

High Court can grant bail: SC on Art 226

Delivering the judgment in the much-hyped case, Arnab Manohar Goswami Vs. State of Maharashtra & Ors (Cr.L Appeal

No.742 of 2020), the apex court has held that a high court should not foreclose itself from the exercise of the power of granting bail when a citizen has been arbitrarily deprived of his personal liberty in an excess of State power.

"In an application under Article 226, the High Court must be circumspect in exercising its powers (to grant bail) on the basis of the facts of each case," observed the bench, comprising Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justice Indira Banerjee, government to exercise vigilance on hitherto uncontrolled digital platforms. Indeed, if the amended law is used judicially and without malice or prejudice, it can usher in 'Swatcch Digital Bharat'.

AG bats for intermediate courts of appeal Attorney General K.K.

Venugopal has suggested setting up of four Courts of Appeal with 15 judges each in different directions so as to reduce the burden of the Supreme Court of India, which has at present, a backlog of 75,000 cases.

Speaking at the Constitution Day function at the Supreme Court, the AG said, "The Supreme Court is the apex court of the country and it should be dealing with only matters of national and constitutional importance. However, at present, we see the Supreme Court hearing matrimonial, rent control, landlord and tenant disputes, bails, matters of land acquisition etc. If the Courts of Appeals manned by the judges with equal caliber as the judges of the Supreme Court are established, then the Supreme Court will be left with only about 2,000-3,000 cases which can be handled by it easily, he added.

151 teams to restore power in Nivar-hit areas

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The APSPDCL has arranged 151 special teams to complete restoration works on a war footing in Cyclone Nivar affected areas in Nellore, YSR Kadapa and Chittoor districts in two to three days.

According to officials of SPDCL, the cyclone damaged power infrastructure, including 33 kv feeders, 11 kv feeders, distribution transformers (DTR) and 33 kv and 11 kv poles in some parts of Nellore, Kadapa and Chittoor districts. The loss was estimated as Rs 5.07 crore and a report was sent to the State government by SPDCL.

Energy secretary Srikanth Nagulapalli briefed Energy Minister Balineni Srinivasa Reddy on the restoration works in the affected districts. Srikanth said that the SPDCL has to restore only six 33 kv feeders against the total 261 and 49 feeders (11 kv) against the 1,029 and 632 DTRs against the total 1,238 which were affected during cyclone.

During the briefing by the secretary over telephone, the Minister for energy has directed APSPDCL officials to continue to put all out efforts to complete restoration works within two to three days. He also directed the DISCOM officials to take feedback from the people of the affected over the restoration and ensure 24x7 power supply.

Lighting supply to all pending villages will be restored by Sunday evening and damaged poles of 33KV and 11KV and sick DTRs of agriculture services will be rectified within two days. Water work services normalcy are being restored on a war footing.

Srikanth appreciated the efforts of CMD APSPDCL Haranatha Rao and his team of DISCOMs.

High octane poll campaign..

Continued from Page 1

TRS and BJP leaders indulged in war of words attacking each other.

Amit Shah, who participated in a road show today, launched a no holds barred attack on the ruling TRS, telling tv channels that the people of Telangana are angry and upset with the TRS and Owaisi's 'alliance' with it.

BJP Telangana president B Sanjay found himself in a row following his comments that his party would conduct a "surgical strike" in the old city here to chase away Rohingyas and Pakistanis.

Akbaruddin Owaisi earned the wrath of his opponents by asking whether the 'samadhis' of former Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao and TDP founder N T Rama Rao.

Covid at back of the mind, gaiety missing from Kartika Masam fete

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

While Covid-19 pandemic continues to show its impact on lifestyle of the people, the thought of a natural disaster like Cyclone Nivar certainly does not help celebrate festivals with traditional gaiety.

This was evident from the less than enthusiastic response to the Karthika Vana Samaradhana that is an essential part of the auspicious Kartika Masam.

Every year people in large numbers, mostly in small groups of family and friends, take part in the Vana Samaradhana programmes, especially on Sundays and other holidays. The verve was missing this year and Coronavirus and the cyclone are being blamed.

Traditionally, families and friends gather in large numbers in gardens to celebrate Kartika Vana Mahotsavam. Gardens and tourism spots like Kotappakonda, Kondaveedu Fort, Kondapalli Fort, Hamsaladevi, Machilipatnam beach, Suryalanka beach, Kothapatnam beach and other such places were crowded during the Kartika Masam.



This

Sunday, only a handful of people were seen at Kondapalli Fort and similar situations prevailed in other places.

The crowd was slightly thicker at Hamsaladevi as the visitors reached it to perform pujas and take a holy dip.

Vana Samaradhana popularly called as Karthika Vanabho-

janam is a ritualistic picnic undertaken annually during Kartika Masam.

Hindus consider plants like Tulasi, Amla, Bilva and Durva as divine and use them in pujas. The plants are considered to be of divine nature and worshipped as Gods in Hindu culture for centuries.



Hindus believe that Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi prefer to reside under Amla trees during Kartika Masam, during Kartika Vanabhojanam, Amla trees are worshipped by the people of Telugu community, said Someswara Sharma, a priest.

He said that pujas are offered to Lord Vishnu and Vishnu Purana and Kartika Purana are recited as part of Vana Mahotsavam rituals. Someswara Sharma explained that traditionally, people cook food under these trees after puja and consume it as prasadam. "This year, there is no enthusiasm for Vana Samaradhana despite it being the second week of Kartika Masam," the priest said.

"Earlier, many families formed groups for an outing during Kartika Vana Mahotsavam and perform puja to Lord Vishnu and have food in the nearby gardens every year. However, this year, perhaps due to Coronavirus and the cyclone, very few people were seen celebrating," said D Venkat Ramana, an event organiser.

He said unlike previous years, owners of farmhouses are refusing to give the premises for Vana Mahotsavam celebrations. "Just two more weeks remain in the Kartika Masam. I am hoping that more people take part in the annual Vana Mahotsavam celebrations," Venkat Ramana said.

BAC to decide on duration of session, not Naidu: Chief Whip

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Government Chief Whip Gadikota Srikanth Reddy on Sunday accused Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu of politicising the Assembly sessions schedule by demanding more number of sittings, even before the BAC meeting.

Speaking to media persons here, Srikanth Reddy said that Naidu has been politicising even non-issues and playing spoilsport for his selfish goals.

He said it will be decided in the BAC meeting as to how many days the Assembly session would be held and asked Naidu to first participate in the proceedings for five days and then demand an extension.

"The State Government is ready to discuss the issues raised by the Opposition on the welfare schemes being



implemented and its policies," the Chief Whip said.

He said the Government has decided to conduct Assembly sessions following Covid protocols taking all precautionary measures, Srikanth Reddy pointed out that there are about 70 members of the Assembly and Council who are aged above 60. "Question Hour could not be taken in the sessions due to pandemic."

The same procedure was followed in the Rajya Sabha," the Chief Whip said.

On Naidu's remarks about shutting down the media point in the Assembly, Srikanth Reddy said it was decided in the last BAC meeting to close the media point to prevent crowding during the pandemic. "Live feed of the proceedings of the Assembly will be provided to all media houses for telecast," he said.

The Chief Whip said It was Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy who has directly credited Rs 70,000 crore into the accounts of people through direct benefit transfer despite financial constraints for the welfare of people while Naidu and his son Nara Lokesh were confined to Hyderabad and restricting themselves to the Zoom App. He termed Naidu as 'stay-at-home Zoom leader'.

Ban on media is trampling of rights of people: Yanamala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Senior TDP leader and Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council Yanamala Ramakrishnu on Sunday appealed to Council Chairman MA Sharif to allow the media to cover proceedings of the Legislature that sits from Monday.

"Allow all sections of the media to cover the House proceedings in tune with the spirit of the Constitution and freedom of expression," Yanamala said in a letter to the Council Chairman.

He asserted that the people have a right to watch and learn about the debates by their representatives in the Legislature. "It's the fundamental right of the voters to know how their leaders respond to public issues and problems inside the House," Yanamala wrote.

He pointed out that it was the TDP regime that had first introduced live telecast of the House proceedings back in 1998. "With that, a lot of transparency came in the conduct of the Legislature and Parliament proceedings. Live telecast, ethics committee and disclosure of property by the elected representatives have enhanced the prestige of the Legislative bodies ever since," the former minister said.

He said that for many decades, media channels were being permitted into the House. "It's unfortunate that the suppressive YSRCP Government is neglecting and ignoring all the established legislative procedures. The Government is taking all undemocratic and unconstitutional decisions. The sanctions on a section of the media was highly condemnable and unpardonable," Yanamala said.

The TDP leader accused the ruling party of adopting unparliamentary activities. "Elected representatives should be answerable to the legislature but the YSRCP was throwing all such traditions to the winds. The ban on ETV, TV5 and ABN representatives amounted to an assault on the Constitution and on the freedom of the press.

The CM is freely trampling upon Constitutional rights. The Chief Minister was acting unilaterally by allowing only his own media, pro-Government channels to cover the legislative proceedings," he wrote.



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Guntur police seize 16,128 bottles of liquor

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As many as 16,128 bottles of illegal liquor worth Rs 32 lakh was seized by Guntur rural police on Sunday and 19 persons arrested.

The accused hid the liquor bottles brought from other States in a hatchery at Uppalapadu of Veldurthi Mandal and the police seized the stocks during checks.

Guntur SP Vishal Gunni said that Special Enforcement Bureau Macharla inspector Konda Reddy arrested two persons - Kalam Srinu and Kalluri Kondalu - from a hotel at Gundlapadu village of Veldurthi Mandal while they were selling liquor illegally and seized 51 bottles from them. During inquiry, the police found several other persons involved in the illegal liquor business.

These people were bringing liquor illegally from neighbouring Karnataka, Telangana and Maharashtra.

Vishal Gunni said that the gang brought 23,520 bottles with the help of person Sangamesh belongs to Bidar district of Karnataka State and stored half of the stock in a hatchery. They dug a pit beside the hatchery with the help of an earthmover and hid the rest of stock in that pit.

The SP said that as many as 19 persons including main accused Sangamesh were arrested.



Krishna district Collector A Md Imtiaz on Sunday reviews the arrangements ahead of the visit of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy to the Gurudwara at Guru Nanak Colony in Vijayawada to take part in the 151st birthday celebrations of Guru Nanak on Monday.

Jagan to take part in Guru Nanak b'day fete

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy would be the chief guest at the 151st birthday celebrations of Guru Nanak to be organised at Guru Nanak Colony in Vijayawada on Monday.

A team of top officials on Sunday evening visited the Gurudwara premises to review the security arrangements in view of the Chief

Minister's visit. Police officials suggested that strict arrangements be made in the wake of the Corona pandemic.

Earlier, district Collector A Md Imtiaz inspected the arrangements at the Gurudwara and gave a few suggestions to the officials. The arrangements at the Gurudwara were monitored by Chief Minister Office programme coordinator T Raghuram.

Shop roof caves in, two die

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Two persons died when the roof of a shop caved in on them near Gradhalaya Veedhi near Old Bus Stand area at Anakapalle Town in Vizag district on Sunday.

The victims were identified as M Nooka Raju (70), owner of the shop and B Ramana (56), a worker.

The police said that the roof of the structure was dilapidated and it collapsed on the duo in the afternoon.

While Nooka Raju, who was trapped under the debris, died on the spot, the injured Ramana was shifted to government hospital, where he breathed his last while he availed treatment.

The bodies have been shifted to the morgue for post mortem.

The police advised the traders to identify the dilapidated buildings and avoid operating business from the structures to prevent such possible mishaps.

Seven militia members surrender

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Shunning the path of violence, militia members are willing to join the mainstream of life.

On Sunday, seven militia members of the banned CPI (Maoist) surrendered before the police at Koyyuru in Vizag Agency. Over this month, 20 militia members in Chintapalli and Koyyuru regions have surrendered before police.

Those who surrendered on Sunday were identified as J Balaraju, J Balakrishna, John Paul, Prasad J, Prakash, K

Chiranjeevi and K Govardhan. On Saturday five militia members M Matsyaraju, K Sanyasi Rao, K. Hari, M Bhagat Ram and K Poornachander, hailing from various villages in Chintapalli mandal.

The police said that the civic action programmes being organised by district police and CRPF, in association with ITDA, were gaining trust of tribals in many parts of Vizag Agency. The militia members promised that they will not repeat such activities and lead a peaceful life.



Covid vax trial volunteer alleges side effects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An Oxford COVID-19 vaccine trial participant in Chennai has sought a compensation of Rs five crore for allegedly suffering serious side effects from the shot, a claim which is being investigated by the Drugs Controller General

of India and the institutional ethics committee at the trial site.

A senior ICMR official said that a preliminary assessment has not indicated any causal link between the alleged adverse events shown by the volunteer and the 'Covishield' vaccine.

The 40-year-old business consultant, who was a volunteer for the third phase of the vaccine trial conducted by Serum Institute of India (SII), has alleged he suffered a virtual neurological breakdown and impairment of cognitive functions, and has sent a legal notice to SII and others.



UoH Professor dies by suicide

Hyderabad: A 40-year-old professor at the University of Hyderabad allegedly died by suicide on Sunday in the varsity's quarters here.

The deceased was a professor in the Department of Medical Sciences in the UoH.

Good response to Navy's blood donation camp

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As part of Navy Week Celebrations, a Blood Donation Camp was organised at Naval Station Bheemunipatnam on Sunday. Surgeon Rear Admiral CS Naidu, Command Medical Officer (CMO), Eastern Naval Command inaugurated the camp which was conducted in collaboration with AS Raja Voluntary Blood Bank, Visakhapatnam following all Covid-19 safety precautions.

The camp witnessed an overwhelming response from amongst the uniformed and Defence Civilian personnel and families with 204 donors enthusiastically volunteering towards this noble cause.

Speaking at the occasion, Rear Admiral CS Naidu, brought out the shortfall of blood in the city during Covid-19 Pandemic particularly for people with blood-related diseases such as haematological problems and Thalassemia who need a regular blood transfusion in the city.

He added that ENC has been conducting blood donation camps regularly and as part of Navy Day celebrations



of Eastern Naval Command this year, over 1000 naval personnel and their families have donated blood during blood donation camps organised at Visakhapatnam by

the Eastern Fleet, Naval Dockyard, INS Vishwakarma, INS Dega in addition to INS Kalinga.

He also highlighted the significance of the invaluable



contribution of the Naval community for humanitarian and social causes towards people of Visakhapatnam district through the blood donation camps.



Ban on media in Assembly...

Continued from page 1

Naidu said that the Opposition has a right to express its opinions on the decisions of the Government. "If needed, the Opposition can make suggestions and also express its protests. In this process, it would be only the media which can place the facts before the people on the positions taken by the ruling and the Opposition parties on various issues," he said.

Naidu pointed out that the media was allowed to cover proceedings in Parliament but a ban was imposed in the AP Legislature. "Different rules cannot be applied in different legislative bodies. That would be unconstitutional. As a responsible Opposition party, the TDP condemns the ban on the media as it amounted to undermining of democratic values," he wrote.

Naidu said that many other States in the country also adopted live telecasts. It was evident how the policies introduced by the TDP in legislative bodies were later acknowledged and followed by other States.

The ban on the media to block the people from knowing the debates in the Legislative bodies was unconstitutional, Naidu said, and demanded that immediate steps be taken to permit all sections of the media without any bias to enter and cover the House proceedings in the session starting Monday

1,637 police personnel on duty for session

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The police department has been put on high alert in view of the winter session of the Legislature that begins from Monday.

Guntur Rural SP Vishal Gunni, who reviewed the security measures, told reporters here on Sunday that the department will be using the best of technology available while taking all precautions to safeguard the health of the personnel in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. The SP said that a total of 1,637 police officers and personnel will be on duty. They include four additional SPs, 20 DSPs, 58 CIs, 9 RIs, 88 SIs, seven RSIs, eight women SIs, 232 ASIs, 300 Head Constables, 108 women constables, 424 Special Party personnel, 168 AR personnel, 211 Home Guards and two platoons of APS personnel.

Vishal Gunni explained to

the police officers and staff the duties assigned to them in each tier of security and directed them to immediately inform their superiors of any problem in the duties assigned to them.

The personnel on duty were told to be courteous while performing their duty, he said.

Vishal Gunni instructed traffic police officers and route security personnel to ensure that no traffic problems shall arise during the arrival and departures of the VIPs and VVIPs to the Legislature.

The SP further said that security personnel on duty should not use cell phones and added that departmental action would be taken against those who were found to be negligent and irresponsible.

In view of the Coronavirus pandemic, all personnel on bandobast duties must wear face masks, use sanitisers and adhere to social distancing norms, Vishal Gunni said.



‘MVA govt *natural*, will stay on’

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Shiv SenaMP Sanjay Raut on Sunday slammed the BJP for calling the MVA government in Maharashtra as "unnatural", and said a government is natural till it exists.

In his weekly column 'Rokthok' in the Sena mouth-piece 'Saamana', Raut recalled that during alliance talks last year, NCP chief Sharad Pawar and senior Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge had a heated argument over the Assembly Speaker's post.

"He (Pawar) collected his papers and left the room in anger. I have never seen Pawar so angry," he said.

Raut said the situation changed after that and the next day at dawn (on November 23) BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis and NCP's Ajit Pawar took oath in a ceremony at Raj Bhavan. Their government collapsed within 80 hours.

Last week, former Maharashtra chief minister

Fadnavis termed the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), which comprises the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress, as an "unnatural alliance", and said the day this tie-up breaks, his party will give a strong government to the state.

Reacting to it, Raut said, "The BJP has been predicting the government's downfall and how it will be done depends on the secret activities and the central investigating agencies. Whatever the ED does, I say with responsibility that the MVA government will stay on."

In politics, "no one is a saint" and no government is natural or unnatural, the Shiv Sena's chief spokesperson said.

"A government is natural till it is there. To destabilise it, agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) are being used. Those doing illegal constructions and accused of abetment to suicide are being protected," he alleged.

"If these political pressure



tactics are natural, then the "Thackeray sarkar" is also natural. The government has proved its majority on the floor of the House and is within constitutional norms," Raut said.

He said if there were no COVID-19 outbreak, floods, cyclones and lockdown difficulties, the situation in the state would have been different in the last one year.

After the Maharashtra Assembly polls last year, the Shiv Sena snapped ties with long-term ally BJP over the issue of

sharing the chief ministerial post in the state.

Recalling last year's hectic parleys between the Sena, NCP and Congress to form a non-BJP government in the state, Raut said Sharad Pawar and Kharge had a heated argument over the Assembly Speaker's post in a meeting at Nehru Centre here.

"Kharge and others were firm that the post shouldn't go to the NCP. I have never seen Pawar so angry. He collected his papers and left the room in anger. Myself and (NCP leader)

Praful Patel followed him," the Rajya Sabha member said. Raut recalled that Pawar had earlier in the meeting said Uddhav Thackeray will be the chief ministerial candidate of the alliance. "But after his argument with Kharge, the situation changed."

"Ajit Pawar was chatting on his mobile for a long time in the room and later left. His mobile was switched-off and he was seen the next day at the swearing-in at the Raj Bhavan," Raut said. The Sena leader rejected Fadnavis's claim that Sharad Pawar and Union Home Minister Amit Shah had a meeting in Delhi

where it was decided that the NCP will support the BJP following which the early morning swearing-in took place.

"There was a meeting at Amit Shah's place where a top industrialist and NCP leaders may have been present. But, Sharad Pawar was in no mood to have any deal with the BJP," the Sena leader claimed.

UP registers first case under anti-conversion law in Bareilly

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh has registered its first case under the new anti-conversion law in Bareilly district based on a complaint from the father of a young woman.

The case was registered at the Devarniya police station in Bareilly district on Saturday, officials said.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi said a case was registered by Tikaram, a resident of Sharif Nagar village under Devarniya police station (in Bareilly), who accused a man -- Uvaish Ahmed -- of the same village of trying to convert his daughter through "allurement" (bahla-phus-laakar).

The case was registered against Uvaish Ahmed under the IPC and the new anti-conversion law.

Senior Superintendent of



Police Rohit Singh Sajwan said four police teams have been formed to arrest the accused.

According to the complaint, Tikaram's daughter and Ahmed studied together in class 12.

Three years ago, the accused started exerting pressure on her to undergo religious conversion and perform 'nikaah' (marriage). But when the woman opposed, he threatened to kidnap her, Tikaram alleged. Tikaram got his daughter married to someone else in June this year. However, Ahmed continued to harass her family members, the complaint said.

Ahmed went to Tikaram's

house on Saturday and asked him to bring his daughter back from her in-laws' house.

Threatening her family, the accused said the woman will have to undergo religious conversion and marry him, according to the complaint.

Tikaram approached police and a case was registered against the accused.

On Saturday, Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel gave assent to an ordinance against forcible or fraudulent religious conversions that provides for imprisonment up to 10 years and a maximum fine of Rs 50,000 under different categories.

The promulgation of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, came four days after the Yogi Adityanath government approved the draft of the legislation which also curbs religious conversions only for the sake of marriage.

SHORT TAKES

JEE (Main) scam: Assam police arrest proxy candidate in Delhi



The Assam police on Sunday arrested the most wanted proxy candidate, Pradipt Kumar, who had written the Joint Entrance Examination (Mains) 2020 for Neel Nakshatra Das, who secured 99.8 per cent marks and became one of the toppers in the all India engineering entrance test, officials said. Police said that Kumar was arrested in Delhi and would be brought to Guwahati to be produced before the court. Police suspect Kumar to be a professional "proxy candidate". On November 1, police arrested a coaching centre owner Bhargav Deka, another prime accused in the JEE (Mains) examination impersonation case in which the Assam police so far have arrested seven people. The Assam government had constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) led by Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (West), Guwahati, Lal Baruah, to probe the scam. "Several people are suspected to be involved in the misconduct and the inquiry is on to unearth the full racket," a police official said. Guwahati Police Commissioner Munna Prasad Gupta earlier told that the accused JEE (Mains) candidate, his doctor father and three other co-conspirators were also arrested on October 28 and investigation was initiated.

SII to seek Rs 100 cr damages from volunteer seeking compensation



After a Chennai-based volunteer served a legal notice to the Serum Institute of India (SII) demanding Rs 5 crore compensation for the alleged neurological complications he developed after being administered a test dose of its Covidshield vaccine, the SII has now countered the allegation with a demand of Rs 100 crore as damages to its reputation while terming his claims "malicious and misconceived in nature". The Pune-based pharma giant claimed that "there is absolutely no correlation with the vaccine trial and the medical condition of the volunteer". The allegations in the notice are malicious and misconceived. While the Serum Institute of India is sympathetic with the volunteer's medical condition, there is absolutely no correlation with the vaccine trial and the medical condition of the volunteer.

MiG-29K pilot still missing, 9 warships, 14 planes conducting search: Navy



Nine warships, 14 aircraft as well as Indian Navy fast interceptor craft have been deployed to trace the missing pilot of a MiG-29K trainer aircraft, which ditched mid-sea off Goa on November 26, the Indian Navy said on Sunday. The Navy statement also said that some debris of the crashed fighter jet was recovered during the search process. "The Indian Navy's search and rescue effort to locate the second pilot of the MiG-29K trainer aircraft, which ditched off Goa on November 26, continues with extensive deployment of naval ships and aircraft," the statement said. "Some debris of the aircraft including landing gear, turbo charger, fuel tank engine and wing engine cowling has been located," it added. "In addition to nine warships and 14 aircraft engaged in the search efforts, naval Fast Interceptor Craft are also deployed to search waters along the coast. Further, the marine and coastal police are on the lookout and nearby fishing villages have been sensitised," the statement said. Another pilot who was also onboard the ill-fated plane was rescued soon after the mishap, which occurred mid-sea. The MiG-29K aircraft was operating from on board aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya, off Goa.

Illegal gun factory unearthed in Bihar's Kaimur



A small illegal gun factory run by a history-sheeter was unearthed in Chainpur area of Kaimur district in Bihar on Sunday after three persons were held during checking of vehicles, police said. In another case, CRPF men also seized arms and ammunition hidden in Naxal-affected Gaya district. "We are holding special vehicle-checking drive in the district, during which three youths riding a motorcycle were signalled to stop in Chainpur area. The accused tried to escape by taking a U-turn from the spot, but alert policemen chased and overpowered them after a brief chase," Kaimur Superintendent of Police Dilnawaj Ahmed said. A .315-bore short-muzzle rifle, two cartridges were seized from their possession. Accused Jalim Ram, Anil Kharwar and Sanjay Kharwar -- all residents of Bhabhua -- were interrogated, following which they named one Ram Dular Sharma of Tirauna village in Chainpur police station area as supplier of the illegal arms and ammunition.

We are providing sipper, straw to Stan Swamy: Jail authorities

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Tribal rights activist Father Stan Swamy, an accused in the alleged Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, is being provided sipper and other facilities in the Talaja prison from the day second of his arrest, a senior prison official said on Sunday.

Swamy, 83, who is suffering from various health issues including Parkinson's disease, was arrested on October 8 and has been lodged at the Talaja prison near here in Navli Mumbai.

A senior prison official said the allegation that prison authorities were not providing sipper and straw to Swamy were "baseless". "Not just sipper and straw, we are providing him other facilities too like wheelchair, walking stick, walker, and two attendants were also provided to him," the official said.

"We know he is a patient, he

"We know he is a patient, he suffers from Parkinsons disease. Why would we not provide him things which he requires," the official said

suffers from Parkinsons disease. Why would we not provide him things which he requires," the official said.

Meanwhile, some Delhi-based lawyers have also sent straws and sippers for the activist in a parcel along with a letter to the Talaja prison on Saturday.

"As lawyers, we were pained

by the situation as all jail manuals provide for special facilities for inmates who have special needs," said Nandita Rao, one of the advocates who have signed the letter sent to the jail.

"We felt if someone does not even have a right to dignified drinking water in judicial custody, then the basic values of our Constitution and humanity are being disrespected," she added.

Swamy had earlier filed a plea in a special NIA court here, seeking that he be provided a straw and a sipper.

The court on Thursday rejected his previous application seeking a direction to the National Investigation Agency to return the straw and sipper allegedly seized from him during the arrest.

Swamy had said he needs a straw and sipper as he has trouble eating and drinking because his hands shake due to the Parkinson's disease.

PCI urged to withdraw 'ominous' advisory on foreign content

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Editors Guild of India has urged the Press Council of India to withdraw its "ominous-sounding" advisory cautioning against "unregulated circulation of the foreign content", saying it has disturbing implications.

In a statement, the guild said it is perturbed by the "unprovoked" advisory issued by the Press Council of India on November 25 to the media.

"Through this advisory, it appears that the Council, which swears by self-regulation of media and believes that any government interference would be destructive to press freedom, is lending its weight towards a step that could bring in some form of censorship and punitive actions against those organisations that publish content, which in its view is seen as 'not desirable'," the guild said.

The advisory does not specify who will verify the content, on what criterion will it be verified, and most importantly, what does "unregulated circulation" even mean, the statement issued on Saturday said.

The guild noted that many publications in the country

license and reproduce content from foreign agencies, newspapers, and periodicals, which is a prerogative of the editor, and who is in any case responsible for all the content published in their publication.

"A reiteration by the Council at this juncture of this established practice, in an ominous sounding advisory, has disturbing implications," the guild said. It urged the PCI to withdraw this advisory immediately.



The Press Council of India, in its advisory, said it has considered references received from various quarters by the government about the responsibility of Indian newspapers in publishing foreign contents.

The council had said it is of the view that unregulated circulation of the foreign content is not desirable.

Guru Nanak Dev's teachings have universal appeal: Vice President

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday greeted people on the eve of Guru Nanak Jayanti, saying the teachings of the Sikh guru have universal appeal and will forever inspire people to follow the path of compassion and humility.

Guru Nanak Dev has remained an icon of truth, compassion and righteousness through his noble life, he said.

"He has a unique place among the spiritual leaders, preceptors, reformers and saints of India. His teachings have universal appeal and would forever inspire us to follow the path of compassion and humility and to show respect for all humankind, irrespective of caste, creed or religion," Naidu said in his message.

Guru Nanak Jayanti is always an occasion for family and friends to come together and celebrate, he said.

"But this year, given the unprecedented health emergency due to COVID-19, I urge my fellow citizens to celebrate the festival by adhering to COVID health and hygiene protocols," the vice president said.

Delhi Cong restructuring to start next week

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Organisational restructuring in the Delhi Congress is expected to begin next week at the block level and priority will be given to partymen who worked hard during COVID-19 relief work, Delhi Congress president Anil Chaudhary said on Sunday.

Senior party workers will be deputed as observers in all 270 blocks to gather names recommended for appointment as presidents of party's block units. The process will be completed in the next one week, Chaudhary told PTI.

"A massive relief work was undertaken by the Delhi Congress to distribute food, ration kits and help migrant workers moving to their states. We will give priority in appointments to those leaders and workers who dedicatedly participated in this work for months," he said.

Those leaders who have performed well in relief work will be retained and given appointments while those who remained aloof and did not show any enthusiasm will be shunted out, he said.

The block-level changes were last made in 2018 with the appointment of new president units by then Delhi Congress president Ajay Maken. The



A massive relief work was undertaken by the Delhi Congress to distribute food, ration kits and help migrant workers moving to their states. We will give priority in appointments to those leaders and workers who dedicatedly participated in this work for months

block committees were dissolved by then Delhi Congress president Sheila Dikshit, after the Lok Sabha debacle of the

party in 2019.

Organisational restructuring in the Delhi Congress is long overdue although three presidents have been changed in the past two years.

Chaudhary said around 35 of the 270 block president posts are lying vacant. Some block presidents also died due to coronavirus infection, he said.

The organisational restructuring in the Delhi Congress will be a bottom to top exercise from block to district and state level. After block presidents, the restructuring of 14 district units will be taken up, said the Delhi Congress president.

The Pradesh Congress committee that is almost non-existent for 6-7 years is also to be overhauled with appointments to various important organisational posts.

Manufacturers told to keep 50% oxygen for medical use

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Amid a fresh rise in COVID-19 cases in Gujarat, the state health department has again directed oxygen production units to keep 50 per cent of their production for medical use so that it could be easily made available to hospitals treating coronavirus patients.

The state health department on September 10 also issued a similar notification.

In its new order dated November 26, issued under various sections of the

Epidemic Diseases Act and the Disaster Management Act, the department has directed oxygen production units to keep their production uninterrupted and at their maximum production capacity.

The units have been directed to produce 50 per cent oxygen for medical use, to be supplied to hospitals in Gujarat, and divert the remaining for industrial use.

The units have also been asked to give priority to supply oxygen to hospitals as compared to industries, in case the



need arises.

The order remains in operation till December 31, said the notification. A similar notification issued in September was effective for a month, and was not revised as the number of COVID-19 cases at that time came down.

Gujarat Food and Drug Control Administration Commissioner H G Koshiya earlier said the demand for medical oxygen reduced in October as compared to September.

The oxygen consumption

stood at 135 ton per day in October, compared to 240 tons per day in September, he said.

This happened during the period when the number of COVID-19 cases witnessed a decline in the state.

However, in the recent weeks, the state has seen a surge of COVID-19 cases, which has led to an increase in the use of medical oxygen in hospitals treating such patients.

The state reported 1,598 new coronavirus cases on Saturday, taking the tally to 2,06,714, as per official figures.

PM: New farm laws have begun mitigating farmers' problems

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid protests by a section of farmers against the recently enacted farm laws, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Sunday that these reforms have opened doors of new opportunities for peasants and bestowed on them new rights.

In his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast, Modi said the farm laws have begun mitigating the troubles of farmers in a short period of time since their enactment in September as he cited the example of a Maharashtra farmer who used their provisions to get the money a trader had promised but not paid to him in time.

New dimensions related to agriculture and related fields have emerged as the recently enacted farm reforms have opened doors of new possibilities for farmers, he said.

"The demands, which were made by farmers for years and regarding which every political party at some point of time had made promises, have been fulfilled... These reforms have not only freed them of various shackles but also given them new rights and new opportunities. These rights have begun mitigating farmers' problems in a very short span of time," he



Agitating farmers decide to stay put at Delhi borders

Chandigarh: Farmers protesting against the Centre's three farm laws on Sunday decided not to shift to the Burari ground in the national capital and stay put at the Delhi borders. Thousands of farmers continued to protest at the Singhu and Tikri borders on the fourth consecutive day on Sunday. Union Home Minister Amit Shah appealed to the farmers to shift to the Sant Nirankari ground in Burari that was offered to them for peaceful protests and said the Centre was ready to hold discussions with them as soon as they move to the designated place. "We have

decided that we will stay put at the Delhi borders. We will not go to Burari," Bharatiya Kisan Union (Dakaunda) president Buta Singh Burjill said over the phone. The decision was taken by representatives of several farmers organisations, he said. Farmer leader Harmeet Singh Kadian, who is the president of BKU (Kadian), too said that the protesters will not shift to the Burari ground. Reacting to the Union home minister's appeal, Kadian told reporters near the Singhu border that the Centre should not impose any condition for holding talks with the farmers.

said. The prime minister's remarks come at a time when thousands of farmers, mostly

from Punjab, have dug in their heels at Delhi's border points and hundreds have gathered at

Centre treating protesting farmers like 'terrorists': Raut

Mumbai: Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Rauton

Sunday said farmers protesting against the Centre's new agri laws are being treated as if they are 'terrorists', and it is sad that they are not being allowed to enter Delhi. The government should consider the farmers' demands sympathetically, Raut told reporters here. Thousands of farmers, protesting against three agriculture laws enacted by the Centre, have gathered at border points of the national capital as part of their 'Delhi Chalo' march. "It is sad they are not being allowed to come to Delhi and are being treated as if they are terrorists and have come from outside the country. The government should consider the demands of farmers sympathetically," Raut said. "Farm laws is one issue. Consider all other demands sympathetically. Different

states are not doing well. It is up to the Centre to step in and help them," the Rajya Sabha member said. Replying to a query, Raut claimed farmers were being dubbed as 'divisive' because they come from Punjab. "Do you want to create instability by reminding the Punjab farmers of the Khalistan movement period?" he asked the Centre. Thousands of farmers continued their protest for the fourth consecutive day on Sunday, staying put at the Singhu and Tikri border points, with farmer leaders deliberating upon their future course of action about proposed talks with the government. With many roads and entry points of Delhi being blocked, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had appealed to the farmers to shift to the Burari ground, and said the Centre was ready to hold discussions with them as soon as they move to the designated place.

the city's Burari ground to protest against the new farm laws. The central government has reached out to them, underscoring its willingness to hold talks with them. It has also asserted that concerns

expressed by some farm bodies about the new laws are misplaced, asserting that existing support measures like the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and state-run 'mandis' will remain in place.

Congress MP Karti flays 'hero worship' of Rajiv case convicts

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Congress MP Karti Chidambaram on Sunday opposed 'hero worship' of Rajiv Gandhi assassination case convicts and wondered why there was no talk about those who were killed alongside the former Prime Minister in 1991.

The Lok Sabha MP from Sivaganga, referring to the seven convicts said, "do not make them heroes, they are not heroes," and asked whether the 15 other victims were not Tamils.

Also, he sought to know, "what about justice for them?" Tagging a clip of his interview to News18 Tamil Nadu channel on his Twitter handle, Karti regretted that the so-called pro-Tamil outfits- that support the release of the seven convicts- have never spoken about the victims.

Rajiv Gandhi and 15 others



The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee had said political parties demanding their release was unacceptable

were killed in a blast triggered by a woman suicide bomber Dhanu at an election rally in Sriperumbudur near here on May 21, 1991.

The ruling AIADMK, main opposition DMK and almost all other parties support the release of the convicts, V Sriharan alias Murugan, T Suthendraraja alias Santhan, A

G Perarivalan alias Arivu, Jayakumar, Robert Payas, Ravichandran and Nalini.

The AIADMK government recommended their release in 2018 and the matter is pending with Governor Banwarilal Purohit. The TN Congress Committee had said political parties demanding their release was unacceptable.

NAXAL TRIGGERED IED BLAST

CoBRA officer killed, 9 commandos hurt

PNS ■ RAIPUR

An officer of the CRPF's jungle warfare unit, CoBRA, was killed while nine commandos were injured after Maoists triggered an IED blast in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Saturday, security officials said. They said the improvised explosive device explosion took place in the Chintalnar forest area of the district at around 9 PM and the injured personnel were evacuated by an IAF helicopter at around midnight.

Assistant Commandant Nitin P Bhalarao, 33, succumbed to injuries in the early hours of Sunday.

Nine commandos, including the team leader second-in-command rank officer Dinesh Kumar Singh, were injured in the incident, they said.

Seven commandos are being treated at a hospital in

Raipur, while two are being given medical care at a unit hospital at Chintalnar, located in the south Bastar area of the state, they said.

Sukma district is located at a distance of about 400 km from here. The injured troops belong to the 206th battalion of the CoBRA. A joint team of the CoBRA and local police was out for an area domination exercise when the blast took place, the officials said.

The team was scouting the area for the proposed induction of some new battalions of the Central Reserve Police Force and establishment of their new camps in this area and that is when the IED went off, official sources said.

Five more CRPF battalions are expected to be inducted in Chhattisgarh for anti-Maoist duties after the Union home ministry recently gave its approval.

Bengal Guv may soon ask TMC to prove majority in House: BJP MP

PNS ■ KOLKATA

With voices of dissent in the TMC getting shriller, BJP MP Saumitra Khan on Sunday took a jibe at the ruling dispensation, claiming that the governor will make such an unconstitutional move? An elected government cannot be treated this way... and the overwhelming majority of MLAs are with the chief minister. The TMC has the support of 218 legislators in the Assembly," Roy asserted.

Khan, who is also the state president of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), said on the sidelines of a programme in Jalpaiguri that the current turmoil and the brewing discontentment in the ruling party have brought to the fore the question if the party still enjoys the support of adequate number of legislators in the House.

"The way the MLAs have been dissenting and leaving Trinamool, the governor may all of a sudden ask the CM to prove majority... There is a possibility," Khan said. Several ministers in the Mamata Banerjee cabinet are ready to switch over to the BJP, he stated.

Reacting to Khan's comments, veteran TMC MP Sougata Roy said BJP leaders like him know nothing about



the Constitution and its provisions. "How could Khan know first-hand that the governor will make such an unconstitutional move? An elected government cannot be treated this way... and the overwhelming majority of MLAs are with the chief minister. The TMC has the support of 218 legislators in the Assembly," Roy asserted.

The ruling TMC in Bengal had been trying its best to keep its flock together, as several key leaders, including party heavyweight Suwendu Adhikari, have, of late, openly aired their grievances against the dispensation. According to BJP state president Dilip Ghosh, the TMC lacks the courage to expel Adhikari, who recently quit from the state cabinet, as "the party fears that it might

face extinction soon. Ghosh also alleged that leaders of the ruling party, who had almost never stepped out of their homes and offices, are now being "forced" to venture out to get an idea about ground realities, ahead of 2021 Assembly polls. "The month of December appears crucial for TMC, as the party is facing extinction with people abandoning the ship. The TMC lacks the courage to expel anyone. It has not been able to expel Suwendu Adhikari," Ghosh maintained.

The Mamata Banerjee party also did little to address the woes of legislator Mihir Goswami, who recently joined the BJP, the state BJP chief said, adding that more such developments are likely in the coming days.

INDIA CORNER

Man shot dead over Rs 200 in UP's Aligarh

A 30-year-old man was shot dead in a crowded market in Civil Lines area here after he allegedly refused to lend Rs 200 to an acquaintance, police said on Sunday. Ansar Ahmad, a father of three, owned a tyre repair shop at Shamshad Market under Civil Lines Police Station and was killed on Saturday by Asif, police said. The accused is a drug addict and managed to flee the spot after committing the crime, Superintendent of Police (City) Abhishek Kumar told reporters. According to police, Asif had on Saturday approached Ahmad wanting to lend his motorcycle, however, the request was turned down. Later in the day, the accused again landed at Ahmad's shop and demanded Rs 200 from him. As soon as the victim refused, Asif took out a country-made pistol from his pocket and before any of the bystanders could react, shot Ahmad in the head.



Maha: Bank ATM gutted in Thane; no casualty

An ATM centre of a nationalised bank has been gutted in a fire that broke out in the premises in Badlapur town of Maharashtra's Thane district, a civic official said on Sunday. No one was injured in the blaze that erupted at the ATM located at Kulgaon in Badlapur around 9.30 pm on Saturday, Thane Municipal Corporation's regional disaster management cell chief Santosh Kadam said. A fire engine from Badlapur was rushed to the spot and the blaze was brought under control around 10.15 pm, he said. The ATM centre was completely gutted in the fire, the official said. The cause of the fire was not yet known, he added.



Minimum temperatures dip in parts of Rajasthan

Night temperatures dipped by a few degrees in parts of Rajasthan, where Mount Abu was recorded as the coldest place with a minimum temperature of 1 degree Celsius, the Met Department said on Sunday. In the plains, Churu registered a minimum temperature of 4.1 degrees Celsius. Sikar, Bhilwara, Pilani, Dabok and Vanasthali recorded minimum temperatures of 5, 6.8, 6.9, 8.1 and 8.5 degrees Celsius, the weather office said. The cold conditions would remain the same during the next 24 hours, it added.



28-yr-old pregnant woman found murdered in her home in UP

A 28-year-old pregnant woman was killed with a sharp-edged weapon in a village in Uttar Pradesh's Chitrakoot on Sunday morning, police said here. The body of the woman, who was four-month pregnant, was found lying on a cot in a room of her home by her husband, SHO, Raipura police station, Sushilchandra Sharma said, adding that the incident took place in Khajuriha Kala village. The SHO said the husband of the deceased has lodged a complaint against a woman and a young man of the same village, and a case was registered. However, no reason for murder has been mentioned in the police complaint, he added. The body of the deceased has been sent for a post-mortem examination, the police said, and added that no one has been detained so far.



Online coaching 'all-weather friend' of students: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 lockdown came as a "shock" for Sakshi Sharma as coaching classes and schools closed abruptly amid her preparations for the NEET medical exams, leaving her worried that she could have to wait for a year to take the test again.

However, after some days into the lockdown, Sharma and her friends had found an alternative in online classes, which experts say will remain "an all-weather friend" not only for students preparing for competitive exams like the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET), but for also imparting education in general in the COVID-19-induced new normal.

"It (the lockdown) came as a

shock... I and many others like me had no idea what to do. We were in the midst of preparing for the exam and the thought of wasting a year was terrifying. But my friends and I immediately shifted our focus to online coaching and were well prepared by September," Sharma, who hails from Chandigarh told PTI over phone.

She took the NEET in September, after the exam, for admission to MBBS, BDS and other undergraduate medical courses, was deferred twice from its scheduled date of May 3 to July 26 and then to September 13 by the National Testing Agency in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Centre had announced a 21-day nationwide lockdown from March 25 to check the spread of the coronavirus.



However, from June 8, the government started gradually easing restrictions under 'Unlock'.

The number of those enrolling for virtual classes has witnessed an exponential rises and the trend is likely to stay, the experts from the education industry said.

Like NEET, other examina-

tions that were scheduled in the months of April and May were also initially postponed, but later the Centre decided to conduct them amid strict COVID-19 measures to ensure students do not miss an academic year.

"The coronavirus pandemic brought various sectors to a grinding halt and students were stuck in a limbo," Kapil

Gupta, founder and CEO of NEETprep, a prominent online coaching centre, said.

"Left with little choice, the jittery lot switched to online learning which was not affected by the lockdown," he said referring to Sharma and her friends taking to virtual classes for NEET.

Immediately after the lockdown, students were anxious as they had been studying for months and did not want to lose the momentum before exams. But at the same time they were cautious of attending classrooms due to the COVID-19 scare, Gupta said.

"This is why online classes are a boon because suddenly they (students) did not have to worry about wearing a mask or maintaining social distancing... Online coaching has

become a big hit especially among those preparing for NEET and JEE exams by proving to be their saviour during the COVID crisis," he said.

Gupta said while the COVID-19 situation has definitely provided an opportunity to online platforms to gain a bigger reach in a short period of time, in the long run, it would be important for those offering this service to present themselves as a credible alternative not only in terms of cost but also efficacy.

"I believe it is established that the quality of content (lectures or questions or mock tests) is much better than classroom coaching but on the aspect of enforcing discipline amongst the students without a physical classroom is a challenge," Gupta said.

Baptism by fire

As Uddhav Thackeray completes a year in office, the reluctant politician seems to have mastered some rules of the game



Nobody had any expectations of Uddhav Thackeray. Not even as a descendant of Shiv Sena supreme Bal Thackeray, who always had a wish of one of his own becoming the Chief Minister. But Balasaheb had probably not bargained for the circumstances under which Uddhav became one. Or imagined him to stand out with quietude and resolve in a hostile environment of competitive politics. For years after tamely acquiescing to its bigger partner, the BJP, the Shiv Sena stood up to it following its improved performance in the Assembly elections last November and demanded chief ministership on that basis. The BJP, the single largest party, thought

it could rustle up the numbers to form its own Government and was surprised when Uddhav snapped ties with it, engineered a coalition with the opposition Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)-Congress combine and negotiated the chief ministership. A manoeuvre that was so not expected from a man who was hardly thought capable of the aggression of Thackeray senior. But one year down the line, he is on a steady course, walking with ideologically divergent partners, not overstepping the ego of the Maratha strongman and NCP chief Sharad Pawar, who is believed to have been the architect of the alliance based on a shared pursuit of power. Apart from a few creases here and there, Uddhav hasn't been an embarrassment for the Congress despite his avowed commitment to Hindutva causes and that party's to its minority plank. The BJP, not quite accustomed to the Sena's revolt yet, has expectedly been placing hurdles along the way of the coalition government, be it through gubernatorial interference, by thrusting Central probes or generally shaming Uddhav's lack of administrative experience. As for the last, Uddhav had no time to settle in as the State recorded its first COVID-19 case on March 9, posing a severe challenge to the healthcare system. And before he could get a grip on it, Maharashtra became the State with the highest number of cases across India. Then the exodus of migrant labourers caught him by surprise, a fact played up by the BJP as an example of his ineptitude and lack of foresight. Still, Uddhav did not lose his cool and went in for aggressive containment measures, testing and medical protocols as Asia's biggest slum, Dharavi, put him on trial. Today, Mumbai is doing better than Delhi in handling the pandemic despite infrastructural weaknesses. Its caseload is going down, it is going for a graded reopening of sectors — unlike other States giving in to populist and commercial pressure — and is the first State in the country to have introduced international-style travel protocols to control the spiral of imported infection. The management of the Dharavi outbreak is a model example of how effective community engagement, awareness and deployment can tame the virus in resource-scarce and congested clusters. As the worst-hit State with a spiralling death count, Maharashtra seems to be finally getting there. And Uddhav, who may be borrowing lessons from the governance heft of the NCP-Congress, must be credited with having the will to deliver without drawing attention to himself. In fact, given his administrative inexperience, he has empowered efficient bureaucrats and shunted out the slackers, clearly emphasising that performance would be the only qualifier of assessment. The best part is he hasn't failed to call a spade a spade. He publicly admonished the police for indiscriminate use of force during the lockdown and in matters religious has taken an apolitical stand despite his Hindutva moorings. So when Maharashtra Governor B G Koshiyari prodded him on opening temples, wondering if he was delaying because of his "secular" partners, Uddhav shot back, asking if Hindutva meant simply opening religious places and as someone who had sworn on the Constitution, was he denying the secularism enshrined in it? Besides, he managed the festival season with reason. By confining the Ganesh Mahotsav to a largely indoor celebration, he avoided a super spreader event. In an editorial in *Saamna*, he even questioned the utility of all shrines in a pandemic. At the same time, he calibrated his response to Muslims, considering the Sena's stand on the Babri masjid and the Ram temple. He used the Congress to urge the community not to congregate in mosques and stayed away from fanning the fire on the Tablighi Jamaat. In fact, Uddhav, in his own way is trying to posit his Hindutva as nationalism rather than the BJP kind of communalism so that he can justify his togetherness with the NCP-Congress. And given the Sena's history of rowdyism, he is trying to split his politics from bogeyism.

Uddhav's assets so far have been his straightforwardness and realism, which have held him in good stead. His respect for Pawar in keeping the coalition largely frictionless is the other reason for his stability. But he has to watch out against ambitious leaders who have already accused him of setting up a coterie to enable a smooth transition to his son Aaditya. And a jilted BJP with the means won't give up trying to break him and picking up dissenters. It almost had him on the lynching of sadhus in Palghar, who were mistaken by villagers for thieves and child lifters. Luckily for Uddhav, who was slow on the investigation, some BJP office-bearers were found to be among the lynch mob and spared him the criticism of running over another Hindu cause. Of course, the BJP baited him on the suicide of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, though the CBI ultimately ruled out a conspiracy. But going by the State Government's demolition drive at an actress' office or a journalist's arrest, Uddhav must stop falling prey to the BJP's design of reactive politics. He certainly could have handled these cases better despite the provocation. If he is to last a full term, he needs equanimity. He doesn't need to flex muscles.

Bubble trouble

The problems with the Pakistani cricket team in NZ highlight the challenges of sequestering sportsmen



While the Indian cricket team began its tour of Australia, not minus some controversy surrounding the fitness of Rohit Sharma, it had already spent a few weeks in quarantine without any issues. Not so for the Pakistani cricket team playing across the Tasman Sea. While every player carried a clean bill of health on leaving Pakistan, it is reported that seven cricketers have tested positive for the Coronavirus since they arrived. This throws into doubt Pakistan's COVID-19 testing regime and with the players being a bit loose and fast regarding the quarantine. The New Zealand

cricket board issued the Pakistani team "a final warning" and if the latter is in contravention of the quarantine or if more players test positive, then it could be sent home without having played a single match.

This incident, rather a series of incidents, highlights the problems of athlete bubbles and indeed the "bubble" travel system anywhere. Even with vaccine development moving along at an unprecedented rate, it is still at least two years before a substantial number of people worldwide can be inoculated. With the delayed Summer Olympics still on track and several other major international sports tournaments, such as the European Football championships, also due to be played, it is vital that national authorities and sports federations work out the kinks as quickly as possible. And that includes player behaviour. Athletes are almost always extremely social young men and women, so asking them to stay locked up for a period of up to two weeks requires immense self-determination that not all of them have. These are challenges that have to be met if we expect a completely normal sporting calendar for 2021 and if eventually fans are to return in full numbers to stadia. And on that last point, there were several Indian supporters during the first One-Day International between Australia and India. Despite the stadium only being at half capacity, Indian fans were clearly ignoring social distancing protocols, which looked Covidiotic and callous on television.

opinion06

A DBT for manufacturers

The PLI scheme is result-oriented. The cash incentives will be paid only if the manufacturers make the goods. It is a better alternative



SUBHASH CHANDRA **PANDEY**

The Central Government has approved production-linked incentives (PLI) for manufacturers in 13 sectors. It essentially means that if an eligible manufacturer produces and sells/exports eligible goods worth ₹100 crore, the Government will give him ₹5 crore (assuming five per cent incentive) as a reward/incentive because such sale/export of locally manufactured goods will create local jobs.

The PLI will be available for sale/export for the next five years in addition to the existing incentives. Now this is one of the concerns that remains for investors and would need to be addressed to make the scheme a success. As the PLI benefit has been assured only for five years, the investor has to assess the financial viability of the project beyond the PLI period. Once a manufacturing unit has been set up with a lot of fixed investment, recovery may be difficult. So the five-year period has to be utilised to make life easy for all businesses and job creators. In other words, the "ease of doing business" has to improve substantially.

The Government expects that it may be called upon to pay about ₹2 lakh crore, which means a total sale/export of about ₹40 lakh crore (assuming five per cent PLI rate) during the next five years. This PLI will increase local manufacturing of eligible goods by an output equal to about 20 per cent of the current GDP.

Thus, the second concern is changing growth dynamics and the global demand scenario, especially in the post-pandemic world. To get free cash of ₹2 lakh crore from the Government, specified goods worth about ₹40 lakh crore would need to be produced in India and a matching demand would be needed in a world where the cut-throat competition is going to deepen.

The third concern is about how much of the PLI benefit would boost the investor's actual post-tax income. In October, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) approved PLI benefits (four per cent to six per cent) to 16 companies. The PLI is available for incremental sales of goods manufactured in India five years subsequent to the base year (FY 2019-20).

Now, whether the incentive of four per cent to six per cent of invoiced price for five years would be enough compensation to offset



the cost disadvantage in India remains to be seen. One plus point in favour of the new manufacturing units is 15 per cent corporation tax that was announced last year. For them, manufacturers of highly branded products like Apple iPhones, the PLI scheme and reduced corporate tax are major incentives. Since such manufacturers face little competition for their products, they can set prices of their production on their own. The PLI benefit may or may not be fully passed on to the retail buyers in this particular case.

Most other manufacturers may face stiff price competition and may not be able to fully pocket the PLI benefit to offset their cost disadvantage. Their discerning, hard-bargaining buyers will demand price discounts on the basis of the PLI benefit.

The percentage of PLI benefit may vary across beneficiaries and depending on the competition, the post-tax actual benefit could vary from investor to investor. The PLI scheme, therefore, needs supplementation by sustained investor facilitation and improvement in ease of doing business.

Incentives like income tax and Central excise exemptions, VAT/GST reimbursements, interest and insurance subsidies, subsidies on plant/machinery and so on are typically provided for industries set up in industrially-backward areas like North-eastern states.

At present, the total manufacturing output of all items (whether PLI eligible or not) in a year is about 16 per cent of the GDP. The services sector has a 55

to 60 per cent contribution in GDP and has been a major employer so far.

The PLI will be available to all new manufacturing units and also to existing manufacturing units for their extra production, additional over baseline output. For example, existing mobiles and electronics manufacturers are entitled to PLI benefit for whatever they produce over and above the 2019-20 level production in the next five years. The manufacturing units will have to apply, register and go through a vetting process and enter into proper agreement with the Government so as to ensure that only eligible manufacturers get the incentive for actual local manufacturing.

On April 1, a PLI scheme promising ₹40,951 crore incentive (four to six per cent of production value) was notified for manufacturers of mobile phones and other electronic components. Medical devices and bulk drugs (active pharmaceutical ingredients) were added to PLI eligibility in July and on November 11, 10 more manufacturing sub-sectors were added.

Thus, ₹1,97,291 crore of cash incentive has been promised in the next five years to manufacturers of automobiles and auto components (₹57,042 crore); mobile manufacturing and specified electronics/technology products (₹45,951 crore); advance chemistry cell batteries (₹18,100 crore); pharmaceuticals and drugs (₹21,940 crore); medical devices (₹3,420 crore); telecom and networking products (₹12,195 crore); processed food (₹10,900 crore); man-made fibres

and technical textiles (₹10,683 crore); high-efficiency solar PV modules (₹4,500 crore); white goods like ACs and LEDs (₹6,238 crore) and speciality steel (₹6,322 crore).

For its move in October to approve grant of PLI benefit (four to six per cent) to 16 companies, MEITY received a very good response from mobile handset manufacturers.

The production of mobile phones surged from about ₹18,900 crore in 2014-15 to ₹170,000 crore in 2018-19. Samsung, Foxconn Hon Hai, Rising Star, Wistron and Pegatron have been granted PLI benefit only for manufacturing high-end phones (invoice value ₹15,000 and above).

Foxconn Hon Hai, Wistron and Pegatron are contract manufacturers for Apple iPhones. They expect to have a major export turnover for high-end phones. Some Indian mobile phone companies, including Lava, Bhagwati (Micromax), Padget Electronics, UTL Neolyncs and Optimus Electronics, have also been approved for PLI.

This scheme aims to make India a manufacturing hub of global repute, reduce imports and generate employment. It covers both low-value and high-employment items like textiles and food as well as high-value and low-employment items like automobiles, mobiles, electronics, white goods, including high technology items like Advanced Chemical cell battery. Incentivising local manufacture of items like ACC battery, auto and electronics components will help India

become part of the global value chains. The automobile industry turnover already accounts for almost half of the total value of manufactured items.

The auto, electronics and pharma industries, which have substantial import dependence and also high export potential, are major beneficiaries of the scheme while textiles and processed food are major employment generators.

A pertinent question is why should the Government give financial assistance of ₹900 to a phone manufacturing company for every phone sold at ₹15,000 (assuming six per cent PLI)? After all, more than half of the value of a phone may comprise imported components. The answer to this question is local employment.

The exports, in any case, are tax-free. Under the WTO rules, a Government can refund all taxes collected from exports so that the local taxes are not exported to foreign buyers. So, whatever Customs, excise duties and GST are paid on exported items, they are eventually refunded by the Government. Often, exporters face the problem of working capital if the refund is delayed.

There is a growing demand in the world for diversification in supply chains and India can become a major player. The promotion of the manufacturing sector means forward integration with global supply chains and backward linkages with the MSME sector.

The domestic electronics hardware manufacturing faces a lack of a level-playing field vis-à-vis competing nations. It is assessed that it costs about 8.5 per cent to 11 per cent more to manufacture these items in India on account of lack of adequate infrastructure, domestic supply chain and logistics; high cost of finance; inadequate availability of quality power; limited design capabilities and focus on R and D by the industry; and inadequate skill development. Sunrise sectors need support in the initial stages.

Traditionally, we have tried to attract investors with investment subsidies like giving land at concessional rates and subsidy on plant and machinery cost at a fixed percentage of say 15 per cent to 20 per cent of price. Thereafter, if the unit does not properly run, the subsidy goes waste. The PLI scheme is result-oriented. The cash incentives will be paid only if the manufacturers make the goods. It is a better alternative from the Government's viewpoint.

(The author is former Special Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry)

SOUND BITE

I honestly don't believe anyone could pull off a *Coolie Number 1* redux other than Varun Dhavan. This is gonna be the massive, commercial blockbuster 2020 has been waiting for.



Musician
—Vishal Dadlani

Had a good interaction with the team at Serum Institute of India. They shared details about their progress so far on how they plan to further ramp up vaccine manufacturing.



Prime Minister
—Narendra Modi

The history of peasant resistance in Punjab goes back to 1906/07 when Ajit Singh, Bhagat Singh's uncle, led a movement known popularly as Pagri Sambhal Jatta movement.



Historian
—S Irfan Habib

Vaccine will be distributed initially in India, then we will look at the COVAX countries which are mainly in Africa.



CEO, Serum Institute
—Adar Poonawalla

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Memories of Diego

Sir — Football legend Diego Maradona visited two football-crazy Indian cities during his lifetime — Kolkata and Kannur. We cherish the day when Maradona came to our city, Kannur, eight years ago. He came, he saw and conquered the hearts of thousands.

This city, which has given to the country some of its best footballers, was decked up with huge welcome posters and hoardings. Soccer fans came from everywhere to catch a glimpse of the "god of football." I still remember how the area outside his hotel was jam-packed. As soon as they saw him waving from the balcony of his room, they were euphoric. There was a big cheer for him from the people, who were whistling, clapping, shouting, dancing and some even crying.

Later at Jawahar stadium, Maradona mesmerised the crowd — perhaps the biggest in the city so far — with his unique brand of stunts and tricks. There was a cake in the shape of the football stadium. He made sure that he didn't slice the ball because for him, they say, it was his life and soul. The

Farmers have the right to protest

The right to hold a protest is intrinsic to a democratic society. The blockade of major highways in order to prevent farmers from nearby States to enter Delhi constitutes a curtailment of this right. The denial of democratic space to farmers shows the Government is disinclined to adopting a consultative approach in dealing with their issues.

The crackdown on farmers with water cannons and tear gas shells was disturbing and inappropriate. The authorities did more harm than good by using strong-arm tactics against farmers and widened the trust deficit. Thankfully, the Government has now belatedly allowed the protesting farmers to gather in Delhi and even promised discussions. We hope that the Government will wisely defuse the situation instead of levelling baseless charges against parties in the opposition for "instigating" the farmers to protest. The Government should not turn its back on them but be empathetic to their community that provides food security to the nation.

The farmers' organisations are just in asking the Government to either repeal the new law, pushed through unilaterally without consulting them, or to give legal guarantees on the Minimum Support Price



(MSP). The Government can't reject their demands using vague claims that the new law will open up the markets and benefit them.

The farmers are fully justified in opposing the new Acts, which have the potential to undercut the prices of their produce. It will pave the way for contract farming and even the loss of their agricultural fields. We urge the Central government to accede to the farmers' demand and rescind the anti-farmer laws.

G. David Milton
Maruthancode

BJP's desperation

Sir — A desperate BJP, seeking to gain a toe-hold in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, has ruffled feathers in a big way in its local rank and file as "outsiders" have

been appointed to oversee the December 1 election.

One immediate reaction to the paratrooping of the saffron party's leadership was the self-immolation bid by a grassroots worker in Musheerabad division in front of the OBC

Morchha National president Dr K Laxman's camp office. The unfortunate incident reflects the seething anger among the BJP workers against the unwelcome moves made by the party leadership. The incident occurred hours before Congress leader and former Hyderabad Mayor Banda Karthika Reddy joined the BJP.

The appointment of BJP general secretary Bhupendra Yadav and four deputies from other States to oversee the GHMC polls, ignoring Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy, party's State unit president Bandi Sanjay Kumar and other State leaders, has not gone down well with the party cadre. Following the party's success in Bihar polls, the BJP leadership is counting on Yadav to deliver in Hyderabad. Even though the State is represented by Reddy at the Centre, party president JP Nadda preferred Yadav over him. This is quite demoralising for the cadre. One should not ignore workers of a region just for political gains.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

What of India's 'Act East' policy?

By rejecting the RCEP membership, we have given China a free hand to integrate its economy with Asian nations. Maybe India should look West now



SANJIB POHIT

The "Act East" policy, with a focus on an extended neighbourhood in the Asia-Pacific Region, has been the cornerstone of India's diplomacy in the current decade. While it was originally conceived as an economic initiative, in recent years, it has gained political, strategic and cultural dimensions, including the establishment of institutional mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation. India has upgraded its relations to a strategic partnership with Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, Singapore and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and has, thus, forged close ties with all countries in the Asia-Pacific. Further, apart from the ASEAN, the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), it has been actively engaged in regional fora, such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) and the Indian-Ocean Rim Association (IORA). The "Act East" policy has laid emphasis on India-ASEAN cooperation for our domestic agenda on infrastructure, manufacturing, trade, skills, urban renewal, smart cities, Make in India and other initiatives. The objective is to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationships with countries in the Asia-Pacific through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

As a follow-up, India has entered into Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) and comprehensive economic engagements with many Asian countries. Notable among them are RTAs with the ASEAN, Malaysia, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, APTA (Bangladesh, China, Korea, Laos and Sri Lanka) and South Korea.

However, India decided against joining the mega trade bloc or the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). It is a free trade agreement (FTA) between the Asia-Pacific nations of Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam. These 15 countries account for about 30 per cent of the world's population (2.2 billion people) and 30 per cent of the global GDP (\$26.2 trillion) as of this year, making it the biggest trade bloc in history.

The fear is that India's agricultural and manufactured goods will not be in a position to stand up to competition from cheaper imports from abroad. Of course, lobbying by multiple associations protecting the interests of processed agricultural product and manufactured goods makers plays a significant role in the policymakers' decision. In contrast, India's service sector, which no doubt would have benefited by gaining access to the large market, could not play its cards well. In the end, the belief that India's merchandise trade deficit (already negative with ASEAN and other Asian countries due to the existing RTAs) will further worsen, tilted the balance in deciding that the country's interests would be best served by not joining the RCEP.

In the long run, this decision will hurt India in a big way. Let me flag up the issues on this count. First, when you have RTAs with some members of the RCEP it will be a Herculean task to stop merchandise from third countries being routed through these nations with whom we have an existing pact. For instance, imports from China may be routed through ASEAN members like Vietnam and Malaysia with whom we have RTAs. Of course, one can argue that the "rules of origin" clause will stem this flow. However in reality, the "rules of origin" clause is not effective enough to curtain third country imports.

Second, India is missing the golden opportunity to be a part of the global value chain. If multinational corporations (MNCs) are thinking of shifting their value chains from China to other countries, they would go for any member of the RCEP like Vietnam and so on. This will be a win-win situation as they will have access to a large market and also benefit from the economies of scale of production. The same holds true for new investment from the European Union or US firms. The usual argument that India has a demographic dividend and MNCs will come here to make a production base falls flat. Given the income inequality, a significant part of the population does not have jobs and thereby income to purchase consumer goods. Gains from the demographic dividend are realised only when people are employed or else it becomes a burden on society.

Third, the service sector, where India has a comparative advantage, would be at a disadvantage because of this decision. Fourth, this decision should have been made based on long-term gain and not based on a higher trade deficit in the short run. By joining the group, Indian industries may suffer in the short-run. But in the end, they will be more competitive, which will open up opportunities in the world markets. It will be a win-win situation for the consumers, too, as they will have access to a variety of goods at a cheaper price. Alas, there is no one to lobby for the consumers' interests.

Fifth, is it realistically possible to "Act East" without entering the mega trading bloc of the East? By rejecting the RCEP membership, India has given China a free hand to integrate its economy with Asian countries. Maybe India henceforth should look West.

(The writer is Professor, NCAER. The views expressed are personal)

THE PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER IS FANNING THE PROTEST. HIS OFFICE BEARERS ARE LEADING IT. TRIED TO CONTACT HIM BUT GOT NO RESPONSE.
—HARYANA CHIEF MINISTER
MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR



I WILL NOT EVEN ANSWER THE HARYANA CHIEF MINISTER'S PHONE CALLS NOW BECAUSE OF THE WAY HE HAS ACTED WITH THE POOR FARMERS.
—PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER
CAPTAIN AMARINDER SINGH

A wake-up call

Let not the recent incident at Nagrota meet the fate of similar encounters in the past. It should ring warning bells and lessons should be learnt from it



ANIL GUPTA

The recent encounter at Nagrota, near Jammu on National Highway (NH) 44, in which four heavily-armed Pakistani terrorists were gunned down by the Indian security forces, has once again exposed the fact that the "Deep State" in Pakistan continues to rule the roost with the singular agenda of bleeding India through a thousand cuts. Similar encounters had taken place on the same highway in the past, too. Pakistan continues to use the International Border (IB) sector as a preferred route of infiltration not only for terrorists but also for narco-terrorism, as it provides the twin advantage of movement into Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Punjab. Also, the *modus operandi* adopted in most cases is near identical. After revocation of Article 370 in J&K, Pakistan's desperation to create trouble has increased manifold. With the Indian Army adopting a very strong counter-infiltration grid on the Line of Control (LoC) and an equally impenetrable counter-terrorism grid inside the Valley, the Pakistan Army has shifted its focus to the IB sector with a comparatively higher success rate.

Pakistan is going through the worst phase of its history. Ever since its formation, the country has suffered the dilemma of identity. Regional loyalties have surpassed national ones, leaving the Pakistan Army alone as a symbol of national identity. This has been exploited by the Army to its advantage by becoming the virtual ruler. To ensure its continued hold over the nation's defence and foreign policy, the Army has created a myth of India being an existential threat. At the same time it has promoted Kashmir as an unfinished agenda of the Partition and as our jugular vein. Despite Islamabad's obsession with Kashmir costing it dearly, both economically and strategically, it refuses to relent. Terrorism continues to remain an instrument of its State policy. Kashmir continues to be the *raison d'être* for the continued supremacy of its Army.

Politically and economically, Pakistan is on the verge of collapse. Prime Minister Imran Khan is the target of a domestic rebellion against his Government by the conglomeration of 11 Opposition parties under the banner of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). Even Imran Khan's mentor, Chief of the Army Staff General Bajwa, and his ISI chief are not being spared by the public. This has unnerved the Army as it is quite conscious of its image among the people. But that aura is gradually eroding due to the involvement of senior Army officers in corruption. While the common man is finding it difficult to survive, the Army is eating up a large slice of the national budget. The economy is in the doldrums. Saudi Arabia, a liberal donor till now, is unhappy with Imran Khan due to his growing proximity with Turkey. Pakistan is neck deep in debt and is resorting to borrowings to service it. Unemployment and inflation are common and Imran Khan is doing nothing to resolve these issues. His total surrender to China is also being resented by Pakistanis.

Pakistan is close to an implosion at this stage due to the growing turmoil in Balochistan, increased unrest in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, revolt in Pakistan-Occupied J&K and Gilgit Baltistan and the growing dissent in Sindh due to the ongoing protests by the PDM. Attempts to integrate Gilgit Baltistan as its fifth province and holding of elections there have been met with stiff opposition from the locals. The results of the elections are being contested as fudged. The Balawaristan Movement for an independent Gilgit-Baltistan is gaining momentum.

With the Pakistan Army under tremendous pressure from China to tie down the Indian Army, the time-tested Pakistani formula of creating an India

“UNFORTUNATELY, THE BORDER REMAINS OUR WEAKNESS, WHICH IS BEING EXPLOITED BY THE ENEMY. MANY QUESTIONS NEED TO BE ANSWERED BY THE BSF WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR GUARDING THE IB. WHY IS IT THAT THE TUNNELS ARE DETECTED ONLY AFTER INFILTRATION HAS TAKEN PLACE? WHY IS NO ACTION TAKEN TO PIN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE LAPSES? WHY ARE NO PROACTIVE MEASURES TAKEN TO PREVENT SIMILAR FAILURES IN THE FUTURE? IS IT LACK OF RESOURCES, PROFESSIONALISM OR SINCERITY?”



bogey at home has been put into practice to generate an anti-India public opinion. Repeated unprovoked ceasefire violations and attempts to push in terrorists have become a norm. Apart from attempts to distract public attention at home, these are also being used to keep Kashmir in the focus of the international community as a potential flashpoint.

Pakistan's nuclear blackmail has been exposed and is no longer being used as a threat by its leadership. So it has increased its dependence on terrorist activities in India and the "Deep State" is involved in spreading its tentacles in other parts of the country apart from Kashmir. However, Kashmir for the time-being continues to remain its main focus because of the realisation that with the passing of each day peacefully, Pakistan is losing its relevance there. That was the main reason behind infiltrating a heavily-armed group with about 750 kg of RDX to create mayhem in Kashmir on the eve of the District Development Council elections in J&K.

Plus, China is egging Pakistan on to keep the pot boiling in Kashmir. It needs a hold in Gilgit-Baltistan and does not want to part with Shaksgam and Aksai Chin. Hence, irrespective of the success achieved by us at Nagrota, Pakistan is not going to relent. We have to be proactive and make the cost of such attempts as prohibitive for the "Deep State" as possible.

Unfortunately, the IB sector remains our weakness, which is being exploited by the enemy. Many questions need to be answered by the Border Security Force (BSF) which is responsible for guarding the IB. Why is it that the tunnels are detected only after infiltration has taken place? Why is no action taken to pin responsibility for the lapses? Why are no proactive measures taken to prevent similar failures in the future? Is it lack of

resources, professionalism or sincerity?

The Government has spent crores of rupees to equip the BSF so that it can stop infiltration, including the Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS) to overcome the difficulties of the terrain. Not very long ago BSF officers had displayed to the media a tractor modified for tunnel detection. There were also claims of importing tunnel detection equipment. What happened to all that and why is that equipment not being used?

The BSF has been provided with seismic sensors and any underground disturbance is meant to be picked up by them. Definitely, the digging of a 150 metre-long tunnel should have been picked up by these sensors but it wasn't. Are these sensors non-functional or have they not been sited and deployed tactically? Incidentally these tunnels serve a dual purpose and the BSF knows that apart from sneaking in terrorists, these are also used for smuggling narcotics. Plus, what was the need to make the detection of the tunnel public? Rather it should have been booby-trapped and kept under surveillance. We have to accept that there are major chinks in our armour as far as guarding the IB sector is concerned and the enemy is exploiting these to its advantage.

Knowing the enemy's compulsion to keep Kashmir on the boil, strict measures need to be taken to prevent Islamabad from treating the IB sector as a preferred route for infiltration. First and foremost, the BSF needs to reconsider its pattern of deployment of ambushes at night. Apart from avoiding predictability, it needs to give up the pattern of deploying in a single line without depth. For day patrolling, it needs to be provided with detection equipment.

A "no gap pattern" deployment of CIBMS has to be ensured, including

liaisoning with neighbouring units to cover gaps. The fact that the terrorists trekked on foot for nine km undetected and thereafter boarded a truck on the NH and travelled up to Nagrota unchallenged is a matter of concern and exposes the gaps in the surveillance and vigilance of depth areas and the NH. Hence, armed highway patrols have to be activated. Mobile checkpoints have to be established to avoid predictability. Cameras need to be installed 24x7. There is an urgent and inescapable need for full body scanners at select places on the NH.

There is a valuable asset of ex-servicemen in these areas. A Border Defence Volunteer Force to strengthen the depth area surveillance and patrolling should be raised for utilising the services of these ex-servicemen. They should be deployed on either side of the NH, up to a depth of five-10 km, depending on the distance of the IB from the NH. It will strengthen the hands of the local police.

A serious review of command and control of all border guarding forces on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and the IB is an urgent requirement. To have greater coordination and effective command and control, these need to be placed under the Ministry of Defence and the local Army formation. The present system has been found wanting time and again. Let not this aspect of national security become a victim of turf wars. Let not the recent incident at Nagrota meet the fate of similar encounters in the past. It should ring warning bells and lessons should be learnt from it. Pakistan is not going to change, we will have to change ourselves if we want to have a zero tolerance policy against terror.

(The author is a Jammu-based veteran, political commentator, columnist, security and strategic analyst)

Through the eyes of 'the other'

The term is used to define 'the self' in contrast. But 'self-Orientalism', ironically, looks towards assumed Western authority for validation



NADEEM PARACHA

In philosophy and literary criticism, the term "the other" means an entity which is constructed to define the self. According to J Miller in *The Sage Encyclopaedia of Quantitative Research Methods*, "the other" is the opposite of the self. Both are perceptions though, constructed by an individual, community or the State. For example, the Nazis in Germany perceived the Jews as being racially inferior compared to the pure Aryan races. So the "imperfect" Jews were constructed as "the other" to define the "perfection" of the Aryans (white Germanic races). The self in this respect can be an individual or an ide-

ology belonging to a perceived social, religious or political whole that can only be defined in contrast to "the other" which is either explained as being inferior, different or even threatening to the whole. The nationalist idea which led to the creation of Pakistan was almost entirely based on this. Muslim nationalism in India could only be defined in contrast to Hindu majoritarianism, "the other", which was explained as being "culturally different" and politically threatening to the Muslim community of the region.

In the same way, Hindu nationalism cannot be defined without the construction of the Muslim other. The self in this context can only reassure and strengthen its perceived self-image by assuring the assumed dissimilarities of "the other". Scholars such as Edward Said and the post-modernist philosopher Michel Foucault severely castigated the self as an agent of conformity. To bolster the power and self-image of social and political conformity (of an elite), it demonised non-conformists as "the other". To Said, the act

of European colonialists of imagining the colonised native as an uncouth, entirely sensual and overtly emotional being was an act of enhancing the self-image of the superiority of the European self in contrast to the oriental other.

In his 1961 book, *Madness and Civilisation*, Foucault argues that the conventional idea of madness was a "social construct" imposed by a conformist elite upon those who refused to conform. Years later, Foucault went on to praise the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran by deriding Western powers for demonising Ayatollah Khomeini as "the other". According to the Lebanese author Kim Ghattas, in her book *Black Wave*, Foucault did not retract his support for Khomeini even when he established an authoritarian theocracy and ordered the execution of hundreds of Iranian men and women.

On the other hand, according to the critics of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Said clubbed together a diverse array of colonised peoples of Africa and Asia

as a homogenous whole and then defined this abstract totality in contrast to a ruthless European colonial set-up. In other words, to define a perceived homogenous self, he created "the other" in the shape of a colonial European elite, which was dismissed, in a rather binary manner, as being an entirely evil entity. This is understood as "Occidentalism."

This can imply that "the other" is not always passive. But on occasions, rather ironically, it strikes back, not by overturning how it is being perceived and demonised by a conformist collective-self, but by actually becoming exactly that. Foucault praised Iran's revolution as a "spiritual" event which was not understood by the "non-spiritual" West. He believed this was why the West was demonising Khomeini as being fanatical and mad.

Yet, in response, Khomeini intensified this image of him as a way to differentiate "Islamic Iran" from the secular West. He moulded a collective Islamic self in Iran in contrast to a Western secular other. This often

leads to what is known as "self-Orientalism" or when "the other" begins to behave exactly how a collective self portrays and perceives it as being.

The idea is either to own the characteristics and labels given to it by the collective self and weave them into an aggressive ideology against the collective self, or to own these labels and present them as being as superior as that to the collective self. Khomeini owned the label given to him by Western governments of being "a fanatic" and used it to intimidate the West, and on the other hand, normalise it as an ethos in Iran. Muslim radicals around the world followed suit.

Things in this respect are even more intriguing in India. For decades, self-Orientalism in India meant producing cultural and spiritual products that were designed according to how "mystical, magical and spiritual" India was perceived in the West. This play was good for business and public relations. But "the other" was missing. This made Indians seem entirely passive

and, as the historian Markus Daechsel demonstrates in his book *The Urdu Middle-class Milieu in Mid-twentieth Century India*, this image was problematic and too "effeminate" for Hindu nationalists, especially compared to the "masculinity" of some forms of Muslim nationalism.

After 2014, once Hindu nationalists gained an overwhelming majority in the Parliament, they began to create a "masculine" self-image and a collective self in contrast to "the other": i.e. the Indian Muslim community. Ironically, decades earlier, by creating a Hindu other to define his idea of Muslim nationalism, this is exactly what Jinnah was warning about. So, in a way, Hindu nationalists eventually decided to own and then flex the label that Jinnah gave them.

That of being hegemonic and a threat to India's Muslim community. Self-Orientalism is often used by tourism industries to cater to the "Orientalist" perceptions of the West. But even if some practitioners of Self-Orientalism pose as being anti-colo-

nial and authentic (as in being non-Western, or more spiritual), they are usually overtly conscious of how the West is perceiving them. During the 2013 elections in Pakistan, campaign commercials of Imran Khan's Centre-Right party, the PTI, showed a Pakistani being gladly welcomed by an immigration officer (in a blonde wig), presumably in a European country. Here the post-colonial self was seeking validation from a post-colonial Western other.

Sometimes indigenous acts are performed just to gain traction from Westerners. In 2003, the former chief of Jamaat-i-Islami, the late Qazi Hussain Ahmad, said there was nothing wrong in behaving or looking religious "because the West is more appreciative of this." This is an example of how self-Orientalism looks towards the West for validation. An image was adopted (of religiosity) to attract attention (and maybe praise) of "the others" by confirming to the perceptions of a "pious Muslim."

(Courtesy: Dawn)

Protesting farmers have not ‘properly understood’ new farm laws

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Niti Aayog Member (Agriculture) Ramesh Chand has said protesting farmers have not fully or properly understood the new farm laws, asserting that these legislations have potential to increase farm income in a big way.

He further said that the motive of the three new farm laws is exactly the opposite of what the protesting farmers have understood.

In an interview to PTI, Chand said, "The way, I am reading these farmers, who are protesting, it looks like that they have not fully or properly understood these three laws."

"If these new farm laws are allowed to be implemented, there are very high chances of big increase in income of the farmers and in many states, it may even double," he said while replying to a question on whether the government is still confident of doubling farm income by 2022.

The Narendra Modi-led NDA government has set a tar-



get of doubling farmers' income by 2022.

On September 27, President Ram Nath Kovind gave assent to the three farm bills -- The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020; The Farmers (Empowerment and

Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020; and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill 2020.

Elaborating further on farmer contentions, the Niti Aayog member said protesting farmers are saying that the

Essential Commodities Act (ECA) has been removed and full freedom has been given to stockists, black marketers, etc.

"If you look at what actually has been done is, there is a modification done in the Essential Commodity Act. According to that modifica-

tion, a criterion has been laid when Essential Commodities Act can be imposed, and that is if there is a 50 per cent increase in prices of cereals, oil seeds and pulses, then it can be imposed," Chand explained.

"Or if there is 100 per cent increase of price of onion and potato then Essential Commodities Act can be imposed," he added.

Citing an example, the Niti Aayog member said that on October 23, the Centre had invoked the Act when onion prices were rising.

It was required, he said adding "states were told to put stock limit". Similarly, allaying fears of protesting farmers about contract farming, he pointed out that there is a big difference between corporate farming and contract farming.

"Corporate farming is not allowed in any states in India... and contract farming is already happening in many states and not even a single incidence has come where land of farmers has been taken over by private companies," Chand said.

Finmin asks PSU general insurers to cut flab

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The finance ministry has asked public sector general insurance firms, especially National Insurance, Oriental Insurance and United India Insurance, to rationalise branches and cut down avoidable expenses to improve their financial health, sources said.

Earlier this year, the Union Cabinet decided to halt the merger process of three state-owned general insurance companies due to weak financial positions of these three companies. Instead, the government approved fund infusion of Rs 12,450 crore to meet regulatory parameters.

The finance ministry has asked these companies to cut the flab by rationalising branches and rein in other avoidable expenses like guest houses, etc, sources said.

Besides, sources said, they have been asked to expand their business through digital medium. As part of capital infusion exercise, the government also approved raising authorised share capital of National Insurance Company Ltd (NICL) to Rs 7,500 crore and that of United India Insurance Company Ltd (UIICL) and Oriental Insurance Company Ltd (OICL) to Rs 5,000 crore each.



It has asked these firms to cut the flab by rationalising branches and rein in other avoidable expenses like guest houses, etc, sources said

the balance Rs 6,475 crore in one or more tranches.

The government in Budget 2020-21 had made a provision of Rs 6,950 crore for capital infusion in these three insurance companies in order to maintain the requisite minimum solvency ratio. Three PSU general insurers, with their large underwriting losses of Rs 14,443 crore, together have been responsible for the overall losses of over Rs 7,118 crore in 2019-20. NICL, with a combined ratio of 160.8 per cent and underwriting losses of Rs 5,759 crore, has suffered losses of Rs 4,108 crore while OICL (141 per cent, Rs 4,197 crore) and UIIL (132 per cent, Rs 4,487 crore) have been hit with losses of Rs 1,524 crore and Rs 1,486 crore, respectively in 2019-20.

INDIA CORNER

Corrugated packaging box makers facing raw material cost shock

The corrugated paper box industry is facing a crisis as prices of raw material have shot up by 30-35 per cent threatening to turn the business unviable, an industry official said. In India, there are about 350 automatic corrugators and more than 10,000 semi-automatic units across the country and the segment generates direct employment for about 4,00,000 people. The corrugated industry said the unprecedented steep escalation of price of Kraft Paper by the paper mills is the major hurdle while consuming industries are not willing to pass on the cost making their business unviable. The prices of both domestic and imported waste paper prices have gone up by Rs 4,500-5,000 per tonne in the last couple of months. China has proposed a ban of waste paper imports from January 2021 and as a result, the Chinese paper mills are stocking up the waste paper supplies available in overseas markets.



Awign raises funds from Michael and Susan Dell Foundation

Tech-led jobs platform Awign said it has raised funds from existing investors Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, Unitus Ventures and Eagle10 Ventures that will be used to finance its expansion to more cities and introduce new services. The company however did not say how much money was raised in the latest pre-series B funding round. Till now, it has raised about USD 4.9 million, including the latest round. Set up by Annanya Sarthak, Gurpreet Singh and Praveen Sah in 2016, Awign has worked with over 1.5 lakh people, and grown 25x in the last 2 years. Currently, it manages a diverse fleet of trained gig workforce across more than 7,000 pin codes in India. Gig workers are independent and temporary workers. They enter into formal agreements with on-demand companies to provide services to the company's clients. This has confirmed the outlook Awign had about rapidly deploying demand-based gig jobs across the country, he added.



FPIs net buyers for 2nd consecutive month in Nov

Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) remained net buyers for the second consecutive month in November by pumping in a whopping Rs 62,951 crore in Indian markets. For equities segment, this is the highest quantum of money invested ever since the FPI data has been made available by the National Securities Depository Ltd. According to depositories data, FPIs invested a net Rs 60,358 crore into equities and Rs 2,593 crore in debt segment, taking the total net investment to Rs 62,951 crore between November 3-27. In October, FPIs were net buyers to the tune of Rs 22,033 crore. Global investors are preferring to invest in emerging markets more than developed markets as the potential upside is much higher in emerging markets, said Harsh Jain, co-founder and COO at Groww.



Five of top 10 most valued firms lose together Rs 91,699 cr m-cap

The combined market valuation of five of top-10 most valued firms declined by Rs 91,699 crore last week, with heavyweight Reliance Industries emerging as the worst hit. While Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), Infosys, HDFC, ICICI Bank and Bharti Airtel suffered losses in their market valuation, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, Hindustan Unilever Limited, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Bajaj Finance were the gainers. RIL's market valuation tumbled by Rs 60,829.21 crore to Rs 12,23,416.97 crore. The market capitalisation of HDFC plummeted Rs 13,703.75 crore to Rs 4,05,996.11 crore. Bharti Airtel's valuation declined Rs 11,020.23 crore to Rs 2,52,755.97 crore and that of ICICI Bank went lower by Rs 5,090.54 crore to Rs 3,26,225.04 crore.



BIDS FOR DHFL TAKEOVER

Adani: Forfeit deposit of those against recovery of public money

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Gautam Adani's roads-to-mining group has indicated that it can improve on its Rs 33,000 crore takeover offer for collapsed housing lender DHFL and has sought forfeiture of deposits of bidders seeking to vitiate auction by questioning maximum recovery of public money.

In an email written to the administrator, who is running the DHFL auction under insolvency process, the Adani Group said it has followed due process scrupulously and its intent has always been to provide an unconditional offer and potential value maximisation for all the stakeholders and at the same time ensuring an expeditious consummation of the process".

In the email, uploaded on DHFL data room and seen by PTI, the Adani Group said it was pained at some bidders resorting to media to sensationalise issues with an aim to prevent value maximisation



for the lenders and depositors.

Four entities -- Adani Group, Piramal Group, US-based asset management company Oaktree Capital Management and SC Lowy -- submitted bids for DHFL in October but lenders, who are getting DHFL auctioned to recover unpaid loans, wanted suitors to revise their bids as original offers were low.

The Adani Group, which had initially bid only for DHFL's wholesale and Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) portfolio, in the revised offer

submitted on November 17 bid for the entire book, offering a total of Rs 30,000 crore plus interest of Rs 3,000 crore, a source in lenders consortia said. This was more than Rs 28,300 crore offered by Oaktree, the source said adding the US firm's conditional bid had outlined that it would hold back Rs 1,000 crore on insurance claims.

Piramal quoted Rs 23,500 crore only for the retail portfolio of DHFL while Hong Kong-based SC Lowy bid Rs 2,350 crore for SRA.

Soon after, rival bidders cried foul over Adani's bid, saying the group had submitted the bid past the deadline and that it cannot expand on its original plan.

All the three rival bidders sought disqualification of Adani, the source said.

In the November 22 email, the Adani Group said it had originally put in an expression of interest or EoI for both Option 1 and 2 (full book and part of the portfolio).

JSW Steel acquiring land for steel plant in Odisha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic steel major JSW Steel is in the process of acquiring land at Jagatsinghpur in Odisha where it has proposed to set up a 13.2 MTPA greenfield steel plant, a top company official said. Speaking to PTI, JSW Steel

Director - Commercial Marketing and Corporate Strategy Jayant Acharya said it is the same site near the port of Paradip where POSCO was keen to set up a 12 MTPA steel plant. The Odisha government and POSCO had signed a MoU in this regard in 2005.

IndoStar Capital to exit corp lending biz

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Alternative asset manager Brookfield and private equity player Everstone promoted non-banking finance company IndoStar Capital Finance is looking to fully exit from corporate lending business by March 2022, its executive vice-chairman and chief executive R Sridhar said.

The company has been

reducing its corporate book over the last two years, and has brought down the portfolio by close to Rs 3,500 crore.

"From a portfolio size of Rs 6,000 crore in 2018, the corporate book is down to Rs 2,500 crore as of date, which is a reduction of around 60 per cent (We have collected Rs 3,500 crore). By March 2022, the wholesale and corporate book will become zero,"

Sridhar said. The company will continue to focus on and expand its retail segment, he said. Currently, retail segment contributes 73 per cent to the company's total book, while balance 27 per cent is from corporate segment.

In the retail business, the company focuses on vehicle finance, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and affordable housing finance.

Covid widens socio-economic gap: Survey

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on women-led micro businesses in India has exacerbated the vast socio-economic gap, finds a survey.

The survey suggests that governments, banks and other financial institutions must immediately follow effective gender-sensitive policy responses to improve the situation.

The findings are based on a collaborative study by Global Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship (GAME) and LEAD at Krea University, Andhra Pradesh which seeks to capture the impact on micro



enterprises in India during the COVID-19 crisis through a survey. LEAD is a non-profit research organisation.

The survey started in May

and will be concluding in January. The gender specific results were for the data collected between July to August, covering about 1,800 micro enter-

prises. The regions and states covered in the survey include North India (Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh), South India (Tamil Nadu), and West India (Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan).

The study monitors key trends on the impact of the crisis and government-mandated lockdowns on business livelihoods, employment, and the income of nano and micro businesses.

According to the 6th economic census, women entrepreneurs own over 8 million enterprises in India or about 13 per cent of the total units.

According to the survey, women-led micro and small

businesses are particularly at risk because they include smaller companies working in lower-margin markets and are more prone to face instability than micro businesses led by men.

Women usually operate with structural and systemic constraints in addition to cultural norms and restrictions. So, the ability to take risks, make mistakes and, more importantly, to fail, is not a liberty licensed to women.

Notably, 43 per cent of women-owned enterprises in the survey fall in the category that reports less than Rs 10,000 profit a month whereas only 16 per cent of those owned by men fall in this category.



5G prospects compelling for India: Qualcomm

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has a big market that needs to upgrade and set up for 5G offtake, and the government and policy makers can trigger growth of the telecom space by releasing spectrum, including 5G, in adequate quantity and at affordable prices," a senior official of Qualcomm has said.

5G would positively impact India's telecom market, the second largest in the world and "still growing", as increased data consumption and heightened adoption of technology due to the pandemic has prepared the market for the advent of next-generation technology, said Rajen Vagadia, VP and President, Qualcomm India and SAARC.

"The case for the immediate rollout of 5G networks in India is a compelling one. It is no longer a choice, but a prerequisite for the country's growth and development," Vagadia told PTI.

Indian regulators will have a big role to play in ensuring that 5G in India is deployed to its "full potential".

As the world's second

largest telecom market, India holds huge promise for growth, Vagadia said.

"The government and policy makers can trigger growth of the Indian telecom market by releasing spectrum, including 5G, in adequate quantity and at affordable prices," he said in an email interview.

Since networks are congested, it is "prudent" to make the spectrum across all bands including mmW (millimetre wave) available for immediate deployment, starting with trials, he said.

5G will completely redefine mobile experiences and enable generations to benefit from it, the company said.

Tech titan, Qualcomm, is a wireless technology innovator and fuelling the development, launch and expansion of 5G.

"We are driving conversations at all levels of the ecosystem to catalyse the commercial reality of 5G in the country -- from telco, education, healthcare, automotive, medicine to manufacturing," Vagadia said.

India has a big market that needs to upgrade and set up for 5G growth, he pointing out.

Housejoy on track to clock Rs 150 cr GMV in FY21

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tech-led home construction, maintenance and beauty services provider Housejoy has seen a strong growth in its business, driven by segments like construction and beauty, and is on track to close the financial year with Rs 150 crore in GMV, a top company official said.

Speaking to PTI, Housejoy founder and CEO Sanchit Gaurav said the company has crossed pre-COVID numbers by a significant stretch in certain categories like home cleaning and virus fumigation, while the festive season spurred demand in segments like beauty services.

"We have been growing at 20 per cent month-on-month profitably and have recovered to pre-COVID numbers overall post the lockdown. We have expanded to 10 new cities for our on-demand and construction business," he said.

The company had clocked Rs 135 crore GMV (gross merchandise value) in FY20, and is on track to close the current fiscal at Rs 150 crore in GMV, Gaurav added.

NOT 'ROWDIES' ON ROADIES, THIS TIME

Who says you can't make meaningful friendships on a reality show? Four friends from different walks of life, across four different towns, meet at a common point - the country's biggest youth-centric reality show, *Roadies*! The longest-running show whose foundation was laid down by the monozogotic Raghu Ram and Rajiv Lakshman and is today airing its most unique season titled *Roadies Revolution* hosted by none other than one of the biggest television personality Rannvijay Singha, celebrating the undying zeal of roadies coupled with their willingness to bring about tangible progress in society.

There's so much more to friendship than just having fun together. The word sacrifice, as huge as it sounds, I applied it for the bond of friendship that you'll see in the coming episodes. For instance, Vipin doesn't only support me but also makes sure he brings immense positivity in my life through the amazing comic timing that he has. All of us try to overlook each other's mistakes without a pinch of ego and are not pretentious at all! I can simply be myself, and they won't judge me, so pretending is never the rule amongst us", shares Zabi over a telephonic conversation. Zabi started working for animal rights when he was 13 years old and at the age of 16, he started his own shelter. When he was 18, he convinced his college to open a shelter for animals. So far, he has saved more than 3,000 animals. Nearly everyone says they love animals, but a young guy like Zabi has taken his love for animals to a whole new level with the help of the Telangana government, and we

by Jayant, there wasn't a moment when any of them belittled him due to his financial background but instead, put up with any role to keep him happy. "They support me through my hardest times, I often don't have to speak words, they just understand me through my emotions. Zabi is that tight-knit bond between us that keeps us together at all times! I never imagined making such beautiful bonds, that too on a reality show. They encouraged me to nourish my passion for dance and expand my good Samaritan deeds off privileged under-privileged students through the *Roadies Revolution*. They truly made me realise what's my worth and all I can send them, is my genuine love", Jayant says.

Remember the hilarious 'Land kara de' viral video, that had a guy appeal to the paragliding pilot to land him to safety? Yes, that guy's Vipin Sahu, and he's

believes Vipin. Donating a lumpsum amount of his monthly salary to the needy is what attracted the other three friends to build a strong companionship with Vipin, apart from his hilarious jokes that also made the gang leaders roll. He shares saying, "*Roadies Revolution* didn't mean contestants who start a revolution but about ones who're already creating one. I was selected, and in the culling process, I found Zabi. Oh, what a man! He radiates positivity to another level, you just can't sulk in front of him, because he won't let you. Be it Zabi's, role of an animal activist, Abhimanyu being a mental health advocate, and Jayant training the poor, - the distinctiveness of all of us, brought us together. With time, our friendship is getting much stronger. Their presence in my life, my reality has become much more beautiful."

Vipin Sahu was successful in changing his stature in the social media world, and is now at a better place with three solid friends!

"It all happened out

the third bosom friend that openly shared his darkest secrets, joys and sorrows to Zabi, Jayant and Abhimanyu. To eradicate the repute of being just 'The Parachute Viral Guy', Vipin came to *Roadies* with an ongoing revolution that he's a part of, in his city. Monthly giving is the best way to help our poorest brothers and sisters,

think it's pretty great.

Talking about the second musketeer of the beautiful clan, Jayant just doesn't consider the other three as friends but as his own siblings. In a push to end domestic violence, he auditioned for *Roadies* and called for firm action to stop abuse against women, after he witnessed his alcoholic father beat up his mother all his life. He couldn't take anymore and chose to take action, but little did he know he would be returning home with three amazing companions that he will call friends for life. As narrated



Zabi, Jayant, Abhimanyu and Vipin hailed the show with true honesty, trust and immense understanding between them! Creating a rift amongst them amid a reality show, politics was the last thing anyone could have tried, as the bond they share both on-screen and off-screen today, stands out from the rest, with each one of them having a unique charm.

Zabi Khan from Hyderabad, who entered the show with a revolutionary movement of providing spaces for abandoned, stray and disabled animals, cannot imagine a life without his three friends that he found on the show. "My world seems to be incomplete without them today, we look out for each other on the show and that's what makes us a unique group.

The concept of 'Reality show' brings to our minds drama, entertainment, and/or fights! And a show like *Roadies* is infamous for profanity, challenges and is inciting at times. But here's an adorable group of four, who walked into the show from different places, with meaning and purpose. The four friends, Zabi, Jayant, Abhimanyu and Vipin, who're melting people's hearts with their bond, talk to *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL, about what brought them together, how they pick each other up and more



Is your dog happy?

Every dog has his or her own individual personality. This personality goes beyond the common labels used for each breed, for instance, Labradors are often described as being 'friendly and outgoing'. But all Labradors may not necessarily exhibit the same likes, dislikes and behavioural traits. Understanding and catering to your dog's individual personality is a great starting point for creating a healthy and happy lifestyle for him or her, says Rashi Narang, Founder, Heads Up For Tails. She points out few points for pet parents to keep in mind:

NUTRITION: A healthy and balanced diet is the keystone of good health. A dog's nutritional needs are influenced by their breed, lifestyle, age and specific health conditions. The diet will alter as your pet grows from puppyhood to adulthood and then again at the senior stage. It's best to keep your pet on a species appropriate diet and consult a vet or a certified canine nutritionist to make sure your doggie is getting all the necessary nutrients.

EXERCISE: Many of the breeds that we have as companions today like labs, beagles and cocker spaniels were originally bred as working dogs.

They used to accompany their owners on hunts or fishing expeditions with specific roles to play. Today, these breeds still have these instincts and so, need both physical and mental exercise as an outlet for their abilities. A dog that is well-exercised is rarely destructive or 'naughty'. Besides their walks, you can give your dog puzzle games to exercise their minds. Tough chews (not rawhide) can also be relaxing as chewing releases stress and anxiety. You can connect with a behaviourist to understand what games you can incorporate into your pet's daily routine. Fun interactive games also help strengthen the pet-parent bond.

GROOMING: Daily grooming is often ignored by pet parents but is an important component of a pet's life. Having a well brushed, healthy skin and coat helps your pet feel more comfortable. Besides a daily brushing with an appropriate brush, make sure their ears and teeth are cleaned routinely as well. Rather than using harsh chemicals for tick and flea prevention, we recommend using natural products that are gentler on your pet's skin and overall health. When used consistently and in conjunction with a nutritious diet, these can be very effective.

Films inspiring you to be better

Films are a great way to relax and unwind but they are also a really important way to connect, learn, and draw inspiration. With WFH making lives tough for a lot of us, *The Pioneer* lists a few films that portray strong female characters you can't afford to miss out on!

Hundreds of films are made about men and their jobs, but working women are not often portrayed. Not only are films a great way to inspire, they also function as a fun and informative tool to teach the young ones life lessons. When you see someone on-screen doing something that you aspire to do in your life, it gives you the motivation and confidence to keep working on yourself. Here is a list of some brilliant films for all the young women out there looking for inspiration and confidence

MARDAANI

We've seen loads of men in a police uniform, from *Singham* to *Dabangg*. But how many policewomen have we seen on the big screen? *Mardaani* is not just another light-hearted flick with jokes galore but is a hard-hitting gorgeous piece of cinema that goes into a lot of deep-rooted issues and systematic crimes in the country.



The protagonist is a strong, shockingly fierce, and determined woman who makes you want to aim to be the best as well. "There is a dearth of stories on women that are sincerely told, while tapping onto the right insight of their problems and journey. So, somewhere I think, *Mardaani* as a universe, is tapping into the core of being a woman, especially in a patriarchal society," writer of *mardani*, Gopi Puthran had said.

TUMHARI SULU

If life is your cup of tea, *Tumhari Sulu* is the perfect film to watch. The story follows the life of a simple housemaker who turns her household upside down by taking on the role of a radio jockey. Full of laughter and tears, the film promises to take you on a wholesome journey. Working women in Indian households often face impossible choices and unsupportive families. This film takes you on a tour of all the pitfalls of that life. Director Suresh Triveni has given the housewife a positive and a fresher interpretation with his film *Tumhari Sulu*. "After a long time, *Tumhari Sulu* looks at the story of a homemaker choosing to balance both her home and her career. She doesn't mind handling her household chores. I love calling her an enthu cutlet. She adds value to her life by participating in various



contests which gives her a sense of acknowledgment and fulfillment. We rarely see a positive portrayal of a homemaker-cum-career oriented woman. That is why people connected with *Sulu* so much," the director reportedly said.

MISS INDIA

The film traces the journey of Samyukta, a young middle-class woman who has entrepreneurial dreams and moves to the U.S and launches a tea brand called *Miss India* bolstered by the support of her grandfather. She takes on another Indian-origin entrepreneur played by Jagapathi Babu who sells coffee. The movie hints at a mass masala style face-off between the two rivals. "It helped me observe how a successful business-woman conducts herself and speaks to the point," said Keerthy Suresh, via a virtual



press conference.

GUNJAN SAXENA: THE KARGIL GIRL

If you are looking for some action, the perfect film to get your adrenaline pumping is *Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl*. Recently released the film took inspiration to a new level. Some career paths are often closed to women for various reasons. Some families do not want their daughters to take on a masculine role. Some jobs just do not have space for growth when it comes to women. This film is a blast of inspiration for all those women who want to take over any such job descriptions. If you're dreaming of that defense forces life, this is the film to watch.

GAME OVER

Taapsee Pannu plays Swapna, a stay-at-home video game professional. Something is eating away at her when the first encounter happens. A memory of a physical assault appears to be the cause and

then she finds herself getting panic attacks, especially in the dark. Her therapist assured her this is a reflex reaction triggered by the realisation that it was around this time in an earlier year that she was assaulted. *Game Over* is as crisp and to-the-point as a thriller can get with a strong women-centric role. Also, it is inventive, intelligent, does not take the viewers lightly and above all, is terrifying. "Life is what you are going to make of it, you should have the will power to live and not just survive. We all have two lives, the second one starts when you have only one left. That's what was written in that envelope I'm holding and when I read it for the first time it hit me hard. It made me believe in living in the moment so much. Not that I was much of a planner before that. *Game Over* was again more than just a movie, more than just a story for me, and for everyone who understood the meaning behind it," shared Taapsee via a post on social media.

Smith does it again

Former Oz skipper makes second consecutive 62-ball hundred to lead hosts to ODI series win despite India's fight with bat

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia buried India under an avalanche of runs for a 51-run drubbing in the second ODI and an unassailable 2-0 series lead after the majestic Steve Smith produced another master-class in the form of a 64-ball 104 here at Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday.

Batting first, Australia rode on five fifty-plus scores including Smith's blazing knock, to post an imposing 389 for four against a sluggish India.

This was the Australian run-machine's fifth century against India in the 50-over format and second on the trot after his ton in the series-opener, which came off 66 deliveries.

A target of 390 proved to be too much for India as they were stopped at 338 for nine, with captain Virat Kohli (89) and KL Rahul (76) finishing as their main contributors in what turned out to be another forgettable outing for the beleaguered visitors.

India started the big chase in earnest with the in-from Shikhar Dhawan (30) and Mayank Agarwal (28) dealing in boundaries from the onset.

If Agarwal found the fence twice in the first over, Dhawan struck Mitchell Starc for three successive fours to get the Indian innings going.

A magnificent cover drive by Agarwal took the visitors past 50 in 6.1 overs. However, in trying to go for one too many, Dhawan perished.

In came Kohli and as he has mostly done through his illustrious career, the Indian captain played some delightful shots on the way to his 87-ball innings to keep the visitors in with a chance.

During his stay in the middle, Kohli pulled, drove, flicked and cut with plenty of success as India tried to keep the required rate within 9-10 runs per over.

But pacer Josh Hazlewood provided Australia their biggest breakthrough when he had Kohli caught brilliantly by a diving Moises Henriques at midwicket.

That brought Hardik Pandya in

I tried to whack the ball a bit too hard in the IPL, now I have started to hit the ball with a bit more finesse which is probably working better for me. I'm just playing nice cricketing shots... Nice to score some runs again for the team and get us to a good total.

STEVE SMITH

AFTER SCORING TWO BACK TO BACK HUNDREDS

As he (Smith) said the other day, he has found his hands, he is looking pretty scary at the moment for opposition teams. He is placing the ball as well as anyone around the world

GLENN MAXWELL

ON STEVE SMITH FORM

We are doing lot of things right, we just need to learn how to bowl better on such beautiful batting wickets. Not a lot that we have done wrong, we need to get better with skills and execution.

KL RAHUL

ON INDIAN DRESSING ROOM MORALE

We were completely outplayed: Kohli

PTI ■ SYDNEY

India skipper Virat Kohli had no qualms conceding that the visitors were outplayed by a confident and ruthless Australia in the series-deciding second ODI on Sunday, pinning the blame on the ineffective and inconsistent bowling by his side.

"We were completely outplayed. I think with the ball, we were not that effective, we didn't hit the areas that we wanted to consistently and they have a strong batting line-up, they know the conditions and the angles well,"

the middle and the all-rounder, in the company of KL Rahul, played some big shots. But they were never going to be enough.

Rahul departed after striking five sixes and four boundaries in his 66-ball knock. India completely lost the plot after that.

Australia fast bowler Pat Cummins picked up 3/67 in his 10 overs.

Besides Smith's 104-run knock, swashbuckling opener David Warner smashed 83 off 77 while skipper Aaron Finch contributed 60 in a first-wicket stand of 142 in under 23 overs.

The duo of Marnus Labuschagne and Glenn Maxwell

Kohli said at the post-match presentation.

Chasing Australia's 389, India finished at 338 for 9 with Kohli (89) and KL Rahul (76) being the top-scorer.

"Look at the scoreboard, we got 340 and still fell short by 50 odd, so the chase always felt steep and we knew one or two wickets would take the required rate to up to 13, 16 and so we had to keep hitting," the India skipper said.

"They took the chances that they created in the field, which was the difference, otherwise it would have been a much closer

game." "...Credit to them, they bowled much more consistently and used the dimensions well."

Kohli said the two catches which led to his and Shreyas Iyer's (38) dismissal were the "defining moments" of the game.

"Me and KL (Rahul) were talking if we stick around till 40-41 (overs), even 100 in last 10 overs with Hardik to come, it was game on, that was the game plan but the two catches that they hung on to were the defying moments," he said.

To dislodge Smith, India needed Pandya to bowl for the first time since returning from a back surgery more than a year ago, and he did the trick in his third

over, luring the impetuous Australian to slash one straight into Mohammed Shami.



Warner suffers injury, taken to hospital for scans

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia's swashbuckling opener David Warner's participation in the remainder of the limited-overs series against India was thrown into doubt after he suffered a groin injury during the second ODI on Sunday.

Warner hobbled off the field after he struggled to get up following a dive in the fourth over of the Indian innings. A car waited outside the Sydney Cricket Ground to take the



David Warner leaves the field after injury

AP

senior player to a nearby hospital for undergoing scans.

Asked about the opener's condition at the post-match presentation ceremony, Australian skipper Aaron Finch said he was not aware of its severity but didn't expect the south-paw to be available.

"No idea. We've got to reshuffle it around, I don't think he'll be available," Finch said after the game.

Considering the way Warner grimaced in pain after falling while

diving to stop the ball, it appears he could not only miss the third and final ODI but also the following three-match T20 series. The Twenty-20 games are scheduled to start on December 4 in Canberra.

SINGLES



Haas driver Romain Grosjean is helped by medical staff after he crashed his car during the F1 race in Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir on Sunday

©F1



Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton, centre, and Ferrari driver Sebastian Vettel, right, take the knee in support of the Black Lives Matter campaign and End Racism Recognition event ahead of the Bahrain F1 Grand Prix

AP



Manchester United's Edinson Cavani celebrates with Victor Lindelof after scoring Utd's second goal against Southampton at the St Mary's stadium on Sunday

AP



AC Milan's Franck Kessie, left and Fiorentina's Patrick Cutrone embrace at the end of the Serie A match at the San Siro

AP

Our bowlers need to adapt to conditions quicker: KL

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Backing his struggling bowlers to the hilt, India's vice captain KL Rahul on Sunday said that Jasprit Bumrah and Co have endured hard lessons in adapting to conditions so far and it is not a surprise that wickets have been hard to come by on batting-friendly Australian tracks.

The Indian bowlers, who did exceedingly well in the IPL before landing in Australia, have bled runs in the first two ODIs, letting the hosts run away with a decisive 2-0 series lead.

The ever-reliable Bumrah and the fiery Mohammed Shami have been made to look quite ordinary by the home team batsmen, who have scored at will.

"I would not agree when you say they are struggling. It's different conditions, different format. It's



learning for us to sit back and think of how to do better when playing on such good batting wickets," Rahul said at the post-match conference.

"In white-ball cricket, it is vital to get wickets regularly, then only you can keep the run-rate under check... We have to find (our) mantra to get wickets and the batting unit has to think about how

to stretch the 30-40-run partnerships," he assessed.

Rahul said Australian bowlers could do well because of the familiarity with the conditions.

"We did not adapt quick enough. It's a learning curve for the bowling group to adapt quicker."

Asked if it's just a bad phase for Bumrah, who struggled even in New Zealand earlier this year, Rahul said the speedster will come back strongly.

"We all know Jasprit is very fiery and competitive on the field. He means a lot to this set up, we know the value of Jasprit. It's about time that a champion player comes back and delivers and gets wickets for us."

"In New Zealand and Australia, the wickets are too good to bat, you will see that bowlers will not get wickets, that's acceptable."

Phillips' record-breaking ton sets up Kiwis win

AFF ■ MOUNT MAUNGANUI

West Indies captain Kieron Pollard accused his side of not performing to international standards on Sunday after New Zealand comprehensively won the second T20I by 72 runs on the back of a record century by Glenn Phillips.

New Zealand wrapped up the series at Mount Maunganui with a game to spare, after winning the opening match on Friday by five wickets, as Phillips provided a batting masterclass.

Called up to the T20 side while regular skipper Kane Williamson focuses on the upcoming Tests, Phillips plundered eight sixes and 10 fours on his way to 108 as New Zealand posted a mammoth 238/3 and then restricted the West Indies to 166/9.

"You never know when the next opportunity is going to come



and I came into this going 'let's go in as hard as I possibly can. I know I can do it,'" Phillips said.

The 23-year-old, who was born in South Africa but moved to New Zealand at the age of five, took just 46 deliveries to reach his century, the 10th fastest in T20Is and one ball faster than the previous New Zealand record held by Colin Munro.

New Zealand stand-in skipper Tim Southee called Phillips's performance "incredible", adding that his two catches, one diving at full-stretch on the boundary, and the sharp run out showed "he's got that X-factor about him".

But while Phillips, along with Devon Conway who produced an unbeaten 85, put the game firmly in New Zealand's hands, opposing captain Pollard was left fuming.

After winning the toss and sending New Zealand into bat under overcast skies, Pollard believed the West Indies were in control when the Black Caps reached the halfway mark at 84/2.

"But between overs 10 to 15 we sort of lost it there," Pollard said. "In terms of the energy and feel and erracticness in the field, that's not the standard that we want to set for ourselves, and not the standard anyone wants to see in international cricket."

Walelegn, Yehualaw win ADHM with record times

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ethiopians Amedework Walelegn and Yalemzerf Yehualaw smashed event records to win the men's and women's titles respectively in the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon held in a bio-secure environment amid the Covid-19 pandemic, here on Sunday.

The results in this World Athletics Gold Label road race were unprecedented with both the elite race winners re-writing the event records.

Both Walelegn (58.53 seconds) and Yehualaw pocketed \$27,000 first prize and an additional \$10,000 as event record bonus.

In fact, Yehualaw ran the second fastest women's half marathon ever. Her timing of 1:04:46 was just a quarter of a second outside the world record time (1:04:31) of compatriot Ababel Yeshaneh, who finished third.

For India, Tokyo Olympics-bound Avinash Sable smashed the national record with a time of 1:00:30.

The 26-year-old Sable, from Maharashtra, was 10th overall. He pocketed ₹3.5 lakh first prize and



Womens elite category Gold Medalist Ethiopian Yalemzerf Yehualaw (C) flanked by Silver Medalist Kenyan Ruth Chepngetich (L) and Bronze Medalist Ethiopian Ababel Yeshaneh

PTI

an additional ₹1 lakh for setting event record among Indians.

According to the Athletics Federation of India's official records, the earlier national half marathon record stands at 1:03:46 in the name of Kalidas Hirave of Maharashtra.

In the men's elite race, last year's Silver medalist Walelegn beat compatriot and defending champion Andamlak Belihu in a nail-biting finish in event record time of 58.53 seconds. Walelegn had won a Bronze at the World Half Marathon

Championships last month.

Belihu, who had won the title in 2018 and 2019, settled for the Silver with a time of 58.54sec in the 21.09km distance. Uganda's Stephen Kissa was third in 58.56.

The 21-year-old Walelegn bettered the earlier ADHM record of 59:06, which was in the name of compatriot Guye Adola, set in 2014.

Avinash Sable, who qualified for Tokyo Olympics in 3000m steeplechase, emerged winner

among Indian elite runners, clocking 1:00:30. This was the first time an Indian ran below 61 minutes in the ADHM.

Srinu Bugatha, who won the race last year, was second with a time of 1:04:16 while Durga Bahadur Budha was third, clocking 1:04:19.

In the star-studded women's elite race, Yehualaw surged ahead after the halfway mark to win in record time, bettering the earlier mark of 1:06:00 in the name of compatriot and defending champion Tsehay Gemechu, who could not finish on podium this time.

Kenya's Ruth Chepngetich was second in 1:05:06 while another Ethiopian and world half marathon record-holder Ababel Yeshaneh was third in 1:05:21.

Yehualaw had finished second in last year's ADHM and third in the World Half Marathon last month.

Among Indians, Parul Chaudhary, who had finished second last year, took the Gold in 1:12:18 while Sanjivani Jadhav (1:13:00) and Komal Jagdale (1:14:04) were second and third respectively.

Messi, Barca remember Maradona in winning style

AFF ■ BARCELONA

Lionel Messi paid tribute to Diego Maradona by stripping off his Barcelona top to reveal the Argentina great's shirt after he scored the final goal of a 4-0 rout of Osasuna on Sunday.

Messi celebrated his powerful strike from outside the box to cap the comfortable victory by taking off Barcelona's blue-and-burgundy to bare the red-and-black of Maradona's shirt from his stint at Newell's Old Boys. Messi then blew a kiss with both hands to the sky as he looked up.

Messi played

for Newells before he joined Barcelona at age 13. Maradona played five matches for Newell in 1994 near the end of his glorious playing career that made him a legend in his home country.

Before the match, the club played *The Song of the Birds* by Catalan cellist Pablo Casals as the teams stood around the centre circle where a Maradona shirt was laid on the centre spot.

Messi had kept his head bowed during the minute of silence before kickoff at the empty Camp Nou for Maradona. Maradona played for Barcelona from 1982-84.

Martin Braithwaite, Antoine Griezmann and Philippe Coutinho also scored for Barcelona.



Sesh to headline *HIT 2*

With Vishwak Sen's date diary filled to the optimum, producers of *HIT 2* got the nod of Adivi Sesh to front it. Script-wise, *HIT 2* will be an independent film, film's producer Prashanti Tipirneni tells NAGARAJ GOUD

In a significant development, we have learned that Vishwak Sen is no longer part of Sailesh Kolanu's *HIT 2*. While the actor's initial agreement was to reprise his part in the sequel as well, his busy schedule meant that he had to make way. According to a source close to him, he has close to eight new projects in his kitty after he wraps up *Paagal* and with Sailesh set to start *HIT* Hindi remake once he completes *HIT 2*, it was a mutual decision that he doesn't board the project.

Adivi Sesh, who has delivered

multiple super hits in a row, will be spearheading *HIT 2* now. "Vishwak's dates were a bit tight, so we had to approach Sesh, who gave his consent immediately after the narration. Script-wise, *HIT 2* will be an independent film and it will roll in March next year," Prashanti Tipirneni, one of the producers of the project, told *The Pioneer* when contacted.

Sesh, who is extremely choosy with his projects, is right now filming for *Major*, which in another two months will be wrapped up. In *HIT 2*, he will be seen as a cop who will be investigating more dangerous cases.



KS Ravikumar to act in web series



Tamil-Telugu filmmaker KS Ravikumar, who has made cameo appearances in most of his directorial ventures, is making his Telugu debut as an actor with an upcoming untitled web series, *The Pioneer* has exclusively learnt. To feature Viswanth in the lead, the series, according to a source, is a full-length comedy entertainer and rolls next month in Hyderabad. K Vivek is debuting as a director with the project, a production venture of MLV Satyanarayana. The source adds, "Vivek is directing from a script of Rajdooth directors Arjun-



Carthyk. Viswanth will be seen as a Casanova, while Ravikumar will be playing his father. The latter has

a full-length role, prompting him to hop on board. The fun emerges from Viswanth's characterisation and spills over to eight episodes the writing team and the director have conceived. Each episode will run into 30-40 minutes." The source goes on to mention that after they wrap up the shooting, the makers want to approach a prominent OTT platform to release it.

— NG

Varudu Kavalenu moves to Dubai

After being shot in Hyderabad for over a month, the filming of Naga Shaurya and Ritu Varma-starrer *Varudu Kavalenu* has now moved to Dubai. On Sunday, Shaurya was clicked by the paparazzi as he entered Shamsabad airport to travel to Dubai.

A source says, "It's a new mini schedule of three days and the shoot will commence from Monday. Debutante director Soujanya Medarametla is planning to shoot some introduction sequences of Shaurya in this brief outing, which doesn't require Ritu Varma."

A pure love story which traces the journey of a guy and girl, who are honest and live by principles, *Varudu Kavalenu* is a production venture of Sithara Entertainments. The likes of Nadiya, Murali Sharma, Vennela Kishore, Praveen, Ananth, Kireeti Damaraju and Rangasthala Mahesh are playing supporting roles, while Vishal Chandrasekhar is composing music for the project.

Kriti as Sita in ADIPURUSH?



Although names like Anushka Sharma, Kiara Advani and Keerthy Suresh were banded about to play Sita in Prabhas-starrer *Adipurush*, it looks like Kriti Sanon has landed the project. According to reports emerging from Mumbai, producer Bhushan Kumar and director Om Raut after considering many names have zeroed in on Kriti to play the part. Besides the fact that she did a couple of Telugu films, it is said that her first-time pairing with Prabhas and height sealed the deal for the actress.

While her calendar is chock-a-block with multiple projects, reports say that Kriti didn't want to miss an opportunity to be a part of a project of this scale and immediately adjusted dates. She will join the sets towards the end of January in Mumbai.

Meanwhile, reports further state that Sunny Singh, who shot to fame with films like *Pyar Ka PUNCHAMA* and *Sonu Ke Titu Ki*

Sweetie, has been signed on to play Laxman in the project. The official confirmation of both the Hindi actors is awaited though. *Adipurush*, a screen adaptation of a chapter from Indian epic Ramayana and revolves around the triumph of good over evil, will be shot in Hindi and Telugu simultaneously and later dubbed into Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and other foreign languages. Saif Ali Khan will be seen as Lankesh, an intelligent demon who is menacing, lethal and brutal, all at the same time. A 3D action-drama high on visual effects, it is a joint production venture between Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, Om Raut, Prasad Sutar and Rajesh Nair.

Sai Tej's Xmas gift

The makers of Sai Tej-starrer *Solo Brathuke So Better* over the weekend announced that the film will release as a Christmas gift-December 25, making it the first Telugu film featuring a notable actor to have a theatrical bow after the pandemic shut theatres for more than eight months. Sai Tej, talking about the release, said, "We all know the kind of situation we are facing this year. It is in this context, we are ready to entertain the audience again. This Christmas, be ready to laugh as an entertainer packaged with romance, fun,

comedy, and emotions in equal measure will greet you in cinemas."

In the film, Sai plays a student who is averse to the idea of being in a relationship, leading him to form a club called SBSB (*Solo Brathuke So Better*). Nabha Natesh, on the other hand, plays a spunky young girl who challenges Sai's steely resolve to stay single. The film, which is a Thaman musical, marks the directorial debut of Subbu.

The digital rights have already been pocketed by ZEE group and it will release on ZEE5 app exactly a month after the theatrical release.

