

**ANALYSIS 7**  
ENGINEERING A BETTER  
FUTURE FOR HUMANKIND**MONEY 8**  
FLIPKART TO  
ACQUIRE CLEARTRIP**SPORTS 12**  
UNADKAT KEEPS  
DC UNDER CHECK

HYDERABAD, FRIDAY APRIL 16, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

'WILL PURSUE  
BOTH, MUSIC AND  
MEDICINE'

Page 11

www.dailypioneer.com

**WEEKEND CURFEW IN DELHI; MALLS, GYMS  
SHUT, HOME DELIVERY FOR RESTAURANTS**

Delhi will shut down on weekends from Friday to "break the chain of transmission" as it tackles a steep rise in Covid cases, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced today. During the weekend curfew, essential activities like weddings planned already will be allowed with passes. Auditoriums, restaurants, malls, gyms and spas will be shut down and movie theatres will be allowed with a third of their capacity on weekdays. Eating out is banned and only home deliveries and takeaways are allowed. Weekly markets will continue but with restrictions - one market will be allowed on any day at a given zone.

**Virat Kohli REPRIMANDED  
FOR IPL CODE OF CONDUCT BREACH**

Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) skipper Virat Kohli has been "reprimanded" for breaching Indian Premier League's Code of Conduct during the IPL 2021 match against SunRisers Hyderabad at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai, the IPL said in a media statement. During the match on Wednesday, Kohli was dismissed for 33 off 29 balls by Jason Holder and while walking off the field, the RCB captain hit an advertising cushion on the boundary before whacking a chair in the team's dugout with his bat. Kohli admitted to the Level 1 offence 2.2 which relates to 'Abuse of cricket equipment or clothing, ground equipment or fixtures and fittings during a Match'.

**NEET POST-GRAD EXAM SCHEDULED ON  
SUNDAY DEFERRED AMID COVID SURGE**

The NEET-PG medical entrance exams - scheduled for Sunday - have been postponed "in light of the surge in COVID-19 cases", Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan tweeted Thursday evening. Dr Vardhan said that a new date for the exam - which will decide the careers of an estimated 1.7 lakh medical aspirants - will be announced later. "In light of the surge in COVID-19 cases, the Government of India has decided to postpone NEET-PG 2021 exam, which was earlier scheduled to be held on April 18. Next date to be decided later" he said. "Decision has been taken keeping well-being of our young medical students in mind," the minister added.

**WPI INFLATION SPIKES TO OVER  
8-YEAR HIGH OF 7.39% IN MARCH**

The wholesale price-based inflation shot up to over 8-year high of 7.39 per cent in March on rising crude oil and metal prices. Also, the low base of March last year, when the data was computed with a low response rate due to the nationwide lockdown, contributed to the spike in inflation in March 2021. The WPI inflation was 4.17 per cent in February 2021 and 0.42 per cent in March 2020. This is the third straight month of up-tick seen in the whole-sale price index (WPI) based inflation. "The annual rate of inflation stood at 7.39 per cent (provisional) for the month of March 2021 over March 2020," the Commerce and Industry Ministry said.

**Every 4th Covid +ve person  
in TS heading to pvt hospital****NAVEENA GHANATE**  
■ HYDERABAD

In spite of Health Minister Eatela Rajender's repeated appeals to people that Covid +ve patients should approach government facilities that he says are fully equipped and properly supplied; amidst the alarmingly rising nationwide caseload, one in four TS corona patients is heading to private hospitals for treatment, notwithstanding their extortionate treatment charges.

Hospitalisation has significantly increased in the second wave, with the number of cases crossing the previous peak witnessed in August during the first wave. Presently, one in 4 Covid-19 +ve person is getting admitted to private hospital in Telangana. As per the Telangana health bulletin, there are 29,649 active cases in the state.

There are 9,176 beds occupied by Covid patients in the State. Although this represents 30.9% of the total cases admitted, the media bulletin states that only 19.2% of the cases are symptomatic. This raises eyebrows concerning the transparency with regard to cases and beds being reported by the Health Department.

Of these, while 6,549 have occupied beds in private hospitals, the remaining - 2,627 - have occupied beds in government hospitals. Nearly 50% of beds in private hospitals are occupied by Covid-19 patients. Nearly 2,585 persons are in ICU or 9% of the total cases. Nearly 60% of the available ICU beds and 64% of oxygen beds are occupied in private hospitals.

Nearly 49% of people hospitalised are in need of oxygen. Even in TIMS, established exclusively for Covid19 patients by the

- More people are getting sick
- 1 in 3 Covid19 patients hospitalised
- 35% of beds in TIMS occupied
- 28% of in-patients require ICU beds
- 53% ICU beds in Gandhi Hospital occupied
- Health department says only 19.2% are symptomatic

Government of Telangana, nearly 35% of the beds are occupied. According to official data, one in 3 persons is getting hospitalised in Telangana.

2

**More children affected  
in 2nd wave in Hyd****ANUSHA PUPPALA**  
■ HYDERABAD

The second wave of Covid-19 seems to be spreading more rapidly and affecting people belonging to all age groups, including children, with March-April data shared by Neuberg Diagnostics Hyderabad suggesting that the percentage of children in the city who have been affected this time is significantly more than that registered for the corresponding period in the first wave. The trend is similar in various parts of the country too.

A significant feature of the second wave is the noticeable clusters of people infected, mainly in family clusters, apartment clusters etc., says city microbiologist Dr. Saranya Narayan. Despite testing positive, many of these children were asymptomatic.



According to an analysis of available data, in 2020, among children 38 per cent were positive in August, 28 per cent in September, 19 per cent in October month, 16 per cent in November and 10 per cent were positive in December. In 2021, the positivity rate among children increased from 6 per cent in January to 31 per cent in April 2021. In February 2021, 4 per cent children were positive and in March 21 per cent children were positive in Hyderabad city.

2

**US expels Russian  
diplomats, imposes  
new sanctions****PNS ■ WASHINGTON**

The Biden administration on Thursday announced the expulsion of 10 Russian diplomats and sanctions against nearly three dozen people and companies as it moved to hold the Kremlin accountable for interference in last year's presidential election and the hacking of federal agencies.

The actions represent the first retaliatory measures announced against the Kremlin for the hack, familiarly known as the SolarWinds breach. In that intrusion, Russian hackers are believed to have infected widely used software with malicious code, enabling them to access the networks of at least nine agencies in what US officials believe was an intelligence-gathering operation aimed at mining government secrets.

2

**Telangana cancels SSC,  
postpones Inter exams****ML MELLY MAITREYI**  
■ HYDERABAD

The School Education Department has taken crucial decisions in view of the rising second-wave Covid-19 cases in TS. It has cancelled the Secondary School Certificate examination scheduled to be held from May 17 and postponed all Intermediate Second Year examination scheduled to be held between May 1 and 19.

After the Central Board of Secondary Examinations (CBSE) took the decision to cancel Class 10 examination, State Education Minister Sabitha Reddy held a meeting with Education department officials on Thursday.

There have been requests from students and parents to the Chief Minister to cancel the examinations in view of the surge in Covid-19 cases. Some students even made online petitions.



There are over 5.4 lakh SSC students in the State and in view of the present serious pandemic situation and concerns expressed by parents and students, the Department felt that it would not be safe to conduct the examinations for such a large number of students. Students have been calling Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy directly appealing to her to cancel the examinations as hardly any physical classes were held throughout the academic year.

2

**Hospitals overwhelmed by Covid surge  
as beds, oxygen fall short across country****PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Many hospitals were scrambling for beds and oxygen as COVID-19 infections surged to a new daily record on Thursday, with a second wave of infections centred on the rich western state of Maharashtra. Experts blamed everything from official complacency to aggressive variants. The government blamed a widespread failure to practise physical distancing and wear face masks.

"The situation is horrible," said Avinash Gawande, an official at a government hospital in the industrial city of Nagpur that was battling a flood of patients, as were hospitals in neighbouring Gujarat state and New Delhi in the north.

"We are a 900-bed hospital, but there are about 60 patients waiting and we don't have space for them," Maharashtra, home to the finan-



Covid positive patients sharing a bed in Delhi, reflecting severe scarcity of beds in capital

cial capital of Mumbai, began a lockdown at midnight, a move that spurred a rush to stockpile essential items in advance.

At Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) Hospital in New Delhi, the country's largest facility

treating Covid patients, two or three patients were seen sharing single beds in some wards as over-worked doctors attended to them, a Reuters witness said.

2

**One patient is now  
infecting up to nine  
in 10 contacts**

The second surge of Covid cases in India has swamped hospitals much faster than the first because mutations in the virus mean each patient is infecting many more people than before, epidemiologists and doctors say. India's daily infections skyrocketed more than 20-fold to more than 200,000 on Thursday since a multi-month-low in early February, though the government has played down the role of mutants in the latest rise, the worst anywhere this month.

2

**Manickam says new  
TPCC chief after by-poll****K VENKATESHWARLU**  
■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Congress Party Affairs in-charge Manickam Tagore reiterated on Thursday that the Congress High Command will appoint the new TPCC chief only after the Nagarajuna Sagar by-elections.

It may be recalled that, three months ago the party's candidate for the Nagarajuna Sagar by-election K Jana Reddy and others requested the High Command to keep on hold the announcement until after the Nagarajuna Sagar by-elections.

2

**Poll notification issued  
for 7 Urban local bodies****PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

The State administration as well as political parties will get into campaign mode once again, following the issue of notification for elections to seven urban local bodies even as campaigning for the Nagarajuna Sagar Assembly bye-election ended on Thursday.

The State Election Commission on Thursday issued the schedule for elections to the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation, Khammam Municipal Corporation and Atchampet, Siddipet, Nakrekal, Jaderla and Kothur municipalities to be held on April 30.

There are a total of 248 divisions/wards in the above urban local bodies. Elections will also be held to nine casual vacancies, including Lingojiguda ward in Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation. The Model Code of Conduct will come into force with immediate effect in all the ULBs where elections will be held.

Nominations will be accepted from Friday between 10.30 a.m and 5 p.m and the ward-wise electoral rolls of urban local bodies will be displayed by the Returning Officer the same day. April 18 is the last date

**Warangal, Khammam  
corporations and five  
municipalities go to  
polls on April 30**

for filing nominations, followed by scrutiny on April 19. One can appeal against rejection of nominations on April 20 and such appeals will be disposed on April 21. The last date for withdrawal of nominations is April 22 and the final list of contestants will be published after 3 pm the same day. Polling will be held on April 30 and re-poll if any will be held on May 2. Counting of votes will be taken up on May 3 from 8 a.m. onwards and the results will be declared after the completion of counting of votes.

2

**NAGARJUNA SAGAR BY-POLL****High-pitched campaign ends; all  
political parties exude confidence****TRS sure of retaining seat with good margin, Cong confident of wresting seat****PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Winning a bye-election in an Assembly constituency ought to have been a breeze for the ruling party, considering that its sitting legislator had earned much goodwill. Going by the way the Telangana Rashtra Samithi went all-out to campaign for the Nagarajuna Sagar

bye-election, pressing several of its ministers to camp in the constituency, it is apparent that the pink party not only focused on the win but also the victory margin.

Determined to challenge the TRS after the recent set-back in the Graduate MLC election, the Congress and BJP too adopted their respective strategies as the high-

pitched campaign drew to a close on Thursday.

Like the recently held Graduate MLC election, the campaign for the bye-election too was aggressive, with sporadic clashes and political parties trading charges against one another about the free flow of liquor and cash.

2

**Excise dept on search for absconding bidders****SNCN ACHARYULU**  
■ HYDERABAD

In a strange case that also raises questions about the sobriety of those who had taken part in the recent bidding for fresh licences to operate bar-cum-restaurants in TS, the Telangana Excise Department is now hunting for about 40 applicants who are incommunicado after having secured fresh licences for operating bar-cum-restaurants through

successful bidding. The absconding applicants are mainly from the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) limits.

The state government had decided to issue licences fresh to start new bar-cum-restaurants in the state. Accordingly, in February the state government issued tender notification calling applications for obtaining licences to start new bar and restaurants in the state.

With this, the total number of bar

and restaurants will increase to 5,790 (5,631 at present).

Of the new bars, 55 will be in GHMC limits, while 19 will be in the peripheral areas. The usual practice is to go for draw of lots if more than one applicant applies for a bar and restaurant to select the final bidder.

For excise tax, there are four slabs. Those in areas within 50,000 population area will have to pay Rs 30 lakh, those in areas with popu-

lation between 50,000 and 5 lakh will pay a fee of Rs 42 lakh, while those in areas with a population of 5 lakh to 20 lakh will have to pay Rs 44 lakh in fee. The highest fees, at Rs 49 lakh, are for areas with more than 20 lakh population. The application fee is Rs 1 lakh, which is not refundable. For 159 new bar-cum-restaurants 8,464 applications were received.

2

**TODAY****ALMANAC****Month & Paksam:**

Chaitra &amp; Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Chaturthi 06:05 pm

Nakshatram : Rohini 11:40 pm

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

Rahukalam : 10:42 am - 12:15 pm

Yamagandam : 03:22 pm - 04:55 pm

Varjyam : 02:37 pm - 04:26 pm - 07:44 am

Gulika : 07:36 am - 09:09 am

Good Time : (to start any important work)

Amritakalam : 08:03 pm - 09:51 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham : 11:51 am - 12:40 pm

**HYDERABAD****WEATHER**

Forecast: Partly cloudy

Temp: 34/23

Humidity: 43%

Sunrise: 05:59 am

Sunset: 06:32 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated April 15, 2021 5:00 PM



WhatsApp is these days one of the most popular social media tools used for multiple ways of communication. According to the developer, WhatsApp messages and calls are end-to-end encrypted. No one outside the parties engaged, not even WhatsApp, can read or listen to such conversations.

This free and encrypted way of secured communication has further added to the utilitarian value of WhatsApp. Encrypted it may be, however, there are ways and means to break into any code and to penetrate so-called secured conversations.

The users of WhatsApp know the versatility of the application that can be used for making one-to-one as well as one-to-many multi-media communications. As for its special features, such as group and broadcast, up to 256 participants can share text mes-

# WhatsApp messages and human psychology

saging, make audio and video calls, and transfer media files. Recently, WhatsApp was in the news for their intention to change the privacy norms that led to massive migration from WhatsApp to Signal, Instagram and other platforms.

Despite migration to other apps, majority of people continued to use WhatsApp. The popular perception was that Instagram is like a prestigious gymnasium that everybody loves to be a member of, but hates to use it. This explains the massive popularity of WhatsApp in comparison to its contemporaries and competitors. Rattled by the massive migration, WhatsApp, in a swift response, resorted to a campaign suggesting it would

**This free and encrypted way of secured communication has further added to the utilitarian value of WhatsApp. Encrypted it may be, however, there are ways and means to break into any code and to penetrate so-called secured conversations.**

maintain the status quo.

Those using WhatsApp can peep into the workings of human psychology from time to time.

There are users who even before reading the message themselves and even without verifying the veracity of received information, as an intuitive response, forward it to their contacts. Like everywhere else, there are genuine and malicious users of this

App.

The most dangerous category is those of rabble rousers, who create and disseminate inflammatory and potentially libellous contents. Several steps have been taken to control this menace such as by putting restrictions on the numbers of individuals and groups to whom a message could be sent at a time. This to some extent has controlled the problem, though not fully.



**DR SHAILENDRA JOSHI,**  
Advisor of Telangana govt and former chief secretary of Telangana

This uniform treatment, restricting circulating useful and harmful messages across the board, needs to be corrected. May be at a later date, we can find a solution to this problem by segregating the

two types of messages through artificial intelligence. Another interesting aspect is receiving messages sent to various people in bulk thanking them for participation in a function/program/event etc; even one has not ventured out and did not attend any such event.

If membership of someone spans a reasonable number of WhatsApp groups, chances of receiving the same/similar message within a limited span of time is very high.

All of us are used to receiving a barrage of messages triggered by a single message. One is also instinctively forced to acknowledge the event and act to convey the similar message. Only one message is sufficient to initiate an avalanche of messages.

Such messages are sometimes communicated to the person even if she is not a member of the group.

Dissemination of so-called knowledge and information sharing on various subjects through WhatsApp is mind-boggling.

There is a WhatsApp remedy for every illness, disease or a problem. If the same trend continues, there may be genuine demands to bestow status of a University or at least a deemed University on WhatsApp.

There is another category of people daily wishing good morning, good evening and good night or some similar repetitive messages to all their acquaintances. While we wish and mean well to all our contacts, I will share one

example of hospitalisation of one of my friends. The moment a news is broken, everyone has to wish the patient get well soon and remembering her in their prayers. It is perhaps, social pressure that compels this mass reaction even knowing that the person or his family are not in a position to receive or read such messages.

The intention seems to show off to other members of the group how caring they are. It is always good to convey directly to the person concerned, instead of responding in a group. One can cite any number of instances depicting various aspects of human psychology while using social media.

To conclude, there is a need to develop and follow a protocol of etiquette for using social media, including ascertaining correctness of the information.

# Sarala Sagar dam - now a testimony for negligence

**MALLEPALLI GOVERDHAN**  
■ NAGARKURNOOL

Sarala Sagar Project, which was the second biggest dam in Asia built with siphon technology was now left as a testimony for negligence by the rulers. The farmers were in deep concern over the cracks through which water was going waste.

It was the oldest irrigation project in India after independence as second Raja of Wanaparty Raja Rameshwara Rao founded by the Sarala Sagar Dam Project that has incorporated siphon technology from California in the United States. He had built the project in the name of his queen Sarala Devi. He had deputed a team of engineers to visit California to study the siphon technology. The project



had been taken up at Sankarampet at Rs 35 lakhs and the foundation stone was laid by Military Governor-General on September 15, 1949, with a capacity of 0.42 tmc. The project was proposed to provide irrigation water to nine villages and livelihood for fishermen. The then PWD Minister JV Narasinga Rao had inaugurated the project.

When the project bund was

breached in 1964 with heavy rains and it was reconstructed with boulders. The project was abandoned with drought conditions. To ensure full tank level, a balancing reservoir was built at Rs 12 crore at a distance of 10 km from the project. The project had provided irrigation water for 12 years continuously and the farmers incurred a huge loss due to a breach of the bund on the left side in 2019. Each hood-

siphon which was in the shape of an elephant trunk will release 3.444 cusecs of water. If all the hood-siphons opened, about 58,500 cusecs of water will be released downwards. From each prime siphon will allow 500 cusecs of water. If all the four siphons opened, about 2000 cusecs of water will be released. The Full Storage Level (FSL) was 1089 feet. The speciality of the project was that if the water levels reached 1089.25 feet, the hood siphons will automatically open and release water. Based on the inflows of water, the hood siphons will open for every 0.25 feet of water. About 27 hood siphons and four prime siphons were arranged for the project. The 530-feet stone structure and 3357 mud structure were part of the project.

## Excise dept on search for absconding...

Continued from page 1

As usual even non-serious players entered the competition with a view to sell their licences for additional money after the draw of lots.

They were prepared to lose Rs 1 lakh application fee in the process. Such players, should they get bar and restaurant, will ask interested parties to shell out more money, depending on the area and demand.

The goodwill amount may around Rs 10 lakh to Rs 25 lakh. Such applicants do not give their original address, but mention some other place.

In the normal situation, the demand for bar-cum-restaurants is more, but due to Covid this time the overall demand has been somewhat less.

# More children affected in 2nd wave in Hyderabad

Continued from page 1

Dr. Saranya Narayan, said, "Children were affected in the first wave also, but more gradually, indicates data of tested children from both first and second wave. In the second wave, which became obvious in March 2021, children are getting affected more rapidly because of reasons like easing of the lockdown restrictions late last year, complacency leading to lack of Covid-appropriate behaviour, travel, schools reopening and emergence of the mutant strains".

"These children can more easily spread the virus like adults as children can't be kept indoors all the time. When they play with other children, there is a greater likelihood of spread. In addition, the younger children

may not follow the safety norms prescribed. Also, the entire small cluster families are testing positive. In these families also children are testing positive", she further added.

Dr Lohith Reddy, a post-graduate paediatrician treating child Covid patients at Gandhi Medical College, told The Pioneer, "We are treating children from infants to children of up to 12-years age and what we observed is that even though the severity is same from the previous year, the only thing is that the number of Covid cases among children has increased. And if children are getting infected, they are spreading even to their family members. The severity is lesser in children when compared to adults because of their carrier molecules are

quite different from those of adults, and severity depends on comorbidities in children".

He added, "So far, in Gandhi Hospital we have seen 30-40 positive cases in children, but a huge number of cases was reported in Niloufer Hospital in the second wave. In the first wave, we have seen 5 to 10 percent of cases; whereas, in the second wave, it has increased to 10 to 15 per cent of positive cases. More cases are reported from the age group of 5 to 12 years of age. Children with comorbidities are seen symptomatic, whereas children without any comorbidities are asymptomatic. Children and parents both should be very careful and wear masks even at home as the infection is easily spreading from each other".

## Hospitals overwhelmed...

Continued from page 1

Covid-positive patients - from a one-and-a-half-year-old toddler to many elderly - and their relatives kept streaming in to the emergency ward at LNJ, arriving by ambulance, cars or auto-rickshaws through the day.

"Last year also we have not seen such a bad situation. This time the number is very high and increasing very rapidly, going (at a) very fast speed, so the situation is really alarming," said LNJ Medical Director Suresh Kumar.

"We are definitely overburdened... Today we have 158 admissions in Lok Nayak alone. All sick patients, all severe patients," Kumar added. India has added 200,739 infections over the last 24 hours, health ministry data showed, for a seventh daily record surge in the last eight days, while 1,038 deaths took its toll to 173,123.

Its tally of 14.1 million infections is second only to the United States, with 31.4 million. Despite injecting about 114 million vaccine doses, the highest figure worldwide after

the United States and China, India has covered only a small part of its 1.4 billion people.

India said on Thursday regulators would decide on emergency-use applications for foreign COVID-19 vaccines within three working days, as it tries to attract Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson and Moderna to sell their shots.

## One patient is now infecting up to nine in 10 contacts

Continued from page 1

The world's hardest-hit country after the United States has reported about 950 cases of people contracting the variants first detected in the United Kingdom, South Africa and Brazil.

"The point is that these variants of concern are still not on top of the discourse," said epidemiologist Rajib Dasgupta of New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University. "Even if it is a new variant, you need to do the same things" to control it and treat patients "but it requires a different urgency to recognise that", he said.

Doctors at New Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences have found that one patient is now infecting up to nine in 10 contacts, compared with up to four last year. Scientists in Britain say the B.1.1.7 variant here, widely known as the British mutant, is 70% more transmissible than previous variants, and much deadlier.

The northern Indian state of Punjab, which has reported one of the highest recent fatality rates in the country, said late last month 81% of 401 COVID-19 samples it sent for genome sequencing were found to be the British variant.

"This virus is more infectious and virulent," said Dhiren Gupta, a senior consultant at New Delhi's Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.

## US expels Russian diplomats...

Continued from page 1

Besides that hack, US officials last month alleged that Russian President Vladimir Putin authorised influence operations to help Donald Trump in his unsuccessful bid for reelection as president, though there's no evidence Russia or anyone else changed votes or manipulated the outcome.

The measures announced Thursday include sanctions on six Russian companies that support the country's cyber activities, in addition to sanctions on 32 individuals and entities accused of attempting to interfere in last year's presidential election, including by spreading disinformation.

The 10 diplomats being expelled include representatives of Russian intelligence

services, the White House said.

The White House also said Biden was using diplomatic, military and intelligence channels to respond to reports that Russia encouraged the Taliban to attack US and allied troops in Afghanistan based on the best assessments of the intelligence community.

Reports of alleged bounties surfaced last year, with the Trump administration coming under fire for not raising the issue directly with Russia. The White House did not publicly confirm the reports. The safety and well-being of US military personnel, and that of our allies and partners, is an absolute priority of the United States, the White House said Thursday.

It was not immediately clear what, if any, other actions

might be planned against Russia. Officials had previously said they expected to take actions both seen and unseen.

The sanctions, presumably intended to send a clear retaliatory message to Russia and to deter similar acts in the future, are certain to exacerbate an already tense relationship between the US and Russia.

President Joe Biden told Putin this week in their second call to de-escalate tensions following a Russian military buildup on Ukraine's border, and said the US would act firmly in defence of its national interests regarding Russian intrusions and election interference.

In a television interview last month, Biden replied "I do" when asked if he thought Putin was a killer.

# High-pitched campaign ends; all political parties exude...

Continued from page 1

Top leaders of all the three political parties addressed public meetings, braving the corona scare in support of their respective candidates in addition to road shows and padayatras.

TRS fielded Nomula Bhagath Kumar, son of late MLA Nomula Narasimaiah, for the sitting seat against K.Jana Reddy of the Congress,

seven-time MLA from the constituency, and Ravikumar Naik of BJP.

The TRS Ministers and MLAs who have been camping in the constituency for the last three weeks say that KCR's image, irrigation schemes and welfare programmes reaching over one lakh beneficiaries in the constituency and sympathy for Nomula's family will ensure Bhagat's win with a thumping majority.

Once the notification was issued for the bye-election on February 23, soon after the MLC elections, TRS deputed its Ministers and MLAs as in-charges to cover each of the seven mandals in the Sagar constituency and drill into the electorate nuggets about the welfare and developmental programmes implemented by the government. The TRS leadership was convinced that it was important to talk about

what they had done till date as well as what they would be doing to address pending issues.

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao addressed a public meeting at Halia on Wednesday -- second in span of two months -- seeking votes for the party candidate and mainly targeting the Congress party and former MLA Jana Reddy for failure to develop the constituency. His advice for

people was to see the visible development of last six years after he had risked his life to achieve Telangana.

The Congress party, which was the first to announce veteran Congress leader K Jana Reddy, who had lost to Nomula Narasimaiah in the last Assembly elections, is equally confident of Jana Reddy's win. The grand old party is sure that Jana's victory would be a turning point in State politics.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
<b>GOLD</b>	
₹ 47,670 (10 gm)	
<b>SILVER</b>	
₹ 71,800 (1kg)	
₹ 100	
CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹193
Without Skin	₹219
Broiler at Farm	₹133
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	446
VIJAYAWADA	393
VISAKHAPATNAM	505
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.46

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.



# Hyd police end Sharmila's fast

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad police on Thursday detained former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy's daughter YS Sharmila as she tried to continue her fast demanding job notifications for Telangana's unemployed youth.

She was taken into custody as she tried to take out a 'padayatra' after police forcibly ended her fast at Indira Park. Police forcibly ended her protest as the permission was given for one-day fast, though she had applied for a three-day fast.

Police stopped Sharmila at the Telugu Talli flyover when she, along with her supporters, was walking towards her Lotus Pond residence in Banjara Hills. There was even a stampede-like situation. At one stage, she collapsed and was briefly unconscious.

She was later dropped at her residence. Sharmila, however, staged a sit-in outside her residence and made it clear that she will continue the fast till all her supporters are released by the police.

Condemning the police action against her and her supporters, she targeted Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao.

Sharmila, who plans to launch a new political party in Telangana in July, undertook the fast to demand the state government issue job notifications for unemployed youth.

The sister of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, she questioned the silence of Chandrasekhar Rao on suicides by unemployed youth. She said the Chief Minister



should respond to the burning problem.

She said she would stand with the unemployed youth who are seeking jobs. "Whether other opposition parties speak for you or not, I will stand by you," she told the youth.

She said fasts and protests will continue across the state till the state government issues job notifications to fill the vacancies in various government departments. She alleged that dejected over the delay in job notifications, unemployed youth were ending their lives but the Chief Minister is neglecting the issue. Recalling that youth were in the forefront of the movement for statehood to Telangana, she demanded that Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) government fulfil their aspirations by providing them

**I will stand with the unemployed youth who are seeking jobs. Whether other opposition parties speak for you or not, I will stand by you. There are 1.91 lakh vacancies in Telanagana. The TRS-led state government should fill them**  
— **YS SHARMILA**,  
Former AP Chief Minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy's daughter

jobs. "There are 1.91 lakh vacancies. The government should fill them," she said and appealed to youth not to resort to suicides, assuring them that she would lead the fight to pressurise the government to issue job notifications.

Sharmila undertook the fast a week after addressing a public meeting at Khammam, where she announced that she will launch the political party on July 8, the birth anniversary of her father.

Unemployed youth, students and leaders of various groups met her during the fast and expressed their solidarity. She said she would unveil the flag, name and ideology of the new party on July 8. The public meeting at Khammam was also addressed by Sharmila's mother YS Vijayamma, who appealed to people to bless her daughter with their support.

Vijayamma also shared the dais with Sharmila at Thursday's fast. An interesting

incident at the venue caught the attention of all and triggered speculations.

Asking video camera persons to move aside, Sharmila remarked that Sakshi (the media house owned by her brother) will not give coverage. Vijayamma, who was sitting next to her, was apparently taken aback. She immediately patted her hand in an obvious signal to stop.

Sharmila has been holding meetings with loyalists of her late father in Telangana for more than a month as part of the preparations to float a political party here.

Andhra Pradesh's ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has already made it clear that its leader Jagan Mohan Reddy has difference of opinion with his sister's plan to enter Telangana politics and launch a new party.

# TS records highest single-day spike in Covid cases; 8 deaths

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

For the second consecutive day, Covid claimed eight lives across Telangana while the daily count of new cases jumped to 3,307, the highest so far in the state.

The previous highest one-day spike was on April 11, when 3,187 cases were recorded. The cumulative Covid tally moved up to 3,38,045.

Eight fatalities were reported in the 24-hour period (between 8 p.m. on Tuesday and 8 p.m. on Wednesday). This is the highest fatality in a day during the second wave.

The fresh fatalities pushed the death toll to 1,788. The case fatality rate remained at 0.52 per cent against the national average of 1.2 per cent.

The spike continued across the state. Greater Hyderabad remained the worst hit with 446 new cases while adjoining districts of Medchal Malkajgiri and Rangareddy recorded 314 and 277 cases respectively.

Nizamabad district bordering Maharashtra remained one of the worst affected districts with 279 new infections. Jagtial reported 155 cases followed by 153 in Sangareddy, 148 in Nirmal, 128 in Kamareddy, 102 in Nalgonda



and 101 in Khammam. Concerned over the massive surge, director of public health, Dr G Srinivas Rao, on Wednesday warned that if the situation continued like this, Telangana will soon become like Maharashtra.

He asked people to be careful and follow all Covid guidelines. "The next four to six weeks are extremely crucial for Telangana and the situation will spiral out of control if we are not careful," he said. "The fact that the state is not imposing a lockdown does not mean we are not in a critical situation. The lockdown is not being imposed because it will affect livelihoods and the economy of the state," Rao said.

According to a media bulletin issued by the health department on Thursday, the number of active cases in the state jumped to 27,861 including 18,685 who are in home or institutional isolation. The recovery rate dipped further to 91.22 per cent, still above the national average for 88.3 per cent.

During the last 24 hours, the health authorities in the state conducted 1,06,627 tests, taking the cumulative number of tests to over 1.13 crore. Samples tested per million population rose to 3,05,212.

The admissions in 72 government and 249 private hospitals treating Covid rose to 9,176.



Somesh Kumar speaking at a high level meeting with senior officials at BRKR Bhavan on Thursday to take stock of the prevailing Covid situation.

# Cops arrest two with marijuana worth Rs 19.2L

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Nampally police arrested two persons, including a woman, on charges of possession and transportation of drugs here on Thursday. Police seized 38 kilos of marijuana, worth Rs 19.2 lakh, from them.

The arrested persons were Rajaram Swami Kannu, 72, from Thane in Maharashtra and Preethi Pradeep Mandal, 22, from Mumbai.

Police said the duo were found moving suspiciously with luggage at Nampally. On seeing the cops, the duo tried to escape. They were chased by SI J Sudhir, B Venkatesh and Abid Hussain, both police constables. The police, after nabbing them, checked the luggage and found the marijuana.

City Police Commissioner Anjani Kumar congratulated the police team.

## CITY LIGHTS

### UoH appeals students to leave campus amid rising virus scare

Months after reopening the campus in a phased manner, the University of Hyderabad on Thursday appealed to its students to leave to their native places in view of the rising Covid cases.



In an appeal, the dean of the students' cell Prof B Nagarjuna noted that they are going through an unprecedented global predicament and that all lives are adversely affected by the scare of infection and contagion. "I would like to share your anxiety and preoccupations and express my solidarity with you and your family," he added. The dean said that as many as 15-20 students who are affected with Covid have been currently isolated at Lake View Guest House and that the number keeps on surging every day. "The situation demands utmost care and caution," he said. "Keeping in mind your health and wellbeing, all the students and scholars are requested to leave to their native place," Prof Nagarjuna appealed. In January this year, the University of Hyderabad has reopened the campus for post graduate students in a phased manner. By then, it had already enabled the return of over 320 research scholars of MPhil, and PhD programmes from various branches.

## Increase skills to check cyber crime: DGP Mahendar Reddy

Director General of Police M Mahendar Reddy on Thursday advised police personnel in the State to hone up skills required to probe cyber crime cases effectively. Addressing the inaugural session of a three-day physical level-III training on cybercrimes against women and children organized by the Telangana Women Safety Wing in virtual mode, he said the session would enable the police personnel empower themselves with necessary skills in investigating cyber crimes cases. As many as 117 select police officers across the State attended the session which will help them in gaining expertise to collect digital evidence in cybercrimes. Using open source technologies and other IT tools, the IOs will get to know the modus operandi adopted by cyber criminals. At the same time, the IOs must also know the open source technologies in identifying the criminals involved in cybercrimes, he said.

## Srinivas Goud says, chalk out plans to develop heritage spots

Tourism Minister V Srinivas Goud instructed officials on Thursday to chalk out plans for developing tourism and heritage spots in the State. Minister V Srinivas Goud convened a meeting with archaeological and tourism department officials at Ravindra Bharati here on Thursday and reviewed the progress of different works. Alampur MLA Dr. Abraham, who also participated in the meeting, thanked Chief Minister of Telangana K Chandrasekhar Rao and Tourism Minister V Srinivas Goud for sanctioning Rs.37 crore to take up development works at Sri Jogulamba temple and adjoining areas. Dr Abraham appealed to the Tourism Minister to lay the foundation for the first phase works to be taken up with a cost of Rs 20 crore. The Tourism Minister said the works would commence in the first week of next month and directed tourism officials to make necessary arrangements.



## Charminar, Golconda shut till May 15

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Amid the ongoing rise of Coronavirus cases, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has shut down the historic Golconda fort and Charminar. A circular from the ASI on Thursday said that all monuments/museums protected by the Central government under the agency have been shut with immediate effect until May 15.

While the ASI has closed its monuments for visitors, there is no intimation about other heritage buildings or historical monuments that fall under the state government, like the



Qutb Shahi tombs, which are currently still open. The Charminar and Golconda fort were also shut last year as well due to the lockdown imposed due to the ongoing pandemic. Both, along with other places, had reopened only in September 2020.

After the monuments reopened, there were not many visitors for the first few months, but things had slowly staggered to normalcy by February this year, as hundreds of people were visiting both the Charminar and Golconda fort. In Telangana, the government has not imposed any kind of lockdown so far, but has shut down schools and colleges in wake of the pandemic.

It is unclear as of now if the state government will also shut down historical monuments. As of Thursday, all public spaces are open, and there has not been any intimation on this front.



### AFTER EFFECTS

Several people in low lying areas are facing issues as even a very light rainfall is creating a flood-like situation in Nadeem Colony at Tolichowki. Residents of the locality complain that it is very difficult to walk on the roads during such situations.



## 39-year-old man gets 20 years RI for raping minor

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A local court on Thursday sentenced a man to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment on charges of raping a minor girl.

Sukrat Singh Ukey, 39, a labourer who is a resident of Dhoolpet, entered a house at Shibil Hills under Mangalhat police station limits on October 10 and raped the girl aged around five years when her parents were away.

Based on a complaint lodged by the mother of the victim, the police arrested Sukrat. The local court convicted him to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 as well.

# Shortage of antiviral drugs as virus cases spike

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

There is acute shortage of Covid medicines in medical shops, a similar phenomenon experienced last year, as people have been administering self-medication as a precautionary measure in the wake of the second wave of the pandemic, according to reports.

While there is shortage for some Covid medicines, some manufacturing companies doubled the price of medicines.

People have been administering themselves the Vitamin-C and D and B-complex tablets and zinc tablets, which are part of the Covid-19 regimen, as a precautionary measure, ignoring the doctors warning against the self-medication, pushing up



the demand for these vitamin tablets. In some medical shops, there is shortage of Dolo-650 mg, Azithromycin and other tablets besides the shortage of Vitamin tablets.

The prices of some tablets namely Biofolate has been increased more than double to

Rs 157 per a strip of 10 tablets. Earlier, a strip was sold at Rs 60 only. Owners of various pharmacies indicate that the prices of various vitamin tablets have almost doubled. Shortage of raw material, shortage of hands due to the pandemic conditions and surge in demand for

the tablets has pushed the cost of these tablets.

There is shortage of Remedisivir injection, which is used in the pandemic treatment. The use of the injection has increased as the number of patients has increased with each passing day. There is no stock of Remedisivir in market. However, the injection is available in treatment centres, earlier the injection was available in pharmacies. Currently, the injection almost disappeared from the private pharmacies, barring the government pharmacies, the patients allege.

Because of the surge in Covid cases in Maharashtra, there is shortage of injections in the state. There is no permission to sell these injections

in outside pharmacies. The Centre has stepped up the production of Remedisivir and even stalled the export of the drug to other countries.

It may be recalled that raids on some medical shops led to the arrest of a racket which is selling the vitamin tablets at higher prices.

People have been in the habit of administering vitamin tablets themselves without medical advice. It is dangerous. People should not get addicted to use of vitamin tablets. The tablets should be used only on prescription from doctors. The continued use of the tablets will lead to imbalance of vitamins posing other health related problems to people.

# Two charred to death as truck catches fire in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two persons were charred to death after a moving container truck caught fire on the Outer Ring Road here on Thursday.

Police said the fire engulfed the container truck after it hit another vehicle from rear. The accident occurred near Telangana State Police Academy at Himayat Sagar.

A police officer said that the driver and cleaner were charred to death as the flames engulfed the cabin, leaving no space for them to escape.

Some passersby tried to save the driver and cleaner by breaking the windowpanes of the cabin but were not successful.

The entire vehicle was gutted before a fire tender rushed to the scene to douse the fire. The accident led to the traf-



fic jam on the busy ORR. Police personnel from Rajendra Nagar police station rushed to the spot to clear the jam.

The deceased were identified as driver Suraj and cleaner Murtunjaya. Their charred remains were shifted for autopsy.

The truck carrying a load of sea food products from Narsapur in Andhra Pradesh and heading towards Gachibowli rammed into another vehicle moving in front. The vehicle was on its way to Mumbai.

**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA**  
O/o Regional Officer, Panchayath Raj Mahabubnagar  
NIT No.7 & B/2021-22 **TENDER NOTICE** Dt.: 09.04.2021  
No. of works (02) : Supplying and delivery of 11000 no/s Plastic Chairs and Public address system to all Rythu Vedikas (88) No's in Mahabubnagar District.  
TOTAL ECY: 66.16 Lakhs. The Tenders will be available on procurement  
https://tenders.telangana.gov.in from 15.04.2021 to 23.04.2021. Further  
details can be had from the office  
R.O. No.: 44-DIVCL-AGENCY/1/2021-22 Sd/- Regional Officer, PR Mahabubnagar



NAGARUNASAGAR BYPOLL

# Cong keen to regain lost glory

K VENKATESHWARLU  
■ HYDERABAD

The Congress is keen to regain its lost glory by romping home in the Nagarjunasagar bypoll as it has been facing defeats since the formation of a separate State for Telangana.

Congress senior leader and Nagarjunasagar bypoll nominee K Jana Reddy, too, lost the 2018 Assembly elections, along with other Congress candidates, as it won only 19 seats. Moreover, the 12 Congress MLAs had shifted their loyalties to the TRS leaving the party in the lurch.

After that, Congress had lost Huzurnagar and Dubbak by-elections besides losing all local body elections, including recent GHMC elections. The party wanted to bounce back with the victory of K Jana Reddy, who won seven times from this constituency.

Taking the election seriously than ever in his entire political career, the 70 plus K Jana Reddy has been working hard for the past three months. Jana Reddy, who lost elections three times from

this constituency, toured almost all 346 villages in the constituency. He has the access of calling the people with their names in the villages of his constituency and requested the voters to cast their vote as it will be his last election.

However, the TRS took the election much more seriously than the Congress and BJP. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao participated in two public meetings before the issuance of notification and on the penultimate day of election campaign targeting K Jana Reddy and see that not to repeat Dubbak result.

In contrast, the Telangana BJP fielded ST candidate Dr Ravi Naik, however, it didn't show much seriousness though it took up the campaign seriously last week. BJP's attitude created an atmosphere like a fight only between Congress and TRS only.

Meanwhile, Jana Reddy has been facing two young leaders Nomula Bhagat (37 years) of TRS and Dr Ravi Naik (36 years) of BJP.



■ Jana Reddy, who lost elections three times from this constituency, toured almost all 346 villages in the constituency. He has the access of calling the people with their names in the villages of his constituency and requested the voters to cast their vote as it will be his last election



■ The TRS took the election much more seriously than the Congress and BJP. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao participated in two public meetings before the issuance of notification and on the penultimate day of the election campaign targeting K Jana Reddy and see that not to repeat Dubbak result

# ‘Govt will transform lives of farmers’

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Minister for Civil Supplies and BC Welfare Gangula Kamalakar inaugurated the first centre to procure paddy for the Rabi season at Cherlabuthukur village in Karimnagar rural mandal on Thursday.

During an interaction with media persons, the Minister informed that the district administration had decided to open 351 Paddy Procurement Centres to procure 4.34 lakh metric tonnes of paddy during the Rabi season. He added that the government had decided to open 6,400 centres across the state to procure paddy at the minimum support price (MSP). The Minister advised farmers to ensure that the crop that they brought to the procurement centre contained less than 17% moisture.

He claimed that Telangana is the only State that had initiated procurement of paddy by opening the centres at the doorstep of farmers despite the outbreak of the Coronavirus. He informed that the State government would procure 'A' grade paddy at Rs 1,888 per quintal



Minister for Civil Supplies and BC Welfare Gangula Kamalakar inaugurating the first centre to procure paddy for the Rabi season at Cherlabuthukur village in Karimnagar rural mandal on Thursday

■ Minister for Civil Supplies and BC Welfare Gangula Kamalakar claimed that Telangana is the only State that had initiated procurement of paddy by opening the centres at the doorstep of farmers despite the outbreak of the Coronavirus

“The centres will function for about 45 days till the entire paddy crop from the farmers in the vicinity is procured. I appeal to the farmers to follow the Covid-19 norms while visiting the

procurement centres and assure payment within four days after procurement,” he explained.

He also inaugurated a Rythu Vedita constructed at his own expense in memory of his brother Gangula Prabhakar in Muqdhoompur

village of Karimnagar rural mandal. He called upon the farmers to utilise the Rythu Veditas and avail of the advice from the agriculture department to cultivate crops that provide higher profits.

“The farmers in Muqdhoompur village have been provided irrigation through the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project. The State government is committed to transforming farmers of the State into ‘kings,” the minister affirmed.

Collector K Shashanka instructed the officials concerned to open procurement centres in all villages at the earliest and ensure the farmers are not inconvenienced in any manner.

The agriculture department officials were directed to maintain an adequate supply of gunny bags, arrange for transportation of the procured paddy to the mills and purchase tarpaulins to protect the paddy from unseasonal summer rains. Additional collector GV Shyam Prasad Lal, district civil supplies officer Suresh and MPP K Srinivas among others were present at the event.

## SHORT TAKES

### VH withdraws hunger strike

**HYDERABAD:** Congress senior leader V Hanumantha Rao has withdrawn his hunger strike on Thursday following the request of Telangana Congress Affairs In-charge Manickam Tagore. The latter urged Hanumantha Rao to withdraw the hunger strike as Congress will take up his demand of setting up of Ambedkar statue at Punjagutta Chowrasta. Tagore offered lemon juice to VH to withdraw his hunger strike at the latter's residence and assured that he will bring the issue to the notice of AICC chief Sonia Gandhi.

### Uttam's PA, driver, gunman test Corona positive

**HYDERABAD:** TPCC chief and Nalgonda MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy disclosed that his personal assistant (PA), driver and gunman have tested positive for Covid. He asked all those who had come in contact with them to undergo Corona tests. It may be recalled they accompanied Uttam in the Nagarjunasagar bypoll campaign. Meanwhile, Nalgonda District Collector Prashanth Jeevan Patil also tested positive on Thursday.

### MLA inaugurates 11 paddy procurement centres

**PATANCHERU:** Pathancheru MLA Gudem Mahipal Reddy on Thursday inaugurated 11 paddy procurement centres at various villages in Pathancheru constituency to procure rabi paddy. These centres have been set up at Pathancheru, Muttagi, Lakkaram, Velimela, Gummadidala, Kottapalli, Kanukunta, Jinnaram, Ootla, Vavilala and Solakpalli. The government fixed the MSP of Rs 1888 per quintal for Grade-A paddy, Rs 1868 for ordinary varieties. The money would be credited into the bank accounts of farmers within a week of the procurement. He advised the farmers against approaching middlemen to dispose of their paddy. He advised the farmers against congregating at the procurement centres as the pandemic cases are on the rise. ZP chairman Prabhakar, Agricultural market committee chairman Harika Vijaya Kumar and other elected people's representatives were present on the occasion.

### ‘Implement 11th wage agreement for SCCL workers’

**JAYASHANKAR-BHUPALAPALLY:** MLC Alugubelli Narsimha Reddy on Thursday demanded the SCCL to implement the 11th wage revision agreement as the 10th wage revision is going to come to an end by July 1 this year. Meanwhile, the pada yatra undertaken by CPM demanding development of Bhupalapally district entered the seventh day on Thursday. Addressing media in this connection, the MLC alleged that the people are suffering due to government not appointing regular officers to the newly created districts. Therefore, he urged the government to appoint regular officials to the districts. He demanded the government to give alternative lands to the SCCL displaced persons and jobs to one member of the family. He said that the rulers have failed to resolve the drinking water crisis in Bhupalapally. He urged the government to give the promised 3 acres of lands to the Dalits and Girijans. He said that it is not proper to close schools and open wine shops and theatres during the current pandemic period. He sought free laptops to the poor students to enable them to pursue online education. He demanded allocation of Rs 1000 crore to the district for its comprehensive development.

### Tribunal invites objections on decisions on RoR

**MAHABUBNAGAR:** Mahabhub Nagar District Collector S Venkata Rao said that a session of the tribunal on RoR cases was held here on Thursday acting on the orders issued by the special sitting of the tribunal held here earlier. He said about 60 applications were received objecting to the orders passed at the special tribunal session held previously. The tribunal session would also be held on Friday too. Only those applications objecting to the decisions of the special tribunal session would be entertained here. He clarified that applications would not be accepted. Additional Collector Sitarama Rao was present.

### Cases against those who fail to wear masks: Rachakonda CP

**MEDCHAL-MALKAJGIRI:** Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Mahesh Bhagwat has exhorted people to observe Covid-19 precautions otherwise threatened to impose a fine of Rs 1000 on those who do not wear masks. Addressing media here on Thursday, he said that cases have been registered against 832 on Wednesday with the help of the CCTV footage. He said that the RAChakonda police have been sensitising people at main intersections on Covid-19 precautions. He said that over 5000 Rachakonda police have received their vaccine and warned the people against inviting more than 200 to functions like marriages. He insisted on people maintaining social distance and wearing masks.

### PD Act invoked against pimp

PNS ■ MEDCHAL-MALKAJGIRI

Rachakonda Commissioner Mahesh M Bhagwat invoked the PD Act against one of the human trafficking gang members for organising prostitution in the limits of Saroornagar Police Station and detained him in the Central Prison, Cherlapally, on Thursday.

Organisers Bathini Manasa, Vallapu Mallikarjun and Pokala Lingaiah were running the brothel house by procuring girls/women from Andhra Pradesh and other parts of Telangana. They lure the girls on the pretext of providing employment, livelihood and later force them into prostitution.

It may be recalled that the racket was busted in a joint operation by the SOT, Rachakonda and Saroornagar police on January 8 and arrested the accused and rescued the victim who hails from AP. The arrested were remanded in judicial custody.

While accused Pokala Lingaiah procures girls/women from AP and other parts of Telangana State and sends them to individual organisers on a commission basis while Manasa and Mallikarjun were already detained under PD Act.

To prevent them from further indulging in human trafficking, prostitution and to preserve public order, Mahesh M Bhagwat invoked the PD Act against offender Pokala Lingaiah and lodged him in the Central prison.

## Removal of AP cops demanded

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC chief N Uttam Kumar Reddy urged Police Observer of Election Commission Sunil Kumar Meena to remove six police officers from duties in the Nagarjunasagar by-election. In his letter, Uttam stated that some police officers of Andhra origin have been placed in key duties with an ulterior motive of helping the TRS and damaging the Congress in the Nagarjunasagar by-election.

He said in the last couple of days, these police personnel have assaulted Congress party general secretary and Dalit leader Manavatha Roy and illegally detained him. They have detained Congress candi-

date Jana Reddy's brother-in-law and PA Shyam Sundar Reddy.

They had also detained student leaders Mahipal Yadav and Muni Naik. He said that they do not have confidence in their neutrality and requested him to remove them from election duty.

He identified the police personnel from Andhra Pradesh as Veera Raghavulu, CI, a native of Guntur district; Gouri Naidu, CI, Chandru, a native of Srikakulam district; Suresh, CI, DCR, Nalgonda, a native of Vizianagaram district; Basha, CI, Showligouram, a native of Kurnool district; ND Prasad, a native of Sri Kalahasthi, and Aadi Reddy, CI, Devarkonda, a native of Machilipatnam.

It may be recalled that natives of Andhra Pradesh are still working in Telangana as transfer of some more officials, including police personnel, is still pending.

He said that he came to know that District SP Ranganath is also from Guntur, but Congress has been hoping that since he is a senior IPS officer, he will be neutral and fair in the polling process.

He asked the Election Commission to remove six police officers from duties in Nagarjunasagar by-election. He also submitted the letter to the CEC, Nirvachan Sadan, New Delhi, CEO, Telangana and District Collector Nalgonda

## Nomula did not get due respect: Revanth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Targeting the TRS government for seeking votes for Nomula Bhagat, TPCC working president and Malkajgiri MP A Revanth Reddy alleged that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao did not give due respect to the departed when he was alive.

Hence, he appealed to the people to vote for Congress nominee K Jana Reddy as he will redress their grievances of people if they ensure his victory.

He found fault with the government for not taking action against the TRS MLAs, who were involved in the drugs case.

Speaking to the media at Haliya on Thursday, Revanth Reddy said that the Chief Minister had failed to speak on the issues of public in Haliya public meeting and there was no mention of Telangana martyrs, Jayashankar sir and others, he alleged.

He reminded that Nomula Narasimhaiah didn't speak in the Assembly after he joined TRS. KCR never allowed Nomula to enter Pragathi Bhavan, he pointed out calling upon the people to question KCR and defeat TRS.

BJP allotted a ticket to ST candidate Dr Ravi Naik as part of an agreement between Union Minister G Kishan Reddy and KCR", he alleged.

### Man murders son

PNS ■ NAGAR KURNOOL

In a barbaric incident, a man killed his six-year-old son at Manthathi village in Nagar Kurnool district on Thursday. According to police, Shiva Shanker's wife died recently due to ill health leaving her two sons behind. Shanker developed an extramarital affair with a woman after his wife's death. In the meantime, he felt that his sons as a hurdle to his illicit relationship and decided to eliminate them. On Thursday, he slit the eldest son's wrist with a knife at his residence in broad daylight and when he was battling for life, he throttled him to death. Being a mute witness to the horrific incident, three-year-old his youngest son fled the spot, but his father chased him and bashed him up brutally. Later, police arrested him based on a complaint.

## Indrakaran exhorts forest officials to get vaccinated

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Forests A Indrakaran Reddy called upon forest department's personnel to get themselves vaccinated against the Covid-19 as the second wave of the pandemic is spreading thick and fast.

He asked the forest department personnel to be careful for the next two or three months. He asked the field-level employees and those who are stationed at the base camp to remain alert. He said that the pandemic can be prevented by receiving the vaccine and observing precautions.

How many of the department's employees received the shot and how many have been affected by the virus and how many forest department employees died of Covid-19, he enquired from the forest department authorities while taking part in a review meeting at Aranya Bhavan here on Thursday.

He directed Principal Chief Conservator of Forests R Sobha to ensure that all per-



sonnel of the department right from the low-rung employees to top officials received the vaccine. He asked her to appoint two nodal officials to monitor the Covid situation among the employees.

She told the minister that 236 have been affected by the virus during the past one year while 11 succumbed to the pandemic. The Minister conveyed his sympathies to the bereaved family members.

He suggested to the district medical and health officials to take steps to administer the vaccine to the forest department's personnel who have been working shoulder-to-shoulder with the frontline warriors.

### Maoists kill two cops

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALAPALLY

Two police personnel were killed by Maoists around 300 km from the base camp at Bheji village in the Sukma district of Chhattisgarh on Thursday. According to Sukma District The Superintendent of Police, a head constable and constable were going on a bike when Maoists waylaid and stabbed them to death. It is learnt that Maoists conducted a reconnaissance a few days ago to eliminate the policemen. On receiving information, Sukma District SP rushed to the spot and enquired about the incident.

## Rail coach factory works at a brisk pace in Kazipet

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Alleging that the Centre has been rendering injustice to Telangana since its formation, TRS working president KT Rama Rao on Thursday said that the BJP meting out step-motherly treatment towards the State by failing to fulfil its promise to set up a rail coach factory at Kazipet in Warangal district as promised in the AP Reorganisation Act- 2014.

Irrespective of the Centre's negligence, the TRS government attracted the largest private sector rail coach factory



Works going on at a brisk pace at rail coach factory in Kazipet

investment in the country by Medha Servo Drives, he said.

The rail coach factory would be completed soon.

## No darshan at Vemulawada temple from April 18

PNS ■ RAJANNA-SIRCILLA

The Rajarajeshwara Swamy temple in Vemulawada will be closed for devotees for five days from April 18 to 22. Temple authorities in a statement here on Thursday asked pilgrims not to visit the shrine on the aforesaid days. Temple authorities have taken this decision in the wake of the rapid spread of Coronavirus in

the temple town.

The authorities said they decided since scores of devotees gathered at the shrine on the occasion of Sivakalyana held on March 31.

They could not control the rush of pilgrims from reaching the temple town, hence, they had decided not to allow devotees for the celestial wedding of Sri Rama.

Bakthostva Kalyanam and

Rathostavam scheduled for April 21 on the occasion of Sri Rama Navami stand cancelled. Besides the famous ritual in the shrine Kodemokku, all other rituals have also been cancelled. Devotees can perform pujas online. If they register their names for different rituals through TS Mee Seva 2.0 or T Appfolio, the rituals would be performed in the shrine in their name.





MISUSE OF INTERNET BY TERRORISTS

# Global cooperation must to end menace: Delegates

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The immense challenges posed by the misuse of the Internet by terrorists can be effectively tackled by international cooperation and sharing of good practices, delegates at a BRICS seminar hosted by India observed.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) organised the two-day online event of the BRICS nations that includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa on April 13-14.

The seminar on the topic of 'Misuse of Internet for Terrorist Purposes and Role of Digital Forensics in Terrorist Investigations' was inaugurated by Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, the NIA said in a statement.

The NIA organised the seminar as India is holding the BRICS chair for the year 2021, it said. "The delegates at the sem-



**"It was emphasised that it is only through international cooperation and sharing of good practices one can end this menace and secure safe environment for citizens of BRICS member states"**

inar appreciated the fact that in the current milieu of breakneck technological innovations and ever-evolving digital landscape, the challenges pertaining to prevention, control and prosecution of the terrorist misuse of Internet are immense," a statement said.

"It was emphasised that it is only through expedient interna-

tional cooperation and seamless sharing of good practices in tackling this menace that we can create a safer and secure environment for citizens of BRICS member states as well as the whole world," it said.

A number of technical sessions were held during the seminar like 'exploitation of social

media as an arsenal', 'dark web and anonymisers', 'emerging technologies and artificial intelligence', 'crypto currency and virtual assets: vulnerability of privacy and online stealth', equipping law enforcement agencies: counter-terrorist investigations and digital forensics.

## Cong gets 12 seats, NPP 11 in GHADC

PNS ■ SHILLONG

The Opposition Congress has won 12 seats while the ruling National People's Party (NPP) won 11 seats in the 29-member Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC), an official said on Thursday.

The election to the GHADC was held on April 12. The counting of votes was held on Thursday, the official of the District Council Affairs Department said.

The BJP which is the junior alliance partner of NPP in the Meghalaya Democratic Alliance government has won two seats, the GNC one and Independents won three seats in the GHADC, the official said.

BJP's Bernard Marak won the prestigious Tura constituency which is under the South Tura Assembly segment represented by Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma.

Marak is a former member of the Achik National Volunteer Council, armed militant group which signed a tripartite agreement with the state and the Central government.

# Monitor Covid appropriate behaviour among people: Maha

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Wednesday asked officials to closely monitor COVID-19-appropriate behaviour among shop owners, who have been allowed to operate during the new restrictions, as well as customers, and penalise the violators.

In a virtual meeting with his cabinet colleagues, divisional commissioners, district collectors, municipal commissioners and police officials, Thackeray stressed on effective implementation of the measures which came into force at 8 pm and will remain in operation 7 am on May 1.

He said officials should ensure that vegetable vendors and grocery shop owners, who have been allowed to operate during the 'lockdown-like' restrictions, scrupulously follow COVID-19-related norms like social distancing and use of face masks to avoid the infection spread.

"If crowding happens, the officials can shut down the shops," he said.

Thackeray asked them to keep an eye of marriage ceremonies so that they do not become super-spreading events.

The state has noticed that marriage ceremonies were one of the reasons behind the COVID-19 spread.

"The district administration and police should ensure that mistakes committed in the past are not repeated, the chief minister said.

Under the new curbs, only 25 people can attend a marriage.

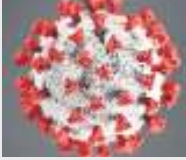
The state's COVID-19 task force members stressed on avoiding indiscriminate use of Remedivir medicine which is causing its shortage.

There should be sensible approach towards the use of Remedivir, a key COVID-19 drug, and medical oxygen, they told the meeting.

All essential services, including medical stores, hospitals, supply of medicines, among others will remain operational, according to a government notification.

Barber shops, saloons, spas, schools, colleges, coaching classes, beaches, clubs, swimming pools, gyms, drama theatres and cinema halls will remain shut during the next 15 days, according to the notification.

## Maha: 5,566 new COVID-19 cases in Thane, 33 more deaths



**THANE:** With the addition of 5,566 new cases of coronavirus, the infection count in Maharashtra's Thane district has reached 3,95,690, an official said on Thursday. Besides these new cases reported on Wednesday, the virus also claimed the lives of 33 more people, raising the death toll in the district to 6,794, he said. The COVID-19 mortality rate in the district is 1.71 per cent, he said. So far, 3,30,876 patients have recuperated from the infection in the district, which reflects a recovery rate of 83.62 per cent. There are 58,020 active COVID-19 cases in Thane district at present, the official said.

## Aurangabad records 1,718 Covid-19 cases, 27 deaths

**AURANGABAD:** As many as 1,718 persons tested positive for coronavirus, while 27 have died of the infection in Maharashtra's Aurangabad district, an official said on Thursday. With the latest cases and casualties reported on Wednesday, the caseload in the district reached 1,03,254 and the toll touched 2,052, the official said. A total of 85,400 patients have recovered from the disease so far, leaving the district with 15,802 active cases, he said

## Over 5,000 beds reserved for Covid patients in Raigad

**ALIBAUG:** In light of the rise in coronavirus cases, the administration in Maharashtra's Raigad district has reserved 5,086 beds in government and private hospitals, an official said on Thursday. According to a release issued by the district administration, 3,552 beds without oxygen support, 1,042 with oxygen support, 311 ICU beds and 181 ventilators have been prepared for COVID-19 patients. There are 3,552 beds without oxygen support in the COVID-19 isolation ward, while a separation room has been set up with 1,042 beds that have oxygen support, the release stated.

## No move to cancel Goa board exams: Sawant

**PANAJI:** The Goa government has not yet thought of cancelling the state board exams of Classes 10 and 12 in the wake of the COVID-19 surge, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has said. The final exams of Classes 10 and 12 of the Goa Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education are scheduled to be held from April 24. Talking to reporters here on Wednesday, Sawant said, "Right now, we have not thought of cancelling any board exams. We will ensure that all measures (related to COVID-19 prevention) are taken when the students appear for their exams." The Goa education department has already allowed examinations of other classes to be held online after the fresh outbreak of COVID-19 in the state, he said. Sawant noted that the board exams were held successfully in the state last year amid the pandemic by following all the necessary measures to prevent spread of the virus. Only 11 students were allowed to sit in one examination hall last year to maintain proper social distancing, he said. The CBSE on Wednesday cancelled its exams for Class 10 and deferred those for Class 12. Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra have also postponed their state board exams for these classes due to an alarming surge in coronavirus cases. States like West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh have said they are monitoring the situation and are yet to decide whether to go ahead with the board exams. Karnataka has said it will conduct the exams as scheduled. On Wednesday, Goa recorded 473 fresh cases of COVID-19 and four more casualties due to the disease. With this, the tally of infections in the state has reached 63,815, while the toll has mounted to 857, as per official data.

## INDIA CORNER

### Mumbai couple convicted in drug case in Qatar returns home

Mumbai-based couple Oniba Mand Sharique Qureshi, who was sentenced to 10 years in jail in a drug case in Qatar in 2019, returned to the city on Thursday with their minor daughter. A Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) official said the couple landed at the Mumbai airport at 2.30 am. The couple had been cleared of all charges after it came to light that a relative planted narcotics in their bag without their knowledge. The couple was arrested at Hamad International Airport in July 2019 after Qatari authorities recovered 4.1 kg of hashish in their bag. It later came to light that Sharique's aunt, Tabassum Qureshi, had used them to transport the drugs. The trip had been sponsored by Tabassum, the official said. At that time, while Sharique was employed with a Japanese company, Oniba had just learnt that she was pregnant. She delivered a girl, Aayat, in jail last February. The couple's family members approached the Indian Government, asking it to intervene in the matter. Following this, the NCB got in touch with the authorities in Qatar and the family challenged the lower court order convicting the couple.



### 15-year old school boy stabbed to death in Kerala

A 15-year old boy was stabbed to death allegedly by a group of people during a temple festival at Padayanivattom near here on Wednesday night, police said. Abhimanyu, a student activist of the Students' Federation of India (SFI) was stabbed to death at around 10 PM on the night of Vishu, allegedly by members of the RSS, family sources said. "We have taken into custody and questioned the father and brother of Sajay Datt, a local, who is the accused in the case. We are yet to nab him, a search is on," police told P T I. The CPI(M) has called for a hartal in Vallikunnam area protesting the murder of the tenth standard student, Abhimanyu. He was supposed to attend the ongoing tenth standard exams in the state.



### Congress MLA Irfan Ansari performs puja at Baidyanath

Jharkhand's Congress MLA Irfan Ansari on Wednesday performed puja at the famous Baidyanath Dham temple at Deoghar, considered to be the most sacred abode of Lord Shiva, creating a controversy. Claiming that entry of non-Hindus is not allowed in the temple, BJP MP Dr Nishikant Dubey demanded immediate arrest of Ansari. The MLA of Jamtara, along with his companions, entered the sanctum sanctorum of the temple and performed the puja. Photographs of the act were also taken. Ansari claimed that he has been coming to the Baidyanath Dham temple since his childhood to take the blessings of Lord Shiva. "Whenever elections come, I have been blessed by Baba Bhole (Lord Shiva) and I have won. Who is Nishikant Dubey to take me away from Baba?" Ansari said. Dubey, the MP of Godda, demanded that the states JMM-led government order arrest of Ansari and take action against the deputy commissioner and the superintendent of police of Deoghar for allowing this to happen.



### Uttarkhand's toll in forest fires rises to eight

The death toll in Uttarakhand forest fires since January this year has risen to eight with one more person dying while dousing a wildfire in Chamoli district, a police official said on Thursday. Raghuvir Lal, 65, a retired PWD employee, was charred to death when he was engulfed in flames while trying to extinguish a blaze in Soniyala forest area near his farm in Gadoli village on Tuesday, Station House Officer of Gairsain police station, Subhash Jakhmola, said. A 19-year-old man had died of injuries sustained while dousing a forest fire in his village in Didihat forest range of Pithoragarh district on Saturday last week. Two deaths due to forest fire were reported from Almora in January and two each from Bageshwar and Pauri districts in February.



## ISRO ESPIONAGE CASE

# SC asks CBI to probe cops' role

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Thursday ordered that the report of a high-level committee on the role of erring police officials in 1994 espionage case relating to ISRO scientist Nambi Narayanan be given to the CBI and directed the agency to conduct further investigation on the issue.

The apex court said the CBI may treat the panel's findings as part of preliminary investigation and asked the agency to submit its report to the court within three months.

A bench headed by Justice A M Khanwilkar said the report of the three-member panel, headed by former top court judge Justice (retd) D K Jain, be kept in a sealed cover and it should not be published.

The top court rejected the submission of former DGP Siby Mathews, who was then heading the SIT probe team, that he was not heard by the committee while Narayanan was heard. The bench, also comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Krishna Murari, said the committee was not to adjudicate the matter but it had to go through



circumstantial evidence and form a prima facie view on the acts of omission and commission of erring officials.

The apex court was hearing the Centre's plea seeking consideration of the report filed by the committee regarding the role of erring police officials in espionage case relating to Narayanan, who had been acquitted and was eventually awarded Rs 50 lakh compensation by the top court.

On April 5, the Centre had moved the top court seeking urgent hearing and consideration of the panel's report terming it as a "national issue".

The apex court had appointed the panel on September 14, 2018 while directing the Kerala government to cough up Rs 50

lakh compensation for compelling Narayanan to undergo "immense humiliation".

It had ordered setting up of the committee to take appropriate steps against the erring officials for causing "tremendous harassment" and "immeasurable anguish" to Narayanan and had directed the Centre and state government to nominate one officer each in the panel.

Terming the police action against the ex-scientist of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) as a "psycho-pathological treatment", the apex court had in September 2018 said that his "liberty and dignity", basic to his human rights, were jeopardised as he was taken into custody and, eventually, despite all the glory of the past, was compelled to face "cynical abhorrence".

The espionage case, which had hit the headlines in 1994, pertained to allegations of transfer of certain confidential documents on India's space programme to foreign countries by two scientists and four others, including two Maldivian women.

# HC seeks Maha govt's reply on Jains' plea

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday sought to know from the Maharashtra government if members of the Jain community can be allowed to take away parcels of special food from their temples while fasting for the annual nine-day Ayambil Oli Tap, noting that it was a "reasonable request".

A vacation bench of Justices S C Gupte and Abhay Ahuja was hearing petitions filed by two Jain trusts, seeking permission for members of the community to take away parcels of pious boiled food to be consumed during the fast from the premises of the trusts.

The trusts' advocate Prafulla Shah argued that they are not asking for temples or dining halls to be opened for people to come and eat there, but only for allowing people to take away food parcels.

"The government order of April 13 titled 'Break the Chain' allows restaurants and bars for home delivery and take away. We are also seeking the same permission, but only for nine days from April 19 to April 27. There will be no congregation at temples," Shah said.

Additional government pleader Jyoti Chavan said people should not flock to these temples to pick up their parcels.

## Salon owners, barbers seek aid from Maha govt

PNS/AURANGABAD

Salon owners and barbers in Maharashtra have demanded financial assistance from the state government in the wake of their shops being shut to curb the spread of COVID-19. The state government has enforced tough new measures, which exclude essential services, from Wednesday for 15 days to break the COVID-19 transmission chain. Barber shops, salons, spas, schools, colleges, coaching classes, beaches, clubs, swimming pools, gyms, drama theatres and cinema halls will remain shut during the period, according to a government notification. The Maharashtra Nabhi Mahamandal, in a memorandum to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Wednesday, claimed 20 salon owners committed suicide.

# Jaslok Hospital to be fully dedicated Covid facility

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Mumbai civic body has decided to convert the Jaslok Hospital here into a dedicated facility only for COVID-19 patients in the wake of a huge spike in cases of the viral infection in the city.

According to a circular issued by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Wednesday, the Jaslok Hospital will no longer admit non-COVID-19 patients and instructions to this effect have been issued to the hospital's management.

It is the first prominent private hospital to be declared as a dedicated COVID-19 facility in the city since the second wave of the

coronavirus here, BMC sources said.

The civic body has directed the hospital to discharge all stable patients, admitted in its non-COVID-19 wards, who do not require tertiary care.

The hospital has also been asked to transfer the non-COVID-19 patients requiring tertiary care to nearby facilities within 48 hours.

"All patients admitted for elective surgeries to be discharged by postponing the elective surgeries," reads the BMC's order.

According to the BMC, the hospital was treating COVID-19 patients with advanced critical care since the outbreak of the pandemic last year.

## Sharad Pawar discharged

**MUMBAI:** NCP chief Sharad Pawar, who underwent a gall bladder surgery at the Breach Candy Hospital here three days back, was discharged from the facility on Thursday, party spokesperson Nawab Malik said. The 80-year-old leader underwent a laparoscopic surgery (a minimally invasive procedure) at the hospital on Monday. "Pawar was discharged from the hospital some time back," Malik said on Wednesday. The NCP chief was hospitalised for the removal of his gall bladder and the surgery was followed by a two-day stay at the medical facility, he said.

## J&K: Case registered for posts on Geelani

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Police in Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir have registered a case under Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) against unidentified people for posting false information about veteran separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani on social media, an official said on Thursday.

A twitter account, claiming to be the official handle of Geelani, posted a press release allegedly issued by the separatist leader wherein he purportedly called for a general shutdown against what he alleged as "killing of children and desecration of religious places".

The press release, allegedly signed by Geelani, was referring to the killing of 12 militants in

four encounters since last Friday. One of the encounters took place inside a mosque which was extensively damaged during the operation.

"According to family sources of SAS Geelani, the tweet is fake and issued by someone from Pakistan. Police is taking action against those who are circulating it through social media to instigate violence," a spokesperson of the Budgam Police said on Twitter.

Meanwhile, Inspector General of Police, Kashmir Zone, Vijay Kumar asked people not to pay heed to social media rumours.

"People are requested to carry out their normal activities in the holy month of Ramadan & need not to pay any heed to rumours on social media," Kumar tweeted on official Twitter handle.



## Walk the talk

Only lip service won't do, the *netas* must follow COVID-appropriate behaviour at all times

The pandemic has upended all the notions of life, as we knew it, from personal hygiene to societal behaviour to health to economy, but the one bulwark it has failed to burst through is the way our politicians think and act. There should be no double standards in dealing with the raging contagion but unfortunately this duality is a trait quintessential to our politicians. Though the Government is fastidiously dealing with the rising COVID-19 cases, it has literally turned a blind eye to the situation in the States currently undergoing polls, where the COVID-appropriate behaviour is a disregarded casualty. During their public rallies, road shows and campaigns, almost all political leaders and their minions overlook measures like wearing masks, maintaining social distance and other protocols. For these power-hungry politicians, the vote of any individual is more important than his/her life — hence, they have scant concerns if the COVID protocols stand in the way of their votes. Despite repeated warnings by the Election Commission, the ground condition hasn't ameliorated. But there are good examples to be had from most of the politicians abroad who — discounting the likes of ousted US President Donald Trump and Brazil's strongman President Jair Bolsonaro — aren't dyed in the same wool. For instance, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson earlier this year

put off his India visit, where he was to be the chief guest at this year's Republic Day parade, because the number of COVID-19 infections in his home country shot up exponentially and he chose to stay with his constituents to alleviate their fears. Now, again, Johnson has decided to curtail his India trip later this month because of the virus situation in England.

Johnson said the rapid drop in the COVID-19 deaths in the UK was because of the three-month lockdown and not so much because of the vaccination. We don't know whether he has any empirical evidence to back his claim, but the fact remains that the condition in his country has steadily improved while India has consistently been climbing the chart of the worst-hit countries, lagging behind only the US at the number two position, for now. Our leaders, therefore, should be ashamed of facing the electorate, for whatever it is worth, rather than milling with them to garner votes. God forbid, but if they do contract the virus — as has become the lot of a host of them — they immediately quarantine themselves in the best of medical institutes and access the best of medical care, of course at the cost of the taxpayers' money. But what about the fate of the poor masses that they leave behind, afflicted? It is for several similar reasons that after almost winning the war against COVID, we are again pinned down on the mat; thanks partly to our insouciance and largely to our political leaders. All the festivals, including the celebration of democracy, can be cherished in the real sense only when the nation's people remain healthy and enjoy their basic right to life.

### PICTALK



Preparations to showcase a heritage engine, on the eve of the 168th anniversary of the first train run in India, in Thane PTI

## Matters of faith

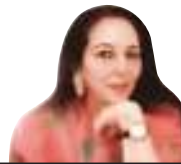
Can devotion alone, in the absence of precautions, protect one from deadly contagions like COVID-19?

Even as lakhs of devotees throng the Kumbh Mela venue every day in Haridwar, with practically non-existent observation of the COVID-appropriate behaviour including face masks and social distancing, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat kicked up another controversy by saying that the Coronavirus won't infect the pilgrims. The corollary to his logic: The devotees are "our own people" (read Indians) spread over a "vast open area" and "Ma Ganga's blessings will ensure the devotees' well-being". His reasoning flies in the face of all expert warnings and empirical evidence — the authorities detected 1,701 COVID-19 cases between April 10 and 14 at the congregation. Rawat's pearls of wisdom sprang forth when some sceptics dared to compare the largest human gathering in India to the Jamaat at the Nizamuddin Markaz, which was tainted in April last year as the "hotspot" and "epicentre" of the COVID-19 cases in Delhi and across India. He said the Kumbh was different because the Tablighi event was organised in a small enclosure, with several overseas attendees and when the Markaz was held, neither was there much awareness about Corona nor were any guidelines.

Coming from a Chief Minister who had tested positive for the viral infection on March 22 before winning the battle against it in early April, it seems that some people, and unsurprisingly the politicians, have so thick a skin that they don't learn any lessons from even personal experiences. India is currently being battered by a rapidly spreading second wave of the pernicious virus and here we are, throwing all sense and caution to the winds amid a sea of humans. One shudders to think of what may happen at the Kumbh if the virus spreads like wildfire and when these lakhs of asymptomatic devotees head back to their homes all across India and unknowingly become the delivery agents of the contagion. Experts have already warned that such a large gathering in the midst of a raging pandemic can prove to be catastrophic and severely impede India's fight against the deadly disease that has claimed millions of lives globally. Yes, Mr Chief Minister, the matters of faith can't and shouldn't be ignored but can these be subservient to the right to life and the joys of good health? That really is the question.

# Socio-economic divides in 2021

As a nation, we must tear down all the obstacles that impede the participation of women in the economy, even those of the mind



BINDU DALMIA

Along expected lines, the post-COVID economic data point to a widening of three pre-existing divides: The gender divide, increasing asymmetries between the incomes of the rich and the poor, and an increasing rural-urban digital divide. As each of these inequalities are subjects that need targeted policy interventions, the focus in this post is on the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Report 2021*, wherein India has slipped to the 112th ranking among 153 countries.

India, home to 0.65 billion women, has widened its gender gap from 66.8 per cent a year ago to 62.5 per cent this year. The decline is seen on multiple sub-index parameters, like the labour force participation falling from 24.8 per cent to 22.3 per cent; the share of women in senior managerial positions being as low as 14.6 per cent; estimated earnings being one-fifth of men; the political empowerment index has regressed by 13 per cent where in ministerial berths for women have declined from 23.1 per cent in 2019 to 9.1 per cent.

Gender equality is a basic human right enshrined in our Constitution and its achievement has multiplier socio-economic benefits. India is committed to the timelines of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations which place gender parity at the heart of bringing a gender perspective to all development initiatives. However, the COVID-triggered economic stress will defer the timelines for achieving the SDGs by 2030.

The post-pandemic policy initiatives require increased gender-specific budgeting and recovery strategies: The Modi Government's flagship schemes that positively impacted women during the first term are an outcome of closely aligning with the Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) norms of the 'UN Women'. The GRB is a globally-followed "best practice" among nations which allocates fiscal expenditure with specific gender perspectives. Though the *Magna*



*Carta of Women* (1999) required that the Governments allocate at least five per cent of the GDP to address gender issues, the amount allocated towards women's welfare has stagnated in recent years. The Union Government releases the 'Gender Budgeting Statement' consisting of two parts. The first part reflects women-specific schemes in which 100 per cent allocation is only for women. The second part reflects pro-women schemes in which 30 per cent of the allocation is for women.

In the recent years, while some schemes have achieved transversal benefits like the Jan Dhan Yojana, DBT and MNREGA, specific gender-targeted schemes have made significant improvements in the socio-economic living conditions of women. However, the funds allocated for the GRB are limited to less than five per cent of the public expenditure, and shrink to about one per cent of the GDP, making it necessary to significantly increase these budgetary outlays. The NITI Aayog estimates that India will have to increase its gender-specific spend by an additional 6.2 per cent to comply with the SDG targets. Upskilling women to



DATA POINT TO THE FACT THAT THE GIG WORK MODEL HAS FOUND A GROWING TRACTION. A WHOPPING 78 LAKH WOMEN WHO HAD EARLIER DROPPED OFF FROM WORK FOR REASONS LIKE CHILD CARE, HAVE SOUGHT TO REVIVE THEIR CAREERS

adapt to the changing nature of jobs: The job market has undergone a tectonic shift since COVID, so the nine-to-five model is no longer the future. Deloitte's research shows that economic contraction is nudging companies towards hiring experienced freelancers.

Data point to the fact that this gig work model has found a growing traction, with 78 lakh women who had earlier dropped off from work have sought to revive their careers as the WFH concept has opened the floodgates for those who hold professional degrees combined with robust work experience. Therefore, while automation will displace many jobs, it will also create 90 million flexi-jobs in the next 10 years, according to the Boston Consulting Group.

Second, as self-employment and micro-entrepreneurship is expected to grow at an annual rate of 17 per cent and projected to reach \$455 billion by 2023, State and cooperative banks must readjust their models to disburse loans at lower rates for priority sector lending to women because the data show that women have stronger saving habits and lower non-performing loans than men. As most women lack collateral and

credit history to access formal lending, we need innovative ways to build credit history.

**How much has gender inequality stunted India's economic progress?** The lack of equal ownership of land, access to formal credit, the unfamiliarity of women with the latest technologies, high educational dropout rates as well as inequitable household and unpaid workload distribution have impeded Indian women's economic prosperity.

Gender inequality has, therefore, translated into enormous notional capital losses for India. The economic impact of achieving optimum levels of gender equality in India is estimated to be \$700 billion of the added GDP by 2025. The IMF estimates that equal participation of women in the workforce will increase India's GDP by 27 per cent.

There is clear evidence: "When women do better, economies do better. That means we must tear down all obstacles that impede the participation of women in the economy, even the subconscious obstacles of the mind."

(The writer is an author, columnist and Chairperson, NCFIL, at NITI Aayog. The views expressed are personal).

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### GOOD DECISION TO CANCEL BOARD EXAMS

Sir — It would ease the minds of students and their parents that the CBSE exams for Class 10 have been cancelled and those for Class 12 were postponed to minimise the risk of infection. It was a wise and welcome move needed at this point in time when we are fighting a second wave. It reflects the priority given to the health and safety of students and keeping them out of harm's way.

The exams by State or other boards, now in progress or scheduled to be held in the coming weeks and months, too should be either cancelled or put off for the simple reason that it will aid in mitigating the pandemic and minimising morbidity and mortality. A picture can be drawn only if there is of paramount importance. The considerations of safety override all other concerns. It is true that education is vital for students to be able to unlock their potential but treating examinations as the be-all-and-end-all of students' existence is not done.

The "real exam" the mankind is currently taking is the continuing pandemic. We cannot afford to do badly in this life-and-death exam. The sole question that bears on our existence and is far from academics is how best we can respond to the once-in-a-lifetime global public health crisis and get through it. Our handling of the COVID-19 pandemic must be based on strategies defining how best we can adapt by modifying our behaviour and way of life and availing the benefit of vaccination to achieve population immunity in order to survive.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

### SERVE THE GREATER GOOD

Sir — Do we need to be "Faster - Higher - Stronger", the Olympic motto, or should we just try to be okay and healthy? The Olympics may yet be cancelled completely after having been delayed a year, says Toshihiro Nikai, the secretary general of the Liberal Democratic Party.

The 2020 Olympics were postponed because of the COVID pandemic and the 2021 version will have few people in the stands as overseas spectators have been

## Respect our jawans



The Cooch Behar violence may or may not have been fomented by the TMC but West Bengal Chief Minister and party chief Mamata Banerjee has created a flutter by accusing the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) of wrongdoing — that the security force intentionally shot down four people in her serious allegation. Over and above, she has put the blame at the doorstep of the BJP and Home Minister Amit Shah by charging him with "genocide".

The CISF personnel were apparently targeted by a rampaging mob of over 500 men,

banned and many of the local citizens aren't interested or actually want it cancelled. Any spectators who would attend will only be allowed to clap and not cheer which seems a rather sad, paler version of the event. The first priority for most countries is to get citizens vaccinated, stop the spread of the virus and then start on an economic recovery rather than watching two weeks of Olympians and para-Olympians doing the best they can. Considering how many have already died and will still die, it is probably best to commit all resources to the medical world and stay safe at home. I know a number of Olympics competitors will miss their one opportunity but that may be the cost they have to pay for the safety of the majority.

Dennis Fitzgerald | Australia

### STICK TO COVID PROTOCOL

Sir — The second wave of COVID-19 is rav-

aged by a rumour that a boy of theirs was shot dead by the police, so goes the common version. It is said that when things went out of control, the CISF men fired at the mob. A very unfortunate incident that should not have taken place in the first instance if everybody had a good head on their shoulders. Here, neither the mob nor the police can be blamed.

On the other hand, Shah has accused Mamata of provoking the people. Caught between the two political bigwigs are the CISF and the Election Commission (EC). It is a mockery of democracy that the constitutional bodies and paramilitary forces are ridiculed and berated by politicians every now and then. Our paramilitary personnel are steadfast on their duties but our politicians have scant respect for them. Let us face the truth — these entities work against all odds. The security forces have a thankless job — no encomiums for doing a thing right. But one mistake, even if inadvertent, can turn things topsy-turvy. Ditto with the EC.

Ganapathi Bhat | Kola

aging India, making the lives of poor, daily-wagers and migrant labourers very difficult. One of the main reasons for the fast spread of the pandemic is the elections being held in five States where COVID protocols are not being adhered to by the public or leaders.

Adding to the woes are the large congregations of people at religious events and places. It is advisable that after the completion of elections there should be no more elections, to local bodies or other bodies as these will only aggravate the situation. We all must act responsibly at this stage; else we will lose our battle against Coronavirus. The cases are rising exorbitantly and taking precaution is the only thing that is in our hands.

CK Ramani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## SOUNDBITE

The Governors can play an important role with the involvement of the Red Cross volunteers and others in creating awareness among the people on the COVID-appropriate behaviour.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



Australian Prime Minister — Scott Morrison

Every day you go through your own journey of asking questions to yourself. There are your own challenges and weaknesses. You have to overpower them.



Actor — Fatima Sana Shaikh



Cricketer — Glenn Maxwell

There is no test, no bed in hospitals, no ventilators, no oxygen, no vaccine, bus utsav ka dhong hai (a festive pretence)... PM cases?

Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi



FIRST COLUMN

AN INVESTMENT FOR PEACE

It is exactly in a moment of crisis that art consoles us with hope and reminds us that we are not alone



SNEHA GAUTAM

Art can serve as an excellent means of self-expression. Curating an art collection that reflects one's personality and taste is indeed an extremely fulfilling experience. When one looks at an artwork from a vantage point, beyond its financial aspect, s/he tends to delve deeper and reflect upon its inherent attributes of mystery and philosophy. This, in turn, will help achieve further clarity and give one the confidence to keep adding art works to one's collection. The World Art Day is observed on April 15 to make people realise that one of the most important roles of art is its ability to trigger introspection and the mirror it holds up to society at any given point of time. Acquiring and being in the presence of art is also about breaking one's perception and engaging with the work of visionary artists. The art one chooses to display at home or the workplace will most likely be a topic of discussion, so it makes sense to carefully pick and select the work that resonates with one's mind and aligns with one's philosophical ethos. The pandemic and the subsequent lockdown also have a positive side when looked at from the aspect of being in the presence of art and the effectiveness of creative expression in our daily lives.



Before the pandemic brought most of the world to a standstill, the World Health Organisation had published a report enlisting the various beneficial effects of art on the health and well-being of individuals. This report encouraged many firms to use art as a medium to boost the morale of their employees during the pandemic. With movements and social interactions largely restricted, art gave countless people a way to look inwards and thus proved to be a means of cathartic relief and helped people in staying optimistic during these tumultuous times. It is exactly in a moment of crisis that art consoles us with hope and reminds us that we are not alone. It's a proven fact that looking at art triggers the human brain to release the feel-good hormone, Dopamine, and initiates a chemical reaction within that is similar to the feeling of euphoria. Hence, one can easily imagine the far-reaching and therapeutic effects of art. Carefully, surrounding oneself with hand-picked creations can play a deciding role in influencing our mood and have a calming effect. It is widely known that colours affect us and certain hues are largely associated with catalysing the onset of different moods. Thus, inevitably, the colour composition of an artwork a person selects will affect him/her. The advantages of being around art are so well-established that a complete art therapy field has been recognised. It helps individuals explore their creative side, arm their perceptions with the thought of the artists, process and present their ideas in a unique way. The fact that museums display artworks as a visual treat for visitors reflects the fact that Governments have recognised these benefits and thus they promote art. People invest good sums in masterpieces made by various renowned artists so as to broaden their horizons and increase their joy.

If these reasons are not convincing enough for someone to actively collect art work, then the originality factor would definitely inspire him/her to do so. This way, one can be assured that the artwork s/he has decided to collect or which is already in one's possession will be uniquely his or hers. Another important aspect while collecting art is the connections one can forge within the art world with like-minded people. Collecting artwork is a passion for many and certainly adds value to one's life. Currently, technology has definitely eased how enthusiasts can learn and explore the techniques of seminal artists from the past and contemporary ones, too. Virtual exhibitions and online auctions are also tools that can help one make decisions regarding acquiring artwork that will add a soothing presence to one's mental space.

(The writer is vice-president, AstaGuru. The views expressed are personal.)

# Engineering a better future for humankind

In this age of unprecedented technological revolution, genetic engineering is fast occupying the centre stage



BKP SINHA

SOMNATH PAI



APART FROM MEDICAL APPLICATIONS, IT IS BEING USED TO GENETICALLY MODIFYING CROPS TO MAKE THEM RESISTANT TO VIRUSES, MAKE LEANER PIGS, HELP YEAST MAKE BETTER BEER, MAKE MOSQUITOES INFERTILE AND SO ON. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE TO RECREATE AN EXTINCT SPECIES, SO A 'JURASSIC PARK' COULD ACTUALLY BE A REALITY IN THE FUTURE

Sinha is a former IFS officer and Pai is Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Virology & Immunology. The views expressed are personal.



CRISPR-based approaches to treat monogenic inherited diseases such as sickle cell anemia, childhood blindness and so on. It holds the promise to treat many other diseases such as cancer, autoimmune disorders and polygenic genetic disorders in future.

Apart from medical applications, it is being used to genetically modifying crops to make them resistant to viruses, make leaner pigs, help yeast make better beer, make mosquitoes infertile and so on. It is also possible to recreate an extinct species, so a 'Jurassic Park' could actually be a reality in the future.

Research is also underway for the use of CRISPR gene editing that could make us less vulnerable to pandemics, cancer, Alzheimer's and other diseases. Mammals have a gene known as p53 that encodes the proteins that suppress the growth of cancerous tumours. Humans and most other mammals have only one copy of this gene, whereas elephants have 20 copies, and they almost never get cancer. Hence, research is ongoing to double this gene in human beings.

Up till 2020, over a dozen clinical trials were underway for a disease called acute myeloid leukemia, super-high cholesterol and baldness. The thrust of the ongoing research is to study how bacteria developed an immune response to ward off new viruses.

**Coronavirus:** COVID-19 jabs, like many modern vaccines, have

also gained from the advancements in genetic engineering.

Bits of the SARS-CoV2 genes have been pasted onto the adenoviral DNA backbone, some of whose own genes have been knocked off to accommodate the foreign gene. When this vaccine is delivered, the adenovirus carrying the SARS-CoV2 will enter the human cell, it will pretend that it produces the SARS-CoV2 protein but will itself be unable to replicate and make a person sick. This creates a temporary SARS-CoV2 protein factory in our bodies to prime our immune system and prepare it to tackle any infection with the real SARS-CoV2 virus.

**Hopes and pitfalls:** Ever since Herbert Boyer and Stanley Cohen patented the recombinant DNA technology that they developed in 1972, and Boyer co-founded Genentech, the world's first biotechnology company in 1976, genetic engineering has been the subject of intense debate beyond the scientific arena, involving lawyers, journalists, politicians and the public at large.

Since then, genetic engineering has come through the moral issue of man playing God, with a possibility to determine the fate of the evolution of all species on planet Earth. It is generally agreed that genetically engineered organisms will not be released into the environment. Many countries, including India, have put in place ethical committees at various levels

that oversee and approve research that involves the use of genetic engineering. Even routine laboratory experiments which only aim to demonstrate cloning experiments to students in biology laboratories also need mandatory approvals of the institutional ethical committees or relevant boards. Though there are already products of genetic engineering in the market like vaccines, pest-resistant crops and genetically-engineered mosquitoes, debate continues on the ethical and moral issues surrounding genetic engineering and gene therapy. Thankfully, its fruits are slowly blossoming for larger public good.

Fortunately for humankind, in 2015 at the NAPA international conference, a consensus quickly developed that it would be bad to completely ban germ line gene editing.

The CRISPR inventor, Jennifer Doudna, herself summed it up: "We wanted the scientific community to hit the pause button until the social, ethical, ecological and philosophical implications of germ line editing could be properly and thoroughly discussed ideally at the global level."

It was concluded at the conference that though it was too early to do germ line editing safely, but someday it would happen and the goal should be to provide prudent guidelines. This holds the key to the future of this marvelous invention.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE POOR PEOPLE OF BANGLADESH COME TO INDIA AS EVEN NOW THEY DO NOT GET ENOUGH TO EAT IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY.  
—UNION HOME MINISTER  
AMIT SHAH



I WOULD SAY THAT HIS KNOWLEDGE ABOUT BANGLADESH IS LIMITED. NOBODY DIES OF HUNGER IN OUR COUNTRY.  
—BANGLADESH FOREIGN MINISTER  
AK ABDUL MOMEN

# Arrest the COVID wave as lockdown is not an option

Any congregation, be it election rallies, religious or social gatherings, must be immediately banned if the pandemic is to be controlled

There is a familiar sense of dread in the air and a feeling of *déjà vu*. That is because, what we are witnessing right now is a rerun of last year and at vastly alarming proportions than before. The new strain of the Coronavirus is creating havoc across the country and straining the existing healthcare system once again.

Railway stations and bus depots are getting packed once again with migrant workers trying to catch a public transport back home. Once again, we can see motley groups of migrant workers silently trudging back home with all their worldly belongings on their drooping shoulders. Thankfully, this time the exodus on foot does not seem to be as major as the last time because the trains and buses are still running.

Messages of total lock-



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.

down are constantly being shared by State-level Ministers, even as the Centre is maintaining that localised containment is the best solution to effectively bring the pandemic under control.

The only fact emerging from this second wave sweeping the nation is that India has failed to take lessons from the total lockdown and the first COVID wave that hit it last year. As the experts rightly point out, somewhere towards the beginning of this year, when the active cases across the country started to come down drastically, the Government and citizens alike, threw caution to the winds. The best example of this was the number of weddings which took place in the last couple of months or the long queues outside restaurants for a seat at the table. People, tired of being stuck in the house for almost

a year, forgot that masks and social distancing are going to be a part of our everyday existence for a long time to come. From weekly bazaars to shopping malls or airports, not to forget the recent festival of Holi and the Maha Kumbh in Uttarakhand, everywhere there is a massive crowd to be seen.

It was only a matter of time before the contagion started spreading exponentially. This explosion of cases that we are witnessing now was imminent and new studies suggest that the virus strain is much more infectious, even though the mortality rate could be lower.

What, therefore, needs to be done before India shuts down again for business and a year of irreparable economic damage is registered? First, as the Prime Minister has been saying, "track, trace and isolate." India, in the last two



weeks, has again got back to ramping up its testing infrastructure to identify the patients. However, the strategy should not have been discarded or taken lightly in the first instance. It took a while to set up centres testing for COVID across the country and there were instances of mandatory negative reports before anyone was allowed free movement across borders. The creation of micro-containment zones to stop the spread of infections was also an

effective tool, thereby leaving the larger area open for economic activities. It is time to revisit these lessons learnt last year.

Any congregation, be it election rallies, religious or social gatherings, must be immediately banned if the pandemic is to be controlled in any manner. It is a mockery of the citizens' patience and persistence if local lockdowns are imposed in some cities or districts thereby curtailing free movement, while thousands congregate to celebrate the festival of democracy, or mammoth religious events like the Kumbh Mela. There has to be political will cutting across party lines to immediately priorities public health and prevent the spread of the contagion by voluntarily calling off any public rallies in the remaining phases of elections. The migrants have already

started to trickle back into their towns and villages from the big cities, bringing with them unknown variants of the virus. Any mass spread of the pandemic in rural belts and smaller towns may cripple the backbone of India. Any amount of night curfew or complete lockdown may not be able to contain the spread of the disease if a sizeable chunk gets infected.

India has achieved a great feat by vaccinating over 10 crore people in 86 days since the exercise began. However, vaccine shortages are being reported from across the country. First the Central Government should ensure that all States, down to the last district, get the appropriate number of vaccines and are prepared to face any life-threatening conditions due to the job. It is an established fact now that the new variant of the

virus may make the vaccine less effective even though the mortality rates are still within control. India was one of the largest suppliers of vaccines to the world and it is time the focus shifts to domestic use. As we read this, there are five more vaccines awaiting the Government's nod in order to be introduced into the market. Speedy approval and speedier delivery of the Sputnik V vaccine in India could go a long way in saving lives. The Government needs to rethink its vaccine strategy and provide financial support to private players to ramp up production. Plus, based on vaccine availability they should allow every willing person to start taking the jab. All the facets of this deadly disease are still unknown, however, last year's knowledge and the preventive shield of the vaccine are always reliable options.



# ‘Need to create room for quick scaling up of vax production’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There is a need to create environment for quick scaling up of global production of vaccines and other medical products to contain the spread of coronavirus and this requires temporary removal of all hurdles, including related with intellectual property protection in the WTO, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has said.

In this regard, he said, India and South Africa along with 57 other WTO (World Trade Organisation) members have co-sponsored a proposal for temporary and limited-scope waiver from certain provisions of the TRIPS (trade related aspects of intellectual property rights) agreement

relevant to the prevention, treatment and containment of COVID-19.

Goyal said that this waiver is not intended to take away protection given to pharma companies, and it focuses only on COVID-19 vaccines, associated medicines, and cure. "We need to create an environment for quick scaling up of global production, not only for vaccines but also other medical products, such as therapeutics and diagnostics. This requires temporary removal of all impediments to the production of Covid medical products, including where necessary Intellectual Property protection," he has said.

The minister was speaking at a WTO event -- COVID-19 And Vaccine Equity: What Can The WTO Contribute? -

- on April 14.

The minister stated that the world is not producing sufficient vaccines due to limited licensing agreements.

To bridge the supply deficit, every tool at our disposal should be used towards producing enough vaccines, he said adding all initiatives must be explored in parallel and in a timely manner to ramp up manufacturing of COVID-19 medical products.

Goyal said that every country should strive for resilient supply chains by ensuring unimpeded access to raw materials required for COVID-19 products and failure to do so could prolong the pandemic for many years through cycles of mutation and may cost the global economy trillions of dollars.



## Working with govts to ensure openness of platform: YouTube

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

YouTube is focused on working with governments to better shape regulations that allow the video streaming platform to preserve openness, while protecting communities from harmful content, YouTube Chief Product Officer Neal Mohan said.

The top executive noted that the platform has always had a robust set of community guidelines to protect the ecosystem of users, creators and partners from aspects like hate speech, misinformation and harmful content.

"...We want to work with government agencies, regulators...all over the world discussing ways that YouTube can play the role that it plays in a way that satisfies the framework that governments have... We've been doing that

for years, for example, in India for the last 13 years and will continue to do so," he said during a session at the Raisina Dialogue.

"We publish those guidelines clearly on our site, and we try to enforce them in a way where we're not distinguishing between regions of the world, who the speaker is, we try to enforce them uniformly regardless of whether it's a private citizen, head of state, in a way that's transparent and clearly published on our platform," the executive said. He further emphasised that YouTube understands its responsibility as an open platform that allows sharing of diverse points of view, and it does that in a way "that builds up things like election integrity, free functioning, democratic societies, as opposed to clamping down on them".

# US remains non-committal on India's move to get TRIPS waiver to vaccines

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

The US remained non-committal on the move by India and South Africa to get Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver for COVID-19 vaccine before the WTO so that the doses are accessible and affordable to low- and middle-income countries.

The move by India, South Africa and several other countries has been supported by more than 60 top American lawmakers, most of whom are progressives.

US Trade Representatives Katherine Tai, in her address to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) virtual conference on COVID-19 vaccine equity on Wednesday, however, did not weigh in on the request made



by India and South Africa.

The virtual conference was attended and addressed by her Indian counterpart Piyush Goyal, Executive Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis of the European Union, and Minister Ebrahim Patel of South Africa on Wednesday. "I have had a chance already

to have very meaningful preliminary conversations with each of you. I am committed to finding ways to partner with you on the issues before us today and more broadly," Tai said.

Acknowledging that there is still a gaping divide between developed and developing

countries when it comes to access to medicines, she said that this was seen during the HIV/AIDS epidemic, where various policies and actions constrained access to medicines, contributing to unnecessary deaths and suffering.

"We must learn from, and not repeat, the tragedies and mistakes of the past. The Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, for example, was born out of the HIV/AIDS crisis, and we all -- both in government and in the private sector -- need to do our parts to live up to its spirit," Tai said.

But there are many aspects of the institution of the WTO and its rules that have not adapted to a changed world, a changed membership, changed practices and expectations.

## Sterlite Power, Vinci Energia to buy Vineyards Project

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sterlite Power on Thursday said it has partnered with Vinci Energia in the power transmission sector to buy Vineyards Project.

"Sterlite Power and Vinci Energia (VIGT11), through Vinci Infraestruturas Gestora de Recursos LTDA, announced the formalisation of the commitment of first acquisition of issuance of debentures convertible into shares for the Vineyards Project that is in the final phase of implementation," a Sterlite Power statement said.

The transaction under this relevant fact foresees 149 million Brazilian Real in debentures aimed at developing projects in Sterlite Power's portfolio.

The investment amount can be converted into shares with an 80 per cent purchase option when the project is complete this year.



## Etrio to supply 100 Touro 3-wheelers to Zypp Electric

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Electric vehicle maker Etrio on Thursday said it will initially supply 100 units of its Touro brand of e-three-wheelers to logistics startup Zypp Electric for last mile delivery, and scale it up to 1,000 units in the next 6-8 months, under a recent partnership.

To start with, Zypp will deploy Etrio's Touro Mini in Delhi-NCR (Delhi, Noida, Gurugram, Ghaziabad and Faridabad), which will further be bolstered by presence across geographies in the country, going forward, the EV start up said in a release.



Besides, Etrio will also provide end-to-end service support to Zypp through its dealer network along with a dedicated relationship manager for maximum uptime, it said.

Zypp, which is a formidable player in the last mile delivery segment has a fleet of over 1,000 electric scooters in its fleet. The three-wheeler segment has been the front-run-

ner in India's electric mobility vision by contributing over 70 per cent of overall EV sales, said the release, adding that the majority of this is in the unorganised e-rickshaw market.

"Since the launch of Touro early this year, we have seen a phenomenal response coming in from both institutional and retail customers. Touro Mini sets a new standard in the e-rickshaw/ e-loader category and the positive feedback on the product has bolstered our efforts to build best-in-class products for the last-mile delivery market," said Deepak MV, Co-founder and CEO, Etrio.

## Boeing partners with IAA, USC for training

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Aircraft manufacturer Boeing on Thursday said it has partnered with the Indian Aviation Academy (IAA) and the University of Southern California (USC) for safety management system training to all stakeholders in the domestic aviation industry.

Commercial aircraft operators, airports and air traffic services are required to have a Safety Management System (SMS), as per International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) requirement. It is considered a best practice to provide a framework for hazard

identification, risk mitigation and promotion of a positive safety culture, Boeing said in a release. Boeing is adopting these practices as it implements an enterprise SMS to support its commitment to the highest levels of safety and quality with its products and services. "As part of our continued commitment to safety, we are collaborating with India's civil aviation stakeholders to promote a collaborative safety culture. We have partnered with IAA and USC to introduce the Safety Management System program to India," Salil Gupta, President of Boeing said.

## French firm EDF installs 1L smart meters in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

French power utility firm EDF on Thursday said it has installed 1 lakh smart electricity meters in India.

The milestone marks the beginning of the commercial rollout of its 5-million smart electricity meters contract, nearly half of which will be installed in Bihar.

"Global low-carbon electricity leader EDF successfully installed 100,000 smart meters in India under its contract with Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL)," an EDF statement said. According to the statement, this is the first large-scale prepaid smart meter solution to be deployed in India.

## CSMIA to consolidate flight ops at one terminal from April 21

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The city's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) has decided to once again consolidate its flight operations to one terminal - T2 - from April 21 amid rising number of COVID-19 cases in the city. The private airport operator had only on March 10 reopened its domestic passenger terminal

T-1 for regular flight operations after keeping it closed for nearly a year.

"In light of the latest developments in the ongoing pandemic situation, CSMIA has decided to re-consolidate all domestic passenger flights currently operating via Terminal 1. With effect from April 21, the airport will be conducting all international as well as domestic flight

operations through its Terminal 2," CSMIA said in a statement.

The Mumbai airport has two terminals T1 and T2. Terminal 1 caters to domestic passengers and Terminal 2 has international services besides domestic operations of some of the Indian airlines. Prior to the pandemic, some airlines were carrying out their operations from T 1.

# FB partners CleanMax for renewable energy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Facebook has partnered CleanMax with a view to move to 100 per cent renewable energy in India as part of its sustainability efforts.

Under the agreement, Facebook and CleanMax will assemble a portfolio of wind and solar projects, supplying renewable power into India's electrical grid, in states where the social networking giant's facilities are also present, a statement said on Thursday.

"Facebook and CleanMax today announced a partnership to support Facebook's sustainability ambitions in India with renewable power from wind and solar facilities set up by



CleanMax, India's leading B2B renewable energy provider," it said.

The first project to be

brought online in the agreement is a 32MW wind project located in Karnataka, the statement added.

While CleanMax will own and operate the projects, Facebook will provide long-term support by committing to purchase 100 per cent of the environmental attribute certificates (EACs) from the projects for years to come.

"We're excited to announce this important step that is helping us support our operations in the region, including our offices in India, with 100 per cent renewable energy.

"This partnership with CleanMax will enable new solar and wind power to be generated in the near future, contributing to the decarbonisation of the Indian electrical grid. Facebook is committed to upholding the highest stan-

dards in environmental sustainability across all aspects of our operations," Urvi Parekh, Head of renewable energy at Facebook, said.

Approximately half of the project capacity has recently been commissioned and is already generating power.

"...We have always strived to develop innovative solutions to help our clients achieve their 100 per cent renewable ambitions. Given the constraints in sourcing power to many facilities, we are working with forward-thinking corporations like Facebook to find creative solutions to these problems," CleanMax co-founder and Chief Commercial Officer Andrew Hines said.

## HCL raises Rs 500 crore via QIP issue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Hindustan Copper (HCL) on Thursday said it has raised Rs 500 crore through issuance of shares to institutional investors. "The QIP of Rs 500 crore has been fully subscribed," the PSU said in a statement. The funds from the QIP are proposed to be used to fund the ongoing capex/expansion plan of the company. The QIP closed on April 12 with wide participation from diverse investors including mutual funds, insurance companies, banks and foreign institutional investors.

# Flipkart to acquire Cleartrip

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Walmart-owned Flipkart on Thursday said it will acquire Cleartrip, an online travel technology company.

Flipkart will acquire 100 per cent of Cleartrip's shareholding as the company further enhances its investments to strengthen its digital commerce offerings for customers, a statement said.

Under the terms of the agreement, Cleartrip operations will be acquired by Flipkart and Cleartrip will continue to operate as a separate brand, it added.

All employees of Cleartrip will be retained and work closely with Flipkart to further develop technology solutions to make travel simple for customers.

The company, however, did not disclose the value of the deal.

"The Flipkart Group is committed to transforming customer experiences through digital commerce. Cleartrip is



synonymous with travel for many customers, and as we diversify and look at new areas of growth, this investment will help strengthen our wide range of offerings for customers," Flipkart Group CEO Kalyan Krishnamurthy said.

He added that the Cleartrip team, with its deep industry knowledge and technology capabilities, will help Flipkart Group provide deeper value and travel experiences for customers.

Stuart Crighton, CEO and co-founder of Cleartrip, said the company has been a pioneer in capitalising on technology to simplify the travel experience for our customers.

"This product-driven focus has enabled us to become the preferred travel partner of choice for consumers in a wide range of markets in the region," he added.

The deal closing will be subject to applicable regulatory approvals.

## MONEY MATTERS

### Infosys shares tumble over 5 pc after earnings report



Shares of Infosys on Thursday declined over 5 per cent on profit-booking after its March 2021 quarter earnings missed market expectations. The stock dipped 5.59 per cent to Rs 1,320.35 on BSE. At NSE, it tumbled 5.52 per cent to Rs 1,320. "Infosys reported a

mutated set of Q4 FY21 numbers. FY22 revenue growth (12-14 per cent) and margin (22-24 per cent) guidance were lower than our expectations of 13-15 per cent revenue growth and 23-24 per cent margin," according to a report by Edelweiss Securities. IT services major Infosys on Wednesday posted a 17.5 per cent rise in net profit to Rs 5,076 crore for the March quarter, and announced up to Rs 9,200 crore buyback offer at a maximum price of Rs 1,750 per share. The Bengaluru-based company's net profit (after minority interest) was Rs 4,321 crore in the January-March 2020 quarter. Its revenue grew 13.1 per cent to Rs 26,311 crore in the March 2021 quarter from Rs 23,267 crore in the year-ago period, Infosys said in a regulatory filing.

### TCPL elevates Puneet Das as president of beverages unit



MCG firm Tata Consumer Products Ltd (TCPL) on Thursday said it has elevated Puneet Das as the company's new President - Packaged Beverages, India and South Asia. Das takes over from Sushant Dash who has moved to lead Tata

Starbucks, said the company, earlier known as Tata Global Beverages Ltd, in a statement. In February, TCPL had announced that Sushant Dash would join Tata Starbucks as CEO from May 1, 2021, as Navin Gurnaney was stepping down there. Das was earlier Senior Vice President - Marketing - for the India beverages business and has been associated with TCPL since 2017. TCPL MD and CEO Sunil D'Souza said: "This is in line with our aspiration to recognise and groom internal talent. We have an exciting time ahead for our packaged beverages business with focus on scaling up our distribution and reach, building on product innovation while strengthening the core portfolio." Tata Starbucks is a 50:50 joint venture between Tata Consumer Products Ltd and Starbucks Corporation and operates around 200 stores in India.

### Okinawa inks pact with electric 2-wheelers rental firm Welectric



Okinawa Autotech on Thursday said it has partnered with electric two-wheelers lease rental firm Welectric to work with companies involved in last-mile delivery operations to help them switch their delivery fleet to electric vehicles. Welectric already has a fleet of over 150 electric two-wheelers and plans to scale it up to over 2,000 in the next 12 months. With this partnership, it will procure electric scooters from Okinawa, including the latest - Okinawa Dual, a customisable B2B electric two-wheeler, the company said in a statement. "With the rise of e-commerce and last-mile deliveries fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become imperative for businesses in the delivery segment to consistently innovate, reduce operational costs, and increase efficiency, especially amidst rising fuel prices. This year, we are expecting a mass transition of two-wheeler users to electric scooters and this partnership is one step ahead in this direction," Okinawa Autotech founder and Managing Director Jeetender Sharma said.

### Optimus completes buyout of shares in JV from Wistron



Optimus Infracore on Thursday said it has completed the acquisition of 19.91 per cent stake in joint venture Optimus Electronics Ltd (OEL) from Wistron Corporation. In December last year, Optimus Infracore's board had approved the decision to acquire 27.6 lakh shares of OEL to strengthen ownership and control. Optimus Infracore previously held 80.09 per cent stake in OEL. After the acquisition of 19.91 per cent stake, OEL has become a wholly-owned subsidiary of Optimus Infracore, a statement said. Also, after acquisition of the said shares, the joint venture agreement with Wistron has ceased to be effective, it added. "This acquisition is aimed to drive value creation for all the stakeholders by strengthening the ownership and work towards enhancing the brand image of Optimus. It will also help us in foraying into new business verticals besides building up the existing business verticals," Optimus Chairman Ashok Kumar Gupta said.





## PINK SALT TO HEAL YOUR BODY AND MIND

There are many reasons why Himalayan salt has grown in popularity! But before you delve into its benefits let's try and understand what exactly Himalayan salt is. It's a rock salt found in Pakistan's Punjab district. Mined in the Himalayan foothills, it has hundreds of essential nutrients that give it its rosy hue. Previous research indicates that it is one of the purest salts available. It comes in a variety of ways, from exfoliating bath salts to cooking brines and salt lamps.

Lavleen Gambhir, Founder, Yummiano, shares four ways to reap benefits:

### Assists the body in detoxification:

Himalayan salt is a rich source of minerals and elements such as potassium, iron, and calcium. Both minerals help our bodies' normal detoxification mechanism and facilitate bacteria elimination.

### Reduces blood pressure:

Sea salt is finely refined, has fewer minerals, and contains more sodium than Himalayan salt. When you replace sea salt with Himalayan salt, your body processes it more easily, so it does not need as much water to flush out the extra sodium as it does if you had used table salt. Furthermore, Himalayan salt is especially rich in iodine, which food manufacturers artificially bind to table salt during processing. Himalayan salt contains natural iodine, which is

very good in assisting the body to create an electrolyte equilibrium, assisting the intestines in absorbing nutrients, and reducing blood pressure.

### Improves digestion:

The high mineral content of Himalayan salt aids in the pH balance of your body. Our bodies have greater immunity and are better able to store and absorb food while our pH levels are healthy.

### Improves respiratory health:

Many people claim that salt therapy, which entails inhaling salt-infused air, can help with lung problems like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD. While further study is required on this subject, scientists discovered statistically significant changes in questionnaires provided to COPD patients who used a dry salt inhaler. With all of the false health statements, it's understandable that some people are perplexed about which kind of salt to use. However, if you choose to skip the ingredients used in standard table salt, pink Himalayan salt is an excellent natural substitute.



# BRINGING COMEDY AND COOKING TOGETHER

Who doesn't love comedy? And who doesn't love food? Bringing the best of the both worlds onto one stage is the upcoming show *Chef vs Fridge* on Zee Cafe. Popular comedian Gaurav Gera, better loved as Chutki, talks to *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL about turning host with the show, his tryst with comedy, and more.

One measly line is all it takes to puncture and break a heart, while it takes herculean effort to make a person laugh. Gaurav Gera, the celebrated comedian of all times actually goes into the pits of sadness where a person lies and gets him/her out with words. With the ability to go underground and bring them to the surface and then take them to heights of laughter, Gaurav aka 'chutki' on social media seems to be the best in it. And, now with Zee Café announcing its new original, titled *Chef Vs. Fridge* — this ridiculously funny comedian is turning a host with this this new assignment.

"Food takes me into a whole new space of approbation, I cook as well. I can't cook any fancy nourishments, but I'm a good hands-on-try for authentic flavours and Chinese cuisine. And, this show coming my way blended so well in the current times. Launched with the commitment of 'Ab fridge lega sabki class, aur chefs banaenge kuch world class', Vicky Ratnani and I will experience a relatable situation as we open our fridges. You'll see ounces of my comical traits being smoothly infused in the way I host the show! While the populace calls me funny, so is our celebrity chef Vicky Ratnani, he's a real funny man. It's not just going to be a cooking show but a comedy cooking show!" Gaurav shares.

Holding the flag high of a funny business, his famous character 'chutki' has taken over his online forum like crazy! Inspired by his regular life experiences, the crazy random stories Gaurav Gera is bringing to us leaves us in splits. Having a lot of influences from the west, he takes the ownership

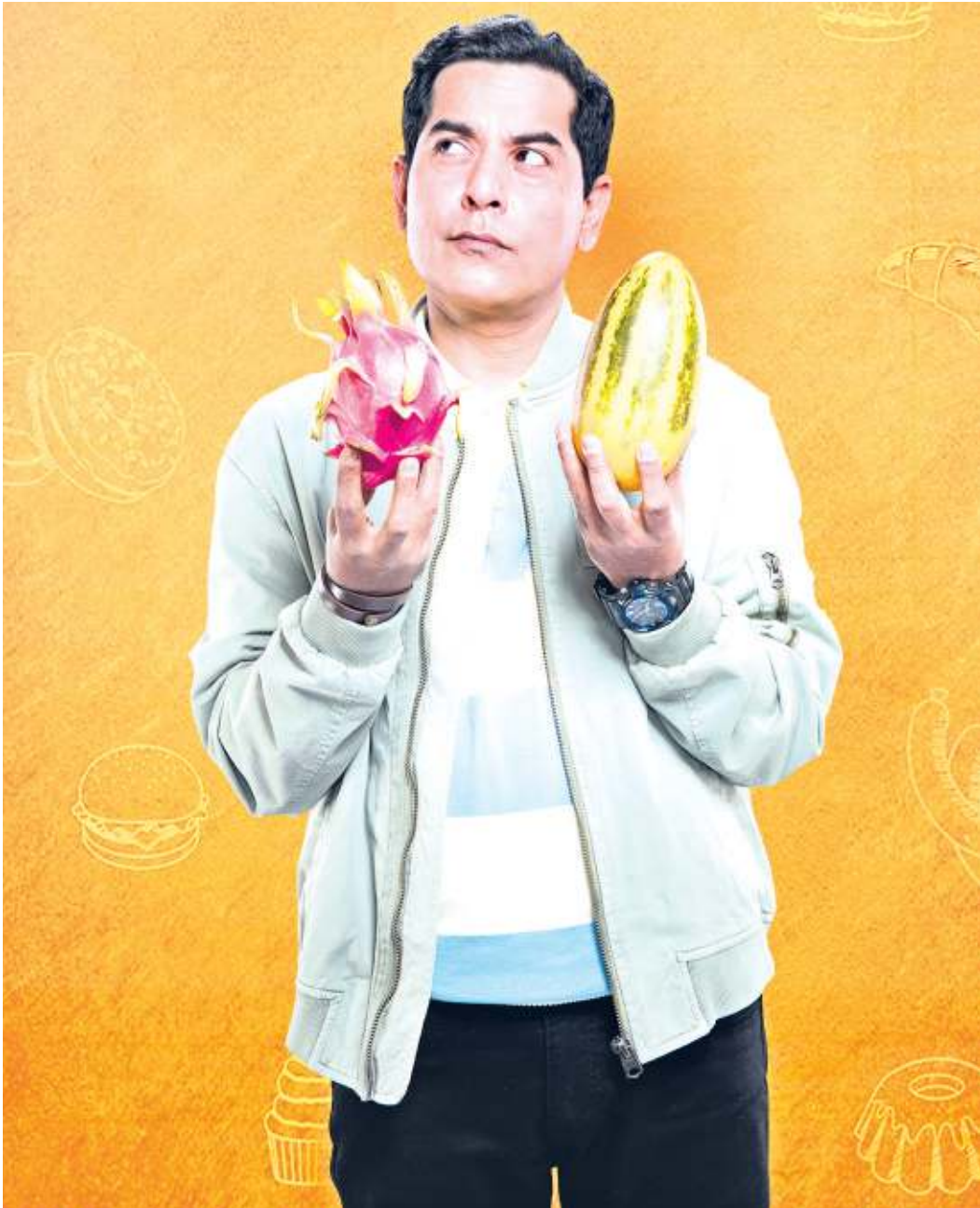
of being likeable somehow. Performing antidotes that are fun, light-hearted and without any undertones of social critiques, he's a self-deprecating comedian. In awe of actor and comedian Sunil Grover's humour, he describes, "I love Sunil so much, the ability to blend in any character that he has to play on screen is phenomenal. Even while performing he's living life and not putting up a rehearsed stand-up act. It's interesting to watch that."

Talking about how social media is helping comedians and influencers create a funny atmosphere online, he tells us, "It isn't just a comedian, every one who specialises in their respective niches can showcase it through social media nowadays. Somebody's either cooking, spreading facts or making spoofs online — it's a worthy platform to be on, others notice you! Look at me, I play almost 35 characters online and chutki seems to be my most favourite."

I am assuming a man wearing a bold lip-shade is doing wonders online, I would like to wonder so. It's creating reactions!"

Women in comedy as compared to the other gender seemed to be less, atleast in the past. There was a dearth of female comedians initially. Why, aren't they funny enough?

Well, Gaurav doesn't second that opinion at all! In fact, he says, "It all boils down to the society we live in, there was a set of rules that were pre-conceived for how a lady should be or behave. They were forced to be so prim and proper out there! I heard some of them saying 'don't try to be a clown' or 'don't attract attention'. So women have been restricted a lot over the years, however, now with the changing times, there's more



acceptance than dismissal. Bharti or Mallika Dua, they are such funny women. Their sense of humour amazes me."

Having discussed that, another facet to the comedy fraternity is that nowadays deep dark humour is landing many of them in jails. Comedians who are into making people laugh today, just like Gaurav, are to be so alert that they re-evaluate their content multiple times before posting it online because the funny man firmly asserts that he doesn't want to offend anyone!

"I don't touch on the topics of religion, sexuality or body-shaming. There's a careful quality control check that I do. I would rather

have pure funny videos instead of landing up into any sort of controversies. Nonetheless, you never know, because at times, people tend to still get offensive on such silly notes which is beyond my imagination."

Lastly, comedy is now a full fledged business! Stand-up stands as a legitimate art form today. Ticking the core of every culture, English stand-up especially is becoming so popular in urban India.

Does Gaurav Gera wants to be one of them? "The fact of the matter is that stand up comedy gigs have become a rage these days, especially in privileged environments! It's got so popular that

citizens tend to think they're both the same. They think comedy means stand-up, which isn't true. I personally love acting out my humour, to shoot it like fiction. I like to have the appropriate plot lines! Others are doing a really fine job at being stand-up comedians, why should I bother myself now?"

To watch more of Gaurav Gera, that too unplugged, tune into the upcoming competitive food show on Zee Café, it's a must watch for Indian foodies who would love to sit on their couch and have a good laugh along that.

(Premiering Sunday 25th April, *Chef Vs. Fridge* will air on Sundays at 8 PM on Zee Café)

Students often face the dilemma of whether they should study in India or abroad. Ashish Fernando shares six factors that can help you decide

One out of every five students face the indecision of whether they should study in India or abroad. Here are six factors that can help you have a better future.

Every student planning their higher education faces many choices. Some of the most important decisions to make range from choosing the right course, a good university and even the right country. Where you

choose to pursue your education can drastically change your future. Most students who decide between their country options, compare the pros and cons with the same burning questions:

### How does the cost of education differ?

Depending upon the course you choose, studying in India can be cheaper than studying in a university abroad. India has some of the world's most affordable higher education options. Thus, Indian universities also attract a lot of global students, especially from European and African countries.

However, that does not mean that studying abroad cannot be affordable. Students from all financial and academic backgrounds study abroad. If you seek hard enough, you are bound to find an institution that has education costs similar to what you would pay in India. The cost of your education also includes your cost of living, of course. It's important to consider that while living abroad may provide a global outlook on things, staying with your families might be more cost-effective. So, if you're still confused, it's better we consider the next factor.

# Take your call



### How do we judge the education quality?

The curriculum, the faculty and the scope of

research or the subjects taught are the three things every student should look at when judging the educa-

tion quality of an institution. In India, most institutions fall under a standard government-set curriculum

or a private education system. However, getting into the apex universities like the IITs and IIMs can be highly competitive with an admission rate as low as 7 per cent.

However, institutions abroad tend to have coursework that differs slightly for each university. This means that a student who plans to apply for an MBA can choose to do so in STEM specialisations instead of a traditional module. These kinds of niche specialisations and programmes are often unavailable in India. The handpicked faculty members, advanced teaching methods and higher admission rates in universities abroad, often make it a better option for students.

### What about job opportunities?

The intention behind almost the entire higher education journey leads to one destination: A well-paying, satisfactory job. Since the degrees from Indian universities are

sometimes more affordable, the return on investment is often considerable.

However, foreign university degrees are often held in the same regard as a degree from a prestigious Indian university. This gives students an edge over others applying for similar jobs in India. Applying to one of the numerous jobs overseas also gives you diverse career options and a higher return on investment.

### Where is it safer?

The physical safety concerns are an inevitable issue faced by every institution worldwide. Many students feel a modicum of comfort in studying in your own country.

However, there are many others who note the safety protocols in universities abroad and pursue education there. Student concerns are taken very seriously and help is immediate. In times such as the global pandemic when education has largely gone digital, safety is a severe con-

cern. Indian universities have put strict restrictions on campus learning. While many universities abroad have also done the same, most institutions in countries like the USA, the UK, Australia and Canada, have introduced a partial lecture schedule on campus.

### Which option is better for a career profile?

Whether you plan on staying overseas or coming back to India, pursuing education abroad gives you a global outlook on life. It develops your perspective and decision making skills, thus, helping you build a well-rounded career. However, if you plan on choosing a career that has a greater scope and career options in the Indian industries, staying in India might be what you need to do.

As you might have noticed, all these factors depend upon one major choice — the course. Be it the curriculum, cost, career or even jobs, the decision you make hinges upon the programme of your choice. The only thing to keep in mind is that country choices are never limited, all that matters is a student's preference.

(The writer if the founder and CEO of iSchoolConnect.)











