

## OPINION 6

NEPAL STARING AT  
POLITICAL DISQUIET

## ANALYSIS 7

NIX SOVEREIGN GUARANTEE  
CLAUSE FOR THE NaBFD

## SPORTS 12

CAPTAIN  
PUNJAB

HYDERABAD, TUESDAY APRIL 13, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3

NTR'S NEXT, A  
PAN-INDIA FILM,  
WITH KORATALA

Page 11

www.dailypioneer.com

NO MEALS ON DOMESTIC FLIGHTS UNDER  
2 HOURS TO CUT COVID RISK: CENTRE

There will be no meals on domestic flights under two hours to minimise the risk of Covid infections, the Civil Aviation Ministry said on Monday. Battling a ferocious second wave of infections, India is undergoing its worst phase of the coronavirus and overtook Brazil on Monday for the second spot in the tally of nations with the highest cases. Issuing a set of new rules for flights, the ministry on Monday said, airlines can serve pre-packaged meals with disposable cutlery and plates on flights longer than two hours. "Crew shall wear a fresh set of gloves for every meal/beverage service, the servicing of in-flight meals to be staggered among the adjacent seats as far as possible," it said.

61 STUDENTS TEST POSITIVE IN IIM-  
CALCUTTA'S WORST COVID OUTBREAK

As many as 61 students at the prestigious Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Calcutta have tested positive for the coronavirus since April 2 and are currently in isolation on campus. Two buildings in which every single-occupancy room has an attached toilet have been earmarked for the students who started reporting symptoms since the end of March. Three doctors are in charge and the institute has tied up with top Kolkata hospitals for regular guidance on home care. More than 570 students have left the campus since the beginning of April. Some 335 are still on campus, including the 61 students in isolation.

RS 50,000 FINE AS SUPREME COURT  
DISMISSES "FRIVOLOUS" PETITION ON QURAN

A petition asking for some verses to be removed from the Quran was dismissed today by the Supreme Court, which also fined the petitioner ₹ 50,000 for filing a "frivolous" request. Petitioner Sayed Wasim Rizvi, a former Uttar Pradesh Shia Waqf Board chairman, had called for removing 26 verses in the Quran that he said were not part of its original text. In the controversial petition, he said the verses violated the law of the land and were used as "justification" to attack non-believers and civilians. Are you seriously pressing the petition," a three judge-bench led by Rohinton Nariman questioned, calling it "absolutely frivolous".

CRESCENT MOON NOT SIGHTED,  
RAMZAN FROM WEDNESDAY

The Central Ruiyat-e-Hilal Committee confirmed that the crescent moon was not sighted over Hyderabad and its surroundings on Monday, indicating that the Holy Month of Ramzan would start from Wednesday. Led by Maulana Qubool Pasha Shuttari, members of the committee scoured the cloud-covered sky from atop the Hussaini Building at Moazzam Jahi Market but to no avail. They then waited for news from the southern states. By about 7.30 pm, when it became clear that the crescent was not sighted anywhere across India, the committee confirmed that the first roza of Ramzan-2021 would start from Wednesday onwards.



## Centre puts brakes to TS' ambitious vaccine drive

■ After CS letter, 3.62 lakh doses expected to reach State

NAVEENA GHANATE  
■ HYDERABAD

The Central government has effectively applied brakes to the Telangana government's ambitions, leaving the state with little choice but to slow down the Covid vaccination drive due to shortage of doses.

Following a letter from Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar requesting 30 lakh doses of vaccines, the Centre reportedly will be sending 3.62 lakh doses on Monday night.

Of these 3.62 lakh doses, two lakh are Covaxin and remaining are Covishield.

This is just about 12 percent of the quantity requested by the state.

Pointing that Telangana was left with only 5.66 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccine that would last for 3 days at maximum, Somesh Kumar had on April 10 requested Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bushan to urgently provide at least 30 lakh doses of vaccine for the next 15 days. However, that was not to be.

The State's ambitious target to vaccinate 2 lakh people per day cannot be met if the supply is so low. The new stock would be consumed in merely two days and the state is again at the mercy of the Centre.

As on Monday, Telangana would have received 26.78 lakh doses, of which 22.58 lakh have been consumed.

Not just Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Delhi, and Punjab have reported vaccine shortage. The states sought immediate replenishment of vaccine stocks to meet new targets set by the Central government as part of Tika Utsav.

India now has second-highest  
number of cases, passes Brazil

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has surpassed Brazil to record the second-highest number of Covid-19 cases at 1,35,27,717, as a record 1,68,912 new infections were reported in a day. The active cases have surpassed the 12-lakh mark, while the death toll increased to 1,70,179 with 904 new fatalities in a day, the highest since October 18, 2020, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated at 8 am on Monday. The national Covid-19 recovery rate has fallen below 90 percent.

According to the Johns Hopkins University (JHU) data, India has overtaken Brazil, which is now at the third spot in the Covid tally with 1,34,82,023 cases. The US has the highest number of cases at 3,11,98,055 while globally 13,61,36,954 cases have been reported. Registering a steady increase for the 33rd day in a row, the active cases have increased to 12,01,009 in India comprising 8.88 percent of the total infections, while the recovery rate has further dropped to 89.86 percent.

## Panel recommends Sputnik V for use in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An expert panel of India's central drug authority has recommended granting approval to Russian Covid-19 vaccine Sputnik V for restricted emergency use with certain conditions, paving the way for a third vaccine to be available in the country, sources said on Monday.

The Subject Expert Committee (SEC) of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) on Monday deliberated upon the application of Dr Reddy's Laboratories seeking emergency use authorisation for Sputnik V. "After detailed deliberation for grant of permission for restricted use in emergency situations subject to

No second dose  
during Tika UtsavOnly 16% in  
Telangana got second  
dose of vaccine

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Though 21.58 lakh doses have been administered three months into the vaccination drive, only 16.25 percent of those eligible could get the second dose of vaccine in Telangana so far. Shortage of vaccine doses is directly impacting the common man i.e. people above 45 who have taken first shot. In Telangana only 3 lakh people of the 18 lakh who took shots have received the second dose of vaccine. Except healthcare workers, hardly anybody is getting a second dose. Of the 2.3 lakh healthcare workers who took the first dose, nearly 1.7 lakh managed to get the second dose. About 75 percent of healthcare workers and 45 percent of frontline warriors have taken two doses of vaccines. Of the 1.5 lakh frontline workers in Telangana who took the first dose, 70,398 got the second dose.



## TELUGU CHIEF MINISTERS

Pioneers of the  
'Work From Home'SNCN ACHARYULU  
■ HYDERABAD

While the Secretariat is considered the heart of administration in any state, it appears that the heads of government in both the Telugu States do not believe so.

The Secretariat consists of various arms of the Government – each department is headed politically by a Minister and administratively by seasoned bureaucrats with the designation of a Secretary. Undoubtedly, the Secretariat plays a crucial role in state administration.

The Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary are heads of the administration politically and administratively respectively. But the incumbent Chief Ministers of

both the Telugu States have changed the Secretariat culture.

Usually the Chief Minister, Ministers and Secretaries attend the Secretariat daily to perform their duties. Whatever may be the reason, both K Chandrasekhar Rao of Telangana and YS Jaganmohan Reddy of AP have stopped coming to the Secretariat. KCR, his first term as Chief Minister, attended the Secretariat regularly in the initial days but later stopped citing "Vasthu Dosham". He started working from his camp office.

In his second term, KCR has not yet attended Secretariat at all. Meanwhile, Jagan is also following in the footsteps of his Telangana counterpart.

Mamata banned  
from campaigning  
for 24 hours

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mamata Banerjee was banned from campaigning in Bengal for 24 hours this evening over speeches that the Election Commission said violated the poll code. The Chief Minister was accused of breaking the law with her comments on Muslim votes and for allegedly urging voters to revolt against central security forces.

SENSEX NOSEDIVES  
1,708 PTS AMID  
MASSIVE SELLOFF

-8-



The Pioneer wishes its readers, advertisers, suppliers and agents a happy Ugadi As our offices will remain closed today (13-04-2021), there will be no issue of the paper tomorrow (14-04-2021).

— RESIDENT EDITOR

People of Tirupati  
observe all, will back  
BJP in by-election

2

India denounces  
linking climate  
issues to  
economic recovery

5

## TODAY

## ALMANAC

## Month &amp; Paksham:

Chaitra &amp; Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Pratipada 10:16 am

Nakshatram : Ashwini 02:19 am

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

Rahukalam: 03:22 pm – 04:55 pm

Yamagandam: 09:10 am – 10:43 am

Varjyam: 09:51 am – 11:38 am

12:00 am – 02:57 am

Gulika: 12:16 pm – 01:49 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 06:16 am – 08:03 am

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:51 am – 12:41 pm

HYDERABAD  
WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy

Temp: 34/

Humidity: 57%

Sunrise: 06:01 am

Sunset: 06:31 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated April 12, 2021 5:00 PM

New pensions, ration  
cards soon, says KTRKTR's dig at BJP: Centre collects money from Telangana,  
spends elsewhere, these are not 'Achche Din' but 'Bure Din'ML MELLY MAITREYI  
■ HYDERABAD

IT, Industry and Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister KT Rama Rao on Monday said that new pensions and ration cards for which the eligible beneficiaries have been waiting will be issued soon.

The Minister and TRS Working President who visited Warangal city in connection with various

development works undertaken by the government at a cost of Rs 1,700 crore addressed a public meeting at Quila Warangal.

The BJP government did nothing for Warangal and people should realise that the Prime Minister who promised to deposit Rs 15 lakh in the account of every citizen by bringing black money from abroad failed to keep his word.

Rains in next  
4-5 days: IMD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Several parts of the country are likely to receive rainfall in the next five days due to different cyclonic circulations, the India Meteorological Department said on Monday.

According to the IMD, under the influence of trough, scattered to widespread rainfall and gusty winds are likely over southwest peninsula in the next five days.

## Pandemic pushes vehicle sales to 6-yr low

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The coronavirus pandemic has pushed India's passenger vehicle sales to their lowest in six years, annual data from an auto industry body showed on Monday, with the sector bracing for further fallout from a recent surge in cases.

India on Monday overtook Brazil to become the second-worst affected country globally, with daily Covid-19 infections soaring and



fewer than 4 percent of its population of 1.4 billion people estimated to have been vaccinated.

The Indian auto sector was already facing a "deep structural slowdown" even before the pandemic and together this has pushed back sales by many years, Kenichi Ayukawa, president of the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), said.

"Recovery from here will require

time and efforts, by all stakeholders," said Ayukawa, who is also managing director of Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest carmaker by sales.

Passenger vehicle sales fell 2.24 percent in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2021 to 2.71 million, with automakers such as Ford Motor and Volkswagen reporting falls of over 20 percent compared with an 8.5 percent drop for domestic rival Maruti, which sells one in every two cars in India, data from SIAM showed.

## Vaccinated people better protected: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Covid vaccines protect against serious illness but transmissibility can still continue and inoculated people can pass on the infection to others, say scientists, warning against complacency in those who stop maintaining protocol after they get their jobs.

Transmissibility from vaccinated persons can be a risk factor until global coverage is achieved, top experts said as India's Covid numbers escalated sharply, reaching 1,35,27,717



(1.35 crore/13.5 million) with 1,68,912 new cases on Monday to make it the country with the second highest number of cases after the US.

Vaccination is simply one of the many different strategies we have to deal with in the pandemic. However, it is not a magical one-stop solution, immunologist Satyajit Rath, from the New Delhi's National Institute of Immunology, told.

None of the vaccines currently available provide protection against transmission of the virus. Statistically

speaking, infection post-vaccination is likely to be milder than one without, added Vineeta Bal, an immunologist from Pune's Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research.

As researchers around the world try and figure out how well Covid vaccines prevent vaccinated people from transmitting the virus to others, the experts stressed on the need for masks and physical distance regardless of the vaccination status. This has to continue until the majority of people are vaccinated.



# People of Tirupati observe all, will back BJP in by-election

Prior to West Bengal poll results, the Trinamool Congress has conceded defeat to the BJP victory, if Prashant Kishor's statements to a section of journalists and advocates are any indication. However vehemently Kishor may deny, one thing is clear that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is immensely popular among the people of West Bengal. His detractors have been portraying Modi as 'anti-farmer' and 'pro-rich' ever since he came to power, but the people have rejected this campaign. The Opposition, in spite of being rejected by the people, pursues its malicious campaign provoking minorities and farmers against the BJP. The people have shown time and again that they are not gullible. The people have placed their irrevocable faith

in the BJP, which is seen as the only party that can extend pious, corruption-free government without taking recourse to vote bank politics and practising pseudo-secularism to safeguard the country's cultural and spiritual values. The will also be seen in Andhra Pradesh. The days when people of Andhra compare the atrocities perpetrated over the past seven decades with the development witnessed under Modi rule during the past six years is not far away. Rayalaseema region, of which Tirupati is a part, had never lagged behind in power as leaders from the region ruled AP 12 times. In fact, one person from each district in Rayalaseema has become the CM; some held the post twice. Unfortunately, they never tried to drive away the back-

**The will also be seen in Andhra Pradesh. The days when people of Andhra compare the atrocities perpetrated over the past seven decades with the development witnessed under Modi rule during the past six years is not far away.**

wardness of the region or end the unemployment there. They failed to bring major industries to the region. Of the seven backward districts, Anantapur, Kurnool and Kadapa belong to this region. As soon as Modi came to power, he completed the 123-km-long Nandyal-Yerraguntla railway line, which has been shelved for over 26 years. Similarly, he took steps to lay new railway track between Kadapa - Bangalore, Nadikudi-Srikalahasti, and Obulavari - Venkatachalam and double

the Guntakal-Guntur and Gooty-Dharmavaram railway track. He took steps to electrification of Guntakal-Bellary, Krishnapatnam - Venkatachalam railway track. This is besides implementing several infrastructure development projects worth crores. Under Sagar Mala project, 21 out of the 83 railway projects have been allotted to AP, of which four to Rayalaseema region. The people returned to the LS six times the present Congress contestant. What



did the Congress do to develop the constituency? MPs of both the Congress and YSRCP did nothing for the constituency. The drainage system has not been improved in Tirupati. As a result, the people have been encountering mosquito menace. Dengue has claimed lives of hundreds, including children, in

this region. The temple city lacks proper drinking water facility in spite of lakhs of people visiting it daily. Earlier, the BJP MP of Tirupati, Venkataswamy developed the region with his MPLADS funds. The people still remember this. The NDA government set up several Central institutions in Tirupati including the IIT, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Institute of Tourism Management, Indian Culinary Institute, the National Institute of Ocean Technology. The Centre declared Tirupati as a 'Smart City' and is implementing 62 projects worth Rs 2,000 crore. During Modi rule, Tirupati airport was elevated as an international airport. Industrial estates,

mega food projects, industrial corridors, expansion of National Highway and other infrastructure development projects are being implemented in the region. The BJP has been working to develop the pilgrimage centre of Tirupati on a par with Modi's constituency Varanasi. The local political outfits did not do anything to develop Tirupati. For them, the BJP is the main rival and hence they sling mud on it. There is no greater innocence than targeting Modi, who vowed to achieve equal development of all regions and develop the backward regions, to derive political mileage. They are not able to realise that the more they criticise Modi and the BJP, the greater would be the loss to them. What is shocking is that the

CM inviting the head priest of the temple to his residence and make him praise him as Lord Vishnu. Nobody will have any objection if the head priest, if he has such devotion for CM, invite the CM to his house and render ekanta seva. But the priest who works in a pious place like Tirumala praising a politician as Lord Vishnu has hurt the sentiments of millions of Hindus. In this land where litterateur-saints like Annamayya were born, the comments of Ramana Deekshitulu are a clear indication of political deterioration of the situation. It may be remembered that Annamayya refused to praise the ruler of the day Saluva Narasingaraya with the same mouth that praises Lord Hari. That is why people see values like piety, transparency, quality and efficiency in the BJP.

# Minister skips road show; makes his presence felt through Twitter

ML MELLY MAITREY  
■ HYDERABAD

TRS working president KT Rama Rao may not have physically taken part in the Nagarjuna Sagar bye election campaign on behalf of Party candidate Nomula Bhagat Kumar but he is making his presence felt through the social media. The party leaders did indicate that KTR may undertake a road show covering all mandals in the Nagarjuna Sagar constituency over two days ahead of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's much awaited public meeting on Halia-Anumolu border area in the constituency on April 14. However with the party leaders led by Ministers Thalassani Srinivas Yadav, Mohammed Mahmood Ali, Jagadishwar Reddy and others camping in the constituency for the last 12 days and reaching every village, KTR focused his attention on development works being taken up by government in civic bodies as the date of election for Warangal, Khammam and five other municipalities will be notified any time by the State Election Commission. TRS Party sources said that the party also kept in mind the election expenditure for the bye election and did not want to exceed it by adding the road shows by

KTR and it explains why he chose other platforms like social media, Twitter to share his thoughts, views and campaign online for the party candidate Bhagath. Participating in face to face on Sunday with the Twitter hashtag 'Ask KTR' with Netizens, KTR predicted that the TRS candidate would register an impressive victory with the blessings of people. Ministers' campaign continues in Nagarjuna Sagar. Meanwhile, the TRS Ministers have been maintaining the same tempo in the Nagarjuna Sagar constituency and have been recounting the welfare programmes and development works taken up by the TRS government and seeking votes on the basis of government's performance. Thalassani Srinivas Yadav and Srinivas Goud campaigning along with Nomula Bhagat in Anumala mandal said Nagarjuna Sagar's further development was possible only under the TRS. Congress leader Jana Reddy served as MLA for seven terms but TRS ensured greater development to Nagarjuna Sagar constituency in just six years. Chief Minister Chandrasekhar Rao was striving with the objective of welfare for all sections and reviving hereditary professions for strengthening the rural economy.



# KTR: BJP leaders' words exposed their character and lack of culture

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TRS working president and IT, Industry and MA&UD Minister KT Rama Rao has given final warning to BJP leaders that they will no longer tolerate abusive language against the Chief Minister and TRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao. KTR in a media conference after participating in several programmes related to development works in Warangal on Monday regretted that BJP leaders were using intemperate lan-

guage without respect for KCR's age and status as the Chief Minister and the man who led Telangana movement. The TRS leaders had been patient but the BJP leaders were instigating even young boys to make impolite remarks against the Chief Minister through social media platforms. The BJP leaders were making cheap comments against the Chief Minister in their public meetings. It only exposed their character and lack of culture, KTR said.

Lashing out at BJP leaders, KTR said they too could use such language against the Prime Minister Modi but it was not their culture. Yet their patience should not be taken for granted, he warned. KTR said that they would soon bring out a white paper on how many crores they sanctioned to Warangal and BJP leaders should be ready for a healthy contest and debate and if they have guts, they should bring double the amount of funds to Warangal.

# India now has second-highest number of cases, passes Brazil

Continued from page 1

Before the latest surge, the active caseload was at its highest at 10,17,754 on September 18, 2020 and had decreased to 1, 35,926 on February 12. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,21,56,529, while the case fatality rate has further dropped to 1.26 percent, the data stated. India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16.

# Pioneers of the 'WFH'

Continued from page 1

In the last two years, Jagan was seen working from the AP Secretariat hardly ten times. Like KCR, Jagan also prefers working from his camp office at Tadepalli. In undivided Andhra Pradesh, all the Chief Ministers used to come to the Secretariat regularly - most days, they would be in their office at 10.30 am and return at around 6 pm to their official residence. After bifurcation too, this trend continued with former AP Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu coming to the Secretariat regularly. Chief Ministers conduct departmental review meetings with the Minister, Secretary and other officials concerned. Like their respective bosses, the Ministers too have stopped coming to the

Secretariat in both the Telugu states. The situation is such that the IAS officers are now spending more time at the camp office of their respective Chief Minister than in the Secretariat. Old-timers recall Jalagam Vengala Rao with fondness for his punctuality and work ethics, compared to other Chief Ministers. "People used to set time on their watches upon seeing Vengala Rao's convoy pass on its way to the Secretariat," they say. "With the Telugu CMs turning their camp offices into their regular office, the Secretariat itself appears forlorn since the Ministers, Secretaries and other IAS officers are not seen. In fact, both KCR and Jagan had adopted the 'Work From Home' culture much before Covid-19 entered the country," they said.

# No second dose during Tika Utsav

Continued from page 1

But when it comes to people above 45 years, 14.69 lakh took the first dose while only 58,245 managed to get the second dose in Telangana which is less than 4 percent. People who are booking appointments and getting confirmation are being sent back by hospitals. Understandably, hospitals have prioritised the first dose and people hoping to get their second shot are forced to keep on waiting. Many senior citizens are unable to get their second dose. Sushil, a citizen, said, "My

parents took Covaxin on March 9 at the ESI Sanathnagar. They were supposed to take their second dose but ESI has refused to give it to them citing lack of stock. Other private hospitals have also refused, citing preference for those who have taken first shot of vaccine from them." Another citizen N Anwar said, "I had confirmed appointment for getting vaccinated for a second dose of Covaxin. Although the appointment was confirmed last week, upon reaching the hospital they refused to administer it, citing non-availability of

Covaxin." Senior citizens are doing rounds of hospitals for vaccines but to no avail. Hospitals are voluntarily informing people about shortages on the second dose. Mahender Yadav said, "I got my parents vaccinated with the first dose in Yashodha at Somajiguda. A hospital employee there told me to make a call one day before we planned the second dose and check the availability of the vaccine. We are not getting vaccines from the Government as expected, so the second dose will be delayed."

# Rains in next 4-5 days

Continued from page 1

The IMD said isolated heavy rainfall is also likely over south and ghat areas of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Mahe, coastal and south interior Karnataka during April 14-16. Another cyclonic circulation lies over southwest Madhya Pradesh and neighbouring areas. Under its influence, isolated rainfall with thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds (30-40 kmph) is very likely over Madhya

Pradesh, Vidarbha, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Gangetic West Bengal and Odisha during next 4-5 days and over Jharkhand during next 24 hours. It is very likely to cause scattered to fairly widespread rainfall with thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds during April 14-17 over western Himalayan region, and light, isolated to scattered rainfall with thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds over adjoining plains during April 15-17.

# New pensions, ration cards soon, says KTR

Continued from page 1

"The Union Government promised to sanction a coach factory at Kazipet soon after Telangana was formed but went back on its assurance. The prices of LPG, petrol and diesel have increased steeply. A LPG cylinder cost Rs 440 when Modi assumed office and now it touched Rs 1,000," KTR said. He pointed out that prices of vegetables and essential com-

modities have gone up and the government increased prices of fertilisers. These are not 'Aache din' but 'bure din', he quipped taking a dig at BJP Government. The Telangana government paid Rs 2.73 lakh-crore towards taxes in the last six years and the Centre gave the State only Rs 1.4 lakh-crore. While money was collected from Telangana, it was being spent elsewhere, he said. Expressing happiness over

the good turnout, he said whether it was an election meeting or any other meeting, people attended TRS meetings as they believed in the leadership of K Chandrasekhar Rao. KTR disclosed that while Rs 300 crore was allocated for Warangal Municipal Corporation in Budget for 2021-22 and for providing Mission Bhagiratha drinking water scheme, the government spent Rs 1,580 crore in Warangal. KTR earlier inaugurated

Mission Bhagiratha water tank with a capacity of eight lakh litres at Rampur to provide drinking water to people as Ugadi gift and pointed out that the government would tap connection only for Re 1. He also inaugurated Rs 24 crore integrated market, modern vegetable market constructed at a cost of Rs 6.24 crore and a Rs 60 crore RoB. He laid foundation for many schemes- 600 2BHK houses at Dupakunta at a cost of Rs 31.8 crore and another 200 2BHK houses at

Desaipeta for journalists, Haj House at Mandi Bazaar, Shadi Khana at LB Nagar in Warangal and distributed house pattas to the poor at Garibnagar. KTR said that the Chief Minister has been taking special interest in developing Warangal into a beautiful city. Just as people gave their verdict in every election in favour of KCR, he appealed for blessings of people in the upcoming Warangal Municipal Corporation election to the TRS.

# Pandemic pushes...

Continued from page 1

That was offset by higher sales from new entrants such as Kia Motors and SAIC Motor's British brand MG Motors, as well as local rival Tata Motors. Sales of trucks, a barometer of economic activity, tumbled 21 percent to an 11-year low, while motorcycle and scooter sales fell 13 percent to their lowest level in seven years, the data showed.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
<b>GOLD</b>	
₹ 47,460 (10 gm)	
₹ -50	▲
<b>SILVER</b>	
₹ 72,100 (1kg)	
₹ 400	▲
CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
Dressed/With Skin	₹184
Without Skin	₹210
Broiler at Farm	₹127
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	421
VIJAYAWADA	393
VISAKHAPATNAM	505
RETAIL PRICE	₹4.01 (in Hyderabad)

# Vaccinated people better...

Continued from page 1

The scientists also batted for universal vaccination, saying it would provide strong community resistance to severe local outbreaks. Cautioning against lowering of the guard even after vaccination, they said some people who get inoculated early may lose their immunological memory over a period of time and become vulnerable again. Vaccination remains an individual protection, not a community protection, until we achieve almost global vaccination coverage. It is possible that vaccine-resistant virus variants will emerge, necessitating steady watchfulness and the rapid development-deployment of next-generation vaccines, Rath said. Bal agreed that disease severity will be low in vaccinated individuals as compared to

those without vaccination. Hence being vaccinated is a better state of affairs at a population level as well as individually, Bal said. Rath noted that if an individual is effectively vaccinated, meaning they develop robust long-lasting levels of neutralising antibodies, then reinfection with vaccine-sensitive SARS-CoV-2 strains, even if it happens, is likely to be associated with only mild illness. On the other hand, he said, a new infection with vaccine-resistant SARS-CoV-2 strains might still cause severe illness in some cases. So yes, vaccinated individuals could still pass on the infection, though the chance and the dose passed on would be lower. Of course, if they are infected with a future vaccine-resistant virus strain, then efficient transmission could occur, he explained.

# Mamata banned from campaigning for 24 hours

Continued from page 1

Mamata Banerjee announced a sit-in protest against the ban. "To protest against the undemocratic and unconstitutional decision of the Election Commission of India, I will sit on dharna tomorrow at Gandhi Murti, Kolkata from 12 noon," she tweeted. To protest against the undemocratic and unconstitutional decision of the Election Commission of India, I will sit on dharna tomorrow at Gandhi Murti, Kolkata from 12 noon.

# Panel recommends...

Continued from page 1

According to sources, around 10 crore doses of the vaccine (Sputnik V) is likely to be imported for emergency use in the country in the next six months. The vaccine is indicated for active immunisation to prevent Covid-19 in individuals aged 18 years and above and is to be administered intramuscularly in two doses of 0.5 ml each with an interval of 21 days. It has to be stored at -18 degrees Celsius. According to recommendations by the SEC, the firm has been asked to submit revised factsheets to CDSCO after incorporating the latest safety and efficacy data and other suggestions made during the meeting, another source said.

Besides, the firm should submit the safety, efficacy and immunogenicity data from the ongoing clinical trials in India and Russia for review as and when available. The firm also has to submit safety data including the data on AEFI and AESI with due analysis every 15 days for the first two months and monthly thereafter till the completion of the ongoing clinical trial in the country. The SEC earlier had reviewed the application by Dr Reddy's in two meetings earlier held on April 1 and February 24. The health ministry earlier had said three more COVID-19 vaccines by Zydus Cadila, Biological E and Genovva are also in the pipeline and are in advanced clinical trials in India.

**SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED**  
OPERATION DIVISION: JACHERLA  
SHORT TENDER NOTICE

TENDER NOTICE NO. 01/2021-22  
Sealed tenders are invited from eligible contractors carrying out various Electrical Works in Operation Division, Jachcherla in Mahabubnagar Circle. Issue Last date: 23-04-2021 upto 17.00 Hrs. Submission Last date: 24-04-2021 upto 16.00 Hrs. All information can be obtained from the website : [www.spsouthpower.com](http://www.spsouthpower.com) Fax No. 08542-233380 & Phone No. 08542-233380

R.O. No. : 10082-PP/CL/ADVT/1.0/2021-22  
SD: K.V. HARASIMHA REDDY  
DIVISIONAL ENGINEER, OPERATION: JACHERLA.

**GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**  
GHC

Tender Notice No. 01/SES/SHPP-WZ/GHMC/2021-22  
Name of Work: Rehabilitation of Weling of Box Culvert on proposed 150 feet road near Sidhar Theatre in Ward no.110, Chandanagar Division, GHMC. Estimate Amount (in lakhs): Rs. 120.00 Lakhs. Start Date: 15.04.2021 at 2.00 PM Last date & time for receipt of Bids: 17.04.2021 at 03.00 PM. Name & Address: Officer Cell No. 01 Superintending Engineer (SHPP/WZ), GHMC, 906900405. Further details can be seen at: 'e-Procurement' @ [www.telangana.gov.in](http://www.telangana.gov.in) or can be called Office of the Superintending Engineer (SHPP/WZ), GHMC in office working hours

R.O. No. : 10072-PP/CL/ADVT/1.0/2021-22  
SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER  
SHPP/WZ, GHMC

**GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**  
GHC

e-Procurement Notice

NTN.No.02/EE-74RZ/GHMC/2021-22  
Name of Work: SI No. 1 to 50 Estimate cost (in lakhs): Rs. 201.02 Lakhs, download Start Date 12.04.2021 at 5.30 PM Last date & time for receipt of Bids: 17.04.2021 at 03.30 PM. Name & Address: officer Cell No. SBI B Ramulu EE, Santhosh Nagar Circle-7, Channarayana Zone Masjid Ground, Darab Jung Colony, Santhosh Nagar, Hyderabad Ph. No. 9381673271. For further details can be seen at: e-procurement @ [www.telangana.gov.in](http://www.telangana.gov.in)

R.O. No. : 10086-PP/CL/ADVT/1.0/2021-22  
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, SANTOSH NAGAR CIRCLE - 7,  
CHANNARAYANA ZONE GHMC







NAGARJUNASAGAR BYPOLL

Left parties dump Congress for TRS

K VENKATESHWARLU  
■ HYDERABAD

In a blow to the Congress, the Left parties have decided to support the TRS nominee Nomula Bhagat in the Nagarjunasagar bypoll.

It may be recalled that the Congress addressed letters to the CPI and CPM seeking their support. However, the leaders of the parties in erstwhile Nalgonda have decided to extend their support to the TRS candidate much to the chagrin of the Congress leaders.

The Left Parties have had a meeting at Mukundapuram in Nidumanuru mandal in Nagarjunasagar constituency on April 10, it is learnt. In the meeting, the Left parties have reportedly decided to extend their support to the TRS. Left parties' district secretaries NelliKanti Sathyan and Mudireddy Sudhakar Reddy and former MLC Cherukupalli Seetharamulu, Thummala Veera Reddy, Palla Narsimha Reddy, Laxmipathi, Narsimha and others participated in the meeting.

Though the State parties of two Left parties are maintaining strategic silence on extending support to the TRS in the Nagarjunasagar by-elections, the District Committees have decided not to give support to



national parties--BJP and Congress-- and decided to extend their support to regional parties and as a part of it, they decided to extend their support to the TRS. The Left parties are against the BJP not only at the national-level but also state-level.

Speaking to The Pioneer, AICC official spokesperson Dasoju Sravan, said: "Left Parties are sold out to the ruling party. It is proved time and time again during the Huzurnagar by-elections, GHMC elections, graduate elections, and now Nagarjunasagar bypoll. Left parties are playing a Hippocratic role of dividing the anti-establishment vote rather than making an effort to unite the anti-establishment vote. Red flags are surrendered to the Pink flag."

It may be recalled that the CPI extended its support to Congress in the 2018 Assembly

elections. However, the CPI distanced itself from the Congress from the Lok Sabha elections held in 2019. However, the CPM had extended its support to the Bahujana Left Party (BLP). However, the CPM dissolved the BLP experiment, which utterly failed in the 2018 elections.

Meanwhile, both the Left parties failed to field their candidates in ongoing Nagarjunasagar by-elections. The CPI had a State Secretariat meeting and sent its resolution to the National party. However, the party didn't announce its decision.

While the Left parties strategically have thrown the burden on the district parties suggesting them not to disclose their decision to the media, and not to participate in the election campaign. Both the parties have also suggested the district parties to transfer the Left parties' votes to the TRS' candidate while speaking with the cadre, one of the CPM leaders on condition of anonymity told to The Pioneer.

A political analyst has opined that the TRS has got an additional strength with the unofficial support of the Left parties. The ruling party already has an official supporter AIMIM party.

Ex-CPM MLA Kunja Bojji passes away

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Bhadrachalam MLA and CPM senior leader Kunja Bojji passed away on Monday. He was 95 and survived by six children. He breathed his last in a private hospital in Bhadrachalam in which he had been undergoing treatment for the past few days for ill health. Bojji's wife Lalaamma died three years ago.

Kunja Bojji was born in Adavi Venkanna Gudem village in Vararamachandra Puram mandal in united Andhra Pradesh. Bojji took united Communist party membership in 1952. He lost sarpanch election of Ramavaram village in Vararamachandra Puram mandal in 1970 with one vote. It was his first election. Bojji took part in several people's movements to solve the problems of the poor tribals and others in the Agency area. With his movements for the party development and to find solutions to the problems of people, he was referred to as 'Agency Sundaraiiah'.

Bojji won as an MLA for the first time in 1985 from Bhadrachalam Assembly constituency on the CPM ticket. Bojji also won the elections in 1989 and 1994 with the support of TDP and registered a hatrick by winning three times continuously.

All set for auctioning of Trident Sugar Factory

R SATYANARAYANA REDDY  
■ ZAHEERABAD

The Sangareddy district authorities have fixed the time to dispose of the Trident Sugar Factory, earlier the Nizam Sugar Factory. In fact, the factory was set up on the outskirts of Kotturu (B) village in Zaheerabad mandal.

On one hand, the government has been extending support to the 'Save Visakhapatnam Steel Plant' agitation while on the other hand, the local TRS leadership paying no attention to the problem, bemoaned farmers and factory workers

The local people have been questioning the double standards of the government on the sugar factory issue. A ruling TRS leader, who staged a fast demanding that the government clear dues to the sugar cane farmers and commence crushing in the sugar factory surprisingly turned a blind eye when the government deciding to dispose of the factory.

District Collector Hanmantha Rao has decided to auction the factory in the second week of May to clear dues of sugarcane farmers. The decision would affect the 200 workers directly and 1,500 indirectly. The decision would drive over 2,000 families on to the streets.

The fate of thousands of sugar cane farmers under the jurisdiction of the factory hangs in balance. The workers, who regard the closure of the factory as only temporary, are not able to digest the news of the permanent closure of the



District Collector Hanmantha Rao has decided to auction the factory in the second week of May to clear dues of sugarcane farmers. The decision would affect the 200 workers directly and 1,500 indirectly.

factory.

The farmers demanded that the cane commissioner, revenue, and police officials, who visited the factory recently, take steps to reopen the factory and clear their dues.

The management of Trident Sugar factory has been delaying payment of bills to sugarcane supplies for over two years. The crushing season for 2019-20 commenced rather late on December 3. During the season 1.11 lakh tonnes of sugar was crushed. Against payment of dues to the tune of Rs 34.31 crore, the factory management could clear only Rs 21.61 crore dues. The factory has suspended the

2020-21 crushing season temporarily.

The sugar cane farmers staged protests in front of the factory demanding payment of dues to them by the factory. The farmers and factory workers have been asking the ruling TRS government to mount pressure on the factory management to get their dues cleared and factory reopened.

They demand local TRS MLA Manik Rao, MP BB Patil and MLC Faridoddin to intervene in the matter and get the factory reopened. Otherwise, they urge the government to hand over the management to other factories or the farmers and workers.

The factory was set up in Kotturu (B) village by the then Congress government in 1972 due to the efforts of the then MLA late M Bagha Reddy.

The factory --Nizam Sugar Madhunagar unit III--was set up on a 115-acre site. Residential quarters were built for officials and workers. The factory was run from 1972 to 2002. The then CM N Chandrababu Naidu disposed of the sugar factory in 2002 to Adikesavulu Naidu for Rs 18.5 crore.

The Ganapati Sugar factory management at Sangareddy recovered the factory from Adikesavulu Naidu. The Ganapati Sugar factory management in 2006 disposed of it to Rajshree Group.

The factory was purchased by Trident Sugar Factory management in 2015 from Rajshree group.

The group run the factory for three years and posed problems in clearing dues to the farmers.

KCR failed to stop looting of water by AP: Jeevan Reddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state would soon transform into a desert with the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme, pointed out Congress MLC T Jeevan Reddy. He questioned Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao to tell as to what he was doing when the Andhra Pradesh government has been taking up the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme.

He said that KCR has no right to seek votes in Nagarjunasagar by-elections as he had failed to stop the looting of water by Andhra Pradesh. He said that the neighbouring state has been taking up the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme showing three tmc from Kaleshwaram as a reason.

Speaking to the media at the Assembly media point on Monday, Jeevan Reddy alleged that the Telangana state is not in a position to use the two tmc of water from Kaleshwaram. He asked KCR to tell whether the latter had taken up works for the third TMC from the Kaleshwaram project only expecting commissions.

He alleged that the TRS government had failed to complete the SLBC project even after seven years. He said that the Telugu states have to take permissions for the new irrigation projects as per AP Reorganisation Act.



He said that Palamuru and Nalgonda district would face heavy loss with the KCR's greediness for commissions. Telangana has been losing the right in Krishna waters with the actions of KCR, he said. He said that KCR accepted the Apex Council to take up the projects in Krishna Board limits.

Reacting to YS Sharmila's proposed political party, Jeevan Reddy said that Congress will see her party as one of the political parties. Saying that 'Rajanna Rajyam' is nothing but 'Indiramma Rajyam', Jeevan Reddy said that the Congress will fight for the 'Indiramma Rajyam', for which former Chief Minister the late YS Rajasekhara Reddy was dreamt of. He said that Congress will welcome Sharmila's political party if it exposes the TRS government's failures.

RACHAKONDA CP GETS THE JAB



The second dose of Covid vaccine being administered to Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Mahesh M Bhagwat at the CP office in Neredmet on Monday. The CP has advised all subordinate officers and staff of Rachakonda to get vaccinated without fear. Over 70% in the Rachakonda Police Commissionerate were administered vaccine

‘Capitalism will not solve fin crisis’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

CPM state secretary Thammineni Veerabhadram has made it clear that imaginary socialism cannot be built as there was confusion over the types of socialism.

He opined that there is a need for ideological clarity on the national and international Communist movements in the prevailing conditions. There is no conducive atmosphere to wage class struggles physically and there is a need to have ideological bravery to face such conditions, he stated.

He said that capitalism had not solved the problems being faced by humanity, including the financial crisis, and the

spread of the Coronavirus.

While paying tributes to Marxist ideological intellectual Makineni Basava Punnaiah on his 29th death anniversary at MB Bhavan here on Sunday, along with CPM state secretary member DG Narasimha Rao, Thammineni said that the Left parties are facing such troubles since the announcement of the Communist plan. He said that the Communist movement had faced troubles when there is no ideological clarity. He said that the governments have to solve any problem ideologically.

Thammineni said that the death of senior leader Kunja Bojji is painful. He also paid

tributes to Kunja Bojji portrait at MB Bhavan. CPM Central Committee member S Veeraiah said that Bojji stood straight without succumbing to the pressures and wooing of ruling parties. Another leader John Wesley said that Bojji continued his peoples' movement being a public representative and also continued his study on public issues. Bojji stood as a representative of the values, which are now disappearing in society.

Party leaders G Nagaiah, Nandyala Narsimha Reddy, G Ramulu, B Venkat, T Jyothi, Pothineni Sudharshan, Midium Baburao, M Saibabu, Sarampalli Malla Reddy and others present.

Adhere to safety norms, Collector tells people

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY



With the Corona surge, District Collector M Hanumantha Rao called upon the people to wear masks to keep the virus at bay.

He said the government has directed everyone to wear masks as a precautionary measure and announced that a fine of Rs 1,000 will be imposed on those who violated the rules.

The government made the wearing of masks mandatory and has made it clear in the order that masks must be worn properly while travelling in public places, offices and other workplaces.

It was clarified that action would be taken against those who did not wear masks under Sections 51 60 of the Disaster Management Act. Similarly, the Collector warned that action would be taken under IPC 188 as well as other Sections.

He advised not to get carried away by negligence, everyone should take precautions as well as wear a mask and observe the physical distance. He said orders have been issued to the authorities concerned to strictly enforce the mask regulation.

The Collector asked the people to cooperate with the administration in controlling the Corona in the district.



Karimnagar Dairy chairman Ch Rajeshwara Rao inaugurating newly constructed Milk Producer Institute (MPI) at the R&R Colony in Karimnagar district on Monday

Cattle Hostels in R&R Colonies mooted

PNS ■ RAJANNA SIRCILLA

Ch Rajeshwara Rao, chairman Karimnagar Milk Producer Company Limited also known as Karimnagar Dairy, has mooted the idea of setting up the Cattle Hostels in all the Relief and Rehabilitation (R&R) Colonies of various irrigation projects to provide an alternate source of income to farmers.

The Cattle Hostels would give a fillip to the milk production as well as help the farmers, who lost their agricultural lands under the projects to take up dairy units for sustainable livelihood in the R&R Colonies, he said and urged the government to take appropriate measures for opening Cattle Hostels in R&R Colonies.

Responding to the suggestion, Manakondur MLA Rasamayi Balakishan assured to take all measures for opening a Cattle Hostel in the R&R Colony very soon by identifying the government land. He said that they would provide facilities for the farmers in the Cattle Hostels, along with land for cultivating fodder.

The farmers of the

Ananthagiri village in Illanthakunta mandal were displaced following the execution of the Ananthagirisagar project as part of the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project to store around 3.75 tmc of water under package-10. The oustees of the project were relocated to the R&R Colonies.

Earlier, the villagers used to provide daily around 600 litres of milk to Karimnagar Dairy. As the farmers have tested the benefits of taking up dairy units with a good and regular source of income, they had reconstructed the Milk Producer Institute (MPI) of Karimnagar Dairy in the R&R Colony with the compensation amount provided by the government.

On Monday, Karimnagar Dairy chairman Ch Rajeshwara Rao, along with Rasamayi Balakishan, ZP vice-chairman Siddam Venu, MPP Venkataramana Reddy, local sarpanch Narasimha Reddy, PACS chairman Annadi Anantha Reddy and others formally inaugurated newly constructed Milk Producer Institute (MPI) in the R&R Colony.

EX SPEAKER'S DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Local Cong leaders attribute Manthani's devt to Sripada Rao

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR  
BHUPALAPALLY

The guns of People's War Group Naxalites exploded in the woods and bullets fired into the heart of former Speaker Duddila Sripada Rao. On April 13, 1999, the former Speaker fell to the bullets of Naxalites in the broad daylight at Annaram village in Mahadevpur mandal of erstwhile Karimnagar district.

On the eve of his death anniversary, his rise in politics and contributions to society are being recalled. He entered politics accidentally and became closer to the people as he was elected sarpanch for five times.

Later, he became closer to veteran Congress leader PV Narasimha Rao, who had already been the four-time

Manthani MLA, Minister of State and the Chief Minister. Being from the same community, Sripada Rao took care of his activities during his tours in the area. When PV entered national politics, the former had suggested the name of Sripada Rao to the high command for the ticket from the Manthani Assembly constituency.

Sripada Rao, who had won the Manthani MLA seat three times, was unanimously elected as the Speaker in the Kotla Vijayabhaskar Reddy government in 1989.

Sripada Rao, who is the Joint Speaker of Andhra Pradesh, had spearheaded the development in the Manthani constituency by providing electricity and roads to all the villages in the constituency.

Govt urged to distribute vax in line with growing demand

PNS ■ NAGAR KURNOOL

Area Hospital superintendent Dr Nagabhushanam urged the government to distribute the Corona vaccine in line with the growing demand in Nagar Kurnool district. The vaccine was administered to 31,000, including frontline warriors in the first phase while in the second phase, the number has crossed 4,000, he said. However, now, they are administering the vaccine to 600 to 1,000 per day with the rise in Corona cases. Notably, the vaccine was administered to over 4,000. He said only doses are available for two days and they have sent an indent for 40,000 doses, he informed.

Govt providing best policing: Harish Rao

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Setting up of Three Town Police Station would provide more security with a growing population at a time when Siddipet is developing rapidly, opined Minister for Finance Harish Rao. The Minister, along with Commissioner of Police Joel Davis, inaugurated the third urban police station in Siddipet urban mandal on Monday.

Addressing media conference later, the Minister recalled that when Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao came to Siddipet, he asked for the sanction of a third urban police station and immediately, he granted permission.

He said that after the formation of the district, all the district offices were set up here. With a population of over two lakh, the Three Town Police Station will be very useful in providing better security to the



Minister for Finance T Harish Rao inaugurates Three Town Police Station in Siddipet urban mandal on Monday

people. It is an important police station in the district as the Collectorate, Police Commissionerate, Medical Colleges, industries, District Court, Toll Plaza, IT Hub and LV Prasad Eye Hospital will fall under its jurisdiction. Notably, there would be close monitoring, along with checking for

accidents, with the setting up of a police station on the Rajiv Rahadaari. The Telangana police system is the best in the country as it is people-friendly. He advised the police personnel to be partners with the people and be available to them to render speedy justice. He said that Telangana is the

only state in the country that uses the most CCTV cameras. He reminded that the crime rate in the state has come down after the TRS came to power. He said that many cases have been resolved based on the CCTV footage and CCTV cameras are very useful in critical cases. In the future, the Women's

Police Station, the Assurance Centre, Sakhi Centre, Child-Friendly Court and the She-Team will all be located in one place, he said. All the villages in the Siddipet urban mandal and some villages in Kondapala mandal will come under Three Town Police Station.



# India denounces linking climate issues to economic recovery

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has denounced attempts to link climate issues to economic recovery amid the coronavirus pandemic at the forthcoming G20 talks, saying it will impose a huge developmental cost on developing countries.

The US administration has been pushing for a strong climate agenda as part of the process of recovery from the pandemic.

Senior government officials feel that imposing "green" conditionalities on trade, investment, financing for development, etc. amid the "worst economic impact of a lifetime would be adding insult to injury as far as poor and developing countries are concerned".

"India is definitely adhering to its climate commitments and we are willing to do more, but I am uncomfortable with bringing it on to G20 platform."

Sanjeev Sanyal, the principal economic advisor to the Ministry of Finance, said climate change is a serious issue but it should not be confused with the immediate objective of an economic revival.

He was responding to deputy director of OCED Development Centre

"Climate crisis has contributed to the emergence of COVID-19 crisis. These issues should be addressed together," Bonaglia said.

Countering him, Sanyal said the link between pandemics and climate change is far from established.

"Whether or not we have climate change, global pandemics happen from time to time."

P Harish, additional secretary (economic relations) in the Ministry of External Affairs, criticised efforts to establish a goalpost outside the Paris framework in the G20.

He mentioned that India is the only G20 country that has met its

Paris commitments and nationally determined contributions.

It won't be correct to ignore the historic caseload and developmental situation where India's per capita GDP is only 5 per cent of that of G7 and fraction of the G20 GDP, and per capita energy consumption as compared to global average is far lower.

"We have many years ahead of us where we come up to the world average in terms of energy consumption and per capita GDP. Constraining our options at this point through extra conditionalities will not only impose a financial cost but also a huge developmental cost," the senior official said.

"Imposing conditionalities amid the worst economic impact of a lifetime by seeking green recovery...in a range of areas, on trade, investment, financing for development, this would be adding insult to injury as far as the poor and developing countries' situation is concerned," he said.

demics and climate change is far from established.

"Whether or not we have climate change, global pandemics happen from time to time."

P Harish, additional secretary (economic relations) in the Ministry of External Affairs, criticised efforts to establish a goalpost outside the Paris framework in the G20.

He mentioned that India is the only G20 country that has met its

Paris commitments and nationally determined contributions.

It won't be correct to ignore the historic caseload and developmental situation where India's per capita GDP is only 5 per cent of that of G7 and fraction of the G20 GDP, and per capita energy consumption as compared to global average is far lower.

"We have many years ahead of us where we come up to the world average in terms of energy consumption and per capita GDP. Constraining our options at this point through extra conditionalities will not only impose a financial cost but also a huge developmental cost," the senior official said.

"Imposing conditionalities amid the worst economic impact of a lifetime by seeking green recovery...in a range of areas, on trade, investment, financing for development, this would be adding insult to injury as far as the poor and developing countries' situation is concerned," he said.

## Fourth Covid wave: Affecting younger population more

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Delhi is causing high-grade fever, spreading faster and affecting the younger population, especially those in the age group of 30 to 50, more, according to experts.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has said the fourth wave is more dangerous than the previous ones and according to data available with him, 65 per cent of patients infected this time are below 45 years.

The sudden spike in COVID-19 cases in Delhi over the last few days and across the country has baffled medical experts.

Some doctors said the reason behind a large number of people contracting the infection this year vis-a-vis last year could be that the "virus has mutated" and the current strain is more infectious.

"The younger population goes out for work, uses public



transportation and hence, there are more chances of coming into contact with others. Many people are still not wearing masks or maintaining social distancing, which has contributed to the rise in cases," said Suranjit Chatterjee, a senior consultant at Apollo Hospitals here.

He, however, pointed out that the number of deaths in Delhi is still much lower compared to what was recorded during the previous waves in June, September and November.

Chatterjee, a COVID-19 survivor himself, said doctors in their 40s and 50s and other younger healthcare workers, say in their 30s, are getting infected in the current wave despite most of them having taken both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Thirty-seven doctors at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi have tested positive for COVID-19 during the fourth wave of the pandemic. Of these, five have been admitted for treatment, hospital sources had said last Thursday.

## INDIA CORNER

### President Kovind returns to Rashtrapati Bhavan after surgery

President Ram Nath Kovind on Monday said he has returned to Rashtrapati Bhavan after bypass surgery at the AIIMS here. "I have returned to Rashtrapati Bhavan after my surgery. My speedy recovery is thanks to wishes and prayers of all of you and exceptional care given by doctors and nursing staff at AIIMS and Army's RR hospital. I am thankful to everyone! I am glad to be back home, Kovind tweeted. Kovind, 75, had on March 30 underwent a cardiac bypass surgery at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here. In a tweet on April 3, the Rashtrapati Bhavan had said, "President Kovind was shifted from the ICU to a special room in the AIIMS today. His health has been improving continuously. Doctors are constantly monitoring his condition and have advised him to take rest."



### Have written to Centre to scale up COVID beds in its hospitals: Jain

Amid an unprecedented surge in coronavirus cases in the national capital, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said on Monday that the city government has written to the Centre to again scale up COVID beds in its hospitals here. Interacting with reporters, he also appealed to people to step out of their homes only if necessary and wear masks all the time. Asked about beds' requirements in view of escalating cases, Jain said, "We are ramping up medical infrastructure post the surge in cases and 5,000 beds have been added in last one week". Delhi recorded 10,774 fresh cases of COVID-19 on Sunday, the highest single-day surge in the national capital till date, according to data shared by the Health Department.



### CBI calls Maharashtra former home minister for questioning

The CBI has called former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh for questioning on Wednesday in connection with allegations of corruption levelled against him by former Mumbai Police commissioner Param Bir Singh and suspended officer Sachin Waze, officials said. Waze, an assistant police inspector, is under investigation in the case of an explosive-laden SUV found outside industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence in south Mumbai. The notice calling Deshmukh to join the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe was issued on Monday morning, a day after his two aides Sanjeev Palande and Kundan recorded their statements before the agency, the officials said. The CBI is carrying out a preliminary inquiry into allegations against Deshmukh levelled by Singh after he was removed from the coveted post of Mumbai Police commissioner.



### Youth dies while dousing forest fire in Pithoragarh

A youth died while dousing a wildfire in his village in the Didihat forest range in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district, officials said on Monday. The incident occurred on Saturday when a fire broke out in Athkhawli and Sarpanch Purn Singh Mehta called youths from the village to extinguish the blaze. Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Vinay Bhargava said, "The victim, Pankaj Singh Deopa (19), fell into a 500-metre-deep, fire-filled gorge, the officer said, adding he was pulled out of it and rushed to a hospital where doctors declared him dead. Deopa had lost his job during the coronavirus-induced lockdown and was staying with his family in the village. His death took the toll in forest fire in Uttarakhand this year to seven. Two deaths were reported in Almora in January and two each in Bageshwar and Pauri districts in February. Forest fires continue to rage in Pithoragarh and Champawat districts in the eastern part of Kumaon region due to a lack of moisture in the forests, with little or no rain during the winter months in the area this year, according to the DFO.



### Judge who gave Babri verdict is 'Up-lokayukta'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Retired judge Surendra Kumar Yadav, who gave the verdict in the high-profile Babri mosque demolition case, took oath as an 'up-lokayukta in Uttar Pradesh on Monday.

"Yadav was appointed as third 'up-lokayukta' by the Governor on April 6. On Monday, Yadav was administered oath by Lokayukta Sanjay Mishra in the presence of other senior officers," an official statement said here.

The anti-corruption watchdog comprises the Lokayukta and three 'up-lokayuktas'.

## Delhi police denies illegal detention of Lakha's cousin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Monday refuted allegations that it had "illegally" detained gangster-turned-activist Lakha Sidhana's cousin Gurdeep Singh in Punjab, even as a team of its Special Cell questioned him.

Sidhana is wanted by the Delhi Police in connection with the Republic Day violence in the national capital, when thousands of protesting farmers, who reached ITO from the Ghazipur border, dashed with the police. Many of the protesters, driving tractors, reached the Red Fort and entered the monument, where a religious flag was also hoisted. Over 500 police personnel were injured in the violence.

In a statement, the police said it is learnt that allegations and misinformation are being propagated on the social media regarding the



detention of one Gurdeep Singh alias Mundi by a Delhi Police team in Punjab.

Several cases were registered by the Delhi Police in connection with the Republic Day violence in the national capital, a large number of suspects have been examined and about 160 accused belonging to Delhi and several other states arrested. Sidhana is wanted in some of these cases and is deliberately evading arrest, the statement said.

According to the police, on April

8, a Special Cell team that was moving in the vicinity of Patiala in search of Sidhana, questioned Singh. He was asked about the presence and movements of Sidhana and thereafter, he was relieved with a direction to appear and join investigation as and when required.

"The investigation is being conducted as per law and in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

## Ambani security scare: Riyaz Kazi suspended after arrest

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Assistant Police Inspector Riyaz Kazi, a colleague of police officer Sachin Waze, was suspended from service on Monday, a day after he was arrested by the NIA probing the recovery of an explosives-laden SUV found outside industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence here and the subsequent murder of Mansukh Hiran, an official said.

Additional Commissioner of Police (Arms unit) Virendra Mishra has issued the order suspending Kazi which stated that he cannot do any private work and action will be taken against him if his order is violated. Kazi has been ordered to appear before the Local Arms Unit every Friday. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested Kazi on Sunday after a fresh round of questioning. A holiday court here had remanded Kazi in the NIA's custody till April 16.



The NIA suspects that Kazi was shunted out of the Mumbai Crime Branch last month, an official had said. Earlier, in a CCTV footage, Kazi was seen entering a number plates shop in suburban Vikhroli and having a conversation with the outlet's owner. He was also seen taking away a digital video recorder and a computer from the shop.

Kazi was also seen collecting CCTV footage from Waze's housing complex in neighbouring Thane, the official had said.

Hiran was found dead in a creek in Thane on March 5.

## Non-adherence to virus norms, virulent strains could be behind surge: Randeep

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

People not adhering to COVID-appropriate behaviour and the circulation of highly infectious strains of SARS-CoV-2 could be the primary reasons behind the surge in coronavirus infections in India, AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria said on Monday.

He also warned that if the situation is not reversed, then the galloping infection rate will eventually cause a huge strain on the country's healthcare system. He sought stricter enforcement of COVID-appropriate behaviour on the ground level by the administration and authorities.

"Around February, when cases started to decrease, people



became lax towards following COVID-appropriate behaviour as they thought the virus had become ineffective.

"People are taking the disease lightly now. If you go out, you see that marketplaces, restaurants and shopping malls are crowded and full of people and these all are super-spreader events," Guleria said.

Earlier, if one sick person was able to infect around 30 per cent of their contacts, this time those getting the disease are infecting a larger number of people, he said.

"So, the rate of spread of the infection is fast possibly due to the highly infectious and transmissible strains circulating," he added.

Various strains of SARS-CoV-2, including the UK, South Africa and Brazil variants, are circulating in India and have been termed as highly transmissible by experts.

Guleria said the entire humanity is going through a difficult time and "unless it is important, people should not venture out. Also, it has to be ensured that there is no gathering and stricter enforcement of COVID-appropriate behaviour has to be ensured".

"We may lose the gains we have made so far if we do not pay heed now," and the situation may completely get out of control, he said.

"If the situation is not reversed, then the galloping infection rate will eventually cause a huge strain on the healthcare system also," he stressed.

The AIIMS chief also urged people to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

## Cops deployed in Pipili ahead of by-poll

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Police on Monday deployed about 1,000 armed policemen in Pipili Assembly segment in Puri district to ensure peaceful polling in the by-election to be held on April 17.

Director General of Police Abhay visited Pipili and said three companies (1 company comprise three platoons of jawans) of Central Armed Police Force (CAPF), 29 platoons

(each platoon comprise 30 personnel) of the Odisha State Armed Police (OSAP) and one platoon of Swift Action Force (SAF) have been deployed in the area.

This apart 60 state police officers have also been engaged in by-poll duty.

The DGP said that the constituency has been divided into several security zones to ensure an incident-free poll. Two ASPs and three DSPs will be in charge of each zone to monitor the law and order situation.

Official sources said as many as 80 critical booths have been identified in the constituency.

The DGP also reviewed the pre-poll violence in Pipili at a meeting attended by Director (Intelligence), RK Sharma, and the ADGP (Law and Order), Yashwant Jethwa.

### Fire breaks out near flyover in Kolkata

PNS ■ KOLKATA

A fire broke out in waste materials lying near a flyover along a major road in Baguiati area in the eastern fringes of Kolkata on Monday and two cars

abandoned there were gutted, fire department officials said.

No casualty took place. The blaze was spotted near a traffic guard office beside VIP Road at around 3.50 pm and two fire tenders doused it in 20 minutes, the officials said.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who was passing by the spot while returning home after attending a public rally in the nearby Dum Dum area, stopped her car on the flyover.



## Ceasefire pacts with 3 Naga insurgent groups

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday extended the ceasefire agreements with three insurgent groups of Nagaland for one more year till April next year.

In a statement, the Ministry of Home Affairs said the ceasefire agreements are in operation between the government of India and National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN/NK), National Socialist Council of Nagaland/Reformation (NSCN/R) and National Socialist Council of Nagaland/K-Khango (NSCN/K-Khango).

"It was decided to extend the ceasefire agreements for a further period of one year with effect from April 28, 2021 to April 27, 2022 with NSCN/NK and NSCN/R and from April 18, 2021 to April 17, 2022 with NSCN/K-Khango," the statement said.

These agreements were signed on Monday.

The three outfits are break-away factions of dominant groups NSCN-IM and NSCN-K. The NSCN-IM had entered into a ceasefire agreement with the central government in 1997 and has since then been engaged in peace negotiations.



## No golden rule

Armed Forces personnel react differently to different life-threatening situations

There are no golden rules for self-defence except that one has to gauge the gravity of the situation and act accordingly. Whether the security personnel deployed at West Bengal's polling stations would fire below or above the waist — especially as an agitated mob advances towards them — depends upon their threat perception and exigency. Even firing to kill is justified if the situation calls for it and if there are no other practical options. What is uncalled for in a certain situation can be well defensible in another. Recently, what happened in Sitalkuchi, Cooch Behar, is really unfortunate as four lives were lost in firing by the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel and no amount of sympathy or compensation can bring them back.



However, what is more unfortunate is the blame game politics taking place between the BJP and the TMC. While Chief Minister and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee termed the incident "genocide", Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that her exhortation to gherao the Central forces had instigated the people to attack the CISF. Sceptics argue that the deaths could have been averted had the CISF jawans fired on their legs with the intention of dispersing the mob and not killing anybody — an argument echoed by Mamata. However, such suggestions are solely being made based on politicisation of the issue and are far from being practical; these people know nothing about what is required to be done by a professional force under such circumstances and have no idea of how fast things develop on the ground.

It cannot be denied that when an agitated mob of 300-400 people advances towards a polling booth to ransack it or towards the security personnel with an intention of snatching their weapons or even killing them should they put up resistance, the use of mild or medium force can aggravate the situation. In such a situation, the use of means like lathicharge, water cannon, rubber bullets or teargas, instead of acting as a deterrent, can rather act as a provocation to the mob which then can charge the personnel with more ferocity. What would follow is a bloodbath in which the security personnel and common citizens both lose their lives in large numbers. To keep the body count low and to disperse the bloodthirsty mob, there is no practical option but to fire with the intention to kill as only that would act as a deterrent under such circumstances. However, such nitty-gritty and technical knowhow are an integral part of the training of any professional force which is deployed to maintain law and order. Mamata's allegations that the CISF has no experience in controlling mobs are more unfounded than real. However, there should be a thorough inquiry into the incident and those responsible for instigating the violence should not be spared. If the security personnel are at fault, strictest action must be taken against those responsible. But we expect our politicians not to do any further politics on the matter — at least not over the deaths. It's plain shameful.

### PICTALK



Devotees offer prayers at Har Ki Pauri in Haridwar during the ongoing Kumbh Mela

PTI

## Tikait flexes muscles

The farmers have renewed their dialogue call while throwing a challenge to the Haryana CM

It appears that Bharatiya Kisan Union leader and Samyukt Kisan Morcha linchpin Rakesh Tikait has returned to the protest theatre with renewed vigour after his sabatical, a period he had advised his comrades to utilise harvesting the season's crop till next month. Freshly back after attending to their domestic chores and familial duties, the cultivators sitting on dharna since November 2020 along the Capital's borders already made their presence felt last weekend when they blocked the Ghazipur border in what they said was a "warning to the Government". Thousands among these protesters have come from Haryana, Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh, even though there now is a nationwide wave in support of their cause — the repeal of the three agriculture legislations that, they say, have been enacted to benefit certain corporates. But now, it seems, the farmer leaders have opted to flexing their muscles even though they well realise that no important political decisions at the national level would be taken in earnest till the results of elections to four States and a Union Territory are declared in early May.

It is in this light that Tikait is taking the fight to Haryana Chief Minister ML Khattar's door by claiming that the latter wouldn't be allowed to enter Badauli village in Panipat, where the Chief Minister is scheduled to be on April 14 for unveiling a statue of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar on the Dalit icon's birth anniversary. The farmer leader alleged that the actual reason for Khattar's visit was to "disturb the amity" among the area's cultivators "as per the BJP's plot". To avoid causing any imagined injury among Babasaheb's followers, Tikait also clarified that the farmers were not against the statue, they were against Khattar. In the same vein, however, ostensibly not to shut down any possible avenue which may lead to a dialogue with the Centre, the farmer leaders have also claimed that they are still willing to talk to the Centre on the three contentious Acts if invited for the same. Their only preconditions remain that the talks should resume where these were discontinued on January 22 and that their demands for total repeal remain unchanged. Well, though it seems like catch-22 without any quick resolution in sight, one would sincerely hope that under no situation would either side resort to any abhorrent step, such as violence.

# Nepal staring at political disquiet

The Nepal top court's decision not favouring Oli has come as a surprise and now his political survival hangs by a fine thread



RISHI GUPTA

After long political and judicial scuffling in Nepal, its top court in two important verdicts nullified the dissolution of the democratically elected Parliament by the President and termed illegal the 2018 merger of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) into the Nepal Communist Party (NCP), saying that another party existed with the same name. It means that the UML and the Maoist parties are back to their old selves.

While the reinstatement of the House comes as a big blow to Prime Minister KP Oli, who has emerged as an ultra-nationalist leader, an unexpected verdict on the future of a divided NCP has eventually put a full stop to the power struggle between the party chairs of the erstwhile NCP, Oli and Prachanda.

The verdict is being seen as an extrajudicial effort to save the country from plunging into political instability. Considering Oli's influence over the President's office, the Council of Ministers, Security Council, extraconstitutional bodies and the Press, it was believed that the court would favour Oli and acknowledge his faction as the legitimate NCP. That would have left Prachanda with no option but to form a new faction. Oli's legal team had also believed in a favourable verdict but the actual result has deepened the political crisis. Now, if the Maoists withdraw support, the Government will fall. The Madhesh-based Janata Samajbadi Party might prove to be the kingmaker as it can support the Nepali Congress and the Maoists to form a Government or ally with Oli to give further lease to his premiership.

**An expected outcome:** The 2018 merger of the two mainstream rivals had generated optimism among the Nepalese people that the new leadership was showing political maturity. However, it was only a matter of political survival for Oli and Prachanda as the former had planned to weaken the



Opposition by bringing archival Prachanda on board. Prachanda was facing serious corruption cases and the charges of *en masse* killing during the decade-long Maoist movement. Prachanda has gone on record to claim alleged 5,000 killings during the movement. Since Oli was the strongest ally, Prachanda could avoid trials at the UN and the International Court of Justice. Therefore, the merger was a self-serving decision by the duo against the widespread belief that they had shown political maturity in the interest of their people. Hence, the fallout was inevitable.

**Blaming and seeking:** With the eventual fall, Oli is seeking to mend ties with New Delhi. To reach out to India, he has appeared on a number of Indian news channels to cry foul against former Prime Minister Prachanda, blaming him for dividing the party. The same Oli created his political stronghold through his anti-India manoeuvring and bashing of the Indian media for being unfair towards the "victim" country.

Oli's public relations office and foreign policy advisory group had come fully geared to criticise India on the border



IF THE MAOISTS WITHDRAW SUPPORT, THE GOVERNMENT WILL FALL. THE MADHESH-BASED JANATA SAMAJBADI PARTY MIGHT PROVE TO BE THE KINGMAKER AS IT CAN SUPPORT THE NEPALI CONGRESS AND THE MAOISTS TO FORM A GOVERNMENT OR ALLY WITH OLİ

dispute. These offices are now attempting all the tricks to reach out to New Delhi. Also, despite a projected bonhomie with China, Oli is pushing for the supplies of the COVID-19 vaccines from India.

However, testing the trust will be the core of India's new relations with Nepal. On the other hand, Oli's biased approach towards China had come at the cost of substantial economic losses. Also, he signed the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance with Beijing, endangering the lives and rights of 20,000 Tibetan refugees in Nepal. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is an obsession with the current regime despite Sri Lanka's exposé of the Chinese wrongdoings.

While Oli may call it a balancing act between India and China, his actions speak otherwise. The alleged soft funding from China to Oli's political adventures in Nepal through the Madan Bhandari Foundation needs no explanation to assert his bonhomie with the dragon.

**Uncertain future:** While the politicians do not wish for Nepal to plunge back into insurgency, Oli's authoritarian attitude has cost Nepal dearly.

Politically, democracy is a casualty considering Oli's dream of a one-party rule in Nepal, with no political opponents outside and within the UML.

On the foreign policy front, Nepal, with its vast hydropower potential, can use India's expertise in generating power. A mutually beneficial plan could have paved the way for Nepal's economic growth. However, far from new agreements, Nepal seems to have no plan to revitalise treaties like the Mahakali, signed in 1996 with India, which can generate cooperation between them. Meanwhile, false promises under the BRI and dreams of a trans-Himalayan railway with China have garnered Oli enough political capital.

Oli's aspirations, accompanied by hollow economic and development strategies, will lead Nepal towards an uncertain future which is being watched carefully by the people of Nepal and international actors, including India.

(The author is an ICSSR Doctoral Fellow at the JNU and Visiting Fellow at the Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs, Kathmandu. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### TIME TO REDEFINE RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

Sir — When Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov visited both New Delhi and Islamabad during his whirlwind tour, the visible and palpable warmth between the two nations at Islamabad was conspicuous by its absence in Delhi. Not mere photo ops, Russia's assurance to Pakistan on supply of highly sophisticated military equipment and the promise to conduct joint military exercise there does not bode well for India's interests. Well, it is not as if all of a sudden Moscow has found a new strategic and military partner in Islamabad. For years, after a considerable period of strong dislike, Russia has built bridges with Pakistan in its own way. But in international relations, what is unsaid often matters more than what is said. Foreign policy is a matter of costs and benefits; no two nations are permanent foes. New Delhi, of course, is not on a slippery slope as far as its military and trade ties with Moscow are concerned.

But international diplomacy is a clever struggle where minds speak more than words. New Delhi's proximity with Washington has not gone unnoticed in Russian diplomatic circles, especially when India has always called Russia an "old friend". Friends have the right to quarrel but if that translates into a fight, then the repercussions are bound to vitiate the atmosphere in the region. As a matter of protocol, a visiting Foreign Minister may or may not call on the Prime Minister of the host country. But PM Narendra Modi is known to rise above formalities. Therefore, tongues wagged when Lavrov left for Islamabad without meeting the PM.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

### MAMATA BANERJEE IS LIKE LAKSHMI BAI

Sir — Visuals of an injured Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on a wheelchair leading the fight bring up the memory of Rani Lakshmi Bai, the warrior queen of the princely State of Jhansi, on horseback with a raised sword challenging the mighty British Raj undaunted. Bouquet or brick-

## CAPFs inept in handling law & order



It seems that the personnel of the central security forces deployed in election duties are not adequately trained to defuse a threat created by a violent mob without resorting to firing to kill. What happened in West Bengal's Cooch Behar has proved their incompetence in handling the law and order situation. The perception that the central forces deployed in the State are not as politically neutral as they should be is not far from reality and it erodes their institutional credibility. Further, the Election Commission (EC) is supposed to

ensure a level playing field for all the parties and apply rules uniformly and not selectively. But its decisions that invariably go in favour of the BJP make it look like an arm of the ruling party. The EC has given us reasons to wonder if it follows the dictates of the Government.

It would be disingenuous of the EC to claim that it had not scheduled the polling in eight phases at the BJP's behest to suit its campaign plan. The task of safeguarding democracy is better served by the EC by being party-blind and playing its role impartially. Mahatma Gandhi's teaching is that means should be as fair as the end. But if what the BJP does in West Bengal is anything to go by, for it the end of wresting power from the TMC justifies whatever means it adopts, be it communal polarisation, misuse of institutions, spurge of money or unleashing violence. It is an inversion of truth to say that the BJP adheres to Gandhian non-violence.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

bats to Mamata Banerjee depends on which part of the political spectrum one is positioned. Bigotry threatens to disturb communal harmony in the State and change its cherished culture. Like waters from a breached glacial lake, money flows into the State unchecked. The Enforcement Directorate follows every Trinamool leader closely to jump upon him tooth and claw. And the platoons have their fingers on the trigger always to 'ruthlessly' enforce "law and order" in West Bengal.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

### NEED TO EDUCATE PEOPLE ON COVID

Sir — It is unfortunate to note that the scourge of COVID-19 is still continuing worldwide. Right now, there has been unnecessary panic among the people despite all the serious efforts to fight the virus. As a result, my family members

, including my mother, had to cancel their train tickets to Chennai from Tuticorin — most of them have been wearing masks. What exactly is the reason for the current tense situation? Countries have been fighting with the pandemic for more than a year now. In fact, all the healthcare and emergency measures like vaccines, face masks, washing of hands and social distancing have been in place to date. In spite of such strict guidelines, people have started ignoring mandatory things like wearing a mask for unknown reasons, maybe due to their lethargic attitude to the crisis.

People must understand that prevention is always better than cure. The WHO should take immediate steps to explain the latest status on COVID and vaccines.

P Senthil | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## SOUND BITE

I urge everyone to cooperate and follow the COVID protocols and don't rush to hospital unless necessary and go and vaccinate if you are eligible.

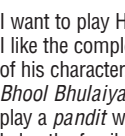


Delhi CM — Arvind Kejriwal



The struggle against Iran and its proxies and Iranian armament is a huge task. The situation that exists today is not necessarily the one that will exist tomorrow.

Israeli Prime Minister — Benjamin Netanyahu



I want to play Hitler as I like the complexity of his character. In Bhool Bhulaiya 2, I play a pandit who helps the family when they feel the existence of ghosts.

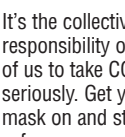


Actor — Govind Namdev



It was lovely to watch Prithvi bat so effortlessly and timing the ball so nicely. He went through a bad patch earlier and has come back as a champion.

Cricketer — Shikhar Dhawan



It's the collective responsibility of all of us to take COVID seriously. Get your mask on and stay safe.

Telangana's Cabinet Minister — KT Rama Rao



FIRST COLUMN

REMEMBERING THE ‘GREATEST INDIAN’

Ambedkar did not seek equality only for Dalits but tried to bring all of India under the umbrella of his great ideals



RATTAN LAL KATARIA

A few years ago, a major English TV news channel in the country started a drive to choose the “Greatest Indian” through online and mobile voting. The people of the country chose Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar as the “Greatest Indian.” This is Babasaheb’s greatest legacy. Unlike other leaders, he is still as relevant in the hearts of crores of Dalits and those who fight for a dignified life for underprivileged Indians, as he was in his time. As the country celebrates the 130th birth anniversary of Babasaheb on April 14, Ambedkar’s struggle and values continue to inspire Indians and even the Black community in the US and others fighting discrimination across the globe. Ambedkar was different from other leaders in the sense that he encouraged the underprivileged to get their rights through education and political struggle. Despite all the protests, insults, reproach and neglect, he did not tread the path of violence and never dreamed of destroying the system. Staying within the confines of constitutional commitments, working within the system and changing it from within, were the hallmarks of his struggle.



Babasaheb was not only the principal architect of the Indian Constitution, he firmly believed in the role of constitutional values in keeping the democratic system alive. Education, democratic struggle and unity were the core of his philosophy. He drew the path between socialist philosophy and communism for social justice. After the Round Table Conferences in 1931, the British proposed a separate electorate. When Madan Mohan Malaviya spoke to Babasaheb in this regard and envisaged its wider implications on Hindu society, Ambedkar agreed to have a more consistent reservation system for Dalits in place of a separate electorate. Thus, the historic Poona Pact of 1932 was signed. Ambedkar always fought for social justice and said that the scriptures that approve untouchability needed to be seen in the light of new knowledge. Ambedkar did not seek equality, fraternity and freedom only for the Dalits but also tried to bring the entire Indian society under the umbrella of his great ideals. When Pandit Nehru went back on his promise on the Hindu Code Bill, Ambedkar resigned from the Cabinet. Currently, while there is intense churning on its role in ensuring democracy and social justice on a global scale, Babasaheb has become more relevant than ever.

The values of dialogue, constitutional struggle and constant coordination are now playing an important role in making the present system more effective. Babasaheb had also made similar efforts in the process of nation building. Just as the Government is working to re-establish India as the “Vishwa Guru”, Ambedkar, too, constantly strived for a global stature for Bharat. He was opposed to the prominence of competitive allegiance of religion, culture, caste and language. He believed that this made it difficult to cultivate Indianness and loyalty to India. He said, “I want people to be Indian first and to be Indian till the end, nothing but Indian.”

Following in his footsteps, the Centre is not only ensuring social justice, but is also striving to bring the underprivileged into the mainstream through economic empowerment. ‘Start-up India’, ‘Stand-up India’, the National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation and scholarships for secondary and higher studies, are all efforts in this direction. On April 14, the whole world will salute Babasaheb, the true son of the nation, and his contribution towards nation building will be remembered. However, the younger generation must not only follow Babasaheb’s ideals on his birth anniversary but every moment of their life.

(The writer is Minister of State, Social Justice & Empowerment and Jal Shakti. The views expressed are personal.)

# Nix sovereign guarantee clause for the NaBFID

To bail out an entity majority-owned and controlled by private parties using the taxpayers’ funds is a bad idea



UTTAM GUPTA



ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THESE PREREQUISITES ARE LACKING, RESULTING IN SHORTFALL IN CASH FLOWS, THEN EVEN THE OFFER OF SOVEREIGN GUARANTEE WON’T PROVIDE MUCH COMFORT EVEN AS THE NaBFID, TOO, WILL END UP BEING A DRAIN ON THE EXCHEQUER JUST AS THE ERSTWHILE IDBI



crucial recommendation remained unattended. In the absence of sustainable arrangements for channelising household savings for long-term investment (a bank’s source of capital is primarily short-term deposits resulting in what is termed as asset-liability mismatch), currently much of infrastructure financing is done by the Government of India (GOI) by way of budgetary support.

The GOI, in turn, raises resources — albeit by providing budgetary support — by imposing cesses, fees and other levies such as the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF), the Permanent Bridge Fees Fund (PBFF) and monetisation of the National Highways Fund (NHF). For instance, during 2020-21, out of the ₹42,500 crore allocated to the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) for executing roads and highways projects, the contribution of the above-mentioned funds was 49 per cent, 27 per cent and 24 per cent respectively.

In this backdrop, and with the present arrangement meeting only a small portion of the mammoth funding needs (₹100 lakh crore under the NIP), setting up of dedicated institutions such as the NaBFID *prima facie* appears to be an attractive proposition. In fact, the Modi Government wants to use the NaBFID as an anchor DFI.

To begin with, the NaBFID will be 100 per cent owned by the GOI, with equity capital coming by way of budgetary support. Over a period of time, the latter will reduce its shareholding to 26 per cent, implying that the majority ownership and control

(albeit 74 per cent) will eventually be in private hands. It would be a professionally-run body, with the Government only appointing the Chairperson.

The proposed structure of the new DFI points towards the Government going for a hands-off approach as the Act does not provide for an oversight mechanism; it will be free from the “three Cs” i.e. the Central Bureau of Investigation, the Central Vigilance Commission and the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. In fact, it goes a step forward by seeking to protect the management for the decisions taken as an “act of good faith.” Up to this point, things are hunky-dory.

However, problems begin to creep when we look at this: “The Act empowers the GOI to extend sovereign guarantee in case of a default.” The guarantees cover a wide range like any liabilities of its own subsidiaries, joint ventures, branches and other similar arrangements; letters of comfort, or letters of credit for loans or bonds and debentures issued by any DFI funding infrastructure projects in India; and guarantee of the NaBFID’s bonds, debentures, loans and borrowings from multilateral institutions, sovereign wealth funds (SWFs), and other foreign institutions. To bail out an entity majority-owned and controlled by private parties using the taxpayers’ funds is a bad idea. Furthermore, to do this when the Government is not even exercising any external oversight makes it abhorrent. The FM’s defence that “an audited report would be placed in Parliament every year, besides the

NaBFID having to furnish to the GOI and the RBI a copy of its balance sheet and accounts, together with a copy of the auditor’s report and a report of its working during the relevant year, within four months from the date on which its accounts were closed and balanced” does not inspire confidence.

One shudders to fathom the contingent liabilities emanating from the above open-ended guarantees provided under the Act and their impact on the fiscal deficit (FD). Already, the FD for 2021-22 is put at 6.8 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product which is almost double of what is permitted under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management. For 2025-26, the FM puts it at 4.5 per cent. The NaBFID Act would result in spiralling of these numbers.

Team Modi needs to take a relook at the “sovereign guarantee” clause in the NaBFID Act. It should be deleted. As for giving comfort to investors, if only project proponents can generate the desired cash flows (this would require transparency and efficiency in project execution, simplified processes, enforcement of contracts, freedom from bureaucratic red tape and above all, realistic pricing of services shorn of populism), this will be automatically assured.

On the other hand, if these prerequisites are lacking, resulting in shortfall in cash flows, then even the offer of sovereign guarantee won’t provide much comfort even as the NaBFID, too, will end up being a drain on the exchequer just as the erstwhile IDBI.

The writer is a New Delhi-based policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.

## POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THIS IS GENOCIDE. I HAVE SEEN THE PICTURES. THE CENTRAL FORCES HAD SIMPLY SPRAYED THE BULLETS INSTEAD OF AIMING AT THE LEGS.  
—WEST BENGAL CM  
MAMATA BANERJEE



EVERY DEATH IS SAD BUT WHY IS IT THAT MAMATA DIDI HAS TO PLAY POLITICS OF APPEASEMENT WITH EVERY DEATH?  
—UNION HOME MINISTER  
AMIT SHAH

# Playing politics over vaccines will not help the cause

The Opposition should develop credible policy alternatives instead of blaming the Govt, and the Centre must be transparent in distribution of the COVID shots

Should political parties play politics over COVID-19? That is what is happening over the delivery of vaccines in the last few days. It has resulted in a fight between the Opposition-ruled States and the Centre for more doses of the coveted jabs as the former and the latter have accused each other of “discrimination” and “neglect” respectively.

When COVID-19 hit the country in January 2020, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi took the Chief Ministers (CMs) and even the public on board about how to effectively deal with the situation. He held several meetings with the CMs and consulted and guided the States, promising them of all possible help. They worked in tandem.

The pandemic helped the Governments focus on the



KALYANI SHANKAR

The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.

deteriorating healthcare system, lack of hospitals and facilities, inadequate social protection, the need for more funds for the health sector, health insurance and so on. Both the PM and the CMs needed each other and leaned on each other to tackle the enormous medical emergency.

However, both were looking at an electorate and their position at the end of their terms. Therefore, it became an individual race for every one of them. However, whether the Government mishandled the lockdown last year came into question. Still, the lockdown itself did not turn into a political issue. Even the Opposition parties could not go beyond a point to criticise the Modi Government.

Now, after one year, with the pandemic running into its

second wave, politics seems to have taken over. When things go wrong, it is politics that comes to the fore.

Now, there are vaccine shortages and there was an obvious miscalculation on the part of the authorities. If something goes wrong, the Centre blames the States while the States blame the Centre for not delivering the required doses of vaccines. The demand pertaining to the shots has also gone up. The initial response from the public was one of “wait and watch”, but now there is a clamour for vaccines as India became the second worst-hit nation in the world.

While the BJP touts Modi as the saviour of the people and lauds his efforts in handling the pandemic, the CMs of the non-BJP ruled States are now alleging that they are getting a stepmotherly treat-



ment. The fact is that all the political parties have realised that COVID-19 has become a long-term game and they cannot simply sit and not play politics over it. So, everything, right from the approval of the vaccines to allocation to the States, is being politicised.

Former CM of Uttar Pradesh Akhilesh Yadav has declared that he would not take the “BJP vaccine”. Others have questioned the efficacy of the vaccines and rightful

ly the promise of vaccine availability made to the people in poll-bound States by the ruling party.

It is a time of reckoning for the State Governments and all political parties. Recently, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, while addressing the CMs of Congress-led States, asked them to prioritise COVID-19 containment. She also accused the Modi Government of “mismanaging the pandemic situation by allowing the export of vaccines resulting in vaccine shortage” in India.

She said: “As the principal Opposition party, it is our responsibility to raise issues and push the Government to move away from PR tactics and act in the interest of the people.”

The current wave of infections will test the country’s health infrastructure and

improvements in it since last year. Maharashtra was the worst-hit State during both the significant surges of COVID-19 cases. As of April 8, almost 24 million doses were in stock and another 19 million were in the pipeline. Some 3-3.5 million doses have been administered on an everyday basis, according to data made available by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

The second wave came when people started celebrating the success with respect to effectively tackling the first wave. The period also coincided with the Assembly elections in five States and mega religious events like the Kumbh Mela. On March 7, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan even declared that “we are in the endgame of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

However, this is not the

appropriate time to question “who” and “why” with respect to the mishandling of the crisis. The real question is what the Centre and State Governments have done during the pandemic and what they can do to contain the second wave. The Opposition must understand that it should be more vigilant, active, public-spirited and courageous.

The Opposition parties should play their role as an institutional watchdog and develop credible policy alternatives instead of blaming the Government. The Modi Government should be transparent in distributing the vaccines and in addressing the concerns of the CMs of the Opposition-ruled States. All the sides should realise that this is an unprecedented crisis, and playing politics will not help.



# Sensex nosedives 1,708 pts amid massive selloff

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex plummeted 1,708 points on Monday following an across-the-board selloff as spiking COVID-19 cases in the country spooked investors. The 30-share BSE index sank 1,707.94 points or 3.44 per cent to end at 47,883.38. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty plunged 524.05 points or 3.53 per cent to finish at 14,310.80. IndusInd Bank was the top loser in the Sensex pack, tanking over 8 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, SBI, ONGC, Titan, M&M, Bajaj Finserv, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank. Dr Reddy's was the sole gainer, climbing over 4 per cent.

"Domestic equities reminded the bloodbath of March 2020 as record rise in COVID-19 cases in the country and possibility of lockdowns in several states dented investors' sentiments," said Binod Modi, Head - Strategy at Reliance Securities. Concerns of possible reversal in economic momentum and earnings recovery made investors risk-averse and huge selloff led to the erosion of nearly Rs 9 lakh crore in investor wealth, he added. Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Tokyo were in the red, while Seoul ended with mild gains. Stock exchanges in Europe were largely trading on a positive note in mid-session deals. Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.57 per cent higher at USD 63.31 per barrel.

# India will come out of Covid crisis with flying colours: Deloitte CEO

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

India will come out of the COVID-19 crisis that has impacted the entire world with flying colours, Deloitte CEO Punit Renjen has said, asserting that the 21st century is "India's century". Renjen said the Indian government has performed well in addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. "This is India's century and I'm convinced about it," the 60-year-old prominent Indian-American business leader told PTI in an interview. "I am certainly a little biased given my (Indian) heritage but I'm actually convinced that this is India's century because of just the raw talent that exists in India, the number of people that comprise India, the democratic tradition that has been around for 75 years," he said. Observing that the pandemic impacted everyone, Renjen said the pandemic impacted India very hard, given the lockdown that the government had to put in place, given the size of the population and what the virus



potentially could do to India. The Rohtak-born Indian-American CEO, who has been heading Deloitte since 2015, described as "remarkable" a recent report from the International Monetary Fund which projected 12.5 per cent growth rate for the country. "Nobody can say with precision, but I really believe that India is going to come out of this pandemic growing at the fastest rate;... definitely the fastest large economy," he said. "I think the recovery is going to be very strong. The fundamentals (of Indian economy) are there and I'm very

bullish as is Deloitte on India," said Renjen, also a member of the Deloitte Global Board of Directors. "This was a very unpredictable virus. India is a country of 1.3 billion people and there are communities in India like Dharavi in Mumbai that are highly congested areas, which are really prime areas for the virus to spread, he said. "Given all of those conditions, I believe that the Indian economy, the Indian people have weathered this as well as they possibly could," he said, adding that, however, there have been difficult times but that is not just unique to India.

Coforge acquires SLK Global at 'enterprise value' of USD 195 mn

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Noida-based IT solutions provider Coforge on Monday picked up a controlling stake in SLK Global Solutions, a business process transformation services provider primarily to the financial services industry, for a reported enterprise value of USD 195 million. The deal will further strengthen the financial services vertical of Coforge, scale up its BPM operations and expand its US footprint, the company said in a statement, which did not quantify the deal value. However, sources told that the enterprise value of the deal is around \$195 million. Though based in Bengaluru, SLK has most of clients in the US banking and insurance sectors and has deep domain expertise in the banking and insurance businesses of North America.



## Fall in gold prices may not impact NBFCs asset quality

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The recent fall in gold prices is unlikely to affect the asset quality of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) lending against gold in a considerable manner, according to a report. However, banks that were aggressively disbursing gold loans during the last fiscal may see some impact on their asset quality, Crisil Ratings said in a report. On a 30-day rolling basis, the gold price has corrected around 10 per cent over the past six months, while on an absolute basis it has fallen twice that rate.

"The correction in gold prices in recent months is not expected to materially impact the asset quality of NBFCs lending against gold," the agency said. Apart from periodically collecting interest over the past few fiscal, NBFCs have ensured that disbursement loan-to-value (LTV) is maintained below 75 per cent, it said. For NBFCs, the average portfolio LTV as of December 31, 2020, was close to 63-67 per cent, while the average LTV on incremental disbursements in the October-December 2020 quarter was around 70 per cent.



## Surya Roshni bags Rs 299 cr order for supply of steel pipes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lighting and steel pipe products maker Surya Roshni on Monday said it has bagged an order worth Rs 299 crore for supply of carbon steel line pipes to Numaligarh Refinery Ltd for Paradip Numaligarh Crude Oil Pipeline project in Odisha. "The company has obtained an order amount of Rs 299.07 crore (excluding GST) for supply of... external coated carbon steel line pipes to Numaligarh Refinery for Paradip Numaligarh Crude Oil Pipeline project," Surya Roshni said in a regulatory filing. The order is to be executed within 15 months, it added. Shares of Surya Roshni were trading 6.87 per cent lower at Rs 359.15 apiece.

## 'India must capture all segments of financial market to fuel growth'

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

India is on the right track and is innovating on the policy side, including on digital identity and payments, but it also needs to capture all the segments of the financial market and institutions to make sure that every piece fits together like a puzzle to fuel growth in the country, according to a top IMF official. "The goal is to have an economy and a financial system that can absorb shocks. Balance sheets can be better managed, Non-Performing Loans (NPLs) can be better managed," Tobias Adrian, Director of the Monetary and Capital Markets Department of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) told PTI in an interview. The non-bank financial system can be better seen, and capital markets have to be deepened and made more robust, he said during the last week's annual Spring meeting of the IMF and the World Bank. Of course, there is the whole fintech agenda as well, which is important in India as it is everywhere else in the world. "We are in the technological revolution in payment space. And I think India has



been path-breaking in many of these technologies and payment systems. Now there is lending that is done in India that is not done anywhere else because the infrastructure is quite strong in this area. But of course, more can be done," Adrian said in response to a question. The IMF official underscored the significance of investments into financial institutions, into oversight, and into infrastructures to ensure that the "financial system can absorb shocks and that is sustaining growth" in a long-term way. India, he said, is on the right track and is innovating on the policy side. "It has been quite innovative on digital identity, for example. I think no country is laying like India in that

respect," he said, noting that the country needs to capture all the segments of the financial market and financial institutions to make sure that every piece fits together like a puzzle to fuel growth in India. The general lesson from the COVID-19 crisis, he said, is that when the terrible adverse shock hits one need to aggressively supply liquidity. Secondly, the fiscal support was very important in this particular crisis and that of course dependent on how much fiscal space each country had. Thirdly, of course financial sector policies have been very successful. Debt moratoria, interest rate payments for that debt in particular are fully compatible with regulatory and accounting flexibility, he said.

## CEOs gather to speak out against voting law changes

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

More than a hundred top executives and corporate leaders gathered online this weekend to discuss their response to restrictive voting laws under consideration in several states and already enacted in Georgia, according to a statement from organizers of the meeting. The statement didn't identify the participants, but The Washington Post reported that



the meeting included executives from major airlines, retailers and manufacturers and at least one NFL owner. Without offering specifics, the statement — issued by the Yale School of Management and two other civic groups —

noted that that "CEOs indicated readiness to act individually and collectively to shore up American democracy and ensure Americans have access to a world class voting system." Such actions could include halting donations to politicians who support the bills and even delaying investments in states that pass the restrictive measures, according to Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, a Yale management professor and one of the organizers.

## Recovery sustains in telcos' operating metrics, says ICRA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

ICRA on Monday said it expects steady recovery in telecom sector to sustain by way of ARPU expansion which is likely to boost revenues and margins for the industry. That said, debt continues to remain the Achilles heel of the industry, it cautioned. ICRA expects total industry debt to remain elevated at Rs 5 lakh crore as on March 31, 2022.

The next round of tariff hikes can provide a fillip to the industry Average Revenue Per User (ARPU). The expansion in profitability is expected to result in improvement in the debt coverage metrics of the industry, but it would continue to remain weak given the high debt levels, ICRA observed. Elevated debt levels will continue to remain the "major impediment" as industry added AGR levies related debt and spectrum debt after recently-concluded auctions.

## Biocon's arm gets GMP compliance certificate

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Biotechnology firm Biocon on Monday said its subsidiary Biocon Pharma has received GMP compliance certificate from UK's health regulator MHRA for its Bengaluru facility. "Biocon Pharma Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Biocon Limited, has received a certificate of GMP compliance from the MHRA, the UK, for its manufacturing facility at Biocon Park in Bengaluru," Biocon said.

## Flipkart inks pact with Adani Group to create 2,500 jobs



to strengthen logistics and data centre capabilities of the Walmart-owned company and create about 2,500 direct jobs. In this two-pronged partnership, Flipkart will work with Adani Logistics Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd, to strengthen its supply chain infrastructure and further enhance its ability to serve its rapidly growing base of customers, a statement said. In addition, Flipkart will set up its third data centre at Adaniconnex's Chennai-based facility, leveraging the latter's expertise and industry-leading data centre technology solutions, it added. Adaniconnex is a new joint venture formed between EdgeConneX and Adani Enterprises Ltd.

Flipkart on Monday said it has entered into a commercial partnership with the Adani Group

## Man Industries bags order worth Rs 766 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pipe manufacturer Man Industries on Monday said it has bagged a new order worth Rs 766 crore. "The company has received a new order worth Rs 766 crore from the domestic hydrocarbon sector," Man Industries said in a regulatory filing. Man Industries said with this new order the unexecuted order book as on date stands at approximately Rs 1,900 crore to be executed in the current financial year. "This order reflects a robust



business environment and also showcases the trust customers have in the company's technological and executional capabilities," the company added.

## Moon says EV battery settlement 'meaningful'

PNS ■ SEOUL

South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Monday welcomed a decision by two South Korean electric vehicle battery makers to settle a long-running intellectual property dispute that had threatened thousands of American jobs and President Joe Biden's environmental policies. In agreeing to pay 2 trillion won (USD 1.8 billion) to LG Energy Solution over stolen trade secrets, SK Innovation can now move ahead with plans to manufacture batteries in Georgia for electrically powered Ford pickup trucks and Volkswagen SUVs. In a series of tweets, Moon said the companies' last-minute settlement on Sunday was "for-



tunate" and "very meaningful" and would help stabilise global supply chains in a fast-moving industry that's experiencing growing pains. South Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy in a press release called for "stronger cooperation and solidarity" between South Korean battery companies which should now focus on "preparing for the future in face of

intense global competition." The agreement between the companies averted an intervention by Biden in a case closely watched for its implications for his clean-energy agenda, which includes drastically increasing use of electric vehicles to help address climate change. Biden had until Sunday night to decide whether to step in, following a February ruling by a trade commission. He called the agreement a "win for American workers and the American auto industry." In a regulatory filing to South Korean financial authorities, SK Innovation said it will provide LG Energy a lump-sum payment of 1 trillion won (\$888 million) and

the same maximum amount in royalties. The companies also agreed to withdraw all pending trade disputes in the United States and South Korea and not assert new claims for 10 years. The U.S. International Trade Commission had decided in February that SK stole 22 trade secrets from LG Energy and that SK Innovation should be barred from importing, making or selling batteries in the United States for 10 years. The decision had jeopardized a \$2.6 billion battery factory that SK Innovation is building in Commerce, Georgia. The company has contracts to make batteries for an electric Ford F-150 pickup truck and an electric Volkswagen SUV.

## Amazon to cover vax cost for over 10 lakh employees



Amazon on Monday said it will cover the COVID-19 vaccination cost for all its India employees and associates as well as those in partner network ecosystem. This would include delivery service partner associates, including Amazon Flex drivers, "I Have Space" store partners, trucking partners and their eligible dependents, a statement said. The benefit also will be available to all sellers on Amazon.in with an active listing since last year, it added. come available to individuals above 45 years of age in India, Amazon India is encouraging its employees, associates, sellers on Amazon.in and partners to get vaccinated at the earliest appropriate time to protect themselves, their families, and their communities," it said. The company has also set up comprehensive support mechanisms for employees and associates working with Amazon and hired through staffing agencies, it added.



# Hyderabad

The ever-increasing fanbase of the popular band When Chai Met Toast is in for a treat. The band's latest release *Awesome In Disguise* is all about *#LeapingForth* and being one's own superhero. With soulful music and a message, the band talks to *The Pioneer's* K RAMYA SREE about their project, upcoming albums, and more.



## AWESOME IN DISGUISE!

Taking awesomeness to the next level for passionate fans, *&flix* has released a special music video *Awesome In Disguise* in collaboration with the leading multinational pop-folk band When Chai Met Toast. An ode to those who inspire us to take a leap of faith, the upbeat soundtrack depicts how it's not just the suits and superpowers, but the heart which is where the awesomeness stems from.

The track which is a foot-tapping melody talks about a journey of bringing together a group of marvelous people to unleash what makes them awesome and extraordinary. Packed with mesmerising acoustics, the music inspires you to *#LeapForth* with faith that puts you on the path of redefining yourself. Along with the band members Achyuth Jaigopal, Ashwin Gopakumar, Pai Sailesh, and Pale Francis, the music video also brings forth those individuals who have achieved nothing short of miraculous feats through their spectacular show of strength, skill, and sheer will.

Featuring in this video will be Parul Arora, the National Gold Medalist Gymnast who aced backflips in a saree, Anam Hashim, India's only professional

street bike freestyle athlete to have won laurels for the country on a global stage and Sagar Waghela, the star boy of the skateboarding circuit, and more. Other featured talents include Manasi Joshi, Indian para-badminton player, the current World Champion and a changemaker in the sporting world and Hydroman aka Jaydeep Gohil, India's first underwater dancer.

With a message that strength isn't only defined by your physical capacity to outperform others but rather by your sheer tenacity and will of mind to overcome hurdles and prove yourself every single time, the band members say, "Superheroes aren't just characters with tremendous physique and superpowers but rather one of sound mind and a good heart. This particular trait is so often seen in select few who go out of the way and never once retire from successive faults and failures but rather give it all it takes to see their dream turn into reality. Here are so many superheroes amongst us, with unmatched abilities and identities and hence the *Awesome In Disguise* title.

Being a part of the *&flix* campaign gave us the opportunity to express through the song, the topic of overcoming fears and leaping forth from the hurdles that lie in your path, a subject we naturally relate to in our song-writing.

Speaking about the music video exclusively with *The Pioneer*, they add, "The concept is trying to clearly explain that it's not the instrument that you choose, but the path in itself that defines your hero journey. *Awesome In Disguise* is a compilation of several acts of unabashed passion and courage that inspire others among us to do better. Heroes are not meant to be only watched, but rather a beacon of hope guide in times of dilemma and doubt. The music video conveys that even though we may hesitate to look beyond our comfort zones or face our fears openly, we all have the inner ability to be our own superhero."

The fan base of When Chai Met Toast has been steadily increasing with every passing day. "It's very heart-warming to see more people discovering our

music and listening to our songs. We were on a six-city tour recently and had entire audiences sing back every word! It was an indescribable feeling. The love showered on us by these incredible fans everywhere is absolutely encouraging and gives us a spectacular high and zest every time we perform in front of the crowds. The medley of tunes from all over India which is basically the soul and rhythm of this band and our music has steadily seen an acceptable form of the culture here in India and is now slowly shaping up to be one of the most favoured types of music among young listeners," the band tells us.

When Chai Met Toasts clearly stands for pop culture rendition of capturing life the way it is through our music and this just felt like the perfect fit. What's next in store for the band? They reveal, "You can expect a wave of anticipation and excitement in the coming months. Along with another single due to release in the coming month, we also have the full album of *When We Feel Young* releasing soon."

## SHOOTING POST-COVID FELT LIKE HOMECOMING: TAHER



SHIKHA DUGGAL

Taher Shabbir, who had once played the lead actor opposite Tollywood actress Taapsee Pannu in *Naam Shabana*, is now tasting stardom even on OTT platforms, and why not, it's the new normal! Re-inventing his approach towards digital platforms, the *Guilty* fame is busy carving a niche for himself in this industry. Not only has he made his presence felt in Bollywood, he also has been part of several recent OTT hits including *Guilty*, *Poison 2*, *Hundred* and is now rooting for *Bekaboo 2* that's full of an ensemble cast!

The new psycho-thriller will make you jump at every scary scene, and messes with your mind. With Taher playing a vital role in it, it's a whole new different ball-game for him as well. There is a distinct difference between suspense and surprise and not confusing the two, *Bekaboo 2* picks up right where season one left, following up on a young author, Anaysha, who shot to fame overnight owing to a book she wrote not-so-ethically! "There is a target been set on almost everyone in the series. None is aware of who is after their lives and happiness and this is the whole USP, the one that's going to keep the audiences engrossed. My character Kiyan is a borderline psychotic and seeks revenge on quite a few people, especially Ananysha and Kashti! Kiyan doesn't let things go easily and neither forgives quickly. Season 2 will see a more evolved version of my character," shares Taher who made his film debut with Shahrulkh Khan-led *Fan*.

At the moment, keeping everyone on their toes with his new venture on the digital platform, the one thing he loves about being in the showbiz industry is the nature of its job. Allowing him to adorn multiple personalities and the ability to separate it from both 'real' and 'reel', being another person for a while is exciting for him! It gives him a kick. Certainly to be able to sustain in this industry is quite challenging yet, Taher Shabbir managed to endure with the way he projected those sincere looking characters on screen. As actors, they sometimes live up to the audience's expectations and sometimes do fail miserably, but the one thing that remains constant is continuing to give path-breaking performances regardless of the conditions that you're working in. Whether you're working in an exotic outdoor location or in the gullies of Mumbai, as an actor what the business demands is to be passionate about it and so is Taher.

Telling us how he progressed into the character of Kiyan, he says, "As per the script, Kiyan has a lot of potential. What I needed currently was to work my ass off on the body language because it's a grey character out there seeking revenge. Now, how the series is going to be received is not in my hands but as an actor, I know that I have given my one hundred percent! I want the

show to be fabulous and the one that stays with the audience."

He's not playing a morally grey character, he's out and out seeking revenge! Not having anything wholly good about himself in the series, it's his way of projecting the character that's turning out to be an interesting addition to the plotline because it's a grey character. He's going to keep the storyline unpredictable for the viewers throughout desiring to be a classic example of how grey characters are played.

There's no black and white about OTT certainly changing the very face of media today! Years worth of change, we believe. Due to the crowd pulling to every OTT platform that's possible, the competition is also rising and how.

The time is ripe for OTTs even in the future because few of them are still hesitant to go to theatres, there's a re-surge in infections unfortunately. Everyone's going through an industry shift and mainstream content being released online is a trend that's going to continue.

"OTT platforms are the future of the entertainment industry catering to various genres and stories. The platforms are growing at lightning speed! The way things are going, it might be possible that people will only prefer OTT as they are easily accessible and at any place. With their diverse content and growing audience, digital platforms are anticipated to be the new normal for everyone," he adds on how

OTT is staying ahead in the competition!

Every set is taking precautions because sanitisation has undoubtedly become the need of the hour! To be secure even while working is everyone's priority and that cannot be compromised on. The actor shares his experience of shooting amid these unprecedented times and this is his takeaway from that — "I was excited to face the camera after a brief hiatus. It felt like a homecoming of sorts! While makers ensure that all the guidelines are followed on sets, actors are also being extra cautious. There were limited people on sets and we wore masks regularly. At every point in and around the sets, there were sanitiser bottles and sprays. It was quite a distinct experience, although now we are pretty much used to it now. It has become a new normal for everyone sadly! Day by day, it was getting challenging to shoot during such restrictions, however keeping the guidelines in mind, I made sure that I carry my sanitisers, mask, gloves, etc. It was not only to ensure my safety but also to ensure the safety of my fellow cast and crew members."

Advising the budding actors to not let an ignorant cloud of judgement stopping you from being in this industry and never to pull your contemporary down in pursuit of success, Taher Shabbir solely believes in working on one's inner self rather! Forgiveness should be more for oneself than for others, he concludes.



On National Safe Motherhood Day, public health expert Poonam Muttreja said that the focus needs to be widened to include morbidity as an important aspect of maternal health.

We have witnessed a steep rise in maternal deaths during the Covid-19 pandemic. This crisis has shown us that we must strengthen health systems to cope with emergencies without impacting essential services," says Executive Director, Population Foundation of India, Poonam Muttreja.

Besides the overwhelming burden of Covid-19 cases in India, the indirect effects of the pandemic are cause for concern, especially in the case of already vulnerable communities. Women and children have been disproportionately affected, with studies registering a significant increase in the numbers of stillbirths and maternal deaths compared to pre-Covid periods. A recent review in *The Lancet*, of studies on maternal and child health outcomes, has confirmed that the impact of the Covid-19-associated lockdowns has been dev-

## A cause for concern



astating for mothers and newborns. Low and middle-income countries (LMICs) have been worst affected. Clinics and public health facilities being inaccessible to many during pandemic-induced lockdowns cut off thousands from essential health services. The United Nations has estimated that this may have caused an additional 2,20,000 child deaths and 11,000 maternal deaths in South Asia alone. These numbers are likely to increase with India potentially accounting for the largest proportions. In India, the number of women who received all four antenatal check-ups during the pandemic also dropped by 51 per cent and the number of institutional deliveries were down by 79 per cent. The demand for family plan-

ning services satisfied by modern methods fell by 67 per cent. National Safe Motherhood Day is celebrated on Kasturba Gandhi's birth anniversary, April 11, every year. This year, the focus was on ensuring access to quality family planning services and reproductive health services for all.

A robust family planning programme is an important way of curbing preventable deaths. "More accessible and equitable family planning services that offers a wider choice of contraceptive methods to couples are a simple, low-cost intervention that can reduce maternal and child mortality by preventing early pregnancies and unwanted pregnancies at a later age," says Poonam.

"At Population Foundation of India, we have engaged with policy-makers, donors, NGOs and communities to consistently raise the discourse on the need for informed decision making on women's health. We promote effective and gender-sensitive health and development strategies and policies. We have constantly emphasised the importance of planned families, birth spacing and delayed marriage as strategies to improve maternal health," she adds.

Gender inequality, gender-based violence and lack of agency continue to impact women's ability to access maternal and antenatal health services. In India, regressive gender norms continue to result in a preference for sons, leading to frequent pregnancies. Further social norms around child and early marriages also impact maternal and child health.

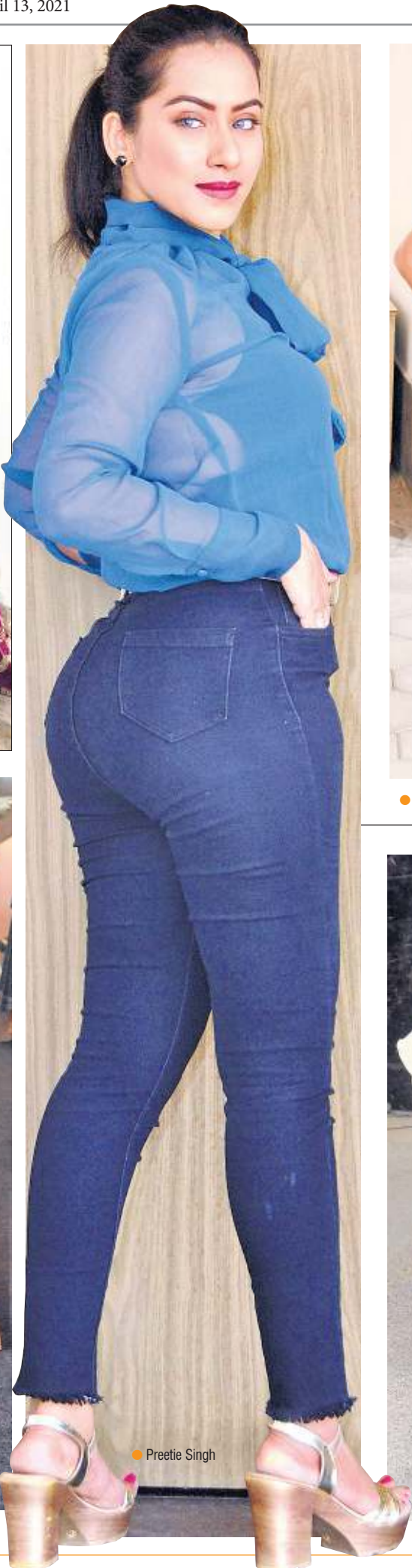
While the full impact of the pandemic on the public health system will not be clear for some time, Covid-19 has underscored that stronger maternal and child care systems are a critical requirement of health system strengthening going forward.

The foundation has been working at the national, state and community level to change perceptions around gender family planning, adolescent sexuality and reproductive health.





● Naziya



● Preetie Singh



● Ritu



● Saifi



● Sana Khan



● Reshu



● Safa



● Sana

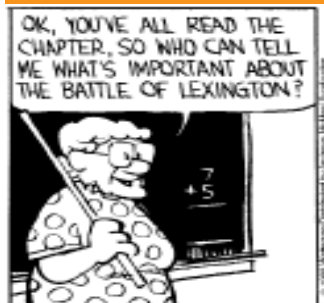
## PARTY

## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



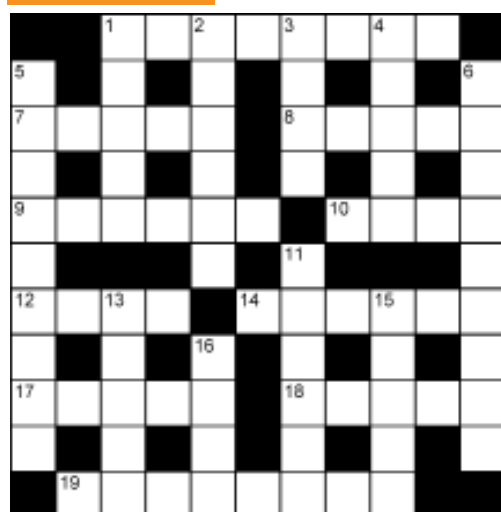
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



#### ACROSS

- Keep live fish in this
- An archer fires this
- Very mean and unkind
- Sad because you are on your own
- Scheme
- A red gemstone
- Defeated
- Wearing nothing
- Stage dramas
- These are pushed around a supermarket

- Normal
- A graceful dancer
- Loss of eyesight
- Humans
- A maker of bread
- Shed these when crying
- A worshipped statue

#### DOWN

- Wear this over clothes to keep them clean
- Sick
- Eat this grain cooked



### SUDOKU



#### Yesterday's solution

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

#### Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.



# NTR'S NEXT, A PAN-INDIA FILM, WITH KORATALA



**Y**oung Tiger NTR who is currently busy shooting for SS Rajamouli's *RRR*, where he plays the role of Komaram Bheem, will next collaborate with Koratala Siva. Although rumours are rife that actor will work with Trivikram Srinivas for his next, as per the ongoing buzz, the film has been shelved for now and that the actor has given his nod to Koratala. The film will start in June after NTR completes *RRR*. Mikkilineni Sudhakar is going to produce this pan-India movie. Makers of the film announced that the film will release on April 29, 2022. Trivikram Srinivas in the place of NTR, will be working with Super Star Mahesh Babu, it is learnt.



**THE FILM WILL GO ON FLOORS IN JUNE AFTER NTR COMPLETES SHOOTING FOR *RRR*. MIKKILINENI SUDHAKAR IS GOING TO PRODUCE THIS PAN-INDIA MOVIE THAT WILL HIT THE BIG SREENS ON APRIL 29, 2022.**

## RAVI TEJA 'PLAYS SMART' IN *KHILADI* TEASER

**M**ass Maharaja Ravi Teja and director Ramesh Varma who are in top form are coming up with an action entertainer *Khiladi*. The film's teaser was launched on Monday as a treat for fans and movie buffs and it promises *Khiladi* is going to be an action-

packed commercial entertainer. Apart from action, there are high intense emotions, romance and some thrilling elements as well in the teaser.

Ravi Teja who falls in love with Dimple Hayathi tries to assassinate her, making us curious to know what led him to take the extreme decision.

Meenakshi Chaudhary, Arjun, Thakoor Anoop Singh, Murali Sharma, Anasuya Bharadwaj are also seen in the teaser that has only one dialogue mouthed by the actor.

"If you play smart without stupid emotions, you are

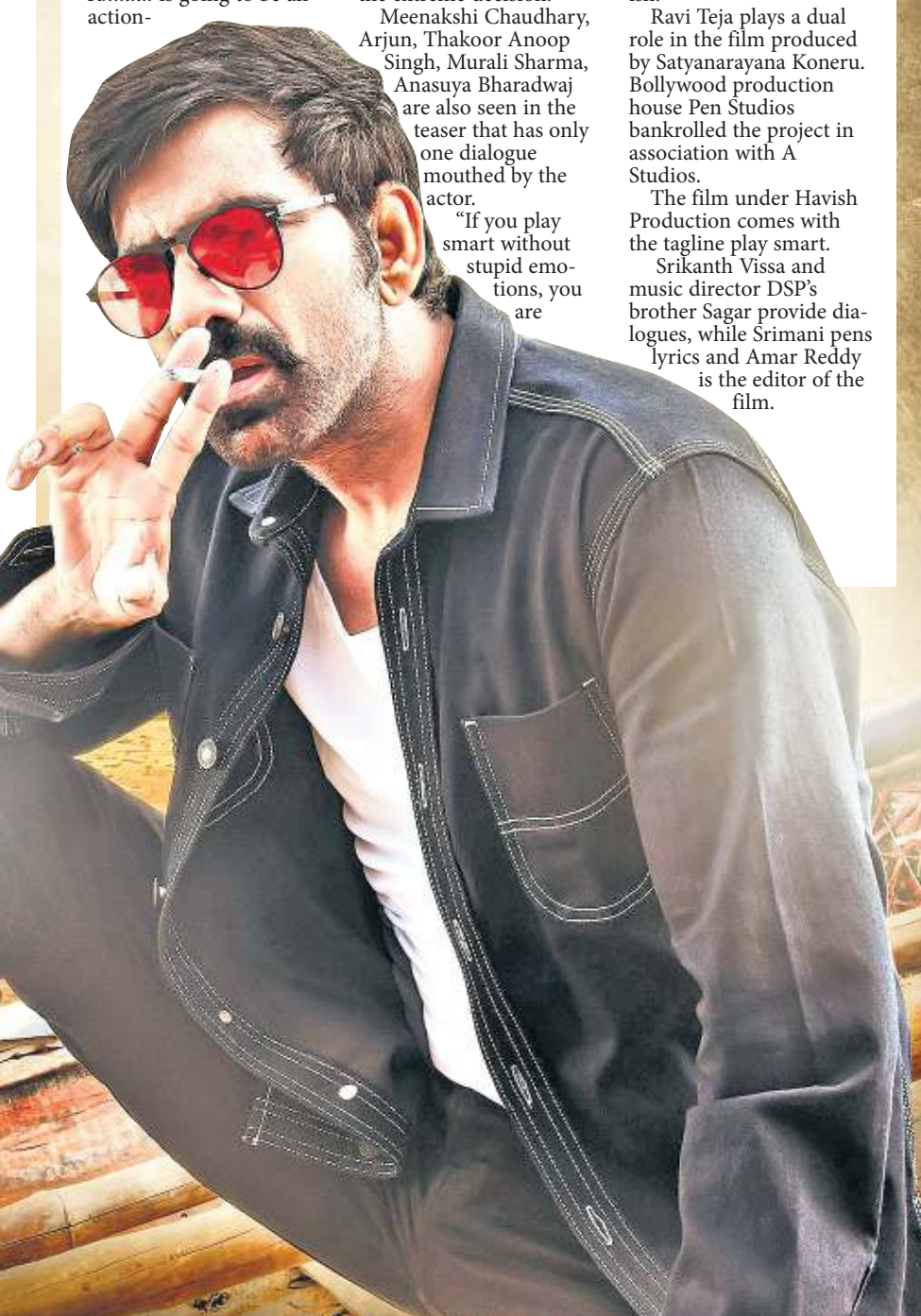
unstoppable," says Ravi Teja and this defines his ruthless character.

Sujit Vasudev and GK Vishnu's cinematography and Devi Sri Prasad's background score are the major assets of the film, other than Ravi Teja's intense performance. Being made on huge budget, every frame looks lavish.

Ravi Teja plays a dual role in the film produced by Satyanarayana Koneru. Bollywood production house Pen Studios bankrolled the project in association with A Studios.

The film under Havish Production comes with the tagline play smart.

Srikanth Vissa and music director DSP's brother Sagar provide dialogues, while Srimani pens lyrics and Amar Reddy is the editor of the film.



## 'With *Baahubali*, we learnt how to get the business together'

**A**ctor Rana Daggubati feels that films from South industry have always been pan-India but the globally renowned film *Baahubali* showed the way to make business the right way in a pan-India arrangement.

Rana played the role of antagonist Bhallaladeva in the two-part film franchise.

Talking about the culture of pan-India films spreading and how it was *Baahubali* that started it, the actor reflects on other films in the past, which have also had a huge reach nationally.

"I was an audience before an actor and to me whether I was watching a Hindi film or a Telugu film the sentiment was the same. I live in Hyderabad and for me be it (Amitabh) Bachchan sir's film or a Kamal Haasan film, the vibes were the same. Time and again there were films which broke the barriers. Like Mani (Ratnam) sir's film *Roza*, that was originally a Tamil film. Nobody in the Hindi belt had a problem

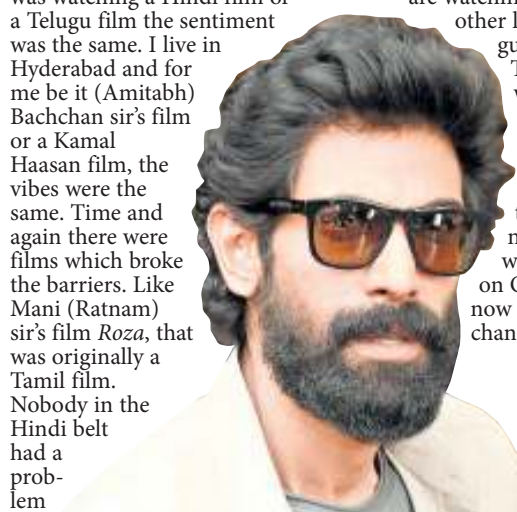
with that. They loved it as much as the South Indians loved it. Audience never has a problem (with language)," says the actor, who recently released his film *Aranya*.

The Hindi version of the same film is titled *Haathi Mere Saathi* but it had to be postponed due to the rising Covid cases in Maharashtra.

Rana goes on to add, "The only thing that changed with *Baahubali* is that we learnt how to get the business together and how do we actually come forth and release it. For a fact, this year they have been selling dubbed rights of all Telugu films, people on television

are watching it and other languages.

They were working on different spaces, they are now also watching it on OTT but now that is changing."



## ADITI'S DISTRESSFUL LOOK IN *MAHA SAMUDRAM*

**S**harwanand and Siddharth have teamed up an intense drama titled *Maha Samudram*. While Anu Emmanuel and Aditi Rao Hydari are playing female leads, Ajay Bhupathi of *Rx100* fame will don the director's hat for the film, whose shooting is progressing at a very brisk pace.

The first look of Aditi Rao Hydari has been unveiled on Monday and the heroine looks distressful. 'An Immeasurable Love' is what the makers captioned the look. She will be seen in the role of Maha.

The film is set to release on August 19. AK Entertainments is producing the movie. Other details regarding the remaining cast and crew will be out soon.



## Gemini group forays into music

**G**emini group needs no introduction. The company has been through the golden age in the Indian film industry.

Being one of the first companies to join the film industry after the country's independence, the group has hundreds of films to its credit, making and introducing several stars to the audiences. The group includes several affiliates such

as Gemini Film Circuit, Gemini VFX and Gemini Studios.

Having ruled the industry for the past 75 years, preparations are underway for Gemini's Diamond Jubilee celebrations too. It was during this time that the company decided to enter the music industry and announced the launch of Gemini Records.

In addition to creating private albums, Gemini Records will take over the rights to film



songs too. The company has operations in Chennai as well as Hyderabad. Gemini is credited with producing many prestigious films in Telugu and Tamil. Completing several years in

such a competitive world is no achievement.

Now with their foray into the music industry, fans are looking forward to unique content from various artists.

## Wild Dog on Netflix

**A**kkineni Nagarjuna's action and thriller drama *Wild Dog* that hit the silver screens on April 2, helmed by Solomon, opened to positive response by the movie lovers and the critics alike but failed to ring box office bells.

Originally slated for an OTT release, the makers decided to release in theatres later.

And now the latest we hear is that Netflix bought the OTT rights of *Wild Dog* for a good price and the film is likely to end its theatrical run in the coming weeks, so the attention has once again turned towards its OTT release.

The film might stream on Netflix from mid May. However, there have also been reports claiming that the action drama *Wild Dog* might release on the OTT platform in the first week of June.

An official confirmation regarding the same is awaited.





