



# sunday pioneer

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## CASE AGAINST KANGANA RANAUT FOR 'OBJECTIONABLE' TWEETS

A Mumbai court has ordered an FIR (first information report) against Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut for allegedly creating religious disharmony. Ms Ranaut, 33, has been accused of "continuously defaming Bollywood film industry" by a casting director who petitioned the court and said the 'Queen' actor is "creating a communal divide between people of two communities and in the mind of common man" through her tweets. The order was passed on Friday by Bandra Metropolitan Magistrate Jaydeo Y Ghule as the court responded to a complaint by petitioner Sahil Ashrafali Sayyed; the complaint also mentions Ms Ranaut's sister - Rangoli Chandel. "She is well aware that she is a well-known actress and has a big fan base so her tweets will be seen and will reach out to many people," the petitioner underlined.



## INDIA RANKS 94 AMONG 107 NATIONS IN GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX

India ranked 94 among 107 nations in the Global Hunger Index 2020 and is in the 'serious' hunger category with experts blaming poor implementation processes, lack of effective monitoring, siloed approach in tackling malnutrition and poor performance by large states behind the low ranking. Last year, India's rank was 102 out of 117 countries. The neighbouring Bangladesh, Myanmar and Pakistan too are in the 'serious' category but ranked higher than India in this year's hunger index. While Bangladesh ranked 75, Myanmar and Pakistan are in the 78th and 88th position. Nepal in 73rd and Sri Lanka in 64th position are in 'moderate' hunger category, the report showed. Seventeen nations, including China, Belarus, Ukraine, Turkey, Cuba and Kuwait, shared the top rank with GHI scores of less than five, the website of the Global Hunger Index, that tracks hunger and malnutrition, said on Friday.



## FRANCE TEACHER, WHO SHOWED PROPHET CARICATURES, BEHEADED

A history teacher who had shown caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed in class was on Friday decapitated and his assailant shot dead by French police as they tried to arrest him, police and prosecutors said. French anti-terror prosecutors said they were investigating the assault which happened on the outskirts of Paris at around 5 pm (1500 GMT) near a school in Conflans Saint-Honorine, a western suburb of the French capital. According to a police source, the victim was a history teacher who recently discussed caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed in class. Prosecutors said they were treating the incident as 'a murder linked to a terrorist organisation' and related to a "criminal association with terrorists".



## GOVT EXTENDS HOME SECRETARY AJAY KUMAR BHALLA'S TENURE

The tenure of Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla has been extended till August 22, 2021, according to a Personnel Ministry order issued on Saturday. He would have superannuated next month. Bhalla, a 1984 batch IAS officer of Assam-Meghalaya cadre, was in August 2019 appointed as the Home Secretary. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the extension in service of Bhalla as Home Secretary beyond the date of his superannuation i.e. November 30, 2020 up to August 22, 2021, it said.



# Telangana won't withdraw case in SC on water sharing

Decisions taken at Apex Council meeting may not see the light of the day

L VENKAT RAM REDDY  
■ HYDERABAD

Giving a new twist to the ongoing dispute between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, TS Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao has decided not to withdraw the case which TS had filed in the Supreme Court with regard to sharing of Krishna and Godavari waters, according to sources.

Not only this, KCR has now decided to ignore several other crucial decisions taken at the recent Apex Council meeting, sources said.

This runs counter to the undertaking that TS gave at the Apex Council meeting convened by the Centre on October 7 with the Chief Ministers of Telangana and AP.



At the meeting, AP Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy had his way (curiously, following a meeting the same day with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah) while KCR's demands were watered down. Fighting a los-

ing battle, KCR had then agreed to withdraw the case in a day or two to enable the Centre to go ahead with its plan to refer the underlying issues to a tribunal.

This was confirmed by none other than Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh

Shekhawat, who chaired the Apex Council meeting, while addressing a press conference the same day.

Shekhawat then said, "With regards to sharing of water of Godavari and Krishna between the two states, the Chief Minister of Telangana has agreed to withdraw the case the State has filed in the Supreme Court to enable the Centre to move forward on referring the water sharing issues to the tribunal under the Inter-State River Water Dispute Act 1956 after taking due legal opinion."

Noticeably, there has been no move on this front by the Telangana government even 10 days after the Apex Council meeting on withdrawal of the case.

2

## India begins to identify 'recipients'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India's coronavirus infections rose by another 62,212 cases over the previous day and a local media report said on Saturday that the government had begun identifying about 300 million people who would be given the vaccine first when it is ready.

The report said that front-line health and sanitation workers, police officials and elderly people with co-morbidities will get the vaccine on priority.

The plan, which is still in the draft stage, aims to cover 23 percent of the population in the first phase. The final plan is likely to be ready by end October-November, the report said.

The selected individuals will be given an estimated 600 million doses.

Earlier this month, health minister Harsh Vardhan had said that India hopes to receive up to 500 million doses of coronavirus vaccines by July next year to inoculate about 250 million people.

Officials have said that giving the vaccine to India's 1.3 billion people will be a mammoth exercise, likely to stretch well into 2022.

India's cumulative tally of coronavirus infections stood at 7.43 million on Saturday, having risen by 62,212 in the last 24 hours, health ministry data showed.

But the number of active infections slipped below 800,000 for the first time in 1.5 months, which the ministry called a significant achievement.

## Fresh spell of heavy rain in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Close on the heels of a downpour that devastated parts of the city earlier this week, several areas in the metropolis received heavy showers on Saturday evening, triggering traffic snarls and water-logging. According to official data (from 8.30 AM to 10 pm on Saturday), Singapur in Medchal Malkajgiri district received 157.3 mm of rainfall, followed by 153 mm of rain at Bandlaguda near Uppal in the city.

2

## 'Separate religion from politics'

■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Unless there is a strict separation of religion from politics and government, secularism cannot be protected, defended or put into operation in a proper sense, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said on Saturday.

Yechury said forces like the RSS want to "take India into the darkness of the past" by changing the country's history, culture, education policy "to give a monolithic Hindu identity to

India" instead of its syncretic cultural identity.

Yechury was speaking while inaugurating the state-wide celebrations of the CPI(M) marking the 100th year of the founding of the Communist Party in India, through video conference. October 17 of this year is a historic day for the communist party as it marks the hundred years of the formation of the first unit of the Communist Party of India in Tashkent in the then Soviet Union. "Secularism means the

separation of religion from politics and from the state.

Every individual has the right to choose his own faith and it will be the duty of the state, law to protect that right which is inviolable and the communists will always stand up to protect it," Yechury said.

He said the state or the government does not have any religion and all the rights of individuals to their religion, or faith of their choice to their religious practices, need to be protected.

2



## Narrow escape for Ravi Shankar

PNS ■ PATNA

Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad's helicopter was damaged after its blades broke at the Patna airport on Saturday. The accident occurred after the minister had alighted from the helicopter. He is fine.

2



'Peace, tranquillity along LAC deeply disturbed'

5



City suffers due to skewed priorities

2

## TODAY

### ALMANAC

#### Month & Paksam:

Ashwin (Adhik) & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Dwitija: 05:27 pm

Nakshatram : Swati: 08:51 am, Vishakha: 09:08 am (Next Day)

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

Rahukalam: 04:21 pm - 05:48 pm

Yamagandam: 12:01 pm - 01:27 pm

Variyam: 01:49 pm - 03:14 pm

Gulika: 02:54 pm - 04:21 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 10:20 pm - 11:45 pm

Abhijit Muhurtam: 11:37 am - 12:24 pm

### VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Thunderstorm

Temp: 32/25

Humidity: 82%

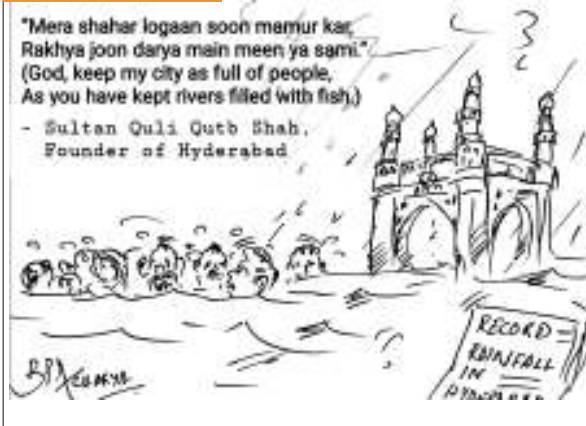
Sunrise: 06:09 am

Sunset: 05:52 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated October 17, 2020 5:00 PM

## OBTUSE ANGLE



## AP seeks Rs 2,250 cr flood relief

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Saturday wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, requesting that the Centre immediately grant Rs 2,250 crore for repair and restoration work in the aftermath of the heavy rains and floods last week.

The Chief Minister said as per preliminary estimates Andhra Pradesh suffered damage to the tune of Rs 4,450 crore due to the heavy rains that lashed the state from October 9 to 13 and the consequent flooding.

Roads and power installations suffered severe damage, while standing crops in thousands of acres were destroyed,



the Chief Minister pointed out, adding that a total of 14 people were killed in rain-related incidents. "We have suffered badly due to rains/floods in August and September and the fresh spell has caused further damage. In this situation, the Centre should stand in support of the state. We urgently need at least Rs 1,000 crore as

advance to undertake relief works on a war-footing and restore normalcy," the Chief Minister said.

He also requested the Centre send its team to the state to assess the exact damage.

"We have suffered heavily because of Covid-19. And now nature's fury has worsened our state," Jagan noted.



## Seema Mustafa elected as president of Editors Guild

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seema Mustafa, the Editor of The Citizen, has been elected as President of the Editors Guild of India, a statement by the top body of editorial leaders said Saturday.

The announcement came after the results of an online election held on October 16 were declared. In the same election, Hardnews editor Sanjay Kapoor was elected as General Secretary. Anant Nath, the Editor of The Caravan, was elected unopposed as Treasurer, the statement said.

Mustafa succeeds Shekhar Gupta, the Editor-in-Chief of ThePrint, while Kapoor and Nath will take over from A.K. Bhattacharya, the Editorial Director of Business Standard, and Sheela Bhatt, the Contributing Editor of Rediff.com, respectively.

## NZ's Ardern gets historic mandate

PNS ■ WELLINGTON

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern delivered the biggest election victory for her centre-left Labour Party in half a century on Saturday as voters rewarded her for a decisive response to Covid-19.

The mandate means Ardern, 40, could form the first single-party government in decades and will face the challenge of delivering on the progressive transformation she promised but failed to deliver in her first

term, where Labour shared power with a nationalist party.

"This is a historic shift," said political commentator Bryce Edwards of Victoria University in Wellington, describing the vote as one of the biggest swings in New Zealand's history in 80 years.

Labour was on track to win 64 of the 120 seats in the country's unicameral parliament, the highest since New Zealand adopted a proportional voting system in 1996.

2

## 'Remdesivir can't cut Covid deaths'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A study coordinated by the World Health Organisation has indicated that remdesivir, along with three other potential drug treatments for the coronavirus, has "little or no effect" on death rates among hospitalised patients.

The interim results from the WHO's Solidarity Therapeutics Trial, said to be

the world's largest randomised control trial of coronavirus treatments, were published Thursday.

The results indicated that the remdesivir, hydroxychloroquine, lopinavir/ritonavir and interferon drug treatment regimens "appeared to have little or no effect on 28-day mortality or the in-hospital course of Covid-19 among hospitalised

patients."

Remdesivir is one of the drugs given to US President Donald Trump after he tested positive for the coronavirus two weeks ago.

The randomised study by the WHO was conducted in 405 hospitals across 30 countries on 11,266 patients, with 2750 given remdesivir.

2

# Dasara Mahotsavam commences in Vijayawada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Dasara Mahotsavam, or popularly called the Dasara Navratri festivities, commenced on Saturday at the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam (Kanakadurga temple) in Vijayawada.

The famous temple will celebrate an avatar of the goddess on each of these days from Saturday to October 25.

On Saturday, the temple celebrated and devotees worshipped Sri Swarnakavachalankruta Sri Durga Devi. On Sunday, Sri Bala Tripura Sundarai Devi and Sri Gayatri Devi on Monday will be worshipped.

Similarly, Sri Annapura Devi will be worshipped on

Tuesday, Sri Saraswati Devi (Mulanakshatram) on Wednesday, Sri Lalitha Tripura Sundari Devi on Thursday, Sri Mahalakshmi Devi on Friday, Sri Durga Devi (Durgastami) and Sri Mahishasuramardini Devi (Maharnavami) on Saturday and finally Sri Rajarajeshwari Devi (Vijayadasami) on Sunday.

Saturday being the first day of the Sarannavaratris (nine auspicious days), the deity will be adorned with gold to appear as goddess Durga to the devotees.

The temple has been decked up in preparation for the celebrations.

However, amid the Covid pandemic, the temple will follow the guidelines as part of the celebrations.



Located on a hill near the banks of Krishna river, the Kanakadurga temple is very popular in the Telugu states.

Meanwhile, the Visakhapatnam-based Sri Saradapeetam has also commenced Sarannavaratris Dasara celebrations on Saturday.

Similar to Kanakadurga tem-

ple, Saradapeetam deity Rajasayamala will also don an avatar each for the next nine days.

In a separate development, Saradapeetam has unveiled a new logo for the spiritual centre.

On Saturday, the first day of the celebrations, Vijayawada

police commissioner B Srinivasulu and temple executive office MV Suresh Babu performed puja.

Brahmin Corporation chairman and Vijayawada Central MLA Malladi Vishnu too had darshan of the deity. Vishnu later praised before the media the arrangements made for the darshan by the temple authorities and said that all Covid guidelines were in place. He said that for the hassle-free darshan, all departments of the temple were working in tandem.

In the wake of the Covid pandemic, only 10,000 devotees per day are being allowed-darshan.

"Last year, over 80,000 devotees had darshan every day but now, there are restrictions in

place at even the bathing ghats and the tonsuring centres due to Covid," Vishnu said. He said that with the blessing of Durga, there had been good rains and all the reservoirs and tanks are full to the brim.

"Kanakadurga flyover has also been inaugurated to ease the traffic woes. The deity will shower blessing forever on the people of the state, farmers, livestock and every family," prayed the MLA.

Durga temple EO Suresh Babu appealed to devotees to carry printout of the ticket for darshan.

All devotees are being duly thermal scanned at the entrance of the temple and checked to see that their face masks are in place and hands well sanitised.







# Highway gang busted, six held

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam district police arrested six men for waylaying truck drivers on the highway and robbing them of money. Police arrested Perli Vijayawardhan (21), Pirangula Sundar (20), Vemu Praveen Kumar (23), Malaga Balaji (23), Vanga Sasikumar (20) and Pirangula Chalapathi Rao (21).

"The accused were committing crimes for money as they were addicted to cricket betting and other vices," said the SP. Incidentally, on Monday, the arrested men waylaid a truck driver and robbed Rs 5,200 from him.

Based on a complaint from the driver and on directive from Prakasam district Superintendent of Police Siddharth Kaushal, police formed four teams to trace the robbers. They alerted the mobile police teams and surrounding police stations through the newly formed Integrated



Prakasam district Superintendent of Police Siddharth Kaushal addresses a press conference in Ongole on Friday

Command Control, which led to the arrest of the six men at Kongapadu crossroads in Addanki. Police managed to recover Rs 2,400 from the accused. In a separate case, the district police arrested two juveniles at Inkollu crossroads of

Nagaluppalapadu and recovered silver ornaments worth Rs 3.8 lakh, which were stolen in three temples. Meanwhile, Kaushal held a crime review meeting on Friday and instructed police to expedite the investigation in crimes committed against

women. The State is shaken by two back-to-back cases in which a woman got burnt to death and another succumbed to stab injuries in Vijayawada. The SP said the State government is closely monitoring crimes on women on a daily basis. He

"The accused were committing crimes for money as they were addicted to cricket betting and other vices," said Prakasam district Superintendent of Police Siddharth Kaushal

ordered his subordinates to start the investigation as soon as a case was registered and complete it within 60 days after filing a charge sheet.

Kaushal said the Ministry of Home Affairs is also reviewing cases on a daily basis. He instructed policemen in the district to learn Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) everyday to upload the details of every single investigation. The IPS officer took stock of the registered cases to check how many were uploaded in CCTNS and directed his subordinates to upload the balance cases as soon as possible.

## Hawala operators apprehended

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Task Force sleuths arrested three operators of a hawala racket and recovered Rs 35 lakh from their possession here on Saturday.

Police seized a motorcycle and three mobile phones from them. On a tip-off, they laid a trap and nabbed the hawala operators at PRK building under Bhavanipuram Police Station limits.

The operators have been identified as Raavi Venkataramana (40) from Gudivada in Krishna district, Satyendra Singh Rajput (34) from Bikaner in Rajasthan and T Satyanarayana (45) from Macharla in Guntur district.

The Task Force police nabbed the operators' red-handed while they were doing the hawala transaction. According to police, Venkataramana handed over Rs 35 lakh to Satyendra Singh Rajput without any bill at PRK building.

The amount was in turn handed over to Satyanarayana on disclosed code sent by one Pappu Singh Rajput from Rajasthan. Police on confirmed information caught the trio while the cash was being received by Satyanarayana from Satyendra Singh Rajput. The three were handed over to the Bhavanipuram Police Station. Information was given to the Income-tax department and the Enforcement department by the Task Force police. City Police Commissioner B Srinivasulu appreciated the Task Force team led by ADCP KV Srinivas Rao, ACP VSN Varma and inspector P Krishna Mohan for busting the Hawala racket.

## EAMCET counselling from Oct 23

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Convener of Admissions, Special Commissioner of Technical Education MM Nayak on Friday said that the AP EAMCET-2020 counselling for admissions into engineering and pharmacy courses will commence from October 23. He released the notification of B Tech and Pharmacy admissions on Saturday.

According to the notification, the eligible students in MPC stream can participate in the web counselling as per the fee particulars, OC and BC candidates have to pay Rs 1,200 and SC and ST candidates will have to pay online processing fee of Rs 600 and participate in counselling. The processing fee can be paid from October 23 through <http://apeamcet.nic.in> for the counselling.

After payment of the processing fee, the registration number and login ID number



details will be sent to the mobile number mentioned in the online application. After completing the verification, the candidate needs to create a password with the login ID and enter the following web options.

Certificates verification will be held from October 23 to 27, followed by web? options registration while the seat allocation dates will be announced next. Certificate verification for physically challenged, sports persons, NCC, Anglo-Indian candidates will be conducted at the Government Polytechnic

College near Vijayawada Benz Circle from 9 am onwards and CAP (Children of Armed Personnel) candidates can go to the helpline centres of Government Polytechnic Colleges in Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam and Tirupati for the verification of certificates.

On October 23 online counselling will be held for candidates with ranks from 1 to 20,000, followed by 20,001 to 50,000, 50,001 to 80,000, 80,001 to 1,10,000 and 1,10,001 to the last rank from October 24 to 27.

## 3 of a family electrocuted in Nellore

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Three persons of a family were electrocuted at Kallurupalli Housing Board Colony in Nellore district on Saturday.

The accident took place when an 11 KV live wire fell on the gate of one Venugopal. Without noticing the live wire on the gate.

He came in contact with the gate and died on the spot. On noticing Venugopal (56), his wife Mariyamma (52) ran to save him and she, too, was electrocuted.

To save his son, Bajamma (70), tried to pull Venugopal but died on the spot leaving a pall of gloom in the colony.

On receiving information, police and fire department personnel rushed to the spot.

## Ministers assure houses for flood victims

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Housing Cherukuvada Sri Ranganatha Raju and Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharitha visited the flood-affected areas in Guntur district on Saturday and assured to providing aid for farmers by taking the losses to the notice of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

Ministers inspected the crops damaged due to flash floods in Chirravuri, Bommavanipalem, Chilumuru, Juvvalapalem and Vellaturu and interacted with farmers. They assured sanction of pucca houses for the flood

victims whose houses were collapsed and damaged.

Raghunatha Raju said that crops were damaged due to incessant rains and floods to Krishna river for the past three days in the Krishna Delta. He said that the government initiated measures to provide essentials to the flood victims and said that drinking water and essential commodities would be provided free of cost for the flood-hit villages.

He assured about providing seeds and urea to farmers to recultivate short term crops in the flood-hit areas. He further assured about providing fodder

to animals through the animal husbandry department.

He announced that officials of departments concerned would start enumerations and compensations would be sanctioned to the flood victims accordingly.

The Home minister assured that their government would provide compensation to every acre and every farmer without fail. Vemuru MLA Meruga Nagarajuna appealed to the minister to sanction pucca houses to the flood victims whose houses were collapsed and damaged in the floods.

Bapatla MP Nandigam

Suresh, AP State Agriculture Mission chairman MVS Nagi Reddy, Guntur district Collector I Samuel Anand Kumar, officials of agriculture, horticulture, revenue, police and other departments were present.

Similarly, Minister for Transport Perni Venkataramaiah alias Nani with Krishna district Collector A Md Imtiaz, Avanigadda MLA Simhadri Ramesh Babu and other officials visited flood-affected Edurumondi Deevi and assured to provide compensation to the flood victims for loss of crops and assets.

## Stringent punishment for Divya's killer demanded

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Parents of Divya Tejaswani, who was brutally stabbed to death by killer Nagendra Babu a couple of days ago, demanded justice to their daughter. On Saturday, they gave a memorandum to Home Minister M Suchiratha urging her to render justice to their daughter. They demanded severe punishment for the accused so that people with wrong deeds would be scared to commit crime against women.

Divya's mother Vimala said that the culprit should be hanged to death, which should remain as a history in the State, and people should rethink to resort to such crimes.

The Home Minister said that the brutal murder of the engineering student was cruel. She assured the parents of the victims that justice would be rendered and stern action will be taken against the accused as per law.

Women should have awareness about law and girls should inform their parents if they are subject to any harassment. Parents should also be supportive of their children and lodge a complaint with police. She said that once Disha law is enacted, the one, who commits rape, or murder will be sentenced to death.



SRI SWARNAKAVACHALANKRUTA DURGA DEVI



On the first day of Navaratri celebrations in Vijayawada on Saturday, the presiding deity Goddess Kanakadurga appeared as Sri Swarnakavachalankruta Durga Devi

## Injustice to BCs under YSRCP's tenure: TDP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister and TDP leader Kollu Ravindra on Saturday accused the government of rendering injustice to Backward Classes (BCs) by not fulfilling its pre-pol promises for their betterment.

He slammed Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy for forming only 56 Corporations contrary to his promise to form Corporations for all the BCs in the State. He lamented that even these 56 Corporations were not being allocated any funds.

Ravindra said that while the BCs were being given nominated posts, which do not have even offices and chairs, the Chief Minister's own caste leaders were given over 703 posts with huge funds at their disposal.

He alleged that the funds meant for BC Corporations were being diverted to other pro-



grammes. He further stated that over 95 per cent funds were spent under Navaratnalu but the benefits were not reaching deserving BC sections.

He said that the government had not given a single loan, or financial assistance for the self-employment opportunities. He claimed that the previous TDP regime allocated Rs 900 crore for Adarana scheme for granting loans and 30 types of tools to BCs. He claimed that the YSRCP has promised to provide Rs 15,000 for Nayi Brahmins but this was paid to just 38,000 out of the total 5.5 lakh population in the State.

## Mahila JAC leader seeks AICC support for farmers' stir

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The tussle between the ruling and opposition parties on three capitals' decisions is continuing as the government stuck to its guns while the Congress, TDP and other parties are rallying behind the agitating farmers.

In this backdrop, APCC Coordination Committee members and Amaravati Parirakshana Samithi Mahila JAC leader Sunkara Padmasree addressed a letter to AICC president Sonia Gandhi seeking her support to the Amaravati farmers.

She explained the plight of 29,000 farmers and their families due to trifurcation of Amaravati and sought the AICC to support the Amaravati agitation. Padmasree alleged that Dalits are being attacked, while women are being raped and killed while the crime against these vulnerable sections had become order of the day in the State. She sought it is time for



the Congress party to raise its voice for these neglected sections and protect them from the misrule of the YSRCP government.

In the letter, Padmasree stated that the previous TDP government had planned Amaravati as the capital of the State after bifurcation for which over 29,000 farmers have given 33,000 acres to build the new capital sacrificing their lives as they depended upon agriculture.

She said that the TDP government had spent over Rs 10,000 crore to provide infra-

Amaravati Parirakshana Samithi Mahila JAC leader Sunkara Padmasree explained the plight of 29,000 farmers and their families due to trifurcation of Amaravati

Padmasree alleged that Dalits are being attacked, while women are being raped and killed while the crime against these vulnerable sections had become order of the day in the State

structure, including construction of interim Secretariat, High Court and Assembly. She stated that several private universities have also come up in these lands and started academic activity believing that the area would be the capital of the State.

## SBI donates mini-bus to Durga temple

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

SBI Amaravati Circle on Saturday donated a 27-seater bus worth Rs 23 lakhs to Kanakadurga temple. The bus was donated for the convenience of devotees, who visit Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devastanam atop Indrakeeladri, said State Bank of India General Manager P Siva Kumar.

SBI officials handed over the vehicle to Kanakadurga Temple Trust Board chairman



SBI team hands over the key of the mini-bus to Durga Temple Trust Board chairman P Somi Naidu on the temple premises in Vijayawada on Saturday

P Somi Naidu and Executive Officer MV Suresh Babu on Saturday. Later, speaking to the media.

They said they would like to thank everyone, who contributed to this great cause. Chief General Manager Sanjay Sahai from Hyderabad witnessed the programme online.

DGM Y Satyanarayana Prasad said he was happy to be a part of Goddess' service. "On behalf of SBI, I would like to thank the temple board members for providing this

opportunity. The programme is sponsored by the local SBI. It was organised by the Gandhi Nagar region officials".

P Somi Naidu and MV Suresh Babu thanked the SBI authorities on behalf of the temple.

Later, the GMs and DGMS had darshan of Goddess Durga on the first day of Dasara Sarannavaratri festivities, along with Gandhinagar branch regional manager Siva Kumar.

## 3-day web session on 'export opportunities'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Federation of Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FAPCCI) will be conducting a three-day web-based session to encourage new entrepreneurs in export business.

The FAPCCI will conduct the web sessions from October 19 to 21. Programme coordinator Sk Sahabuddin said that eminent speakers and senior officials from the Director-General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), banks, export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) and Customs are

Medical, textiles, electronics, toys, plastics, gem and jewellery, pharmaceuticals, agriculture and processed food items will be promoted for export

being invited to participate and lead the sessions.

As per the analysis of the Commerce department, medical, textiles, electronics, toys, plastics, gem and jewellery, pharmaceuticals, agriculture and processed food items will

be promoted for export, he said

Sahabuddin said that many companies in the MSME sector started focusing on exports. He said that web-based programmes have been designed for the entrepreneurs/individuals, merchant exporters, manufacturers, service providers and those who are successful in their local market wishing to identify their capacity in export business. He stated that interested persons can register and contact him for further information over 8309306291 and DL Hinduja on 7670908388.

## Lord rides Chinnasesha Vahanam at Tirumala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Lord Malayappa Swamy was taken in a procession on Chinnasesha Vahanam on the second day of Srivari Navaratri Brahmotsavams on Saturday dressed in the celestial attire of 'Damodar Krishna'.

Lord Malayappa holding a glob of butter in one hand and a flute on the other hand was taken in a procession on the five-hooded golden vahanam inside Srivari temple due to Covid-19 restrictions.

According to mythology, Chinnasesha is the personification of Vasuki - the king of serpents. To make the human race conscious of the divine Kundalini energy.

The Lord rode on Chinnasesha Vahanam and



Priests offer puja to Lord Malayappa Swamy on the second day of Navaratri Brahmotsavams at Tirumala on Saturday

devotees beget blessings for their families.

Tirumala pontiffs Pedda

Jeeyar Swami and Chinna Jeeyar Swami, TTD Executive Officer KS Jawahar Reddy, MP

Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy, additional executive officer AV Dharma Reddy, JEO P Basant

Chinnasesha is believed to be the personification of Vasuki - the king of serpents. To make the human race conscious of the divine Kundalini energy, the Lord rode on Chinnasesha Vahanam and devotees beget blessings for their families

Kumar, Board members DP Anant, Prashanti Reddy, Chippagiri Prasad, Govind Hari, CVSO Gopinath Jatti, chief engineer Ramesh Reddy, temple deputy executive officer Harindranath, Peishkar Jaganmohan Charyulu and others were present.



# Rains take a toll on standing crops

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Standing crops in 4,071 villages in 348 mandals of 27 districts of the state have been damaged affecting at least 4 lakh farmers. The loss of crop is estimated to be around Rs 2,000 crore. Standing crops in an extent of 7.35 lakh acres have been damaged with crop prospects in them is put at less than half the normal harvest.

According to a preliminary report sent to the government by the Agriculture Department, Yadadri-Bhongir district accounts for crop loss in 47,808 acres, while Siddipet district accounts for loss of crop in 65,925 acres and Mahabubabad district reports crop loss in 4,210 acres.

To be able to get investment subsidy from the Centre for the crop loss, the Agriculture



Department has to send a detailed report listing the loss of crop from land holding wise. The department has been making arrangements to obtain details from the farmers once the disaster management department gives its green signal to do so. Medak district accounts for maximum num-

ber of 54,747 farmers sustaining loss, while Khammam district accounts for losses to 53,985 farmers.

The Agriculture Department reports indicate loss to crops damaged in 7.35 lakh acres in the rains that lashed the state during the past one week. The rains affected crops in 4 lakh

**According to a preliminary report sent to the government by the Agriculture Department, Yadadri-Bhongir district accounts for crop loss in 47,808 acres, while Siddipet district accounts for loss of crop in 65,925 acres**

acres in July, August and September. The official accounts of crop loss then are not included to the state government in its latest report.

Will the government procure the discoloured paddy due to the incessant down pour? A clear picture is yet to emerge. The quantity of such paddy would be around 2 lakh tonnes. Only after drying the harvested paddy, the extent of discoloured paddy would be able to be estimated. The Civil

Supplies Department will not lift paddy if the moisture content exceeds 17 per cent.

The officials of the department say they are helpless in this regard unless the state government relaxes guidelines. To what extent the state government will be able to come to the rescue of the farmers could not be predicted now. Only the time will tell the support the farmers will be able to get from the government or otherwise.

## Cong, BJP did nothing for people, says Harish Rao

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Siddipet MLA and Finance Minister T Harish Rao on Saturday alleged that the Congress and BJP did nothing to the people. "The leaders from both the parties come to the people during elections and TRS is the only party which is working for the welfare of the people," he said. Stating that Solipeta Sujatha would be the first woman MLA of Dubbak constituency, Harish said that the Congress and BJP ruled states are not giving pensions to Beedi workers.

While participating in an election campaign in Mubaraspur village in Doultabad mandal on Saturday, Harish Rao said that state Congress leaders have no powers and they have to depend on Delhi leaders every time. "The Congress and TDP governments failed to solve the



drinking water problem in the last 70 years," he claimed. The farmers faced lot of troubles during Congress regime and now the BJP is trying to trouble the farmers by installing meters to bore wells.

Harish said that the credit of implementing welfare schemes even during pandemic time

goes to Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao. He said that the previous governments in undivided Andhra Pradesh collected land cess, however, the TRS government is giving investment to help to the farmers. He urged people of Dubbak to cast their vote to the TRS candidate.

## Cong alleges graft in irrigation projects

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on Saturday demanded the state government to conduct a thorough inquiry into the tenders and technical estimates of irrigation projects which took place under the tenure of retired ENC Muralidhar Rao.

He demanded either CBI or Vigilance Department to probe the matter. Addressing the media at Assembly Media Point on Saturday, Bhatti said, "If there is a thorough inquiry into the issue, the people will know as to how the public exchequer was looted. The state government should reveal as to why the state government is still continuing ENC Muralidhar Rao, who retired 7 years ago. The TRS government neglected the irrigation department totally," he alleged. The CLP leader slammed the state govern-



ment for resorting to arrests when the Congress leaders went to Kalwakurthy Lift Irrigation project. "If the state government has done nothing wrong, why it is arresting us? TRS government is working only for contractors," he alleged.

Couple of months ago, there was a fire mishap mishap at Srisailem GENCO and last night at Kalwakurthy Lift Irrigation project, Bhatti alleged. "I don't understand as to why these accidents are taking place one after the other. Why did the cracks appear over there?" he wondered.



## Raja Singh: TRS candidates will lose deposits

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP MLA Raja Singh on Saturday predicted that the ruling TRS party candidates will lose deposits in the upcoming GHMC elections. Addressing the media here, the MLA demanded Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao to console the people in flood-hit areas.

"KT Rama Rao had visited flood-hit areas along with MIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi only for the sake of votes. The TRS candidates will lose their deposits in GHMC elections," he said. "KCR in the Assembly stated that he will construct 'Model Musi', however, the people of Musi catchment area experienced huge losses due to heavy rains," he alleged.

## KCR to launch Dharani on Oct 25: CS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao will launch the much awaited Dharani portal on October 25, marking the auspicious occasion of Dasara. The District Collectors have been directed to ensure complete preparedness in terms of staff and infrastructure prior to the launch, for effectively rendering citizens services through the website.

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar held a video conference with the District Collectors, Additional Collectors, Tahsildars and Naib Tahsildars on Saturday. A detailed presentation was made on the functioning of the Dharani portal. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Secretary said the Dharani website is a most innovative and state-of-the-art online portal which is transparent, accountable, safe, secure and hassle free. He felt that the website will be a revolutionary and trend setting system in the entire nation. "As per the vision of the Chief Minister, the system will ensure absolute transparency and also remove discretionary powers



**Under the new system, the Tahsildars of all the 570 mandals will also function as the joint sub-registrars for registration of agricultural properties, said Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar**

of the officials concerned," he said.

Somesh Kumar added that under the new system, the Tahsildars of all the 570 mandals will also function as the

joint sub-registrars for registration of agricultural properties, while the sub-registrar will conduct registrations of non-agricultural properties through their respective offices in 142

locations across the State. He also stressed that all Tahsildars should conduct at least 10 transactions by Sunday. They have been directed to rise to the occasion and effectively implement the Dharani portal.

The Chief Secretary asked the District Collectors to ensure that hardware facilities for the Dharani portal, are fully functional. He wanted them to regularly convene coordination meetings with power distribution companies, broadband service providers and TSTs representatives, to ensure that there is no interruption to the citizen services.

Inspector General of Stamps and Registration V Sehshadri, Health and Family Welfare Secretary Syed Ali Murtaza Rizvi, SC Development Secretary Rahul Bojja, Tribal Welfare Secretary Christina Zongthu, Commissioner of Commercial Taxes Neetu Prasad, Special Secretary for Finance Ronald Ross, Commissioner of Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Raghunandan Rao, Excise Excise Sarfraz Ahmed, TST's managing director Venkateswar Rao and others attended the conference.

## Uttam blames KCR for KLIS incident, seeks apology

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president N Uttam Kumar Reddy demanded judicial probe into the submergence of the pump house of Mahatma Gandhi Kalwakurthy Lift

Irrigation Scheme at Yellur village in Nagarkurnool district in the rising back waters of Srisailem reservoir.

Addressing a press conference through Zoom App on Saturday, Uttam claimed that the submergence led to an explosion of pumps and the entire pump house was inundated within 20 minutes. He said that the entire incident, resulting in loss of property worth thousands of crores, was a man-made mistake.

Uttam said that the tragedy was completely avoidable. He pointed out that an expert committee, constituted by the present government, had submitted a report on 20th June, 2016 making several recommendations for the safety of pump house.

However, the State Government ignored the recommendations and carried out underground works of Palamuru Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Project within 400-metre radius of KLIS pump house. He said those explosions led to the submergence of the pump house inundating

## Revanth injured during arrest

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC working president and Malkajigiri MP A Revanth Reddy on Saturday sustained injury when the police tried to arrest the latter at Ellur in Nagarkurnool district. The Malkajigiri MP was on his way to visit Kalwakurthy Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) pump house. Revanth Reddy went to visit the pump house along with Congress senior leaders-Mallu Ravi, SA Sampath Kumar, Ch Vamsichand Reddy and others.

However, Telakapally Police arrested Congress leaders in midway and shifted them to Uppunuthala police station. However, Revanth didn't get down from his car for almost an hour. Meanwhile, the Congress activists reached the spot and staged dharna on Nagarkurnool-Achampet road demanding the police to allow their leaders to visit KLIP pump house. However, the police dispersed the Congress activists and a mild jostling took place between Congress leaders and police



leading to tension for some time. In the melee, Revanth Reddy sustained injury on his leg. Revanth alleged that the dictatorial rule is going on in the state. "The opposition party has the responsibility of knowing about the incident. However, the state government is not allowing the opposition leaders," he alleged. According to sources, Kalwakurthy pump house submerged in the water. The accident took place due to underground blasting done for the sake of Palamuru-Rangareddy First Pump House and approach Channel.

10 out of its 14 floors. The TPCC chief said that Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao should accept the responsibility for the entire damage as

he also holds the Irrigation portfolio. He said that the damage was so enormous that it would hit the water supply to the farmers in that Ayacut.

## Rain-hit ryots assured of all support

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Transport Minister P Ajay Kumar has told the farmers who lost crops due to rains not to lose heart and assured all possible help from the State government.

The minister along with Sathupalli MLA Sandra Venkata Veeriah inspected roads, tanks and standing crops damaged due to rains in Sathupalli, Vemsoor mandals in Khammam district on Saturday.

Ajay Kumar noted that every farmer who suffered loss due to cyclonic rains would be helped by the government. He said the irrigation and roads and buildings officials were already told to take up works to repair damaged canals, tanks and roads in the district.

He said Sathupalli mandal has received a record rainfall of 18.6 cm rainfall and Vemsoor recorded 17.8cm rainfall on Oct 13 which was the highest

rain recorded in the district in this season. As a result widespread was caused in the Sathupalli Assembly segment. Ajay Kumar informed that the agriculture and revenue officials were already told to start crop loss assessment. As soon as the loss reports were submitted to the government steps towards paying compensation to the affected farmers would be taken.

He further said arrangements for paddy and cotton procurement were underway. About 438 centres would be set up for paddy procurement while 13 centres were being established by the Cotton Corporation of India for cotton procurement. The number of sectors increased to eight. Ajay Kumar inspected Bethupalli tank left canal and feeder channels in Sathupalli, low level causeway at Adasarlpadu village, tanks and irrigation canals in Vemsoor damaged due to recent rains.

## TS reports 1,451 new Covid cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana registered 1,451 new Coronavirus cases, taking the state's tally to 2.2 lakh, even as 1,983 more patients recovered from the infection, officials said on Saturday. Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) area accounted for the highest 235 new cases in the past 24 hours, followed by Rangareddy district at 104, Medchal Malkajigiri at 101, Bhadradi



Kothagudem at 92, Nalgonda at 84 and Khammam at 71.

Other districts where new cases were reported include

Karimnagar (65), Siddipet (64), Warangal Urban (55), Suryapet (37), Nizamabad (32), Rajanna Sircilla (30), Jagtial (29), Peddapalli (28), Medak (25), Nirmal and Wanaparty (24 each), Vikarabad and Nagarkurnool (22 each). However, nine more patients died, raising the statewide COVID death toll to 1,265. In all, 55 per cent patients died due to comorbidities and 45 per cent due to Covid alone.

## Srisailem project gates lifted as inflows rise

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Officials of Srisailem project lifted 10 gates of the project to a height of 33 feet to discharge 6.50 lakh cusecs through the project's spillway in to Nagarjuna Sagar Project.

The project is receiving heavy inflows on account of heavy rains in the upper reaches of the project in Karnataka and on account of discharging flood water into Jurala and Tungabhadra projects. The project officials have been discharging the flood water after producing hydel power through the right and left canal bank power houses. As a precautionary measure, three feet of water was discharged from the project. The FRL of the project is put at 885 feet. As against the FRL, the water level in the project reads as



882.3 feet. Meanwhile, the NSP has received an inflow of 5.28 lakh cusecs of water as on Saturday morning. The officials have lift the 18 crest gates of the project up to a height of 10 feet to discharge 4.91 lakh cusecs from the project. The discharge of flood water is put at 29,063 cusecs through the main hydel power station of the project and 3575 cusecs

through the power house of the project. Against the 590 FRL of the project, water level measured in it is put at 588.8 cusecs. Meanwhile, farmers protested at Nagireddipet mandal demanding that water from Nizamsagar project be released to save the submerged paddy crop in Nizamsagar backwaters at Nagireddipet and Yellareddy mandals.

## Theatre operators adopt wait and watch approach

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In spite of the Centre giving its nod to open cinema theatres across the country, the theatres in the state did not open as the state government has to issue orders locally giving permission to resume activity. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting had released an extensive list of SOPs including model seating arrangement and staggered show timings for the same. However, the exhibitors are also not keen to open the theatres pending resolution of their demands by the state government.

They have been demanding deferment of payment of electricity charges for the lockdown period, increase in the maintenance costs of theatres, permission to collect parking fees in single theatres among other things. The exhibitors association has decided to go ahead with the resuming of exhibition of cinemas only after a clear



picture emerges on these issues.

However, are Hyderabadis running to the theatres just yet? In the run up to the Dasara weekend, the big movie producers are choosing to play the wait-and-watch game, even as the multiplex and single theatre owners try to cut their losses. The jury is still out on whether to book the movie ticket. Many hard-core movie goers cannot wait to watch their stars on the big screen again. However, other movie enthusiasts want to wait out the pandemic

before they feel confident to venture into a movie hall again. Karnataka, Gujarat, Bengal, UP, Bihar, Delhi and some other states have resumed exhibition of cinemas from October 14. The Telangana Cinema Exhibitors' association secretary Govindraj has exuded confidence that the state government will respond on the association's demands as early as possible.

It may be recalled that cinema halls in several parts of the country reopened earlier this

**It may be recalled that cinema halls in several parts of the country reopened earlier this week after seven months in the shadow of the pandemic**

week after seven months in the shadow of the pandemic. Theatres and multiplexes, closed since March because of the coronavirus crisis, recently allowed to resume operations as per guidelines issued under Unlock 5. Fifty per cent occupancy, staggered show timings, social distancing, thermal screening, adequate protection gear for the staff, and com-

pulsorily providing phone numbers for "contact tracing" are some of the changes moviegoers will see.

At the food and beverages section, all food will be sterilised under UV rays in a machine for eight minutes before being handed over to the customer. Popcorn containers will completely be covered with paper lids. Despite the extra arrangements, the cinema hall officials claimed that prices of tickets and food will remain the same as pre-COVID rates. A recap of Covid-safety norms and punishment, in case they are not observed, would become a part of the customary pre-and-post-show advertisements. Floor and seat markers for social distancing, thermal scanning and "respiratory etiquettes" are among the changes patrons will have to bear in mind after they are allowed entry on being cleared as "asymptomatic".



INDIA CORNER

AIMPLB will work towards building public opinion

**Lucknow:** The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) will work towards building public opinion against a uniform civil code, saying in a country like India with different cultures and civilisations such a move "will not be justified". A decision to this effect was taken in the executive meeting of the board held virtually a few days ago. AIMPLB member Zafaryab Jilani told PTI on Saturday that "important decisions pertaining to common civil code and the Babri mosque demolition case" were taken in the meeting on October 11 and October 13. "The board members are of the view that in the agenda of the ruling BJP, now only common civil code is left, and they will proceed in this direction," he said. Jilani said that the board will establish contact with different sections of the society, which could be affected in case the common civil code is implemented, and try to build a consensus and public opinion against it.

Govt effectively responding to flood situation, says CM

**Mysuru:** The Karnataka government was effectively responding to the havoc caused by heavy rains and floods successively battering the state, with relief and rescue work on in affected areas and was confident of revival of the economy, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa said here on Saturday. "Several districts of north Karnataka have been affected by floods and I assure the people there that the government is with them. Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to me last night and took stock of the situation. He has assured all necessary assistance from the centre," he said. Speaking at the inaugural of the Dasara festivities, Yediyurappa said he has reviewed the situation with Deputy Commissioners of flood hit districts and Minister R Ashoka was touring the regions.

‘Peace, tranquillity along LAC deeply disturbed’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday said peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is "deeply disturbed" and this is obviously impacting the overall relationship between India and China. Jaishankar made these comments against the backdrop of the over five-month-long border standoff between India and China in eastern Ladakh where each side has deployed over 50,000 troops. The Sino-India boundary question a very "complicated" and difficult issue, he said at a webinar on his book The India Way', giving a historical perspective to development of the relationship between the two neighbouring countries in the last three decades.



The external affairs minister said the relationship between India and China, which was "very difficult", was normalised since late 1980s through a plethora of initiatives like trade, travel, tourism, and societal activities on the premise of peace and tranquillity along the border.

"It is not our position that we should solve the boundary question. We understand that it is a very complicated and difficult issue. There have been many negotiations at different levels... That is a very high bar for a relationship," Jaishankar said.

"I am talking about a much more basic bar which is that there must be peace and tranquillity along the LAC in the border areas and that has been the case since the late 1980s," he added. "Now, if peace and tranquillity is deeply disturbed, then obviously there will be an impact on the relationship and that is what we are seeing," he said referring to the border situation in eastern Ladakh. Jaishankar said both China and India are rising and assuming "bigger" role in the world, but the "big question" is how the two countries find an "equilibrium". "That is the basic case I addressed in my book," the minister said, adding he completed the manuscript of the book in April, before the border row erupted in eastern Ladakh.

Rape case filed against actor's son

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Police have registered a case against veteran actor Mithun Chakraborty's son Mahaakshay and the former's wife Yogita Bali on a complaint of rape and cheating filed by a woman, an official said on Saturday. The case was registered at Oshiwara police station on Thursday night based on the complaint lodged by the 38-year-old woman, he said. "The complainant said she was in a relationship with Mahaakshay Chakraborty from 2015 to 2018 and during that period he had promised to marry her," the official said. "The woman said that during their relationship, she had gone to see Mahaakshay's flat at Adarsh Nagar in Andheri West, which he had purchased in 2015. She said when she went there, the accused offered her a spiked soft drink and forced her to have physical relations with him," he added. "The woman alleged that



when she became pregnant, Mahaakshay asked her to abort the baby and gave her pills," he said. "The woman said she used to ask Mahaakshay about their marriage. But in January 2018, he told her that he cannot marry her, which led to an altercation between them. She said when she called him, his mother Yogita Bali threatened her," the official said. The complainant later went to Delhi with her brother to stay with their family friend.

There, she lodged a complaint against Mahaakshay and his mother Yogita Bali at Begumpur police station in June 2018, he added. The police had registered an offence under section 376 (rape), 313 (causing miscarriage without woman's consent) and others, and the probe was transferred to the crime branch there. A Delhi court later granted anticipatory bail to Mahaakshay and his mother in the case.



Notification to shut govt-run madrasahs: Assam minister

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

All government-run madrasahs and Sanskrit tols will be closed in Assam and a notification to this effect will be issued in November, Education Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Saturday. The Madrasa Education Board will be dissolved and all state-run madrasahs will be converted into high schools and new admissions will be held for all as regular students, the minister said addressing a press conference here. "The final year students will be allowed to pass out but henceforth all taking admission in these schools will have to study as regular students," he said. The Sanskrit tols (institutes) will be handed over to the Kumar Bhaskarvarma Sanskrit University and these will be converted into centres of learning and research where Indian culture, civilisation and nationalism will be studied, the minister said. "This step has been taken by the government to ensure that students get regular education under the SEBA," he said. The examinations of the madrasahs and the tols are different with students not appearing for the matriculation examination conducted by the SEBA, he said.

New farm laws an attack on soul of every farmer: Rahul

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday stepped up his attack on the central government over the recently enacted farm laws, and said these are a blatant attack on the soul of every farmer and that such legislations "weaken" the country's foundation. "These three laws are an attack on the soul of every farmer of this country, they are an attack on their sweat and blood. And farmers and labourers of this country understand this," he said. Referring to his "tractor rallies" against the laws during his recent visit to Punjab and Haryana, Gandhi said, "I came to Punjab and Haryana a few days ago and every farmer and labourer know that these three laws are an attack on them."

He said he was happy that the Punjab government has decided to convene a special session of the Assembly on these laws on October 19 where MLAs will "decide about these farm laws". Gandhi was delivering a virtual address at the launch of the second phase of 'Smart Village Campaign' in Punjab. Rs 2,663 crore has been allocated to execute approximately 50,000 different development works under the campaign. Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, some of his cabinet colleagues were among those present at the virtual launch. Hitting out at the BJP-led central government over the farm laws, Gandhi said, "If we weaken country's foundation, India will be weakened."

"When Congress party fights, we do that to protect and strengthen the foundation. This is the difference between us and the central government.

They talk of the building, but they thrust schemes from the top without talking to the panchayat and the people and their laws weaken India's foundation," he said. "If these laws were in favour of farmers and labourers, then why did the government not allow a debate before these were passed in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha? Why were they afraid of a debate? Entire country would have seen the debate and decided if these laws are for farmers' benefit," he said. "But in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, voice of India's farmers was suppressed. I am happy that in Punjab assembly, farmers, labourers' voice will be heard in the special session," said Gandhi. The three farm bills -- the Farmer's 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 -- were passed by Parliament recently. Subsequently, President Ram Nath Kovind gave his assent to the bills. The Congress, many other opposition parties and several farmers organisations have been protesting against these

legislations, claiming that these will harm the interests of farmers and benefit corporates, a claim denied by the government. The Centre has asserted that these new laws will be beneficial for farmers and will increase their income. Gandhi said the Centre had launched an assault on Punjab and its farmers with these ill-conceived laws. "Every building has a foundation. If that weakens the building falls. If Vidhan Sabha is the building, Panchayats and Sarpanches are the foundation. If we have to develop Punjab or India, we have to protect the building and the foundation," he said, adding that the smart village campaign was aimed at that. Representatives of all the Punjab village panchayats participated in the virtual launch programme. "When Congress runs a programme, be it MNREGA, Right to Food Act or rural infrastructure programme, we run it through medium of panchayats... because we know if we involve panchayats, programmes can run effectively. If we trust our programmes from the top without involving panchayats and area MLAs, it is bound to fail because it won't involve people," he said.

Grand Alliance promises jobs to youths

PNS ■ PATNA

The RJD-led Grand Alliance (GA) on Saturday released its joint manifesto for the upcoming Bihar assembly elections, promising to offer jobs to 10 lakh youngsters and repealing the new farm laws recently enacted by the central government if they are voted to power. Releasing the manifesto titled "Badlav Ka Sankalp" (commitment to change) in the presence of All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala and other Mahagathbandhan leaders,

Tejashwi Yadav said their government, if elected, would first approve the process for appointments on about 10 lakh jobs in the government. "Contractual teachers would be entitled for same pay for same work, for which they have been agitating for long," said Yadav, who is the opposition chief ministerial candidate. Assuring the people that the coalition will stand by its commitments, Yadav said that they were not leaders who conveniently forget their promises and that the state has still not been accorded a special status -- a demand echoed

for years by political parties in Bihar. "(Donald) Trump will not come to accord special status to Bihar, which was once promised by the Prime Minister," said Yadav, in an apparent reference to Prime Minister Narendra Modis ties with the US President. Kumar has raised the issue of granting special status to the land-locked Bihar several times, both during the Congress-led UPA and the BJP-helmed NDA- which could bring investment into the state by providing concessions in taxes to prospective indus-

tries. Surjewala said that the first assembly sitting of the GA government would see annulment of the three controversial farm acts that, he alleged, defeat the objectives of green revolution in the state. Nitish Kumar government was the first in the country to do away with the APMC (Agriculture Produce Market Committee) Act in 2006. "If we form the government, under the leadership of Tejashwi Yadav, we will pass a Bill in the first Vidhan Sabha session to scrap the three anti-farm laws.

Durga Puja committee to install gaint TV screens

PNS ■ KOLKATA

A big-budget Durga Puja committee in the city will adorn the idols of Goddess Durga and her progeny with 25 kg gold and to avoid crowding inside the pandal would install giant TV screens on roads so that revellers can watch the decoration and the idol. The idols of Sribhumi Sporting Club will be wearing



golden crown, golden chain and the golden jewellery, state Fire minister Sujit Bose, the livewire behind the puja told

PTI. Basu said while the puja will shun its usual lustre due to Covid, but there will be no scaling down of the idol's height. "We will ensure visitors do not crowd inside the pandal and will control the crowd in case there is the hint of gathering. We will ask them to see the pandal on the TV screens put up near the marquee," the senior Trinamool Congress leader said.

Pak violates ceasefire along Intl Border in JK

PNS ■ JAMMU

The Pakistan Rangers violated ceasefire overnight by resorting to unprovoked firing on forward posts and villages along the IB in Kathua district of J&K, officials said. The firing in the Pansar-Manyari area started around 9.15 PM Friday and continued through the night, forcing the residents to take shelter in the bunkers.

‘Activists under detention for their words’

PNS ■ PUNE

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Saturday said a large number of people, including activists Varavara Rao, Sudha Bharadwaj and Anand Teltumbde, are under detention for their words, although none of them is accused of hitting anyone or possessing a gun. He also said that words and ideas may outlast power and

authority. The Thiruvananthapuram MP and author of several books was speaking at the Symbiosis International University Literary Festival via video-conferencing. "When I was in school, I learnt that the pen is mightier than the sword. Today, I have seen our country, its politics and its discourse. I am no longer convinced it is," he said. "I am sorry to say, but

words and ideas may outlast power and authority. Power and authority in the short term can crush the words," the Congress leader said. "We have seen that a large number of people are under detention for words they have expressed. Currently, people like Varavara Rao, Vernon Gonsalves, Sudha Bharadwaj and Anand Teltumbde are under detention for their words.

Those accused in the killing of a 46-year-old man at a meeting attended by senior administration and police officials here will be charged under the National Security Act and the Gangster Act, police said on Saturday, as the hunt continued for the local BJP leader who allegedly shot the man dead. Eight people have been named accused in the incident on Thursday. While police is on the lookout for six people, including local BJP leader Dharendra Pratap Singh, two have been arrested.

Police have also detained five others. Besides the eight accused, the FIR in the case mentions 20-25 unnamed accused. DIG (Azamgarh Range) Subhash Chandra Dubey has announced a cash reward of Rs 50,000 on information leading to the arrest of each of the accused. Dubey said, "A cash reward of Rs 50,000 has been announced on each of the absconding accused."

Action will also be initiated under the National Security Act (NSA) and the Gangster Act against the accused. Under the NSA, one can be detained without a charge for up to 12 months if the authorities are satisfied that the person is a threat to national security or law and order.

Family refuses to conduct last rites of Shaurya Chakra awardee

PNS ■ AMRITSAR

The family members of Shaurya Chakra awardee Balwinder Singh Sandhu, who was shot dead by two unknown assailants in Punjab's Tarn Taran district, have refused to cremate the body unless the accused are arrested. The 62-year-old Sandhu who fought terrorism in Punjab was shot dead in the district on Friday, months after the government withdrew his security cover. The motorcycle-borne men pumped four bullets into him when he was at his office adjoining his home at

Bhikhiwind. Sandhu's wife Jagdish Kaur Sandhu, told reporters, "The family would not cremate him unless the killers are arrested." She also demanded security cover for her family. "All the family members -- I, my late husband, his brother Ranjit Singh Sandhu and his wife Balraj Kaur Sandhu -- are Shaurya Chakra awardees and this award was given by the Centre for our fight against militancy." "Both the state and Central governments are accountable for the intelligence failure that resulted in the killing of my husband at the hands of terrorists," Sandhu's wife said.

MP urges Centre to raise Mizo regiment to guard borders

PNS ■ AIZAWL

Mizoram's lone Rajya Sabha member K Vanlalvena has urged the Centre to raise a Mizo regiment in the Army or a paramilitary force Mizoram Rifles to guard the state's international borders with Bangladesh and Myanmar. The lawmaker, who is currently camping in Delhi, has recently met Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and urged him to initiate steps in this regard, a statement said on Friday. Vanlalvena said Mizos had resisted British rule and two



Mizo chiefs Dokulha Chinzah and Ropuiliiani had spent a large part of their lives in prisons. He told Singh that raising an

army regiment or a paramilitary force to guard Mizoram's borders with Bangladesh and Myanmar will not only solve local unemployment issues but

also boost national security. "Mizo youths, with their inborn fighting spirit and strong desire to join security forces, can make the best army regiment or paramilitary force in the country," Vanlalvena said. During last year's agitation against the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Union Home Minister Amit Shah had promised NGOs leaders from Mizoram that the Centre will raise a CRPF battalion comprising Mizo youths, according to a Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA) leader.

PM to deliver keynote address at Grand Challenges Meeting

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will deliver the keynote address at the inaugural function of Grand Challenges Annual Meeting on Monday evening via video conferencing. The Grand Challenges Annual Meeting, for the last 15 years, has fostered international innovation collaborations to address the biggest challenges in health and development, the Prime Minister's Office noted in a statement on Saturday. It said the Grand Challenges Annual Meeting will convene this year virtually from October 19 to 21, bringing together policymakers and

science leaders. It will call for deepened scientific collaborations in solving global health problems with great emphasis on COVID-19 with an "India for the World" framing, the statement said. The Grand Challenges Annual Meeting 2020 will be co-hosted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, the Indian Council of Medical Research and NITI Aayog, along with the Grand Challenges Canada, the United States Agency for International Development and Wellcome, it said.



# COVID-19 has resulted in largest global economic contraction in 80 years: IMF

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund said the global economic contraction caused by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic is the largest in the last eight decades, raising the world poverty rate, exacerbating inequalities and damaging long-term economic growth prospects.

The WB and IMF concluded their annual meeting here on Friday, which heavily revolved around the impact of COVID-19.

"The pandemic has resulted in the largest global economic contraction of the last eight decades: it is impacting developing, emerging and developed economies; increasing the global poverty rate; exacerbating inequalities; and damaging long-term economic growth prospects," according to a joint-ministerial communique issued by the two UN-backed institutions.



The associated lockdowns, restrictions and continued uncertainty have caused investments, trade, and remittance flows to plummet, eroded jobs and human capital, kept children out of school, and pressured food and medical supply chains, it said.

The monetary institutions warned that the humanitarian crisis can further exacerbate fragility, conflict, and violence

as well as intensify risks, including in small island states.

The economic crisis is threatening the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable populations, including women-led households, youth and the elderly, refugees and displaced people.

It is also widening gender gaps and jeopardising hard-won development gains and prospects for girls and children

**The economic crisis is threatening the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable populations, including women-led households, youth and the elderly, refugees and displaced people**

overall, it said.

Commending the World Bank for the speed and scale of its COVID-19 response across countries, the joint communique said that the bank is supporting countries' efforts to strengthen health systems and should continue to do so.

Early this week, the bank had announced a USD12 billion financial incentive to fund a COVID19 vaccine.

Noting that in the restructuring and recovery stages of the COVID-19 response, the bank and the IMF will need to help countries rebuild better, focusing on promoting the building

blocks for an inclusive and sustainable recovery, ensuring affordable energy access and energy security, and addressing the challenges to economic and environmental vulnerabilities, including climate change, the communique said that they look forward to the upcoming Climate Change Action Plan.

To accelerate a resilient recovery centered on jobs and economic transformation, the communique asked the World Bank to provide the knowledge, policy advice, and financial support to help countries strengthen social safety nets

and facilitate the movement of capital and labour toward sectors that will be productive and sustainable in the post-pandemic context, while also providing the innovation needed to open up trade finance for SMEs and confront the challenges of informality.

The joint communique urged the World Bank to support the mobilisation and crowding in of private capital and finance, to create markets and promote investments and quality infrastructure for a broad-based recovery and long-term development.

Supporting the extension of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) by six months and to examine, by the time of the 2021 Spring Meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the joint communique said that all official bilateral creditors should implement this initiative fully and in a transparent manner.



## FT MF's schemes generate Rs 8k-cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund has said its six shut schemes have received Rs 8,302 crore from maturities, pre-payments and coupon payments since closing down in April.

Franklin Templeton MF shut six debt mutual fund schemes on April 23, citing redemption pressures and lack of liquidity in the bond market.

"The six schemes have received total cash flows of Rs 8,302 crore as of October 15, 2020 from maturities, pre-payments and coupon payments since April 24, 2020," Franklin Templeton MF said in a statement.

Part of this amount has been utilised to repay borrowings and post repayment, Rs 5,116 crore is available for distribution to unitholders in four cash positive schemes -- Franklin India Ultra Short Bond Fund, Franklin India Dynamic Accrual Fund, Franklin India Low Duration Fund, Franklin India Credit Risk Fund have 40 per cent, 19 per cent, 19 per cent and 4 per cent of their respective assets under management (AUM) available in cash to distribute to unitholders, it said.

This is subject to a successful unitholder vote, the fund house added.

The fund house reiterated that the cash flows received so far are without the ability to efficiently monetise assets, which will only be possible after successfully completing the e-voting process.

It further said the court has completed hearing the arguments on matters related to the six schemes under winding-up and the fund house is now awaiting the judgement from the court.

"Our focus remains on the important task of generating maximum value and returning your monies at the earliest possible time in accordance with the applicable regulations, subject to the decision of the Karnataka High Court," the fund house said.

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## Govt issues notices to Flipkart, Amazon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a crackdown on e-commerce companies, the government on Friday issued notices to e-commerce majors Flipkart and Amazon for not mandatorily displaying information, including country of origin, about products sold on their platforms.

The notices have been issued by the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.

While notices have been issued to Amazon and Flipkart, the department has asked the states to ensure compliance of rules by all e-commerce companies. The two companies did not comment on the issue of notices. The department has asked all e-commerce entities for ensuring compliance of



Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules.

Both the companies have been asked to reply within 15 days. "It has been brought into notice that some of the e-commerce entities are not displaying the mandatory declaration on digital platforms required under the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011,"

the notice said.

In almost similar worded notices, the department said that Flipkart India Pvt Ltd and Amazon Development Centre India Pvt Ltd are e-commerce entities and therefore, they have to ensure that all mandatory declarations be displayed on the digital and electronic network used for e-commerce transactions.

The two companies, as per the notices, have "not provided the mandatory declaration and contravened" the Legal Metrology Act.

Referring to advertisements made by the entities on their respective websites, the notices said that "on examination" of the advertisements "it was found that the mandatory declarations are not mentioned" as per the rules.

The Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules provides that an e-commerce entity has to ensure that the mandatory declarations (including the country of origin), except the month and year in which the commodity is manufactured or packed, "shall be displayed on the digital and electronic network used for e-commerce transactions".

## Zydus Cadila gets USFDA nod for drugs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drug firm Zydus Cadila on Saturday said it has received approval from the US health regulator to market Ursodiol capsules, used to treat primary biliary cirrhosis, in America.

The company has received final approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) for the medication in 300 mg strength, Zydus Cadila said in a statement. Ursodiol is in a class of medications called gallstone dissolution agents. It is used to treat people with primary biliary cirrhosis, an autoimmune liver disease.

## Public warned against mischievous activities of MSME Export Council

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The MSME ministry on Saturday warned the public not to fall prey to "unauthorised" and "ill-intentioned" activities of MSME Export Promotion Council and clarified that it is not associated with the organisation in any way.

The Ministry of MSME issued a clarification in this

regard alerting the public after taking strong note "of mischievous activities of this organisation projecting itself as part of the MSME ministry". The ministry said it is noticed that certain messages are being circulated in media and social media regarding issuance of appointment letter to the post of 'director' by the MSME Export Promotion Council.

"It is hereby clarified that Ministry of MSME is not associated with the MSME Export Promotion Council in any way. Also, the Ministry of MSME has not authorised any posting or appointment to any post related with this council. The public is informed and advised not to fall prey to such messages or such elements," an official statement said.

## Need to take long-term perspective on debt sustainability: WB President

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

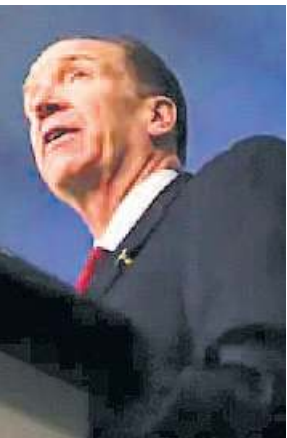
There is need to take a longer-term perspective on debt sustainability, World Bank President David Malpass said on Friday as he sought to consider debt stock reduction to address looming debt crisis.

"I think we need to take a longer-term perspective on debt sustainability," Malpass said in the intervention of Development Committee meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

At his request early this year, the G-20 has endorsed a temporary suspension of debt service, which has resulted in 43 of the world's poorest countries benefitting from an estimated USD5 billion in debt service suspension from official bilateral creditors.

In addition, the World Bank had announced a 150 billion in surge financing. Much of it is for the poorest countries and will take the form of grants or low-rate, long-maturity loans.

"The Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) has



helped us make significant progress on debt transparency, which is critical for increasing high-quality investment," he said.

Looking beyond the DSSI, one must consider debt stock reduction, he said.

"Otherwise there's no light at the end of the debt tunnel for the people in the debtor countries," he added. "The crisis-related lending operations supported by our institutions have put heavy emphasis on short-term financial flows. Those address liquidity needs

but not the solvency crisis facing the world's poor," Malpass said.

For example, reprofiling debt payments addresses liquidity but not solvency. There is a need to strengthen the IMF/WB Debt Sustainability Analyses to use a longer window, he said.

This concern about the debt overhang also applies to the G-20 discussion of a common framework on debt treatment, he said. "It's important that the framework not just kick the can. Given the urgency of the debt crisis, it's urgent to make rapid progress toward debt stock reduction, because debt burdens are crushing recovery and reversing decades of progress on poverty reduction," Malpass said.

Malpass also welcomed the public call of several European shareholders, including Ministers of Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Spain and Sweden for "the WB and the IMF to deliver a coherent approach to debt restructuring that helps address the looming debt crisis.

### INDIA CORNER

#### Gems, jewellery exports may dip 20-25 pc; growth expected by FY22

The gems and jewellery export is expected to decline by 20-25 per cent this fiscal year compared to 2019-20 due to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, GJEPC said on Saturday. During 2019-20, the exports stood at Rs 2,52,249.46



crore, according to data provided by the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council of India (GJEPC). "We expect the exports to witness a decline of 20 25 per cent in 2020-21, compared with last year. With demand improving gradually, we should be at our 2019-20 levels next year. Growth will come back only maybe by 2021-22," GJEPC chairman Colin Shah said at the virtual press conference about the closing of 5-day Virtual India International Jewellery Show (IJS).

#### Government approves 14th tranche of electoral bonds

Ahead of the Bihar election, the government on Friday approved the 14th tranche of electoral bonds which will be open for sale between October 19 to October 28.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) accorded 'no objection' from the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) angle on October 15 with certain conditions, a finance ministry statement said. As per the ECI, "no political functionary shall make any reference in this regard during any public speech or communication to the press or public in the constituencies going for poll; and the relevant provisions of Model Code of Conduct issued by the Election Commission shall be strictly followed." The three-phased Bihar election will be held on October 28, November 3 and November 7. Counting of votes will take place on November 10.



#### Bank of Baroda inks pact with Mahindra & Mahindra for finance

To push agriculture finance, state-owned Bank of Baroda (BoB) on Friday said it has entered into a pact with Mahindra and Mahindra for tractor finance business. The lender, through its over 5,000 rural and semi-urban branch network, will provide tractor loan facility to customers of Mahindra and Mahindra. This memorandum of understanding (MoU) will give a boost to agri business and will help farmers in availing hassle-free credit facilities for buying tractors. BoB Executive Director Vikramaditya Singh Khichi said. The tractor financing scheme was first piloted in the UP zone for a year and it has been successful, he said adding that this is being expanded into 11 zones of the bank. The bank has tied up with Gromax under the Mahindra stable as the preferred brand, he added. Besides, he said, the bank is focussing on dairy sector self-help groups and farmer producer organisations for expanding the agriculture finance portfolio.

#### Digital media, news aggregators need to comply with 26pc FDI cap

News aggregators, news agencies which supply information to digital media firms and companies uploading news and current affairs on websites will have to comply with the 26 per cent foreign investment cap, the government said on Friday.



These companies "would be required to align their FDI to the 26 per cent level with the approval of the central government, within one year from the date of issue of this clarification", the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) said. In August last year, the Union Cabinet approved 26 per cent FDI (foreign direct investment) under government route for uploading/streaming of news and current affairs through digital media, on the lines of print media. A section of industry players and experts had stated that the move to cap FDI in digital media sector to 26 per cent throws up questions that need clarifications.

## FAO, IFAD and WFP stressed on Building Resilient Food Systems

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Against the backdrop of the Corona virus pandemic that has challenged lives, livelihoods and economics, the three UN food agencies called for an unprecedented response by way of collaboration and partnership to continue the fight against food and nutrition insecurity. Speaking at an online event to mark the World Food Day,

representatives - Tomio Shichiri, FAO; Meera Mishra, Country Coordinator, IFAD; and Bishop Parajuli, WFP Representative and Country Director - stressed on the need for 'Building Sustainable Food Systems'. The event was organized in partnership with Josh Talks - one of India's largest and fastest growing impact story telling platform.

All speakers emphasised the call to 'grow, nourish, sustain,

together" to collectively address challenges the food systems have faced since the onslaught of the pandemic.

Tomio Shichiri - FAO Representative in India said, "Food is the essence of life and the bedrock of our cultures. FAO is working with government, training institutions and other stakeholders to establish an enabling environment for nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems policies.

## DST restructures FIST programme to cater to tech needs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

New Delhi, Oct 17 (PTI) The Department of Science and Technology said on Saturday it is restructuring its Fund for Improvement of Science and Technology Infrastructure in Universities and Higher Educational Institutions (FIST) to cater to high-end requirements of startups and industries and align it with the government's 'self-reliant India' campaign.

The FIST programme will now be reinvented as FIST 2.0 to orient it towards the goal of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' to create research and development infrastructure not only for experimental work but also to cater to theoretical work, ideas and entrepreneurship, said Sanjay Dhande, the chairper-



son of the FIST Advisory Board.

This will create a new paradigm for FIST 2.0, he added.

"The Department of Science and Technology (DST) is restructuring its FIST programme under which it supports scaling up of the network

of infrastructural facilities for teaching and research in universities and higher educational institutions to cater to high-end S&T infrastructural requirements of start-ups and industries," the department said in a statement.

It will also link up pro-

**The FIST programme will now be reinvented as FIST 2.0 to orient it towards the goal of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' to create research and development infrastructure not only for experimental work but also to cater to theoretical work, ideas and entrepreneurship**

grammes like FIST, Sophisticated Analytical Instrument Facilities (SAIF), and Sophisticated Analytical & Technical Help Institutes (SATHI), all of which are designed to set up science and technology infrastructure centres at department, university, regional and national level, it said.

While on an average of about 8,500 researchers use these facilities in centres spread all over India, industries and start-ups involved in research

and development, technology and product development have to carry out most high-end experiments and testing of technologies from laboratories outside India.

This is because they prefer not to buy equipment and infrastructure which are of limited usage to them and they cannot access most of the high-end science and technology infrastructure set up in the universities and institutions, the statement said.



## The birdman of Assam



ANWARUDDIN CHOUDHURY  
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD  
ASSAM

He is an ornithologist, mammalogist, an artist, avid photographer and an author. He is also the honorary Chief Executive of the Rhino Foundation for Nature in North-east India and was Deputy Commissioner of Baksa and Lakhimpur districts in Assam. He retired as Divisional Commissioner of Barak valley, Development Commissioner for Hill Areas and Commissioner and Secretary to the Government of Assam last year.

If this was not enough to add to his list of accomplishments, Choudhury is a member of as many as nine IUCN/SSC/BLI specialist groups. Due to his work, at least 12 wildlife sanctuaries and two elephant reserves have been established. He was also instrumental in upgrading Dibru-Saikhowa into a national park, inclusion of Laokhowa and Burhachapori Sanctuaries in Kaziranga Tiger Reserve.

Known as the Birdman of Assam, he was the first to produce books on the birds of different Northeastern State. His studies have contributed enormously to the conservation and awareness in the region.

“I was born and brought up in Nagaland. Back then it was a part of Assam. But later, I ended up finishing my schooling and college from Guwahati. I was always interested in Nature and the diverse wildlife this region has to offer. I used to draw birds from the region which later turned into a scientific study. But I also wanted to be a Civil Servant and hence took the UPSC exam and got selected. As a Government official one can do so much good and that is what I did,” Choudhury says.

He tells you how as an officer in the region he was able to do so much for the conservation of wildlife and get the files moving at a fast pace. Though he agrees that it is not always easy to get things done but since he was an officer, doors that were difficult to open, were wide open for him.

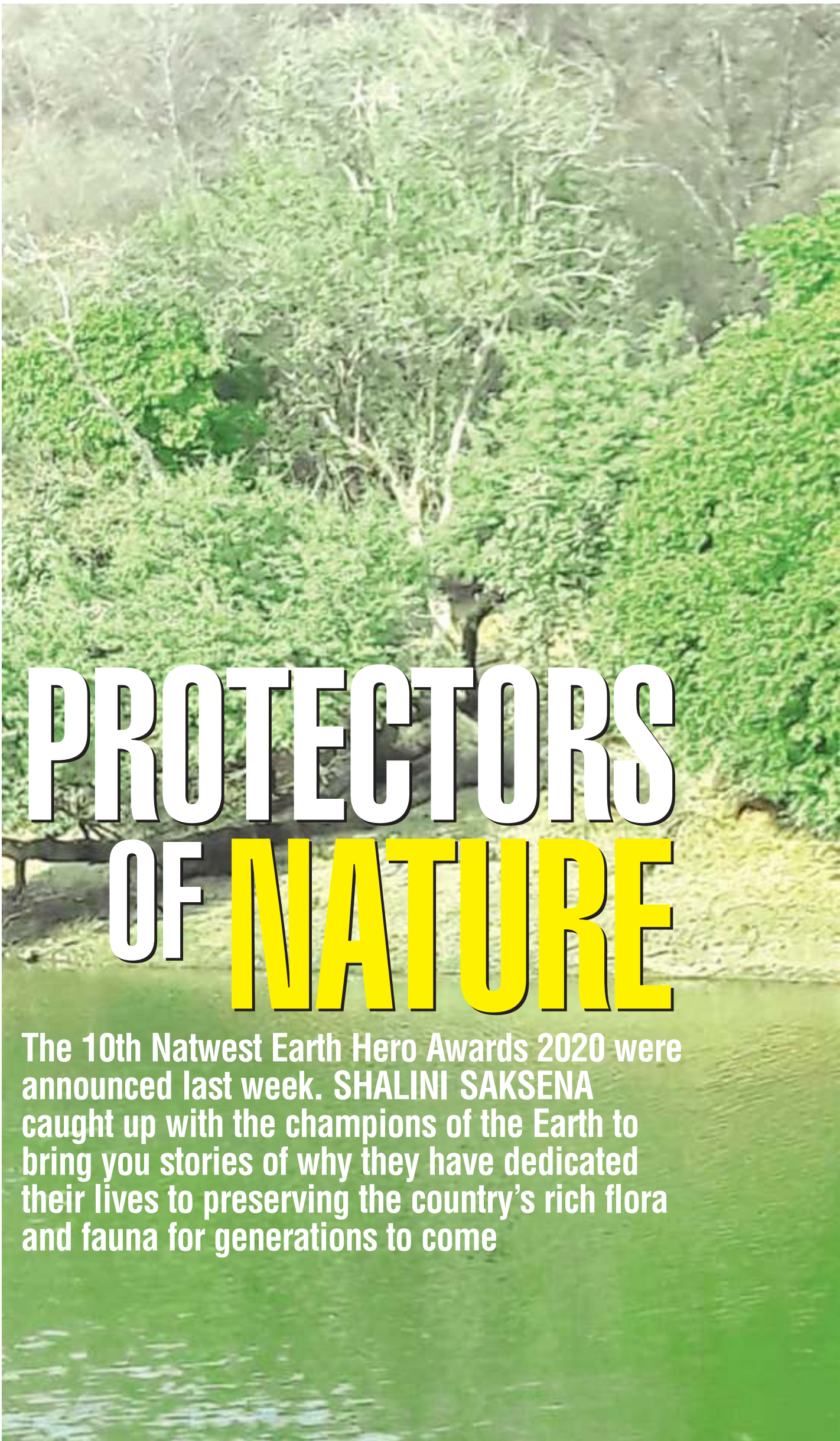
“Of course, I could sanction my own recommendations. Once I was in the Forest Department, we didn’t have to coordinate with other departments but where required, it was easy if you take personal interest. Instead of sending the file, I would take it myself to my colleagues. Once I got talking about Nature, people got interested too. This made it possible for me to a lot when it came to conservation,” Choudhury says.

He tells you that even though it was easy to get paperwork done, it was tough to involve the local communities. But in districts where he had independent charge, he would organise awareness programmes particularly at the *panchayat* level. “I would tell them the importance of conservation,” Choudhury tells you.

Another challenge that the region faces is the loss of wildlife due to floods especially of the Kaziranga. But he explains why flooding in this area is extremely important for the eco-system.

“Without floods, the eco-system would collapse. Some seven-eight decades back, during floods the animals would move to higher ground — Karbi Anglong without any human interference. Slowly, people took over and highways were made and the region became busy restricting the movement of the wildlife. Unfortunately, there is no long-term solution though some higher grounds are being constructed where animals can rest during flooding,” Choudhury explains.

A major part of his work was declaring the white-winged wood duck as the State bird. This bird, one is told is endangered. This was part of Choudhury’s work with the birds in the North-east. In India, there are 1,300 species. Out of which around 1,000 are



# PROTECTORS OF NATURE

The 10th Natwest Earth Hero Awards 2020 were announced last week. SHALINI SAKSENA caught up with the champions of the Earth to bring you stories of why they have dedicated their lives to preserving the country’s rich flora and fauna for generations to come

WITHOUT FLOODS IN KAZIRANGA, THE ECO-SYSTEM WOULD COLLAPSE. SOME SEVEN-EIGHT DECADES BACK, DURING FLOODS ANIMALS MOVED TO KARBI ANGLONG WITHOUT ANY PROBLEMS. SLOWLY, PEOPLE TOOK OVER AND HIGHWAYS WERE MADE AND THE REGION BECAME BUSY RESTRICTING THE MOVEMENT OF WILD ANIMALS

found in this region with Assam topping the charts with 850 species — the highest in any State in the country.

Now that he has retired, he tells you he has more time to write. But during the lockdown, field work was hampered. However, things are back to normal and Choudhury is back to traveling and working towards general conservation.

A specific project that he just finished working on is Amur Falcon, a migratory bird that moves from Assam to South Africa with their breeding place in eastern Siberia. There are two roosting sites in Assam that we observe since lakhs of birds roost here. We had been working on this project for the last three years and last year saw the highest number — three lakh — with the world population standing at 10-12 lakh this was a great achievement,” Choudhury says.

## Eco-tourism key to conservation

ANSHU PRAGYAN DAS  
GREEN WARRIOR AWARD  
ODISHA

She is Deputy Conservator of Forest (Ecotourism), Forest & Environment Department, Odisha. She joined the service in 2007. She has extensively worked in Satkosia Tiger Reserve (STR), Mahanadi Wildlife Division to reduce the depletion of the tiger habitat. She mobilised the local community to create Odisha’s first eco-village — Muduligadia inside STR. The ecotourism project — Satkosia Sands Resort and Nature Camp run by 34 community members has a capacity to accommodate 19 guests and has generated a revenue of ₹3 crore in the last four years.

She tells you that eco-tourism and conservation of wildlife are two sides of the same coin. “One very important threat to wildlife and conservation is human-related pressures. Conservation can bring good results only if there is support from the locals. Eco-tourism is one such area that can help us strengthen economic development in remote areas. It can also bring social wellbeing,” Das explains.

She tells you that it was not easy to involve the locals with the conservation. There was a lot resentment from the locals. Das and her team started working in two areas — punishing the guilty for illegal activities and addressing the long-standing grievances like all-weather road, we provided them electricity and introduced different livelihood alternatives. Gradually, this reduced the reduced their dependency on the forest.

The success story of Satkosia Sands Resort and Nature Camp tells you that when one involves locals, the results can be amazing. So much so that seven-eight villages are no longer dependent on the forest. “Earlier, they were totally dependent on the forest for their firewood needs. We provided LPG. The income from the resort bettered their lives. It has also controlled migration. Locals helped the department set-up antipoaching camps. The protection at the tiger reserve got better. We enrolled women in protection activities. We managed to get good informer network. People have understood that if they work towards conservation their livelihood and lifestyle will improve,” Das says.

Due to the information provided, the department was able to nab an international smuggler of pangolin Shamsuddin Khan in 2018. This would not have been possible without local support. The good part about the revenue generated from the resort is that it goes back to the people who run it. About 80 per cent is distributed as salaries depending on the work they do and how to manage the resort and its upkeep. Part of the money — 10 per cent goes to their community development as eco-villages. There is no plastic, there is no litter outside and no open defecation. The houses are colourful and depict their traditions and cultures. So much so that people visit these villages just to see the houses. The rest 10 per cent goes the Government as revenue. There are 47 such eco-tourism that are under one portal. People can go the website and book wherever they want to stay,” Das says.

She tells you that the duty of a Government servant it is their duty to do their work diligently and honestly wherever they are posted. “Forest and Environment is one department where one gets to do varied work — there is general conservation work, there is eco-tourism and there is working towards saving species from extinction. One can even take up hobbies like photography and writing that I have been doing for the last seven-eight years,” Das says.

Her publications *Avifauna of Satkosia*, *Satkosia Seen and Unseen* and *Birds of Satkosia Landscape* have garnered a lot of attention. Another feather in Das’ cap is her work towards the *gharial* in STR. “Back in 2015, there was only one left in the region. Illegal fishing in the area led to the extinction of this animal here. It lives in deep waters. Satkosia gorge is the only place in Odisha where we find gharial. Below Satkosia, there are no *gharials*. All the earlier release programmes didn’t help because the entire gorge was under the cover of illegal fishermen.

“We apprehended 38 of them and rehabilitated them. We gave some of them jobs in the department and others were given alternatives. Gharials are extremely sensitive to the fishing nets. After the arrests were made, we artificially released a gharial and the numbers went up to eight in 2019. Of course, the success of this rehabilitation is not just mine. I need to thank all my team members for their contribution in ensuring that the gharial thrives here once again,” Das says.

She opines that aim of conservation is to remove illegal activities. Hence, the area became safe for other wildlife as well. This increased tourism. Today, people are not just traveling to see the tiger or eat good food or go shopping. People today are looking for experiential travel. They want to explore new places. Photography is a passion for the young. Then there is biking, hiking and bird watching. One of our projects offer canopy walk. These activities go well with eco-tourism and hence we have seen such large number of travellers. Seeing wildlife is not the aim,” Das says.

He started working on making the area a tourist attraction — Sam being a prime example. “With eco-tourism, it opened doors to alternate job opportunities. The grassland enclosures can be saved as well as GIB’s habitat. But more needs to be done. The money that is earned from eco-tourism should go to the local communities and ensure that the money is spent for their betterment,” Jamara tells you.

He tells you that back in the 80s, the number of this beautiful bird stood at 1,500, unfortunately, the number has dwindled to less than 100 according to 2011 census. However, Jamara’s work has paid off. The Wildlife of India picked up 10 GIB eggs to be artificially hatched in Desert National Park in Rajasthan. All the eggs were picked up from where Jamara has been working tirelessly.

“It is good to see my work been has paid off but there is much to do. I want to thank NatWest as well for the award,” Jamara says.

## ‘SAVING GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD IS MY CALLING NOW’



MALSINGH JAMARA  
SAVE THE SPECIES AWARD  
RAJASTHAN

He was 18 when he enlisted in the Army. At age 35 he retired after serving the country for 17 years as *havaladar*. When he came back to his hometown in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan he was at a loose end and didn’t know what he should do next till he came to know that Great Indian Bustard (GIB) had practically disappeared from this region. That is when he knew what his calling would be henceforth.

“When I came back to Jaisalmer in 2010, I came to know how this large bird found in our State had almost disappeared thanks to extensive poaching. I was always interested in photography. My home is inside the park. Whenever I was home on a holiday, I would roam the area and take photos. But once I was back for good, I reported

poaching from Sudhasar area to the Forest Department in 2012 because I released one thing — if we save GIB, we would save Nature. Since then I have made it my mission to save this species from extinction.

But the task was not an easy one. People living in the area depended on the money that came to them when people would come to hunt GIB and illegal farming and grazing. To change their thinking and get them to take an alternative method to eke out a living was not easy.

“It is very easy to say that people who depend on the forest need to look for an alternative way to earn a living. One has to understand that to change one’s dependency on Nature and to change one’s thinking is not easy. People have families to feed. You just can’t tell them to not enter a certain area because it is now under State protection. Also, a large portions of forest area in Rajasthan is not owned by the Forest

Department. Then there is the desert. People have been living off it for generations. To ask them to stay off the land where the GIB lives was next to impossible. But I never gave up. I would go from village to village that surround the grassland enclosures where the GIB lives. I told them the importance of grasslands. The habitat of GIB is the tall grass found here. This grass is special. A bit of rain is enough for it to sprout,” Jamara says who is also the founder secretary of Godawan Conservation Society.

He has also served as the honorary Wildlife Warden, Jaisalmer and eco-development, Sudasari, Forest Department. Since he reported the first poaching, he has played a huge role in the renovation of old grassland enclosures and creating new ones with the cooperation from surrounding villagers. Jamara has also been instrumental in providing employment to local people though eco-development committee —

guarding the area and labouring for renovation. In the last eight years, he has engaged in advocacy for the GIB and grassland conservation with State and Centre.

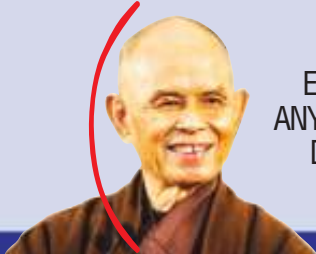
“Even though we gave them an alternative means to earn a living. To convince them to take them up was tough. People were used to illegal farming and grazing their cattle here endangering not just GIB but the entire habitat of the region. They didn’t see how what they were doing was wrong; they had been doing this for years. I told them if we increased the grasslands, it would good for them as well — they can take their cattle to graze there legally — leaving a large portion for GIB and other wildlife to thrive here. But to give alternative employment to so many people is difficult. But the villagers tell me that if they are given a job, they would stop traditional practices,” Jamara explains.

He started working on making the area a tourist attraction — Sam being a prime example. “With eco-tourism, it opened doors to alternate job opportunities. The grassland enclosures can be saved as well as GIB’s habitat. But more needs to be done. The money that is earned from eco-tourism should go to the local communities and ensure that the money is spent for their betterment,” Jamara tells you.

“It is good to see my work been has paid off but there is much to do. I want to thank NatWest as well for the award,” Jamara says.







EVERY THOUGHT YOU PRODUCE,  
ANYTHING YOU SAY, ANY ACTION YOU  
DO, IT BEARS YOUR SIGNATURE  
— THICH NHAT HANH

Vijayawada, October 18, 2020

tarot 8



YOUR  
WEEK  
AHEAD

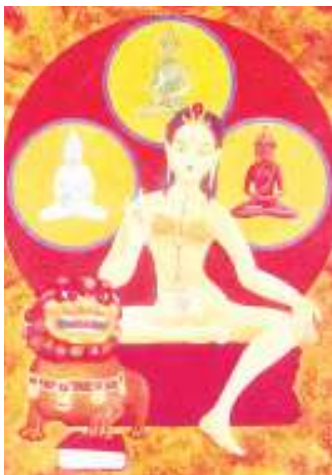
MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

This week is a good time to enjoy your health and add extra charm to your persona. You are cheerful, hopeful, and full of life. You take good care of yourself, and the people you are concerned with. Compromising on health issues is not advisable. Balancing in your work and relations is important. On the career front, be cautious if you are in a job. Follow the discipline and set rules of the organisation you are working with, else be ready to face some displeasure of your seniors. Businessmen should be careful in their money transactions. There are conflicts and confrontations which may make you lose your calm. On the personal front, you may get involved in a great relationship. You are likely to be in a romantic mood.

**Lucky number** 10  
**Lucky colour** Golden  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

You are a very positive, creative, and happy go lucky person. This is reflected in your personality. It is an excellent time to flaunt your charm and enjoy the path of personal development. The completeness, sense of vitality and peace in mind will make you very efficient this week. On the career front, you are confident and ready to face any challenges that come your way. You may win and earn accolades for your performance this week. You will be in your senior's good book. Do not let this success get into your head. On the relationship front, be careful as there are chances of counterfeit love. Investigate before you take any final decision. Existing relations should clear the doubts and confusions, if any, to avoid misunderstanding in future.

**Lucky number** 14  
**Lucky colour** Green  
**Lucky day** Friday



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

You are likely to change your mind about something that you think is wrong with you physically. Do not ignore what your doctor has told you. Those suffering from serious ailments need to be under the constant observation of doctors. Others also need prevention from seasonal ailments, which might aggravate if timely attention is not taken. On the work front, confusion about whether to leave the present job, start a business, or some undesirable circumstances is likely to occupy your mind. Changing your field would get you nowhere. Find out your interest and potentials. This is the time to be firm in your decisions and keep your ears and eyes open. On the personal front, there exits hope and happiness on the emotional level, along with a sense of security.

**Lucky number** 11  
**Lucky colour** Brown  
**Lucky day** Monday



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

This week you need a break from normal life. There is a need to slow down from the hectic work pace and relax. Do not push yourself when you are tired, it may cause illness and injury. On the career front, you have the benefits of your communication both verbal or written and will get the good news regarding your career. Businessmen can acquire a secure position monetarily. Those in service will get the support of their seniors and boss this week, which is likely to prove a stepping stone in their career. Be cautious, stay focused on what you want to achieve. On the personal front, a new beginning and higher expectations are on the cards. This is the time when you need not put extra efforts in the relationship area.

**Lucky number** 8  
**Lucky colour** Pastel colours  
**Lucky day** Wednesday



**VIRGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

This week work at balancing your *chakras* or your body, mind, and spirit. Pay adequate attention to all three. Meditation, *Pranayam* and walk in the nature would work wonderfully. The benefits are far greater than any effort you can put in. Professionally, connections with new people, especially people from other lands, will be beneficial. This is the time to make new business deals, sign new projects and assignments. Crack your potential. Stars are favouring you. Creativity, change, and development are the themes of the week. On the personal front, new ideas and plans will help you to revitalise your relations with the loved ones. Love is in the air and you are in full mood to express your feelings. This is a good time to make relations.

**Lucky number** 12  
**Lucky colour** Yellow  
**Lucky day** Thursday



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

This week take some time out for yourself. You are on the right track now, keep doing what you are doing. Learn more about rituals from the past. They will deepen your spiritual understanding and practice and help you to bring balance. On the career front, lots of activity, getting things accomplished is on the cards. You may make your peers look bad. You don't feel tired; being workaholic is your passion. Keep your behaviour in check, there are chances of using harsh words that create a hostile situation around you. Maintain your cool and equilibrium whatever the situation, that quality will add a feather in your career. On the relationship front, if you are currently committed, it may well rise to new and better heights soon.

**Lucky number** 13  
**Lucky colour** Peach  
**Lucky day** Tuesday



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

Listen to your body with great care and attention. You are either overeating or starving yourself to lose weight. Both situations are bad for health. Bringing balance in food habits not only helps you to maintain your weight but it gives you a confident mindset. You are otherwise hale and hearty, enjoy the week. On the work front, investment done in the past is coming to fruition this week. This can be literal such as a bank account returning money to you. You will be reaping what you have sown. You are in the good books of your senior and soon there will be rewards. On the personal front, love and emotions will take back seat. You prefer isolation. Those committed must stay connected with their time to keep the spark alive.

**Lucky number** 17  
**Lucky colour** Sky Blue  
**Lucky day** Wednesday



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

You need to balance your health efforts with your personal and professional responsibilities. Make sure that you are taking time out for your self, for rest and healing. If you put yourself last on the list of things, your health will suffer. Make sure to take adequate rest and sleep, too. On the professional front, if you are looking for a job, you have the ability and the skill to find it. If you are already employed, you will find a better position. If there's no room for a promotion in the current job, give serious thought to finding something where there is this possibility. On the relationship front, if you are committed, don't hesitate to speak your mind to your beloved. You stand with pride and express your feelings. This will only improve your relationship.

**Lucky number** 19  
**Lucky colour** Black  
**Lucky day** Saturday



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

This week you are likely to feel stressed out. You may be suppressing your emotions, and this will impact your body negatively. Be careful how, when, and where you vent your emotional reactions. Work to reduce your stress level. Think positive. Stay calm and connected. Anger is a silent killer. On the career front, tension is indicated. Be positive, this is a temporary phase. If you are trying for a job change, this is the right time. Making plans only will not help, execute them with sincerity. You have the potential to achieve the desired position. On the personal front, the time is right for soul-searching and discovery of the inner realms. It is a very positive time for you and an excellent opportunity to strengthen relationships.

**Lucky number** 22  
**Lucky colour** Blue  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

Tension and depression might take toll leaving you exhausted and under-confident person. Reading, meditation, and light exercises will give you relief and good sleep will help improve your state of mind. Uncertainties and confusion in life will melt away if you have a positive and creative mind. On the work front, you need to make some quick decisions. Make sure your intelligence and logic are used for a good cause. Do not waste your time in disputes. Solution for a problem is already there or will come soon. On the personal front, work with a cool mind rather than the raging heart. If you are already in a relationship, this can be a make-or-break period. This is a time to get very clear about what you want out of your relationships, and then take steps accordingly.

**Lucky number** 21  
**Lucky colour** White  
**Lucky day** Monday



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

On the health front, you seek to self-validate and believe in your talents. Your motto of a diseases-free, happy family will get you busy. It is time to see how totally different and wonderful things can be. Professionally, you are positive and will try to bring love and compassion in your work. You are highly intuitive too. People are amazed to see this persona of you. This is a time to focus on your goals and targets. Be firm and determined. Those in business need to be tough in the money transactions. On the personal front, mind, heart, and emotions are going in different ways. This is a highly emotional time in love relationships. Things can quickly become heated. Treat your lover like a friend. Don't be in a hurry to end or to begin a relationship.

**Lucky number** 15  
**Lucky colour** Grey  
**Lucky day** Friday



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

This week keep your stress level under control to stay in good health. Deal with any problems that come up physically, don't try to avoid them. Be sure to get enough rest. If you need healing, ask for it. Sensitive people need caring, nurturing, massage, and hugs from dear friends, which will go a long way toward keeping them healthy. On the career front, other people may oppose your new ideas or proposals, but if you know that you are right to go ahead. You are enthusiastic, full of energy and want to put your best, but others are not taking it positively. Leave your simplicity behind, be smart and little articulate. On the personal front, your relationship will move into a lighter, easier, and more balanced phase when you are sure of yourself.

**Lucky number** 12  
**Lucky colour** Red  
**Lucky day** Thursday

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**ASTROTURF**  
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

# Test of astrologer/astrology

A couple of years back, a very dear friend sought appointment for his estranged wife. Though they had separated, they remained good friends. The lady offered her birth particulars, based on which her astrological chart was drawn. I, then, drew the chart at the moment of consultation. The ruling planets emerging at that that moment did not match with those of the chart drawn against birth particulars provided by her. It implied that the birth particulars were not right. In the Krishnamurthy system, there is a proven method to check whether the birth chart is right. I then asked the lady: "Are your birth particulars correct?" "Yes," she affirmed. There was no fun in arguing with her. So, I made all my observations based on what the chart drawn at the moment of consultation reflected. After having answer to her questions, she satisfactorily went home. She then called up and thanked ex-husband for leading her to a good astrologer.

My friend then called me informing that the lady was quite happy with you. He then asked me: "Please tell me the birth particulars she furnished." He was left aghast when I shared the birth par-

ticulars she had furnished. "Sir, she gave you wrong birth particulars. It was the one given to me at time of marriage to hide her actual date of birth. Later, I found her true horoscope. How come, your observations were so apt, even though she did not furnish her true birth particulars?" "Well, I ignored the birth chart, and instead counted on what the astrological chart at the moment of consultation reflected". I replied.

"How can the chart drawn at the moment of consultation reveal her state of affairs so correctly?" He countered. "Remember, there is continuum in time. What one is faced at a particular moment is culmination of doing and undoing in the past. Seeded in the present moment is how future is expected to unfold. The chart at the moment of consultation, reveals what prevails in your mind, and the way it is going to progress in the emerging times. If you know that you are planting a mango seed, being aware of its chemistry, you may be able to figure out the timeline of its progressive growth. The astrological chart at the moment makes aware of the potential seeded in mind, which makes it possible to foresee the impending future events."



We are often faced with such challenging encounters in our professional life, particularly in marriage matching. It has been observed that many parents of girls in marriageable age, fudge their birth particulars so that it matches with the groom's chart, to seal the marriage. They though hasten their girl's marriage, but with what end? In their rush to shed their responsibility, they don't care for their own daughter's marital happiness. When problems arise, the groom side comes with the question: "Sir, we had done matching before the marriage. Yet, why is it not working?" When cross checked, it comes out that the girl's chart was incorrect.

Recently, I came across such a situation when hassled parents of a newly married son came the other day with their charts. They asked me to suggest some *pooja* that may help restore his marital happiness. Well, marital discord is always because of attitudinal differences of the partners. So, problem is seeded in their minds. How can any *pundit* invade their mind space through *pooja* to make necessary attitudinal correction? They have to self-correct themselves to ensure marital happiness.

A look into the boy's chart revealed

that he had an inflated ego — bound by his own self-defined do's and don'ts — coming as it may with Mars conjunct Uranus, opposite Jupiter. He can't digest anything happening at variance with his own beliefs and perceptions. Being tactless and undiplomatic, his ill-timed and ill-framed reactions often unnerves others. When I looked at the girl's chart, it was found fudged. After making necessary correction, the chart revealed her true nature.

She was born in Gemini *lagna*. The sign lord Mercury conjunct Sun and Jupiter were in the *lagna*, opposite erratic Uranus, mischievous Neptune and Saturn in the marriage signifying 7th house. Debilitated Moon was opposite Venus. It implied that the girl lived in her own delusory perceptions, distanced from ground realities. She wished to live exclusively on her own terms, least bothered about other's sensibilities and concerns. Her sense of reasoning and judgment would be impaired. If things don't move her way, she may go wild. The result is there to see.

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





# the pioneer agenda

FROM THE INSIDE

**A super thriller all the way**  
**Batla House puts to rest a lot of controversies and versions on the infamous Batla House encounter**



**Must watch for dog parents**

I'd rather be by myself than be spending any time or energy on somebody that I didn't feel sure about  
— Blake Lively



Photos: Ayandrali Dutta

Will this year see the beginning of the return of the Durga Puja in its original form? SAIMI SATTAR discusses the idea with Kolkata denizens to find out more

## THE HOMECOMING

This year, 41-year-old Arpita Sarkar is relieved that rather than being stuck for hours in traffic in the month preceding Duga Puja, she has been able to commute smoothly to and from office. “Things had come to such a head that we had decided that even though we hate spending these days away from Kolkata, we would do so,” she says. But a tiny miniscule virus had other plans. So now, for the six days of the Puja, rather than engage in *pandal*-hopping, Arpita along with her family will cook something special at home, probably go to a relative's house where children too would be able to catch up with their cousins. “That is what *Pujo* signified for us when we were growing up. Heading to *Mama baari* or *Bade Papa's* place with our parents is what we did as children. Even though, it is a community celebration, the crowds that have become synonymous with Durga Puja are not the essence of the festival,” says 41-year-old Arpita who works as an HR in a multi-national company in Kolkata and counts dance and drama as her areas of interest. She often performs at the cultural programmes organised during Puja and this year she is recording the performance which is being put up jointly with other artists on YouTube channels.

Over the years, for Bengalis and non-Bengalis, Durga Puja came to be centered around how many *pandals* they had hopped, which one displayed the best theme and which Puja Committee was likely to win an award that year. The lament, especially among the older generation, was that the emphasis was now on an extraneous journey while the festival was more of an inward cruise of devotion which had gone completely missing. But nature often has a way of setting humans on the path of course correction, sometimes in the form of a virus, only if they are willing to listen to its call.

Like every year, Ayandrali Dutta, travel and food writer who has made Delhi her home for the past 12 years, will be making her way back to Kolkata to be a part of the 168-year old ancestral Burrabazar Mallick Bari Durga Puja that is celebrated at her house. “Over the past five-six years, Durga Puja has become a social media activity where you have to do a check in at all the *pandals*,” says Dutta who sees her annual homecoming as something akin to the Goddess Durga's return to her maternal house.

At Ayandrali's, till last year, there would have been around 300-400 people visiting and eating at her house. These would be family friends, relatives, people who had heard about the *puja* through word-of-mouth. “This won't happen this year,” says Ayandrali firmly. While the *aarti* would take place, the ceremonial conch would be blown but the place where the five-foot idol is placed would not be flocked with people who had queued up for a *dekkho* at the *prati-ma*. This year there would not be more than five-six at one time. But Ayandrali believes that this was very much-required. “We needed to slow down and cut down on lot

of frills which we thought were an important part of life. After all, that is what we have been doing during the past seven months and it has done us a lot of good. It has made us realise that minimalism could be a part of life. Instead of 400 people eating earlier, now there would be 50 and that it is perfectly fine. If we are feeding for the sake of charity, we can do it in some other place and in some other way,” she says adding that Pujas had become a larger than life affair.

While Ayandrali is much younger, Arup Sarkar, a retired government servant can recall a time when Pujas were simpler affairs. “The budgets have become huge due to sponsorship by political parties and corporates. There is an excess of everything — lighting, theme, decoration. A lot of money is thrown around on the display but the devotion that is needed is nowhere to be found. Earlier, the way the face was crafted, the body made and the decorations done were exceptional. The idols were simpler but they inspired devoutness. The *bhakti* that came from the heart is no longer there,” he says. He hopes for a return to the simplicity of earlier times but is not relying on the fulfilment of his wishes — even during the pandemic.

Arpita, a trained Bharatnatyam and Odissi dancer, too is not fond of the theme *pandals*. “The competitions are a way of showing off how much money can be splurged. The focus is on making expensive *pandals* and political parties have jumped into the fray as well. When we were younger, we went to see the *pandals* every year. The idols and *pandals* were the same each year but they inspired devotion. Since they are so intricate and expensive now, there are many restrictions about where we can sit and what we can touch so much so that people are not able to enjoy themselves,” she says.

Arup points out that earlier there was a lot personal involvement. “The entertainment was different. Everyone from the extended family pitched in ensuring that the festivities went off smoothly. On the cultural side, someone sang, another one recited. It was unparalleled *anand*,” he says.

Ayandrali too agrees that the complexion of Puja underwent a change as different members of the household became busier and a lot of work was outsourced to people. “Earlier every member had a responsibility to go and get the flowers, buy the vegetables, decorate the house and more so there was personal touch. Many of us no longer stay in Kolkata and when we return for Puja we prefer to outsource the work and spend time with family,” she says.

Of course, like contemporary times, earlier too *pujas* entailed dressing up to the nines; *dhaaki* players who by their rhythmic percussions signalled the arrival of *Maa* Durga to her maternal home; the *dhunochi naach* made popular in the non-Bengali speaking areas by countless Bollywood films as well as *pandal*-hopping but it is the



OVER THE YEARS, FOR BENGALIS AND NON-BENGALIS, DURGA PUJA CAME TO BE CENTERED AROUND HOW MANY PANDALS THEY HAD HOPPED, WHICH ONE DISPLAYED THE BEST THEME AND WHICH PUJA COMMITTEE WAS LIKELY TO WIN AN AWARD THAT YEAR. THE LAMENT WAS THAT THE EMPHASIS WAS NOW ON AN EXTRANEIOUS JOURNEY WHILE THE FESTIVAL WAS MORE OF AN INWARD CRUISE OF DEVOTION WHICH HAD GONE COMPLETELY MISSING

new norms of social distancing that have forced many to sit back and rethink about the hijacking of this festival by Mammon.

The change had started around 25 years back when the concept of “theme *puja*” made an entry. From 1993-94 each of the *paara* (area) began to conceptualise the *pandal* around a contemporary issue. It could be questioning violence against women while celebrating a goddess or depicting the condition of refugees or creating awareness about social issue of contemporary relevance. As the *pandals* grew in scale, awards started being handed out for different categories like best idol, lighting, decoration, social work and more. To remain a contender in the competitions needed a scaling up of budgets and corporate sponsorship or by political parties entered the picture. And after that there was no looking back as each year the magnificence and size of the *pandals* grew and visitors from and around Kolkata lined up.

However, 48-year-old Sutirtha Basu, a regional manager in a pharmaceutical company has a different take. Sutirtha, who used to visit nothing less than 50-60 *pandals* every Puja, feels that these gave artists and craftspeople a platform to display their talent. “Artists who conceptualise the *pandals* are from arts college and are really talented. Depending on the theme, they get village artisans adept in crafts like mud, metal or others to make the *pandals* and give them an opportunity to showcase their ability. An entire economy depends on Durga Puja. These people have tremendous flair but it was never exhibited,” he says and adds, “The awards are a recognition of the hard work and talent.” Not just the *pandals* and idols but also the social work done by Puja Committee is rewarded.

Despite the changes, a *bonedi puja* or the one celebrated at a *Zamindar baari* (home) like the one at Ayandrali's ancestral home, still maintains tradition. “Even if they do not assemble at any other time, they make sure to come during *puja*. They dress up in traditional attire, wear the heirloom jewellery and have cultural programmes,” says Arup.

In fact, historically it was only the *zamindar* and other rich families who celebrated Durga Puja at their homes. “There was no *paara puja* which started 100-110 years back during the British Raj. The *zamindars* objected to the *paara pujas* as earlier they had exercised a monopoly over organising Durga puja. Being allowed to visit one was considered to be a favour bestowed upon one. While all the *paara* people were not freedom fighters but they wanted that they should be able to express their hatred against the British. So the *asur* (demon) in the *prati-ma* (idol) was depicted like the British and the Goddess was shown to be killing him,” says Basu.

Fast forward to today. And whether we would be able to annihilate materialism and imbibe the true spirit of the festival, this year and in the ones that follow, is a story that is unfolding and yet to be written.

## MEANWHILE IN THE CAPITAL...

For sometime now the Durga Puja Committees in Delhi were in a quandary about the way they could go ahead and celebrate the festival without endangering people while ensuring that the festivities remained intact. The Purbanchal Bangiyo Samiti, a forum of 38 committees which celebrate Durga Puja in East Delhi formed about two years ago decided to take the lead and, post several parleys with Manish Sisodia, Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi finally, managed to come out with a set of guidelines that attempts to do both.

While the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), Govt. of India had already issued a Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in the first week of the month, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) suggested some additional measures. All the event organisers have to obtain requisite permission from the District Magistrate concerned for organising the festival events well in advance. The order says that the capacity of each event site would be decided on the basis of area and social distancing norms, laid down by MHA by which in a closed space, a maximum of 50 per cent of the hall capacity would be allowed, with a ceiling of 200 persons, and in an open spaces the size of the ground would be kept in view and strict observance of social distancing norms would be followed. Naturally, the seating capacity for each such site would be determined according to the norms of social distancing and observing Covid-appropriate behaviour.

This would include ensuring separate entry and exit at each event which will be strictly regulated and only those wearing a face mask would be allowed inside.

Every organising committee is supposed to video-record the entire event and a soft copy of the unedited video recording in pen-drive and a certificate, certifying that no violation of the SOPs/Guidelines issued by Govt. of India and Govt. of NCT of Delhi has taken place, shall be submitted to Nodal officers within three hours of closing of the programme of each day. In case of any violation of SOPs/guidelines the permission for conducting such an event shall be revoked immediately for all subsequent days. At all events only sitting on chairs with social distancing norms shall be allowed. Suitable arrangements have to be made for an adequate number of temporary toilets and other public facilities like electricity, water, sanitisers and thermal screeners at each site venue.

Mirinal Biswas is the general secretary, Milani Cultural & Welfare Association, Mayur Vihar, as well as the Purbanchal Bangiyo Samiti, a forum of 38 committees which celebrate Durga Puja in East Delhi formed about two years ago. Says he, “Only 11 of the 38 committees will organise the Durga Puja with a small idol. The rest would have a *kalashghot puja*. The idol would be eco-friendly with water-based colour and of the height of three-five feet. Some of the *puja* committees would be organising online pushpanjali. No cultural events, *bhandara* and stalls would be allowed.”

At the Milani Clubhouse, they are registering members and handing out digital tokens for visiting the place where the idol is kept. The restricted entry would be rotated after every half an hour so that everyone gets a chance to offer prayers while maintaining social distancing. Children below 12 and elderly people above 65 will not be allowed inside.

For the immersion, a metal tank is being arranged by Purbanchal Bangiyo Samiti at Mayur Vihar Kali Bari Ph-1 and at Purbasha Kali Bari (IP extn) premises with each Puja committee being given a different time slot. Puja material like flowers, leaves and decorative items will not be allowed at the time of immersion.





*Batla House* enlists the details of an anti-terror operation and lives in uniform. It also puts to rest a lot of controversies and versions on the infamous Batla House encounter, writes J GOPIKRISHNAN

# A super thriller on anti-terror ops

The book *Batla House* written by former police officer Karnal Singh is a real thriller and gold mine of information on the anti-terror operations, history and great analysis on the terror outfits targeting India. Karnal Singh (IPS) who retired as Chief of Enforcement Directorate was the Chief of Special Cell of Delhi Police which conducted the encounter with Indian Mujahideen (IM) terrorists at Batla House in Delhi in September 19, 2008. The terrorists were hiding in a flat in Batla House after unleashing a series of terror attacks in various places in Delhi six days ago on September 13 evening by placing bombs in waste depositing boxes, which killed 22 people and injured more than 130 people. There were lot of controversies and different versions and even a movie was produced on the Batla House encounter, which was the finest precision operation of the Special Cell, the counter terrorism unit of Delhi Police.

After 12 years, the writer — Karnal Singh — the man who headed the encounter is declassifying the details of country's much talked about encounter operation. Apart from thrilling moments of the encounter declassified by the very man who conducted the operation, the writer explains how his trusted deputies cracked the case within six days of the serial blast which shook the Delhi on September 13, 2008 evening. This book also details the personal life of police personnel and their sacrifices in family life for the Call of Duty for the Nation.

Singh goes in detail about the life of his team members of the Special Cell, where the life of the policemen is always 24x7. The blast day was a Saturday and the writer, who was then Joint Commissioner and head of the Special Cell of Delhi Police, was helping younger son in solving Maths problems. While rushing to the blast spot hearing the serial blasts in Delhi, he tells wife to call elder daughter, who was in the city enjoying weekend with friends, back home. In six days of hectic work, team cracked down the hiding terrorists. There are many tearful moments in the book when the writer talks about late Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma, who lost life in the encounter.

On September 18, a day before the operation, Singh recounts getting calls from wife reminding him of their elder daughter's birthday. That very day, the writer learns (from other colleagues) that the key officer Mohan Chand Sharma's



son was in intensive care unit with acute dengue and dipping platelet counts. When he asked Sharma, the officer dismissed it saying wife and parents were taking care of the child, and got back to work. ACP Sanjeev Kumar Yadav who led the back-end team in the operation was facing tussle with wife due to his late hours. On the day of the operation too, he had fought with his wife and upon getting a call from office did not think twice before leaving his wife mid way to rush to office.

The writer details the lives of all his team members giving due credits to them, which is very rare in service stories. From constables to officers, the book details their role in the operation — unearthing the location of the hiding terrorists by tracing emails and mobile phones, using human intelligence, analysing the previous blasts in Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Surat etc. The writer acknowledges the role of each team mate checking the blast sites, explosive materials, forensic work and digital mapping to the person and how they undertook the recce operations before the shootout.

The writer clears all the doubts on the Batla House encounter in the minds

of many for the past 12 years. There were many questions including why Sharma was not wearing a bullet proof jacket. In their defence, it was a secret operation and the main team was disguised in plain cloth shirts. Batla House is a crowded area and densely populated by Muslims. As it was the festive season, the team decided to strike in the day, as many would be trying to catch up on sleep post night celebrations. Singh and team reached the spot upon hearing about the bullet injuries of Sharma, requisitioning more force and commandos. He details how he entered the encounter spot with a small team, weaving their way through narrow bylanes, past angry crowds.

This book exposes the dark side of Indian politics that works on appeasing minority vote bank. As all the terrorists belonged to a community and hailed from Azamgarh in Uttar Pradesh and shoot out location was a densely Muslim populated location in Delhi, the entire political vultures were parading in the Batla House.

This book is full of so many interesting stories. One terrorist, who left the scene in the morning, got so frightened upon hearing the news of the encounter

that he landed at a TV channel for live show in the evening. Nine bombs had been planted and explosion and diffusion took only in eight areas only. Explosion happened at five areas and bomb diffusion happened in three areas. One bomb did not work and could not be identified. The email claiming the role by Indian Mujahideen (IM) sent to media houses after the first blast claimed nine spots. Book also explains back ground of many terrorists, their role in money making by engaging in kidnapping for ransom, apart from role of radicalising agents.

The writer explains tough laws for dealing with terrorists. One such example is two days after the Delhi Blast, one terrorist Aftab Ansari (already facing death conviction jailed in Kolkata for 2002 American Centre) sent message to Singh saying he wanted to give details of the Delhi blasts. He had been caught by Singh in Delhi in 1995 and was jailed for some years. Once out of jail, he master-minded the American Centre blast and is now facing death conviction from 2005. After consulting Intelligence Bureau, Singh decided not to meet him in Kolkata jail. This episode shows how flimsy are our laws in dealing terrorists

and Ansari is still on appeal against the death conviction. The writer argues for different rules while arresting a person involved in terrorist cases. He says civilian norms on arrest can't be applied to a terrorist, explain the loopholes in it. When a person is arrested, police is mandated to inform relatives or near and dear ones. This is helpful for the other accomplices in the terror operations.

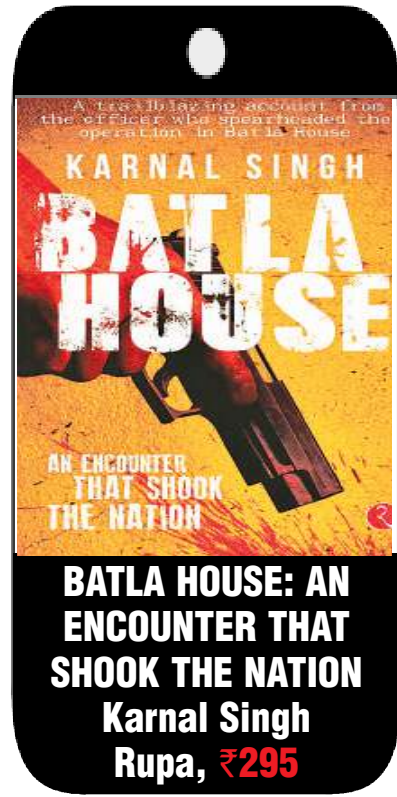
Singh explains the need for the maximum possible information to be shared with media to avoid fake and wrong stories. He explains in detail, how Delhi Police suffered bad press due to the stoppage of press conferences by Home Ministry and how he managed to handle the media by calling people to provide right things.

He narrates how a lady journalist and her journalist husband gave valuable inputs on tackling wrong reports being spread in media. The writer explains how he met the Jamia Milia University Vice Chancellor and appraised the exact information. Earlier the Vice Chancellor declared legal help as some students were arrested. Actually the terrorists were living in garb of students and were doing private jobs. After an explanation by

Singh and DCP Alok Kumar with all evidences, the Vice Chancellor changed the mind. The writer also explains how he convinced then Union Minister Kapil Sibal with all details, when many ruling party leaders were questioning the Batla House encounter, as Delhi Assembly elections and Lok Sabha elections were nearing. Sibal appraised the facts to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that day itself.

Apart from the thrilling narration of a detailed probe on the blast and identifying the hidden terrorists in six days and executing encounter in a crowded area, that too in daylight, this book explains many others aspects of policing.

This book is a classic book to be placed in Police academies and libraries for reference as it explains how to handle operations and future cases on human rights violation allegations and how to conduct trials. The book also details the history of terror outfits like SIMI, Huji, IM and their linkages with Pakistan and its ISI funded training and how they radicalise the youth to work against India. Let us hope more declassifications will come from Singh in the future through more books.



## NEW ARRIVALS



**A PLATE OF WHITE MARBLE**  
Bani Basu; Translated by: Nandini Guha  
Niyogi Books, ₹450

First published in 1990 in the original Bengali, *A Plate of White Marble* tells the tale of the 'new woman' of an era that just witnessed the independence of a nation. Bandana, the protagonist, though grieves over her husband's early death, never conforms to the social connotation and ideals of 'widowhood', thanks to her uncle. She dares to begin her life afresh in every possible sense. But naturally, the road proves to be full of thorns as she gradually faces bitterness from many quarters of the society. The only thing she clings to is her son, but once that anchor too is lost, she leaves behind the safe concrete walls of what she used to consider 'home', only to work for a far greater cause — she joins a children's home to work for those who need her the most.

**UTTARA KAANDA**  
S.L. Bhyrappa  
Eka, ₹599



In Bhyrappa's *Uttara Kaanda*, Sita looks back on her life—abandoned at birth and abandoned again by her husband. Her entire life has been a quest for home, a sense of belonging. When they return from their long exile, Rama is anointed king of Ayodhya, but a pregnant Sita is sent away to live in a forest. Her exile doesn't end. *Uttara Kaanda* is Sita's soliloquy: O Rama, I loved the pure man you were in your youth, not the man you have become — not this man who is shackled by the royal throne. My love for you died sixteen years ago. A master of detail, Bhyrappa mines the ancient epic to humanise characters who have, for centuries, been looked upon as gods beyond reproach, bringing us as close as we'll ever come to understanding them.

# A tribute to the frontline protectors

Sashidhar Vempala's book is about the lives and stories of the forest guards who are the real men behind the tiger conservation and the wildlife in India, writes DEEPAK KUMAR JHA

The story of India's wildlife success is incomplete, unless its frontline warriors are part of it. They are the first line of defence in protecting India's precious natural heritage and safeguarding its ecosystems. According to Sashidhar Vempala, author of first of its kind coffee table book, titled *The Tigers Behind the Tigers*, these men and even women are the unsung heroes of India's conservation success story. Vempala is an acclaimed wildlife photographer, documentary filmmaker, conservationist and a sustainability professional. His films on conservation topics and human wildlife conflict, have won awards at international forums.

The book talks about the lives and stories of the forest guards, who are the real men behind the conservation of tigers and the wildlife of India. The gist of six chapters of the book is that these men in *khaki*, patrolling the jungles are the real reason the tiger survives today.

All over India, 1,75,000 men and women serve the forests of India, 24x7, striving to protect the amazing natural habitat. Several lose their lives battling poachers of both wood and animals, many are seriously injured in animal attacks, but they go on with a courage and valour that is inspirational. They have learnt the ways of the forest, the sounds, the animals tracks, the secrets and a sense of fearlessness, always bumping into the wild and that too, dangerous ones when on foot.

This book, published during



the Covid pandemic lockdown period, is a collection of pictures and the stories captured during Vempala's work with them and hence it's a tribute to these frontline forest protectors, who are always at the frontlines of wildlife protection in our country.

In a recent conversation with *Agenda*, Vempala raised apprehensions about the possibility of the big cat being susceptible to Coronavirus when Jim Corbett National Park built quarantine wards. "But what about the forest guards? Are they still on duty?" asked Vempala. But then he goes on to say most guards are under permanent lockdown anyway.

Vempala in his book says each forest has a legend and even the vehicles have their stories. He refers to one such instance in the department bus at Kabini which

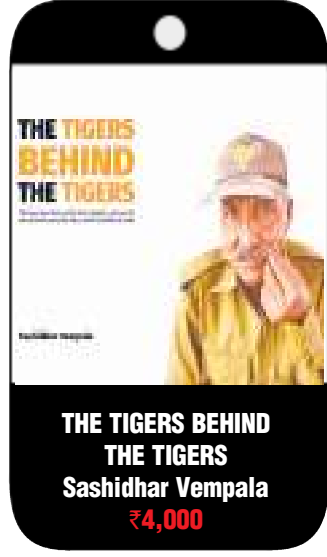
has many untold luck stories. Many, who cannot afford the exorbitantly high costs and monopoly of Jungle Lodges and Resorts, have to take this bus. The bus is considered extremely lucky in terms of a good sighting of the wilds when on board.

Each chapter deals with the importance of the frontline workers, who have made it possible to help tigers, lions, elephants, rhinos etc grow in numbers for decades. Saving Tigers on Land, Saving Tigers in the Mangroves, Some Fauna They Save, Human Elephant Conflict, Conflict Within and the Godspeed are the titles which deal separately on subjects and issues like economic valuation of the tiger reserve, gene pool protection services, carbon sequestration, zone of influence outside the reserve,

anti-poaching camps, the Sunderbans mangroves, some keystone species saved by the fauna alongwith hundred images.

While the book has notes on Kaziranga, a separate chapter makes for an interesting read on the human elephant conflict. Vempala talks about a case study in West Bengal where he mentions that for many centuries, elephants have roamed the forest of South West Bengal which has no natural elephant/animal corridor. Yet, the elephants have passed on their knowledge of the routes to their young ones.

Previously, the size of herd of elephant was small —15-20, and total numbers of elephant that roamed the zone was between 30 and 45. This was for the period 1970s-1980s when the forest cover was degraded to some



extent. But in recent time, in the last 35 years, the zone has improved considerably in terms of green cover and the numbers of elephants have also increased to more than 100.

The author narrates the stories of women officers taking care of Nature comprising the wild, the greens and the humans and their vested interests in keeping the cycle going. "No one wants to give up what they get and that's why the solution can only be collective and not conflicting," Vempala narrates, highlighting that the conflict needs immediate mitigation and the protectors need their powers.

While it is understood that animals look for their own meals, there is an interesting chapter on how the wild have their dedicated cooks who besides making

their own meals, also cook for small animals to mighty elephants of the jungles.

In the last chapter, Vempala rues about the paltry wages of the guards risking the lives. World over, every year, more than 100 rangers are killed in the line of duty. India loses more forest rangers each year than any other country in the world. Yet, a forest guard in India is rarely felicitated or celebrated.

The book urges us to acknowledge the work of the forest frontiers and details how they work around the clock; what is a forest guards' life like and how they ensure that the tiger and all other wildlife is protected in the forest. The book also mentions that the forest reserve runs on acute shortage of manpower and of available approved positions, they operate at 60 percent, going to as low as 30 percent in some lesser important reserves. Daily wagers form the bulk of the frontline forest force and they supplement the permanent staff of guards and foresters.

Such is Vempala's passion for the constituents of forest, that he founded a nature conservation organisation — Guardbook Conservation Foundation — which works towards forest conservation and supporting the forest guards of India in their duties. Guardbook helps the forest guards not only with boots, jackets and torches but also with powering up camps with solar energy, setting up rainwater harvesting pits and a lot more.



HOME THEATRE

Must watch for dog parents

**PUP ACADEMY 2**  
**Netflix**  
**\*ing: Don lake, Christian Convery, Aria Birch, Gabrielle Miller**  
**Dog Voice Over: Riley O'Donnell, Chance Hurstfield, Dylan Schombing, Brian George**  
**Rated: 6/10**

There is something inherently cute and sweet when one watches movies that have animals especially dogs. Remember *The Call of the Wild*, *Benji* and *Marley & Me*? While not all animal movies have a happily ever after, but it doesn't take away the aww factor from them and *Pup Academy* that dropped its second season on the OTT platform is no different. It goes without saying that the pups are adorable, sweet and cute and if one has ever had a dog before, a need to have another one is going to be tough to resist.

If you are not a dog lover, this



series that takes off where the first one ended — a street pup — Boxer

being thrown out of pup academy for bringing in other street dogs into the

academy who then wreaked havoc may have a change of heart.

In the meantime, why not have fun and watch the little pups get up to no good, get into trouble and do what pups do best — shower love on their master.

But then the show is not about the story as much as it is about the bond between a human and pup and how much it affects the dog if he doesn't have this bond with his chosen human. The adage: Dog is man's best friend couldn't have had a better setting than this show. So much so that there is a dog named D.O.G. Couldn't be cuter than this.

However, if one is looking for a story that stimulates the brain, this is not a show to watch. The story is simple and banal and take-off from Season 1 — a bunch of wolves, instead of dogs — who want to take over the running of the academy their way.

The good part is that it is family-friendly and a perfect watch for all dog parents and kids of all ages.

— Shalini Saksena



**BLACKPINK: LIGHT UP THE SKY**  
**Netflix**  
**\*ing: The band members: Jisoo, Jennie, Rosé, and Lisa**  
**Rated: 5.5/10**

K-pop made its presence felt back in 2012 when Psy released his single — *Gangnam Style*. The song had gone viral and propelled Psy into instant stardom. Since then K-pop has become a must-listen for all music lovers. So it is not surprising that when the all-woman band came into the scene with their debut album *Square One* after a gap of seven years launched by YG Entertainment,

the group won its first award during a musical programme for Whistle at Inkigayo, becoming the girl group that won the award the fastest. Since then the album's tracks have since surpassed 1.73 billion streams worldwide.

This and much more is revealed in *Black Pink: Light Up the Sky*, a documentary that follows the lives the girl group and how they reached where they are today given that each one of them came from a different background.

But the thing binding them was and is their love to perform and sing.

The documentary introduces

the girls collectively and individually which gives us a little peek into what makes them tick. But the real emotions come into play when their guards are down and they talk about missing their family and experiences that a 15-16-year-old would normally be part of.

The whole, now that we are so successful, how do we live up to the expectations of the fans is real. Where they will be when they are 42-44 — married with kids? How long will this success last? It gives a glimpse of real fears and reiterates that all that glitters is not gold.

— Shalini Saksena

Real emotions are revealed

TELLY TALE



IT'S CHAMPI TIME

Sidharth Shukla has been a part of both *Bigg Boss 13* and *14* and two things have remained common for him. One is the platform and the other is *champi*.

While we have seen Shehnaz Gill as his *champi* queen in the past season, Hina Khan is filling in for Shehnaz's absence in this season. Khan is often seen giving Sidharth Shukla a powerful *champi*, which seems to be the booster to keep him going in the game.

Shehnaz has always been very possessive about Sidharth when they were together in the house. Wonder what she has to say about the *champi* sessions in this season.

ALL BECAUSE OF AAHANA'S MARZI



A glittering award ceremony celebrating Asia Pacific's leading cinematic performances, the Asian Academy Creative Awards through a virtual event, announced the list of national winners of its third edition. Touted as the epitome of success for artists, this award is looked upon by fans across the continent and signifies artistic dominance. In a major coup across the leading categories of this gala, Aahana Kumra bagged the national award for 'Best Actress In A Leading Role' for her phenomenal performance in Voot Select's Original series *Marzi*.

Ecstatic about her big win at the

2020 Asian Academy Creative Awards, Aahana Kumra said: "When I read the script of *Marzi*, I immediately knew it would emerge to be a game changer. The character of Sameera Chauhan will always be closest to my heart. This is a milestone win for me and it simply wouldn't have been possible without the love from my fans and support from the entire cast and crew of *Marzi*. I would like to thank Rajeev for being a phenomenal co-star, Radhika Anand for penning this marvelous script, Anil Sir and of course Bodhi Tree Productions for bringing this fabulous concept to life. And last but not the least, a big thank you to Voot Select for giving me a fantastic platform to showcase my talent. I look forward to delivering more of such impactful performances and will continue to dedicate myself to each character that I bring alive on screen."

Based on the novel *Liar* which is written by the BAFTA and Emmy nominated Jack and Harry Williams, Voot Select's original *Marzi* is a crime thriller that follows a web of lies and betrayals through a date night which leaves everyone conflicted on who is speaking the truth. The series has a rating of 7.3 on IMDB and is an odyssey of the marvelous slate of originals available on Voot Select. Launched on March , the OTT platform has captivated viewers across all age groups with its diverse content lineup.

DANCE WITH THE SISTERS

It's official! This festive season, the dancing divas and absolute sensations — Shakti and Mukti Mohan will be seen donning a new hat. That's right! In Zee Café's all new show, *Dance With Me*, the Mohan sisters will set the floor ablaze as the celebrity dance experts. Rumor has it that the talented duo will jazz things up engaging with fans via fun hook step sessions. So, here's an exclusive opportunity to brush up those moves as Shakti and Mukti take center stage every week. Inviting viewers with *khul ke nacho* as the clarion call, the show is set to launch on October 25 airing every Sunday at 10 pm on Zee Café and 10 am on Zee TV, November 1 onwards along with Zee5.

Confirming the buzz doing the rounds, Shakti and Mukti Mohan on their Instagram made the official announcement on October 16. Sharing the happy news with her fans and followers, Shakti unveiled the foot-tapping promo that features professional dancers and people from all walks of life grooving to the peppy beats. The track, created by ace composer Mayur Jumani, mixes popular Bollywood numbers that are sure to get you grooving as you break free and make way for happiness this festive season.

Speaking about the announcement, the reality TV

superstar and dance maestro Shakti Mohan said: "Nothing compares to the feeling of dancing your heart out. I believe it to be the most beautiful emotion that truly elevates happy moments in our lives. Both Mukti and I feel an instant rush of positivity and energy boost whenever we're on stage and it we're super excited to be a part of Zee Café's latest show *Dance With Me*. We have put a lot of heart and soul in curating the best performances that are sure to set you dancing in your living rooms and we hope the viewers enjoy watching the show as much as we did in being a part of it."

To this, her sister and dance partner Mukti Mohan added: "Growing up, dance has always been an intrinsic part of our lives. Both Shakti and I share a passion for dance that goes beyond words and we can't wait to celebrate the joy dancing together with our fans truly unleashing the spirit of *khul ke nacho* on Zee Café's *Dance With Me*. This being one of the most interactive show's at present, we're super excited to directly engage with dance enthusiasts through fun hook steps and performances that both entertain and inspire."



SINHA FAMILY ON KAPIL SHOW

This weekend, *The Kapil Sharma Show* will be welcoming one of the legendary superstars of Bollywood Industry; Shotgun *aka* Shatrughan Sinha with his son Luv Sinha. The duo will come to promote their upcoming song; *Zaroorat*, featuring Shatrughan Sinha and daughter Sonakshi Sinha. It will be quite exciting for the viewers to watch Kapil and Shatrughan Sinha discuss the tremendous journey of the veteran actor while unveiling few unknown facts about his remarkable career in the Indian film industry.

The episode will definitely be a joyful ride for the viewer and to add to the fun and entertainment quotient, Krushna Abhishek and Kiku Sharda will be seen donning new characters in the show.

Welcome your favourite bahu

Star Plus is all set to roll out the Season 2 of the much-awaited show *Saath Nibhaana Saathiya* from tomorrow. MUSBA HASHMI speaks with DEVOLEENA BHATTARCHARJEE *aka* Gopi Bahu about how excited she is to be back on screen and how the character changed when she stepped into the show

Watching one or the other daily soap is our guilty pleasure. There is no denying that it makes for a good watch if one wants to take a break from the reality of their lives. Of late, daily soaps are so in trend and the one which tops the charts is *Saathiya*. Not because the storyline is something out of the box, but because Yashraj Mukhate decided to mix a scene from the popular show and it went viral within no time.

Even Rupal Patel, who played Kokila Ben couldn't help but appreciate Mukhate's take on the popular scene. Now that the show has already received it's share of admiration from the audience, it is just the right time for the makers to launch *Saath Nibhaana Saathiya 2* on Star Plus tomorrow.

Devoleena Bhattacharjee, who was seen in *Bigg Boss 13* is all set to play Gopi Modi once again. If one is to ask what Season 2 has on offer for the audience, it's a no-brainer that they have to give it a watch.

"I can't give out the story for Season 2, because we are also not told about the whole story, we just shoot as per our director's direction. Also there are frequent changes during the shoot. But one thing is for sure, that the entertainment quotient will surely be high and with a message of women empowerment. There will be a new love angle between Gehna and Anant. I am sure audience will love it," Bhattacharjee tells you.

Ask her about how excited she is to be back on screen as Gopi and she is quick to answer — that her excitement has no bounds. "I am super excited. I never imagined that I will be coming back on TV as Gopi. It gives me a different feel. Most of the times when there is a Season 2 of a show, the character remains the same but the actors change. But I am getting to play Gopi again and it is nothing short of a gift to me," she tells you.

A new season, she says, come with a lot of new challenges. "With a second season, the expectations of the audience are high. So it is challenging that way. To bring a second season of a hit show is risky in itself, because of the high expectations. But I think, we have proved ourselves and now the responsibility lies on the newer lot and it's there chance to prove themselves. Having said that, it doesn't mean we don't have any responsibility, it is just that they have a larger part of play in it," she

First six months in the show were challenging. Things were not falling in place. I got to know that people felt that this was not my cup of tea. It felt bad. But I am a very stubborn person, if I take up a job, I do my best to make it happen



explains.

If one is to remember, the infamous scene of the show where Gopi washes off Ahem's laptop with soap and water and hang it to dry, one would remember Giaa Manek, who was then replaced by Bhattacharjee. Ask her if it is challenging to step in to the shoes of an already established character, she says that for her the role was as new as it can be.

"I never thought that I am replacing someone. If I had would have focused about these things, I would have not been able to pull that off. My focus was on to do justice to my character. That's all. I saw it as a new role," she says.

Initially, Bhattacharjee struggled with the character, so much so that people told him that she won't be able to play it. "First six months were challenging. Things were not falling in place. I got to know that people felt that this was not my cup of tea. It felt bad. There were talks that the show might get off air after Giaa's replacement. People expected me to act like Giaa, but that's not possible. I have a different personality and I will act in my way, I can't copy someone. But despite all this, I am a very stubborn person, if I take up a job, I do my best to make it happen. So was with Gopi. I fought for my character. I did things in my own way. I just didn't let it go. I put in all my efforts and hard work and eventually it did work. And when the audience accepted me, Gopi's character was changed quite a bit. She was shown as a progressive woman. Even her style was changed," she tells you.

She tells you that she has a lot of fun memories from the sets of the previous season. "I was like the queen on the sets. I shared a good rapport with everyone. We did so much fun. Some days were exciting, some were good and some were bad. I laughed, cried, got angry and what not. We were like a big family and we enjoyed every bit of it," Bhattacharjee recalls.

Daily soaps are always tagged as over dramatic and over the top. Bhattacharjee has a say on that. "That's not true. The reason people love daily soaps is that they find a connection with it. Everything that has been shown happens with us at some point of time. It's just that we modify it as per the need of the story. Otherwise it is not over dramatic, it is just a reflection of the society," she opines.

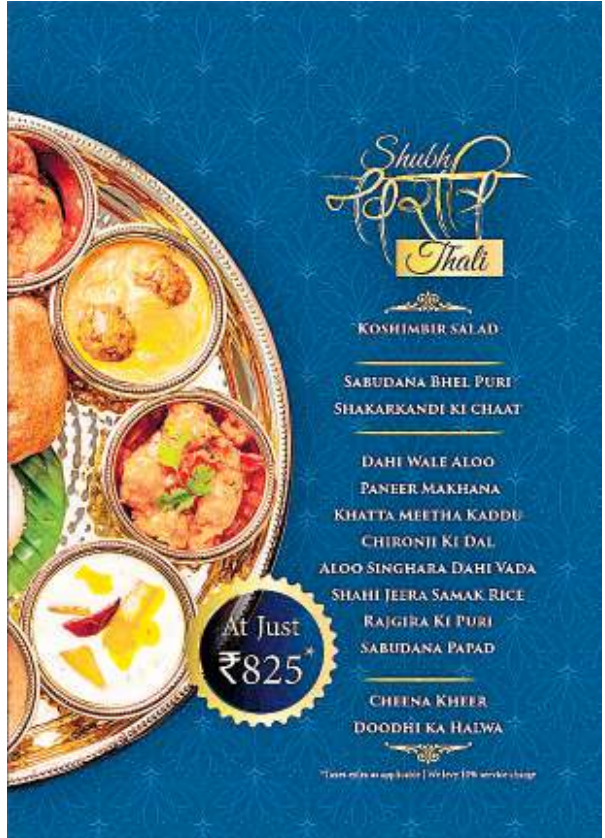
Plan Your Day

A delightful Navratra Menu specially curated for your Festive Indulgence! at Select CITYWALK, Falahari Malai Paneer Tikka (Fresh Cottage Cheese chunks in vrat special creamy marination of cashew nut, cream & cardamom; Cooked in tandoor)

Price: ₹310 plus GST

**Navratra Special Thali**  
(Malai paneer tikka two pcs, kuttu puri two, paneer makhani/shahi, falahari kofta, aloo tamatar subzi, samvat pulao, salad, raita, sabudana papad, vrat wale aloo/banana chips & sweet)

Price: ₹440 plus GST





# MR PERFECTIONIST

From Odisha to Hyderabad, Bibhu Prasad Acharya has left an indelible mark on everything he has touched during his stellar career in bureaucracy. In a freewheeling interview with *The Pioneer*, the 1983-batch IAS officer, who was instrumental in developing Genome Valley and biotech sector, and facilitating over 20 world-class clusters such as Financial District, Mindspace IT Cluster, Sri City SEZ, APSEZ, Vizag, Brandix, Pharma City etc, speaks to Naveena Ghanate about his family background, his schooling, as well as insights into the ups and downs in his life and how he got the tag of being a ‘perfectionist’.



With wife Ranjeev and son Nikhil



With Hampi Acharya along with mother Bijoylaxmi Devi



With PM Narendra Modi at Common Foundation Course for Civil Servants at Statue of Unity, Kevadia, Gujarat in October 2019



With former Governor E.S.L. Narasimhan along with 11 IAS probationers of 2017 batch, allotted to Telangana cadre



Donating for the school on behalf of alumni association to Odisha CM Naveen Patraik

“In my view, the biggest challenge in the government is to avoid cynicism and indifference and remain positive and fully involved to the task on hand – a quality conspicuous by absence in many civil servants

B P ACHARYA



With Vice President Venkaiah Naidu

money was inculcated to me by my father. Thus empathy and helping others has become my motto. I instituted an award in my grandfather's name to be presented every year at the annual conference of Indian Water Works Association (IWWA) for outstanding work in field of water supply and sanitation.

## Met match at Mussoorie

My wife Ranjeev is a batchmate from Jalandhar, Punjab. We developed friendship during our civil services training at Mussoorie and later decided to get married. We got married in Tirupati in 1985. She served as Special Chief Secretary, Education, and has now retired from service.

## Start of career

While Odisha was of course my first choice, I was allotted Andhra Pradesh cadre, based on the zonal system. Depending on the rank and community I belong to, I couldn't make it to Odisha and coming to Andhra Pradesh wasn't a complete shock but a possible choice. My first posting was as the sub-collector, Bhadrachalam and hers was sub-collector, Kothagudem.

Right at the start of our careers, Godavari recorded its worst flood in 1986. Fortunately, we managed to save a lot of lives.

## Was asked to contest for Lok Sabha

I served for six years in Warangal and people wanted me to contest for the Lok Sabha. But I was not interested and I knew it would be challenging. I was the District Development Officer, Zilla Praja Parishad for three years and later worked as Collector and District Magistrate, Warangal from 1990-1993.

Working in Warangal was the high point of my career and I could identify with people, the land and heritage. That's how I brought out a publication on 'Kakatiya Heritage'.

People there used to treat me like a 'son of the soil' and the link remains unbroken. The people from Warangal do reach out to me even now.

## Turning the HMDA around

My most challenging role was my brief stint in HMDA in 2009. The situation was so bad that the HMDA did not even have enough money to even pay my salary. I was fortunate

to be able to turn it around in 10 months and could complete large parts of ORR and finalised the Master Plan for the GHMC area after nearly 45 years. We even allocated the first parcel of government land to the HMRL in Nagole so they could start their activities.

## Dairy development

During one of my stints, I was posted as MD, Vijaya Dairy and I had to compete with the then Chief



Ranjeev and son Nikhil



As toddler



With father Late KC Acharya and elder brother Debi Prasad Acharya

## QUICK BYTES

- **Describe yourself in three words:** Make things happen
- **Languages you speak:** Odia, Telugu, English, Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi
- **What scares you the most:** Uncertainty and anxiety
- **Favourite singer:** Jagjit Singh
- **Fitness regime:** Gym, regular walks.
- **Favourite book:** *The Outsider* by Albert Camus
- **Favourite food:** Maha Prasad offered at Puri Jagannath temple
- **Favourite spot in Telangana:** Boat ride on the Godavari, Papikondalu
- **Last time you were emotional:** I get emotional every day
- **Who do you admire the most:** Mahatma Gandhi has inspired me throughout.
- **If a movie was made about you:** It should be a documentary on Sri City

- **Do you have any regrets:** Perhaps I should have opted for Central cadre at the right time

Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's Heritage group.

We got the best of consultants and reinvented the product. Since I was competing in Chief Minister's dairy, he asked me to contribute to Genome Valley.

## WHO chief's compliment

Recently, WHO chief scientist Dr Sowmya Swaminathan complimented me, saying: "You should be proud of the Genome Valley cluster". She was speaking in the context of Covid-19 vaccines under development there. Her praise was the most satisfying moment for me.

## Manufacturing 'defect'

I have a manufacturing defect - I get 100 per cent involved in anything I take up, I can't allow myself to put in a superficial effort. Making things happen in the government is not easy. In fact, it's very difficult and requires a lot of effort and vigorous persuasion.

During my stint at the APIIC, I turned it around. When I left the Corporation, its turnover was Rs 5,000 crore, up from the merely Rs 65 crore when I took over.

Yet I was made a scapegoat in the political crossfire in 2012, for no fault of mine. My conscience is clear that I was treating these investments on their merit. It was a traumatic time and my family suffered. I turned to spiritual introspection and began reading Gita, Mahabharata and Ramayana. It was ashram. Eventually, I believe 'Dharma Rakshati Rakshatah' (Dharma protects those who follow it).

## Do not want to retire

Everyone who joins the Civil Services aspires to become the Chief Secretary. There was some professional regret but it was made up with work done at MCRHRD-IT.

At the MCRHRD-IT, we have trained over 80,000 field staff of the State under DoPT training e-Learning programme during the last three years and over 10,000 trainees on virtual mode too during the last six months of the lockdown.

I will turn 60 on October 30. I am not tired and wouldn't want to retire. I like to do something in the Industries sector. In the context of pandemic, the MSME sector needs to be revamped and that is one area I am looking at and another is Manufacturing sector.

## Publish a book on cartoons

I may come out with a book based on my cartoons. I have been drawing cartoons since I was a child inspired by RK Lakshman. I have about 200-300 cartoons. I like the classical style of RK Lakshman black and white, as colours tend to distract from the punchline. As a civil servant, there are some restrictions, but when I retire, I would be able to take a political stand on issues.

## Son resents recommendations

My son Nikhil was born in Warangal. He is a filmmaker and working as creative strategy consultant in London. He is very particular that I shouldn't talk about him and resents recommendations.

His standards of ethics are perhaps more stricter than mine. I wouldn't say I am easygoing as a father, but instead, I am firm. I get involved in so many things. Letting things go is something I can't do, I wish I could be easygoing. Trying to micromanage everyone's lives causes stress and tension.

