

**ANALYSIS 7**  
TIME TO TURN NOCEBO  
TO PLACEBO IN INDIA**MONEY 8**  
EXPORTS ROSE TO \$13.72 BN DURING  
APR 1-14: COMMERCE MINISTRY**SPORTS 12**  
SHAHRUKH STEERS  
PBKS TO 106

HYDERABAD, SATURDAY APRIL 17, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



# the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

VISHWAK SEN'S  
NEXT A LOVE  
ENTERTAINER

Page 11

**CISCE DEFERS CLASS 10, 12 EXAMS  
IN VIEW OF SURGE IN COVID CASES**

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) on Friday deferred the board exams for classes 10 and 12 in view of a rise in COVID-19 cases across the country. India added a record 2,17,353 new coronavirus infections in a day taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 1,42,91,917, while active cases surpassed the 15-lakh mark, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Friday. In light of the nationwide surge in coronavirus cases, the class 10 and 12 exams which were to be held from May 4 have been deferred, CISCE's chief executive and secretary Gerry Arathoon said.

**PAK ORDERS "COMPLETE BLOCKING"  
OF SOCIAL MEDIA TEMPORARILY**

The Pakistan government on Friday ordered an hours-long shut down of social media and instant messaging platforms, after days of violent anti-France protests. In a notice to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, the Interior Ministry requested a "complete blocking" of Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube and Telegram until 3pm (1100 GMT). It gave no reason for the ban, but it comes a day after French nationals and companies in Pakistan were advised by their embassy to temporarily leave in the wake of the rallies led by an extremist party that paralysed large parts of the country and left two police officers dead.

**BS YEDIYURAPPA TESTS POSITIVE,  
SECOND TIME IN 9 MONTHS, HOSPITALISED**

Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa today tweeted to say that he had tested positive for the novel coronavirus. In a brief post on Twitter, Mr Yediyurappa said that he was fine but had been hospitalised on the advice of doctors. The 78-year-old Yediyurappa was earlier hospitalised on August 2, 2020 after he tested positive for coronavirus. "Upon having mild fever, today I got tested for Covid-19 and my report has come out positive. Although I am doing fine, I am being hospitalised based on the advice of doctors. I request all those who have come in my contact recently to be observant and exercise self-quarantine," the Chief Minister's tweet read.

**'NEED TO DO BETTER JOB FOR EMPLOYEES':  
JEFF BEZOS IN LAST LETTER AS CEO**

US tech giant Amazon on Thursday sounded conciliatory notes as the US government considers stricter regulatory measures against America's largest digital platforms. Founder Jeff Bezos told investors his e-commerce empire needs a better "vision" for its workers, just days after an effort to create the company's first labor union was defeated. Some Amazon executives had fired off snappy comments at various politicians who supported the labor campaign, but their chief executive took a more circumspect approach to the anti-union victory at its plant in Bessemer, Alabama.

**Senators to Biden:  
Waive vax intellectual  
property rules**

8

**SII CEO urges US to  
lift raw material  
export ban**

5

**Yet another political  
party in Telangana  
is quixotic**

2

## 'Strong evidence', Covid-19 spreading through air: *Lancet*

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There is consistent, strong evidence to prove that the SARS-CoV-2 virus, behind the COVID-19 pandemic, is predominantly transmitted through the air, according to a new assessment published on Friday in *The Lancet* journal.

The analysis by six experts from the UK, the US and Canada says public health measures that fail to treat the virus as predominantly airborne leave people unprotected and allow the virus to spread.

Although some studies in the past have suggested that COVID-19 may spread through air, overall scientific literature on the subject has been inconclusive.

In July last year, over 200 scientists from 32 nations wrote to the WHO, saying there is evidence that the coronavirus is airborne, and



even smaller particles can infect people.

"The evidence supporting airborne transmission is overwhelming, and evidence supporting large droplet transmission is almost non-existent," said Jose-Luis Jimenez, from the University of Colorado Boulder in the US.

2

**1,189 samples tested  
positive for deadly  
variants in India**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A total of 1,189 samples have so far tested positive for variants of concern of SARS COV-2 in India, the health ministry said on Friday as the country is witnessing a steep surge in COVID-19 cases.

These include 1,109 samples testing positive for the UK variants, 79 for the South Africa variant and one sample for the Brazil variant, the ministry said.

2

**Nirav Modi's  
extradition to India  
cleared by UK govt**

PNS ■ LONDON

Scam-accused billionaire Nirav Modi's extradition to India has been cleared by the British government. UK Home Secretary Priti Patel signed the extradition order on Thursday.

Nirav Modi, 50, is a step closer to extradition but still has the option of legally challenging it within 28 days before the UK High Court. The process may take months or even years, as seen in the case of liquor baron Vijay Mallya, who went to court against his extradition order signed back in February 2019.

2

## Only 2.1% of total vaccines allocated to TS

NAVEENA GHANATE  
■ HYDERABAD

An analysis of MOHFW data pertaining to allocations of vaccines to States/UTs by the Centre suggests that, at 2.1% the allocation of vaccines to Telangana is much low compared to that of other states, though serpentine queues at vaccination centers across the state warrant an immediate increase in the allocation. At least 16 states have been allocated more vaccine doses than Telangana by the Centre.

Telangana has so far been given 30.72 lakh doses of vaccines, of which 27.6 lakh vaccines have been consumed. Although vac-



cines are being manufactured in Telangana, the state's share of vaccines is less than that of even those states whose population is less than that of TS. According to MOHFW, Telangana currently has 3.12 lakh vaccines available for use, while Andhra Pradesh has 3.68 lakh vaccines.

2

## Dispose cheque bounce cases quickly: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Friday came out with a slew of directions to ensure speedy disposal of cheque bounce cases across the country and asked the Centre to amend laws to ensure clubbing of trials in such cases if they are lodged against a person within a year related to same transaction.

The top court in March last year had taken cognizance of humongous pendency of the cheque bounce cases and on Friday came out with the directions to ensure speedy disposal of such matters which were 35.16 lakh as on December 31, 2019, out of total 2.31 crore pending criminal cases in the country.

A five judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde, in a common order, took steps to reduce the burden on the docket of the criminal courts and asked the high courts to issue practice directions to magistrates, trying cheque dishonour cases, to record reasons before converting trial of complaints under Section 138 of the (Negotiable Instruments) Act from summary trial to summons trial.

2

## Sharmila offered me money to join her party, claims Konda Murali

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress senior leader and former MLC Konda Murali has claimed that YS Sharmila, daughter of former chief minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy, had offered him crores of rupees for joining her proposed party.

Mentioning that values were important to him, he said, "We got a call from Sharmila. However, we made it clear to her that we will not shift our loyalties to her party at any cost. I tried to bring the now Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy out of jail. However, Jagan did not talk to us after he came out of prison. There is no chance of changing the polit-



ical party. We will continue in the Congress", Konda Murali was speaking to media persons after participating in the Congress district leaders' meeting in Warangal on Friday.

2

## Situation is grave, second wave is like Tsunami: DPH

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Officials in the Telangana Health Department have conceded that the present situation due to the second wave of Covid-19 is 'grave'.

Likening the emerging situation to a 'Tsunami', Director of Public Health G Srinivas Rao said: 'Situation is grave. It is like tsunami, may not be in Telangana at the moment, but in the coming days we cannot say how things are going to be.'

But in other states like Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat, we are witnessing a steep surge in the number of cases every day'.

Dr Srinivas said that the Government was prepared to tackle the emerging situation and was putting all efforts.

2

## State reports highest ever, 3,840 new cases

**Gandhi Hospital to treat only Covid patients**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The surge in COVID-19 cases in Telangana continued with 3,840 fresh infections, the highest single day spike ever, pushing the tally to 3,41,885, the government said on Friday.

The toll rose to 1,797 with nine more fatalities, a bulletin said, providing details as of 8 PM on April 15. Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) accounted for the most number of cases with 505, followed by Medchal Malkajgiri (407) and Nizamabad (303).

The total recoveries were at 3,09,594 with 1,198 patients being cured and there were 30,494 active cases. Over 1.21 lakh samples were tested on Thursday and cumulatively more than 1.14



crore samples have been tested.

The samples tested per million population was over 3.08 lakh, the bulletin said.

The case fatality and recovery rates in the state stood at 0.52 per cent and 90.55 per cent respectively, while it was 1.2 per cent and 87.8 per cent at the national level.

2

## 'People's behavior can contain Covid, not lockdown or curfew'

ML MELLY MAITREYI  
■ HYDERABAD

With no signs of any let-up in the intensity of the second wave of Covid-19, due to which cases are surging alarmingly, Health Minister Eatela Rajender reiterated on Friday that lockdown or curfew would be of no help to contain the pandemic; and, hence, the government was not thinking in that direction.

Rajender, who went to Huzurnagar in Karimnagar to participate in various programmes, conceded that there was shortage of oxygen. He, however, said all measures were being



■ 'Managements of private hospitals should show humanity; it is not the time to make profits'

■ Steps to overcome oxygen shortage in TS

■ Centre urged to increase vax allocation to Telangana

taken to overcome the shortage. "Vaccine distribution is completely under the Center's purview. Based on the needs of the state and population, allocation is being done. I am talking

to Union Minister Harshavardhan daily. Since vaccine is being made in our state, we urged him to give us priority.

2

## ABV offers info on Viveka murder to CBI

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Suspended IPS officer and former state intelligence wing chief, AB Venkateswar Rao has written to the CBI director, lamenting inaction by the team of CBI's Investigating Officer (IO) NM Singh into the murder case of former minister YS Vivekananda Reddy and tardiness in collecting information from him regarding the murder.

In a letter to the CBI chief on Friday, ABV said: "A few months after the CBI took up the case and coming to know from newspaper reports that the case was not yet solved, I contacted NM Singh telephonically and offered to share whatever information was available with me related to the case."

2

## Pawan tests positive

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Actor-politician and Jana Sena Party supremo K Pawan Kalyan on Friday confirmed that he has tested positive for Covid-19 and is undergoing treatment under the care of expert doctors.

According to a statement issued by the party, Pawan Kalyan had recently isolated himself after many of his staff members and others working closely with him tested positive.

According to the statement, Pawan Kalyan had on April 3 undergone a Covid-19 test on returning from campaigning in Tirupathi for the upcoming Lok Sabha by-election. Although the test returned negative, he had been in quarantine in his farmhouse on the advice of doctors.

However, the actor-politician has since been suffering from



fever and body ache, the statement said. On taking the test again two days ago, it returned positive for the coronavirus.

According to the statement, Dr T Suman, a cardiologist from Khammam, came to Hyderabad to treat Pawan Kalyan. "Necessary tests were also conducted. He was given antiviral drugs as he has suffered infection in lungs, and was also provided oxygen support.

2

## Bribes to voters in 5 assembly polls at record high of Rs 1,000 cr: EC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The seizure of illegal inducements to voters, such as liquor and cash, during the ongoing polls to five assemblies and by-polls to some seats has crossed the record value of Rs 1,000 crore, a whopping jump of over four times since the 2016 polls, the Election Commission said Friday.

An Election Commission "progressive" report, which will get updated as the remaining phases of

poll are conducted, said the maximum Rs 446.28 crore was seized in Tamil Nadu, where the elections have already ended, followed by West Bengal (Rs 300.11 crore), where four phases are yet to take place.

Polling in Assam, Kerala and the Union Territory of Puducherry has also finished. Counting of votes for these five assemblies is slated to be held on May 2.

The poll-panel called these seizures by its various field and



technical enforcement teams a "historic milestone" achieved "for the first time in any assembly electoral process, meaning during simultaneously-held assembly polls."

"The stupendous rise in seizure

figures is because of better preparedness and multi-pronged strategy of the Commission. The Commission conducted exhaustive reviews at various levels which included review meetings with enforcement agencies of the state/UT and central agencies," the EC said in a statement.

The agencies of the Union government primarily include the Income Tax Department, the Customs and GST directorates and the Financial Intelligence Unit

(FIU). According to data compiled till Thursday, the EC said, Tamil Nadu had reported a total seizures of Rs 446.28 crore, West Bengal Rs 300.11 crore (so far), Assam 122.35 crore, Kerala Rs 84.91 crore, Puducherry Rs 36.95 crore.

Additionally, the seizure of cash, liquor, drugs and other freebies of Rs 10.84 crore was reported in constituencies that saw by-polls during the same period, it said.

2

**TODAY****ALMANAC****MONTH & PAKSHAM:** Chaitra & Shukla

Paksha, Panchangam

**Tithi:** Panchami: 08:31 pm**Nakshatram:** Mrigashirsha: 02:33 am

(Next Day)

**Time to Avoid:** (Bad time to start any important work)**Rahukalam:** 09:09 am - 10:42 am**Yamagandam:** 01:49 pm - 03:22 pm**Varjyam:** NIL**Gulika:** 06:02 am - 07:35 am**Good Time:** (to start any important work)**Amritakalam:** 04:42 pm - 06:29 pm**Abhijit Muhurtham:** 11:50 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 16, 2021 5:00 PM

# Yet another political party in Telangana is quixotic

A head of launching her political party on July 8, YS Sharmila, daughter of former chief minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy, sat on fast in Hyderabad on April 15 demanding among other things, employment to youth in Telangana. She declared that she would continue her agitation for the filling up of the government vacancies.

Anyone who observed Sharmila's political statements made so far referring to Telangana State, will conclude that she has no clue about the developed Telangana and the way it has been made a role model by Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Rao during the last seven years.

Sharmila is merely making demands that lack essence, basis or evidence. So far, the reasons present by her on why she is launching a party have no takers.

At the Khammam public meeting, she said she wants to question the present dispensation. If that be so, Sharmila will go down in history of this country as the only person who launched a political party to merely question the state government.

Which scheme, programme or project will Sharmila question?

Is it the Kaleshwaram project, considered to be a man-made wonder and which has won accolades the world over? Will she question the government on how it turned Telangana, which was on the verge of power crisis, into a power surplus state?

Will she question the government on why it is supplying quality and free power to the agriculture sector and uninterrupted power to all sectors? Will she question the KCR Kits scheme which is helping pregnant women or the financial help to young women of all communities for their marriage through Kalyan Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak schemes?

Will Sharmila question the government on why it is helping farmers through Rythu Bandhu and Rythu Bima? Will she question the government for eradicating illicit liquor and playing cards clubs? Will she question the financial help to all the hereditary professions in the State or the creation of SHE teams? The list is endless.

**At the Khammam public meeting, she said she wants to question the present dispensation. If that be so, Sharmila will go down in history of this country as the only person who launched a political party to merely question the state government. Which scheme will she question?**



**VANAM JWALA NARASIMHA RAO**  
CHIEF PUBLIC RELATIONS  
OFFICER OF CHIEF MINISTER  
OF TELANGANA

Sharmila, she does not have a single programme, policy or scheme that she can question!

In a vibrant democracy like ours, anybody can question the government but launching a political party can never be the reason for this.

No political leader or anyone ever had been successful launching a political party all by himself or herself.

In the past, leaders like Nadendla Bhaskara Rao, KE Krishnamurthy, Jana Reddy, Mudragada Padmanabhan, Vijayashanti, A Narendra, P Indra Reddy, Devender Goud and others launched political outfits and wound them up sooner or later.

At a time when national parties like the Congress and BJP are unable to make gains against the TRS in the State, what will Sharmila gain under these circumstances?

Why should people or leaders from other political parties rally behind her? There is absolutely no sentiment or a great issue on which she can take a political ride.

Telangana state does not require another political party as there are a dozen already in existence.

Since 1947, the Congress had total control over the political scenario in the country till 1996, except in 1977-

79 (Morarji Desai) and 1989-90 (VP Singh).

The turning point came in 1996 when the people gave a fractured verdict.

For the first time, the BJP dethroned Congress and Vajpayee became the PM for 13 days. After the BJP failed to clear the floor test, 13 regional parties formed the United Front that ruled for two years.

Since 1996, all regimes at the Centre have been coalition governments, led either by the Congress or BJP. Since then, the days of a single party forming the government at the Centre were over till 2019 when the BJP led by Modi secured 303 seats.

A cursory look at the rise and success of the regional parties shows that their existence and ability to come to power was always based on mass issue or sentiment.

In Tamil Nadu, the DMK and later AIADMK came to power and still exist drawing their strength from the Dravidian movement.

Parties like the Samajwadi Party, BSP came into being on the issues of SCs, STs, Minorities and BCs; TRS was born out of a people's movement for separate Telangana State.

TDP came to power appealing to the Telugu pride and sentiment; CPI and CPM were born out of Communist ideology while the AIMIM and Akali Dal were formed on religious lines. AAP rode to power on the issue of statehood for Delhi.

Sharmila's party definitely does not fit into any of these categories.

The question remains — for what purpose is Sharmila launching her party, and at whose behest?

Such experiments of starting new political parties are nothing but quixotic and end up like Don Quixote de la Mancha as described in the Spanish novel written by Miguel de Cervantes.

# 'CM striving to make city climate-resilient'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Mayor Vijayalakshmi Gadwal, who was the only Mayor from the country to be invited to the Global Mayor's conference conducted by United Nations Information and Communication Technologies (UN ICT), attended the online event on Friday and delivered a speech on 'Advancing a Carbon-Neutral, Resilient Recovery

for Cities and Nations'.

"We meet at a critical time when Covid and climate change are challenging our lives. The resilience of our governance systems has ensured a quick and ongoing recovery from the pandemic, with a fast vaccination drive," she said in the event presided over by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

She also emphasised on how Chief Minister K

Chandrasekhar Rao and Minister for IT and Municipal Administration K T Rama Rao were striving to make Hyderabad a climate resilient and a low-carbon city. She further started, "Hyderabad is also developing a city biodiversity index, with 64,000 hectares of urban forests and is planting five million saplings to enhance our carbon sinks significantly."

## Nirav Modi's extradition...

Continued from page 1

Earlier, the UK Westminster court had allowed the extradition plea and sent the case to the Home Secy.

The jeweller is wanted by Indian courts for fraud and money laundering in the ₹ 14,000-crore Punjab National Bank (PNB) loan scam.

While clearing his extradition to India, a UK judge in February dismissed arguments like his mental health worsening during the pandemic and poor Indian prison conditions.

## 'People's behavior can contain Covid...

Continued from page 1

An appeal has been made to the Union Health Minister that the State be allowed to administer vaccine to everyone aged above 25 years," Eatela said. The Union Minister responded positively, but did not give an assurance, he added.

Eatela emphasised that people should exercise self-control and be disciplined. "What would really help in curbing the spread of the virus is self-control and discipline of people. People should stick to wearing masks, practice hand hygiene, and follow physical distancing. One should come out of the house only when it is absolute-

ly necessary," he observed.

The number of people taking vaccines had increased; yet, the supply was not in proportion to the demand. The vaccine could not be purchased directly by the State as it was under the jurisdiction of the Centre, he said.

The entire State machinery was working under the direction of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao to bring the corona situation under control. Still, there was possibility of more number of cases being reported in the coming days. Every one should cooperate to face the pandemic unitedly, he said. Life had to go on, businesses had to run, people had to eke out their livelihood, and farm-

## Only 2.1% of total...

Continued from page 1

Andhra Pradesh has vaccinated 47.6 lakh people and is at 15th position in terms of allocation, at 3.5%. The country has 2.67 crore vaccine doses available. In all, 11.94 crore vaccine doses have been consumed as of April 16, 8 am.

While the highest allocations, of more than 9 per cent, have been made to Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra; Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal have got nearly 8 per cent of the allocations. Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka,

Kerala, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Haryana and Delhi are preceding Telangana in allocations.

Evidently states witnessing elections have got better allocations.

Sources in the Health Department indicated that the allocations to the state can improve further as vaccine hesitancy has reduced more and more people are coming forward to get vaccinated. With increase in cases, shortage of oxygen and hospital beds, more and more people want to get vaccinated.

## Bribes to voters in 5 assembly polls...

Continued from page 1

The total value of these seizures stands at Rs 1001.44 crore while it was Rs 225.77 crore in these five assemblies during the 2016 assembly polls.

A pie chart analysis shows that while liquor (Rs 41.97 crore out of total Rs 122.35 crore) was the freebie that was being pushed maximum to lure voters in Assam, precious metals (Rs 27.42 crore out of total Rs 36.95 crore) was used the most as a bribe to attract voters in the Union Territory of Puducherry.

Similarly, in Tamil Nadu, cash (Rs 236.69 crore out of total Rs 446.28 crore) was abused the most as poll bribe, while in Kerala precious metals was used the most to attract voters (Rs 50.86 crore out of Rs 84.91 crore).

In West Bengal-- where the

remaining four phases of polls are scheduled to take place on Saturday followed by on April 22, 26 and 29 -- drugs and narcotics are the highest category of illegal inducements seized till now (Rs 118.83 crore out of the total Rs 300.11 crore).

The EC said it had deployed a total of 326 special expenditure observers for free and fair conduct of these polls, while 259 assembly seats were marked as 'expenditure sensitive' for what it called 'focused vigil' to check the flow of black money and freebies.

As per the law, distributing cash and gifts during the electoral process with the intent to influence voters is not permitted and such expenditure comes under the definition of bribery which is an offence both under 171B of IPC and under the Representation of People Act.

## Dispose cheque bounce...

Continued from page 1

In a case tried summarily under Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), if the accused does not plead guilty, it is sufficient for a magistrate to record evidence and deliver a judgment instantly. But, in summons trial under CrPC, the judicial officer will have to conduct the entire proceedings and record evidence after the accused does not plead guilty.

We recommend that suitable amendments be made to the (NI) Act for provision of one trial against a person for multiple offences under Section 138 of the Act committed within a period of 12 months, notwithstanding the restriction in Section 219 of the Code, said the bench, also comprising Justices L Nageswara Rao, B R Gavai, A S Bopanna and S Ravindra

Bhat.

The bench took note of the submissions of amicus curiae and a provision of CrPC which provided that when a person is accused of more offences than one, of the same kind, committed within a space of 12 months, he may be tried at one trial for a maximum of three such offences.

It took note of the suggestion that the law on cheque bounce can be suitably amended by the Centre to avoid multiplicity of proceedings where cheques have been issued for one purpose.

CJI Bobde, writing the 27-page order for the bench, said, Inquiry shall be conducted on receipt of complaints under Section 138 of the Act to arrive at sufficient grounds to proceed against the accused, when such accused resides beyond the territorial jurisdiction of the court.

## Pawan tests positive

Continued from page 1

His brother K Chiranjeevi and nephew Ram Charan are making necessary arrangements for his treatment," the statement said. "A medical team from Apollo Hospital has examined Pawan Kalyan as well. Medications have been given to reduce fever and nausea in the lungs. Producer Naga Vamsi is staying with Pawan Kalyan to oversee necessary arrangements," the Jana Sena Party said in its statement.

## State reports highest ever, 3,840 new cases

Continued from page 1

According to a separate release, over 22.90 lakh people in the state have received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine while over 3.36 lakh got their second shot also as of April 15. Meanwhile, in view of the rapid surge of COVID-19 patient load, state-run Gandhi Hospital heresuspended accepting non-COVID-19 cases and outpatient services with immediate effect.

"Therefore Heads of Departments and faculty hereby are instructed not to admit non-COVID cases, but emergency and terminally ill patients should be stabilised and then transferred," an official note said. The patients now undergoing treatment at the respective wards should be cleared at the earliest and all the beds in the hospital should be made available for COVID-19 patients, it added.

## Situation is grave, second...

Continued from page 1

He said, "We brought all private hospitals, starting from 10-bed hospitals to the top level tertiary care hospitals, have been put in place. In the first wave we could handle almost 20,000 beds; now, for the second wave, we are prepared to manage with 60,000 beds. From 200 private hospitals in the first wave, we increased it to 1,600 now, leading to an increase of 40,000-45,000beds in private hospitals alone".

He said that even in government beds were filling up, though there was no dearth of

beds. Dr Srinivas said: "In the last 5 weeks, cases have been increasing in Telangana from 300-400 to 4,000. In the next few days, the situation will continue to be similar. Hospital admissions have also increased. We are increasing beds by 25%. In the coming days, there will be certain problems".

The DPH said that resources, be it Remdesivir injections, oxygen or beds, need to be judiciously used and only for patients with moderate to severe symptoms. The Government has placed an order for 2 lakh vials of Remdesivir. He urged peo-

ple not to rely on Tocilizumab and plasma therapy, but leave it to doctors' discretion. Treatment had been decentralised, Dr Srinivas Rao said.

Surprisingly the virus variant in the second wave was most infectious and spreading very rapidly. It was affecting the young population in age group of 45 years more, than was the case in the first wave, he said. "We don't know where it is going to end. In the last 4-5weeks, there has been an increase in the number of cases in Telangana in large, densely populated cities like Hyderabad and even in erstwhile districts," he added.

## Sharmila offered me money to join her party, claims Konda Murali

Continued from page 1

He said that Congress leaders together would strive to restore the lost glory of the party. The Congress needed a leader, who would move among people now, he said.

Konda Murali asked party leaders to file their nominations in all divisions and submit withdrawal forms. "We will give tickets to the leaders suggested by the party. However, one should not get sold out after getting a ticket. We are with you. You should be sincere," he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Konda Surekha said though betrayal was common in politics, it was not correct. She said that party

leaders should not sell themselves out to any other political party in the forthcoming elections to ULBs.

"Selling out to others is nothing but selling our mother. We will strive for your victory and bear all the expenditure required for the elections," she said. She said that the corporation elections would be the foundation for the 2023 Assembly elections. She slammed the State Election Commission for choosing to conduct municipal elections at a time when Corona was at its peak. She alleged that the TRS government had been conducting elections during corona as otherwise the pink party would be defeated.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
<b>GOLD</b>	
₹ 48,000 (10 gm)	
<b>SILVER</b>	
₹ 330	
₹ 73,400 (1kg)	
₹ 1600	
CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹193
Without Skin	₹219
Broiler at Farm	₹133
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	451
VIJAYAWADA	393
VISAKHAPATNAM	505
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.51

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.

OVERCROWDING A CAUSE FOR CONCERN

# Covid bomb ticking at diagnostic centres

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Spurt in Covid-19 cases is driving people mad and sending them to various diagnostic centres to get themselves tested. As the tests and administering vaccines are taking place under one roof the risk of people getting exposed to the virus has increased. Moreover, there is a huge rush at these centres with people congregating at these centres as some of them might have contracted the virus already.

Lab technicians were seen conducting the tests under the shade of a tree due to inadequate accommodation at these centres. Moreover, there is a short supply of PPE kits. People, who have been waiting in serpentine queues to get themselves tested, are seen arguing with the testing personnel due to inadequate testing kits.

Experts have been advising the government authorities to make use of the vacant school buildings for a vaccination as holidays were declared for schools because of Covid-19 so that the people visiting the centres to receive the vaccine are unlikely to get infected.

In Hyderabad, Rangareddy and Medchal districts, rapid antigen tests are being conducted in 248 centres. These



centres are becoming crowded as the persons who wish to get themselves tested are visiting these facilities along with their family members.

Observing physical distance is being thrown to winds. People are sitting in chairs not sanitised and getting themselves tested. The people are gathering under trees in groups. The tests are being done and also the vaccines are being administered in one place. As a result, expectant mothers and lactating mothers visiting hospitals for their

monthly check-ups are exposed to the risk of contracting the infection.

Vaccines are being administered in 179 government and 148 private hospitals. On an average, 150 persons are receiving the shot per day. So far, 20 lakh people have received the vaccines in the three districts.

Citizens, who are reluctant to receive the shot initially, started congregating at these centres because of the spurt in cases during the second wave. The number of those visiting

the centres has exceeded the vaccine to people ratio. Therefore, those who have booked a slot on Co-Win mobile application are not able to get the vaccines too. Those who received the first shot have to wait for long to receive the second shot.

A resident of Badangpet – Jagadeeshwar – went to Balanagar PHC on April 4, along with his spouse to receive the vaccine. The hospital is fully crowded with those who reached there to get themselves tested for the virus.

In Hyderabad, Rangareddy and Medchal districts, rapid antigen tests are being conducted in 248 centres. These centres are becoming crowded as the persons who wish to get themselves tested are visiting these facilities along with their family members.

Four days after receiving the vaccine, he said that his wife showed up symptoms like fever, cold and cough. Upon testing, she was found to have tested positive for the virus. He said that for the past one month he and his spouse did not went out of home, except for receiving the Covid-19 vaccine.

Nageswara Rao of Sanathnagar said that he received the Covaxin first dose in a corporate hospital and went there recently to receive the second dose, but the hospital turned him away saying that there is a shortage of vaccines. He said that he received the first dose 35 days ago. He said that he daily visits the hospital in the morning and returns unvaccinated. He is not sure when he is going to receive the second shot.

# Govt committed to support physically challenged: KTR

## • Innovative assistive aids distributed to over 16,000 persons with disabilities

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The government has launched a novel initiative to help the persons with disabilities to live independently and distributed different kinds of assistive aids and appliances worth Rs 24 crore to them.

In a programme organised at the LB Nagar Stadium here on Friday, Minister for IT, Industry and Municipal Administration KT Rama Rao said that the government was committed to give support to the poor and physically challenged and help them lead a life with dignity and self-respect.

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao would always tell party leaders and members that a person's life would be meaningful only when he, or she could understand the hardships of a fellow citizen and extended their support to alleviate their suffering, he said.

Minister for the Welfare of the Disabled Koppula Eshwar presided over the meeting where 16,600 physically challenged were given assistive devices free of cost. Ministers Sabitha Indra Reddy and Malla Reddy also



attended the programme.

KTR said that the government was implementing several welfare programmes for the physically challenged that were not available anywhere in the country. A meeting was held four months ago to understand the problems of the physically challenged and based on their feedback, the government took it as a challenge to come out with new assistive devices and some of them were distributed today, he said.

Listing out the welfare schemes for the physically challenged, he said the government was extending pre-matric and post-matric scholarships, running skill development training centres and giving a pension of

Rs 3,016 and reserving five per cent of double bedroom houses to persons with disabilities.

The appliances that were distributed to the physically challenged included 900 retrofitted motor tricycles, 650 battery operated wheelchairs, 300 laptops, 400 4G smart phones, 1,500 tricycles, 2,000 wheelchairs, 3,000 crutches, 1,460 hearing aids, 2,065 walking sticks for the visually challenged, 800 MP3 players, 478 Braille books, 165 innovative smart canes, 13 innovative wheelchairs for cricketers, 155 innovative crutches, 334 artificial limbs, 260 calipers and 2,000 battery-operated tri-cycles.



### FRIDAY PRAYERS

Muslims offering prayers on the first Friday of holy month of Ramzan across the city. Some of them are observing social distance while others are not paying attention to Covid norms



# Noted radiologist Kakarla passes away

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Noted radiologist and former Director of Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) Dr Kakarla Subba Rao passed away on Friday here. He was 94. The family members of Dr Kakarla Subba Rao informed that he breathed his last due to the current Covid conditions. "Ceremonial meeting will not be held due to Covid," Sushrut, Shobharani and Dr Sushanth Kakarla, the family members of the departed soul said.

The renowned hospital administrator was well-known for his efforts to transform NIMS into a super-specialty hospital. He was the first



Director of NIMS between 1985 and 1990 and later between 1997 and 2004, before

retiring.

Held in high regard by his peers, Dr Rao was admitted to

KIMS a month ago with age-related health complications. According to doctors at KIMS, Dr Rao breathed his last, following health complications.

He was a Professor of Radiology at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York, before he returned to India in 1985-86. Influenced by the call of the late Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, N T Rama Rao, he joined NIMS and strived towards its development into a highly specialised hospital. In recognition of his valuable contributions in the field of medicine, the Government of India honoured Kakarla Subba Rao with Padmasri in 2000.

# CM, Eatela condole Kakarla's death

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Eminent doctor and former NIMS Director Kakarla Subba Rao passed away while undergoing treatment at a private hospital here on Friday. Dr Subba Rao, who was ailing was admitted to the hospital a month ago.

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao condoled the death of Padmashree Dr Kakarla Subba Rao. In a message, the

Chief Minister recalled the services rendered by Dr Subba Rao in the field of medicine at the national and international level. As the Director of NIMS, his services were invaluable.

He expressed his condolences to the members of the bereaved family. Dr Subba Rao was born into an agricultural family at Pedamuthevi village in Krishna district. He did his schooling at Challapalli and

college education at Hindu College in Machilipatnam. He got his medical degree from Andhra Medical College in Visakhapatnam and went abroad in 1955 and cleared the American Radiology Board exam. He worked in hospitals in New York and Baltimore and returned to India in 1956 and joined Osmania Medical College as an assistant professor and became a chief radiologist. Later, he extended services as

Director of NIMS and developed it on par with corporate hospitals. He was awarded Padmashree in the year 2000. Health Minister Eatela Rajender in a condolence message said that the services rendered by Dr Subba Rao to the medical field would be remembered forever.

His services as Director of NIMS were invaluable. He conveyed his condolences to the members of the bereaved family.

## CM urged to avoid lockdown

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

FICCI in a letter addressed to Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao suggested efforts should be made to avoid introducing a lockdown or even a partial lockdown in the State. Resorting to this at this stage may not be conducive to the overall situation and will push the economy into downward spiral, said FICCI president Uday Shankar.

The lockdown in 2020, though unavoidable at that time, exacted a huge cost on the Indian economy and the livelihood of the people," he said.

The country needs to break the chain of Covid spread, he said suggesting ramp-up of Covid testing, hold an awareness drive on the importance of using mask and sanitiser and maintain social distance.

# Restaurants following Covid norms, says assn

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Restaurant and Bar Licensee Association on Friday claimed that it was also taking part in the ongoing drive of the government to keep the deadly Covid-19 virus at bay. It also said that it was ready to follow all strict rules prescribed by the state government to prevent the spread of the virus in the wake of its second wave.

Speaking to media persons at Basheerbagh Press Club here on Friday, the association representatives said that they had sustained huge amount of losses due to the lockdown imposed in the state in the last year and added that thousands of workers had lost their



livelihood due to the closure of the restaurants and bars of the state. They said that all the bars and restaurants were working very hard to keep the virus at bay and added that they would follow all norms prescribed by the state government. They said that they were taking

steps to ensure safe distance between tables at the restaurants. They also said that they were employing all sanitisation methods to prevent the spread of the virus at their establishments and added that they were keeping sanitisers with 60 percent of alcohol concentration and tissue papers on all the tables used by the customers.

Association state president S Manohar Goud, Vice President Kotha Venkatesh Goud, state body Members Saveria Srinivas Goud, B Prabhakar Reddy, D Srinivas Reddy, M Janardhan Reddy, N Venkatesh Goud, K Varun Reddy, A Santosh Goud, P Eeswar Goud, S Pawan Kumar and J Chandu were among those present.

# Multi-storey structures switch over to solar energy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Gated communities, villages and townships here have focussed on captive solar power generation taking advantage of government subsidy for generation of non-conventional energy and supplying the surplus solar power to the power distribution companies and thereby greatly slashing their monthly power bills.

In fact, 212 MW of solar power is being generated across the state through 9,515 net-

metering connections. Of which, 143.3 MW is being generated in GHMC limits alone.

Though initial costs are high, these communities have taken pains to install the solar panels as the panels will generate power for 25 years in a row.

They not only reduce their monthly power bills but also ease the burden on power utilities to purchase power to make up for power shortage. The solar panels making company gives 10-year warranty on the panels



besides taking up the responsibility of annual maintenance. In case of any technical problems, experts will resolve the problems onsite.

A 518-unit multi-storeyed building, in Bandlaguda, spends Rs 12-14 lakh a month towards power charges. The house-owners pooled resources and installed

750 kW solar panels at a cost of Rs 2.60 crore producing 85,000 units every month. Naturally, their monthly power bill has come down to Rs 4 to Rs 6 lakh a month.

The GHMC installed 941 kW solar panels on the rooftop producing 1,500 units of power by each panel in a year. The GHMC is succeeded in reducing its power bill to Rs 1.50 crore a year. The Agricultural University at Rajendra Nagar and its hostels have reduced the annual power

bill to Rs 40 lakh as against Rs 1 crore earlier.

Buildings in Genome Valley in Shamirpet installed 952 MW solar panels, while those in Jawahar Nagar installed 947 MW solar panels, the Open Space in Kokapet installed 100 MW solar panels, the KIMS Residency structure installed 275 MW solar panels, the Himayatsagar Owners' Association installed 710 MW of solar panels and succeeded in reducing their power bills greatly.

**SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA STATE LTD**  
Operation / Medchal Zone  
**Tender Notification No.01/21-22**  
**Tender Specification No.04/A/20-21**  
E-procurement tender is invited from the experienced and GST Registered Vendors for recall of tender Specification No.04/20-21 for Electrification emergent works to GHMC Venkay Housing Colony with 400 New Falls at Annapurna in Medical Constituency in Wardratal operation sector Hosanguda Circle. Bid down load starts date & time : 17.04.2021 from 14:00Hrs, Bid Submission closing date & time : 26.04.2021 14:00Hrs, Technical Bid opening date & time : 27.04.2021, 14:30 Hrs. & Price bid opening date & time : 30.04.2021, 15:00Hrs. For further details please visit [www.tender.telanganagov.in/](http://www.tender.telanganagov.in/) or [www.telanganaspc.com](http://www.telanganaspc.com)  
R.D. No.108/PPC/AJ&K/2021/021-22 Sec. 16/2021 Sec. Chief General Manager, Operation / Medchal Zone / Hyd.

**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA**  
**ROADS AND BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT**  
e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE  
1) Online tenders are invited under e-procurement plat form in Bhadradi Kothagudem District under DMFT, respectively in (R&B) Department wide ENG(R) NT No.1716/ENG(R)/KIMBER/RJDEE &AGE/2021 Dt:15-04-2021 for 1) 2 road works for 1st call in Bhadradi Kothagudem District under DMFT funds. 2) Tenderers can download the tender schedules from e-market place i.e. [www.approcurement.gov.in](http://www.approcurement.gov.in). The last date of receipt of tenders is on or before 29-04-2021 upto 3.30PM. 3) Further details can be seen of e-procurement market place i.e. [www.approcurement.gov.in](http://www.approcurement.gov.in).  
RD No.42/SPL/AGB&K/2021/2021-22 Dt:15-04-2021 Sec. Engineer-in-Chief(R&B) State Roads & CRN

## Woman slits daughter's throat

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 32-year old mentally disturbed woman has allegedly killed her six-month old daughter believing in superstitions in Mekalapati Tanda in Suryapet district, about 150 km from here police said on Friday.

According to Praveen Kumar, sub-inspector, Mothey, B Bharati, a teaching graduate, slit her daughter's throat on Thursday believing that she was the reason for her miseries.

"We were informed that she was mentally unstable for the past few months. She was behaving weirdly practicing poojas and praying all day long. Yesterday she slit her daughter's throat and performed pooja," Praveen Kumar told P T I, adding that some locals had informed the police.

The body of the child was sent for post-mortem and the police are yet to make any arrest in the case.

## NAGARJUNASAGAR BYPOL

# Parties put in last-minute efforts to polarise votes in their favour

K VENKATESHWARLU  
■ HYDERABAD

The D-day has come for the much-awaited Nagarjuna Sagar by-elections. The political parties have put their last-minute efforts to polarize votes in their favor. The important leaders of respective parties had already met the caste bodies' heads, peoples' organizations heads, and influential persons of the villages to polarize the votes in favour of their candidates besides distributing money and liquor.

The main political parties, particularly the ruling TRS and Congress party did not leave any option unexplored even in the last minute and tried hard to attract the voters. The ruling TRS party's leaders, who had come from other places left the constituency on the evening of April 15 entrusting the responsibilities to the local leaders, who were

somewhat unhappy all these days as they nurtured the feeling of being neglected during the campaign owing to the domination of 'outside' leaders. The local leaders were accused of putting in their effort in polarizing the votes in favor of TRS party candidates half-heartedly.

However, the Congress candidate K Jana Reddy had fully depended on the local leaders, instead of leaders from outside as he had full grip on them. It is learnt that the local Congress leaders and various community leaders tried their best in polarizing the votes in favor of Jana Reddy even during

the last minutes. It is learnt that the political scene in Nagarjuna Sagar changed in the last four days with the polarization of

votes taking place with the help of community leaders.

It is also learnt that both TRS and Congress distributed money and liquor in their own inimitable fashion even on the night of April 16 urging the voters not to forget their candidate. However, the management of the poll will play a crucial role on Saturday, April 17, in deciding the candidates' victory.

According to political analysts, the senior leader K Jana Reddy,



## Police 'attack': Roy approaches HC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC general secretary has approached the High Court urging it to initiate action against the police of Nagarjunasagar for attacking him. He urged the court to make the police department to pay Rs 25 lakh as compensation for detaining him illegally by the Nalgonda police.

In his petition, he mentioned that he filed the writ petition aggrieved by the high-handedness of police in taking the petitioner into their custody and detaining him illegally more than 24 hours without registering FIR, without serv-



ing any notice mandated under the law and without following due procedure as contemplated in CrPC as illegal, arbitrary, violation of Article 21 of Constitution.

He mentioned in his petition

that he had participated in the election campaign in Nagarjunasagar byelection in support of Congress candidate K Jana Reddy staying at Siddhartha Project House, Room No 12 Nagarjunasagar. However, the police entered his room forcefully at 9.30 pm on April 13 night when he was having dinner and police brutally beaten him up and dragged him into the jeep and taken away to various police stations—Nagarjunasagar, Tirumalagiri, Haliya and Nalgonda II Town Police Station.

Manavatha Roy mentioned in his petition that the police

informed him orally that since there was a meeting of the Chief Minister on April 14 at about 5 pm in Haliya mandal, they have taken him into custody when he questioned about his arrest. However, the police kept him in Nalgonda II Town Police Station and beat him up without any reason.

Manavatha Roy made Home Department, Principal Secretary, DGP and SP of Nalgonda, Deputy Superintendent of Police of Miryalaguda, Station House Officer of Nagarjunasagar Police Station, Nalgonda Task Force CI SM Basha as respondents.

## Harish releases first list for municipal polls

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Finance Minister Harish Rao on Friday announced the TRS first list of six contestants for Siddipet Municipal elections. The following is the list : 31st ward-Jangiti Kanakaraju (BC General), 4th Ward- Kondam Kavitha - Sampath Reddy (general category woman), 8th Ward-Varala kavitha Suresh (BC Woman), 34th Ward- Gudala Sandhya Srikanth (General Woman) 37th Ward- Saaki Bal Lakshmi Anand (SC woman) and 17th Ward Mallyala Jyoti Prashanth.

## Elderly couple charred to death

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

An elderly couple was charred to death when their hut was gutted in a fire accident at Tangallapally village in Koheda mandal during the intervening hours of Thursday and Friday.

According to villagers, the victims Yada Narasaiah (95) and Yada Latchamma (85), both were bedridden, were staying in the hut. Their three sons, who were staying in separate houses, used to take care of them. Narasaiah's elder son Balaiah (78) said his father was a smoker and a cigarette butt may have led to the fire accident.

He said they woke up at 2.30 am on hearing his father's cries for help. With the help of villagers, Balaiah said they managed to douse the fire, but could not save their parents. The death was instant for both of them. Koheda police have registered a case.

## Shabbir: Declare health emergency in TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress on Friday slammed the State Election Commission and the TRS government for announcing the schedule for holding elections to two municipal corporations and five municipalities. "It looks ridiculous that the SEC has announced the poll schedule within two hours after the Education Department announced the cancellation of SSC exams and postponement of Intermediate exams because of the Covid-19 situation."

He took Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao to the task for his dual approach. The government shuts down all schools, but permits liquor shops to operate till late in the night," former minister Mohammed Ali Shabbir said while addressing a press conference at Gandhi Bhavan here on Friday.

Shabbir Ali demanded that the Telangana government declare a health emergency in the State in view of rising



cases of Covid-19 and deaths. He also demanded the postponement of municipal elections.

He said that the government has failed to deal with the Covid-19 situation. He said no beds were available either in the government or private hospitals, anywhere in the State. Furthermore, there was a huge shortage of oxygen in many government hospi-

- Cong slams SEC, TS govt for announcing civic poll schedule
- Wants postponement of municipal polls

tals. Similarly, the ventilator beds were not available even at a premium, he alleged.

Shabbir Ali said that there was a huge contradiction in the claims being made by Health Minister Eatala Rajender regarding the availability of facilities in government hospitals and the real situation.

He said that the Health Minister does not even have an idea about available bed strength in the State. Citing an instance, Shabbir Ali said that a mandal president of Congress party from Kamareddy district was admitted for Covid treatment and doctors have recommended his shifting to any major hospital in Hyderabad. Although the media bulletin

shows that over 2,500 beds are vacant in GHMC limits, which include 1,466 beds in Gandhi Hospital and 806 in TMS. He said he personally spoke to the Health Minister seeking his intervention for admission in any major hospital for Kamareddy's leader, but all those efforts proved futile.

The Congress leader accused the TRS Government of hiding real statistics pertaining to Covid-19 cases and deaths. Similarly, he said that the details of healthcare facilities were also being exaggerated to stake false claims.

"Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao is playing with the lives of innocent people by tampering with the Covid-19 figures. He is apparently the only Chief Minister in the country who did not hold any review meeting on Covid's situation. His only focus is on politics. He is least bothered whether people live or die due to Coronavirus. His only concern is to win the elections at any cost," he said.

## Janasena loses 'glass' symbol in TS civic polls

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Janasena Party has lost the 'glass' symbol in the Telangana mini civic body polls. Not convinced with the explanation given by Janasena Party, the Election Commission has announced to remove the 'glass' symbol from the list of poll symbols.

Hence, the Janasena Party has lost its 'glass' symbol in the municipal elections. The Election Commission made it clear that the symbol was removed as the Janasena Party could not contest even in 10 per cent of seats in the municipal elections.

The Janasena Party told EC that owing to an alliance with BJP, it could not contest in the last elections.

However, the party would field its candidates in other municipality elections including Warangal and Khammam.

## Govt will procure paddy, including male grains, says Eatala

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Health Minister Eatala Rajender has said that farmers of the region cultivates male and female variety of seeds and assured them that the government will procure every grain including the male grains from the farmers.

However, he asked the farmers to clean the paddy at their homes and bring them to procurement centres.

He was addressing a gathering after inaugurated paddy procurement centres at Tanugula village of Jammikunta mandal and Valbhapur in Veenavanka mandal of the district on Friday.

He said that the procurement would be fair without giving no room for any discount. If the farmers bring paddy with empty seeds and

rocks and paddy with high moisture content, the procurement agencies have to face the blame of discounting paddy while weighing up to 2 to 3 kg. He asked officials to ensure that there is no room for such allegations. At the same time, he asked the farmers to bring quality paddy to procurement centres.

He said that all steps to ensure that there is no shortage of hamalis, gunny bags and vehicles to transport procured paddy have been initiated. The district Collector and joint collector will monitor the procurement process till the end. Every one should wear masks and observe physical distance as Covid-19 cases are on the rise. Everyone in the Assembly constituency is being subjected to Covid-19 testing and a programme to administer vaccines is under way.

## SHORT TAKES

### Women sensitised on complaining using QR Code

**PEDDAPALLI:** Women's protection wing of Ramagundam police commissionerate on Friday sensitised women at Mancherla Bus Statnd and Railway Station on complaining to SHE teams using the QR Code scanning method so that the police can swing into action immediately and review the progress. SHE team district in-charge circle inspector Srinivas said people can lodge complaint online using mobile phones from any part of the state using QR Code against eve teasing either in public places or at work place. In this method, women and girls need not remember the WhatsApp numbers and can lodge complaints from anywhere. Srinivas asked them to save this link in their phone numbers. If the people press the link, a complaints page will be opened. Complaint lodged in this fashion will straight away go to the central server. He said that the citizens can communicate their response using this QR Code (green). He said that posters on complaining using this method would be displayed at all railway stations, bus stations, main road junctions and offices.

### Task force raids on rice mill, seizes 10 quintals of PDS rice

**PEDDAPALLI:** Ramagundam Task Force on Friday raided on a rice mill and seized 10 quintals of PDS rice meant for recycling and later selling as fine variety of rice in market. On a tip off that some persons have been recycling PDS rice and passing it off as fine variety of rice in Dandepalli and its surrounding areas under the Ramagundam police commissionerate limits, task force CI Kiran, SI Latchanna and Dandepalli SI Srikanth and others conducted a raid on Venkataramana rice mill on the outskirts of Medaripeta and confiscated the PDS rice. The Task force personnel took the rice mill owner Jadipudi Ramesh into their custody for recycling the PDS rice. The Task Force CI Kiran said that the raids were conducted at the behest of Ramagundam police commissioner V Satyanarayana. The police would not spare those who indulge in selling spurious seeds, betting, gambling, duping unemployed.



### KTR shows the way for clean politics; TRS not to contest in Lingojiguda

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TRS has decided not to contest in the Lingojiguda division byelections in GHMC limits on humanitarian grounds. This decision was taken as a response to an appeal made by BJP.

It may be recalled Lingojiguda corporator elect Akula Ramesh Goud died days before the swearing-in ceremony. The BJP has decided to field Ramesh Goud's son in the Lingojiguda division byelections to be held on April 30. A delegation led by former BJP leader N Ramchander Rao met TRS working president KTR at Pragathi Bhavan and appealed to him to facil-

itate the unanimous election of BJP candidate.

LB Nagar MLA Sudheer Reddy, late Ramesh Goud's wife and son and leaders from both parties participated in the meeting. On the occasion, TRS working president KTR said the untimely death of Akula Ramesh Goud was unfortunate. The appeal made by BJP not to field a candidate was discussed with Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and as per his instructions, the TRS has decided not to contest in the Lingojiguda division elections. Ramesh Goud's family members thanked Chief Minister KCR and TRS working president KTR for their gesture.

### People urged to receive Covid-19 vaccine without fail

PNS ■ NAGAR KURNOOL

In the wake of spurt in Covid-19 cases, District collector L Sharman on Friday exhorted one and all to get vaccinated against the corona virus without fail.

In a statement, he asked the Medical Health Department to increase the number of tests and subject everyone who visits hospitals to Covid-19 testing.

The pandemic can be kept at bay provided people observe social distance.

He advised people to wear masks when they come out of their houses for urgent purposes.

He asked all those who are above 45 to get themselves vaccinated against the pandemic. He asked the Medical Health department to sensitise villagers fully on the need to receive the vaccine shot. He asked the people to observe precautions.

## Chandulal's last rites held with state honours

PNS ■ MULUGU

The last rites of former minister Ajmeera Chandulal, who died on late Thursday night, were performed at Sarangapally village in Mulugu district on Friday.

Ministers Errabelli Dayakar Rao, Satyavathi Rathod, Narsampet MLA Sudarshan Reddy, Zilla Parishad chairman Kusuma Jagadishwar, Govind Naik and others attended the last rites.

Chandulal's rituals were performed with full State honours while Armed Reserve Police fired three rounds into the air as a mark of respect to the departed leader. Mulugu Collector Krishna Aditya and In-charge Superintendent of Police Potharaju Sai Chaitanya were present at the funeral rites.

Tribal leader Azmeera Chandulal enjoyed much clout among the masses particularly among his community people in the erstwhile Warangal district.

He chose the path of democratic politics to serve the people though there was 'much



Ministers Errabelli Dayakar Rao, Satyavathi Rathod and Collector Krishna Aditya and others at the funeral rites of former minister Chandulal at Sarangapally village in Mulugu district on Friday

influence' of the Naxalism in the Mulugu and other Agency areas in the district. He was elected as the sarpanch for his native village in 1981 and served till 1985.

He joined the TDP and won the Mulugu Assembly (ST) constituency and served as the Minister for Tribal Welfare in the NTR's Cabinet for four years. He won the Assembly elections in 1994 for the second time.

His victory over Congress senior leader Ramsayhayam Surender in 1996 from the erstwhile Warangal Lok Sabha

constituency was a sensation at that time. In the midterm polls, Chandulal retained the post by winning against Dr T Kalpana Devi of Congress. However, political observers say that Chandulal could win the Warangal MP seats twice owing to the support of his community voters who were in large numbers.

Meanwhile, Chandulal joined the TRS in 2005 and won the Mulugu MLA seat for the third time in 2014 polls, and served as the Tribal, Cultural and Youth Affairs Minister.

# SII CEO urges US to lift raw material export ban

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Serum Institute of India (SII) CEO Adar Poonawalla on Friday said the US needs to lift its embargo on raw material exports to help ramp up vaccine production.

SII is currently manufacturing anti-coronavirus vaccine Covishield, developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University. The vaccine is not only being used in India, but exported to a number of countries.

Poonawalla had earlier admitted that SII has been facing problems in sending out required number of batches of vaccines due to the bureaucratic and government-related hurdles.

Tagging the twitter handle of the President of the United States, Poonawalla said in a tweet, "Respected @POTUS, if we are to truly unite in beating this virus, on behalf of the vaccine industry outside the U.S.,

SII is currently manufacturing anti-coronavirus vaccine Covishield, developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University. The vaccine is not only being used in India, but exported to a number of countries

I humbly request you to lift the embargo of raw material exports out of the U.S. so that vaccine production can ramp up. Your administration has the details."

Earlier in March, Poonawalla had said that the production of coronavirus vaccines and scaling up global availability could be seriously limited due to the ban on exports of critical raw materials by the US.

Speaking at an event organ-



ised by the World Bank in March, Poonawalla had said one of the constraints that needs to be addressed but nobody is able to address so far is the availability of critical items from the US.

"...There are lot of bags and filters and critical items that manufacturers need. I will give

you an example. The Novavax vaccine that we are a major manufacturer of, need these items from the US...Now the US has chosen to invoke the Defence Act, in which there is a sub-clause which prevents the export of critical raw materials required for their local vaccine manufacturers," he had said.

## 5 poll contestants test positive for Covid in WB

PNS ■ KOLKATA

At least five candidates of different parties contesting the ongoing assembly election in West Bengal have tested positive for COVID-19, a health department official said on Friday.

Out of the five candidates who tested positive, three are from the Trinamool Congress (TMC), and one each from the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), he said.

RSP's Jangipur candidate, 73-year-old Pradip Kumar Nandi, tested positive on Wednesday and is now in home isolation, the official said.

BJP's candidate for Matigara-Naxalbari seat Anandamay Barman (38), TMC's Goalpokhar nominee Mohammed Ghulam Rabbani, Tapan candidate Kalpana Kisku, and Jalpaiguri candidate Dr Pradip Kumar Barma have tested COVID-19 positive, the health official said.

# Mumbai's Haffkine gets Centre's nod to produce Covaxin

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Union government has given its permission to the Mumbai-based Haffkin Institute to manufacture Covaxin, an anti-coronavirus vaccine of Bharat Biotech, an official said on Thursday.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had earlier requested the Centre to allow the Haffkin Institute to produce Covaxin, which is currently produced by the Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech, the official from the chief minister's office (CMO) said. Renu Swarup, secretary of the Union Science and Technology Department sent the approval letter to the Maharashtra chief secretary Sitaram Kunte, the official said.

"Swarup informed the state government that the Centre has approved its request of



using infrastructure of Haffkin Bio-pharmaceutical Corporation Limited for Covaxin production. It was done after approval given by the experts," he added.

The Union government has granted one year period to the

state to carry out the production.

Accordingly, the chief minister has asked Kunte to appoint a senior officer to monitor and carry out the production in the given time-frame, the official said.

## INDIA CORNER

### Plan to convert Jaslok Hospital into Covid facility hits roadblock

The Mumbai civic body's plan to convert the Jaslok Hospital here into a dedicated facility for Coronavirus patients seems to have hit a roadblock with the hospital saying that it would continue to treat other critically ill non-COVID patients as well.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) had on Wednesday issued a circular, in which it had said that the Jaslok Hospital will no longer admit non-COVID-19 patients and added that instructions to this effect had been issued to the hospital's management. It had taken this decision in view of the spike in infection cases in the city. However, the hospital issued a statement late night on Thursday, saying that it has increased the number of beds for coronavirus patients, but it would continue to treat other critically-ill patients also.

"Keeping in view the rising cases of COVID-19 in Maharashtra, Jaslok Hospital and Research Centre, Mumbai has increased the number of beds allotted to the COVID-19 patients from 58 to 150 to support the current crisis. But we continue our efforts in treating other critically-ill chronic patients and (conducting) procedures," it said in the statement.



### Cop Riyaz Kazi remanded in judicial custody till April 23

Court here on Friday remanded police officer Riyaz Kazi, an associate of suspended cop Sachin Waze, in judicial custody till April 23 in connection with the case of an explosives-laden SUV found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence and the subsequent death Thane-based businessman Mansukh Hiran. Kazi, an assistant police inspector, was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on April 11. He was produced before a holiday court here at the end of his NIA remand on Friday.

The court sent him to judicial custody as the central probe agency did not seek his further remand. The NIA has alleged that Kazi is involved in the conspiracy of the case, along with Waze, who is the prime accused. Kazi was involved in destroying the evidence, the NIA has alleged.

### 'MP to get 450 MT of oxygen for Covid patients soon'

Madhya Pradesh would get 450 metric tonnes of medical oxygen from other states shortly for treatment of critical COVID-19 patients, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Thursday. The new stock of medical-grade oxygen, whose demand has shot up due to the rising coronavirus cases, is being arranged after talking to the Centre, he said.

"I had requested Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for oxygen supply to Madhya Pradesh. A consensus has been reached for supply of 450 metric tonnes (MT) of oxygen from Bhilai, Devari (Chhattisgarh) and Rourkela (Odisha) to the state shortly," Chouhan told reporters here. "I am thankful to them," he added.

The chief minister said the private sector is being roped in to transport the life-saving gas in the state, which has been witnessing a surge in COVID-19 cases. "Transportation of oxygen is being done on a war footing," the CM said, adding the support of the private sector, too, is being taken. He said continuous efforts are being made to procure Remdesivir, an anti-viral drug used in treatment of COVID-19 cases.



### CID takes over probe into Cooch Behar CISF firing



(CID) has been constituted to conduct the probe in the incident which happened during the fourth phase of polling at Sitalkuchi. The incident had set off an acrimonious war of words between the ruling TMC and challenger BJP, and triggered public outrage.

Investigators will visit booth number 126/5 in Jorpatki in Sitalkuchi assembly constituency where CISF personnel had opened fire after they allegedly came under attack from a group of villagers. The TMC has claimed those killed were its supporters who were gunned down when they were standing in queue to cast their votes.

# Bengal elections: 45 constituencies to go to polls in fifth phase today

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Over one crore voters in West Bengal will decide the political fate of 342 candidates on Saturday, when 45 assembly constituencies go to polls in the fifth phase, amid a raging second wave of COVID-19.

Security measures have been heightened for phase five in view of the violence in the previous phase, which witnessed the death of five people in Cooch Behar, including four in CISF firing.

The Election Commission has decided to deploy at least 853 companies of central forces to ensure free and fair voting, an official of the poll panel said.

It will also put in place measures to ensure strict adherence of COVID-19 pro-



ocols during the voting process, he said.

West Bengal on Thursday recorded the highest single-day spike of 6,769 coronavirus cases and at least 22 more fatalities.

Prominent names in the fifth phase include Siliguri Mayor and Left Front leader Ashok Bhattacharya, state ministers Gautam Deb and Bratya Basu and BJP's Samik Bhattacharya.

# Manipur makes Covid negative report mandatory for entering state

PNS ■ IMPHAL

The Manipur government has issued an order making it mandatory for all persons entering the state to produce a negative COVID-19 test report, an official said on Friday. The official said the order shall become effective from April 18.

The order issued by Deputy Secretary, Health department, Soiminlian Lengon on Thursday said that "All persons entering Manipur,



whether by air or by road, and irrespective of place of origin, shall be allowed entry only on mandatory production of a

negative RT-PCR/ TrueNat/ CB-NAAT COVID-19 test report taking within 72 hours from arrival in Manipur."

### Science City Kolkata to remain closed for visitors till May 15

PNS ■ KOLKATA

In view of the sudden spike in COVID-19 cases, Science City Kolkata will remain closed for visitors from Friday till May 15, an official said.

A spokesman of the National Council of Science Museums (NCSM) said in a statement the decision was taken following the directives of the Union Ministry of Culture. "In view of the

current COVID situation of the country, Science City, Kolkata will remain closed for visitors till May 15, 2021," the spokesman said on Friday.

He said this was in consonance with the directives of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. The Science City had opened on November 10 last year after being closed from March 16, 2020 due to the pandemic.

# Odisha logs 3,108 new Covid cases

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odishas COVID-19 caseload on Friday mounted to 3,61,450 after 3,108 more people tested positive for the infection, hile three fresh fatalities pushed the death toll to 1,938, a health department official said.

Meanwhile, keeping in view the COVID-19 surge, Odishas major tourist destination, the Sun Temple in Konark, has been closed with immediate effect.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) said, due to the pre-



vailing COVID-19 situation, all centrally-protected monuments, sites, and museums in the state will remain closed with immediate effect.

It will remain in force till May 15, 2021, or until further orders,

an ASI official said.

Three prominent monuments and sites, including Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri, Sun Temple in Konark and Shree Lingaraj Temple in Puri, are among the ASI protected monuments.

ASI Odisha circle superintending engineer A K Mallick said the authorities of Shree Jagannath Temple and Shree Lingaraj Temple have been apprised of the ASI's decision for closing the monuments for visitors given the resurgence of COVID-19 cases.

# Kejriwal to hold meeting over Covid situation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has called a meeting on Friday to review the COVID-19 situation in the national capital.

Coronavirus cases in the city have been spiralling with 16,699 fresh COVID-19 infections and 112 fatalities reported on Thursday. A senior government official said, "The chief minister has called a meeting to

review the COVID-19 situation in Delhi at 4 PM today. Health Minister Satyendar Jain and senior government officials will be present at the meeting at the Delhi Secretariat."

The Delhi government had on Thursday announced sweeping restrictions, including a weekend curfew to break the chain of COVID infections in the city.



# Study paints rosy picture for women entrepreneurs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Businesses owned by women entrepreneurs in India are likely to grow up to 90 per cent in the next five years, according to a new study which also notes that the uptake of government schemes supporting such entrepreneurs is quite low.

The study by prominent philanthropic organisation, EdelGive Foundation, was conducted across 13 states and Union territories (UTs).

The mapping of these areas listed almost 3,300 women entrepreneurs who were classified into three categories--those engaged in manufacturing, retail and service delivery

enterprises. Out of these, 1,235 women entrepreneurs were sampled and interviewed for the study.

In addition to these entrepreneurs, their family members, employees and clients were also interviewed. Besides in-depth interviews were carried out with 20 NGOs that directly support women entrepreneurs.

According to the study, around 80 per cent of women, from semi urban and rural India, feel a significant improvement in their socio-economic and cultural status after starting an enterprise.

It also found out that despite several state-run schemes and policies supporting women



entrepreneurship, the uptake of such initiatives is quite low.

"Only one per cent of the women entrepreneurs sur-

veyed have availed of any government scheme and this is primarily because just about 11 per cent are aware of such pro-

grammes," the study says.

The multi-faceted study has focused on a cross-section of factors ranging from societal, financial, personal to familial to understand the overall journey of women entrepreneurs along with looking at the role of government, NGOs and corporates in the ecosystem.

While the study reports improvement in the socio-cultural lives of the women entrepreneurs, it reveals that there are still significant gaps in terms of financial knowledge and resources available to the entrepreneurs along with marketing, production, technological and socio-cultural challenges faced by them.

# Ex- CBI director Ranjit Sinha passes away

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former CBI director Ranjit Sinha died here on Friday morning in what is believed to be a COVID-19 related death, senior officials said.

He was 68.It is understood that he was confirmed positive for coronavirus on Thursday night and breathed his last at 4.30 am on Friday, the officials said. Sinha, a 1974-batch officer of the Bihar cadre and who had cracked the coveted UPSC examination at the age of 21, had taken over as the CBI chief in 2012.

## Bumpy road ahead

To avoid having a comatose economy now, we must bear the cross of our earlier negligence

India is hunkering down again to battle the second and more virulent wave of the Coronavirus outbreak. It would have been much better for us had we sincerely stuck to the COVID-19 protocols when the numbers were down and, who knows, we might have been rid of this pesky virus by now! While the average citizen decided that it was “okay” to return to the crowded restaurants, malls, airports and bus and railway stations without masks or social distancing, our short-sighted politicians postponed the all-important Board exams but considered it imperative to hold political rallies and road shows brimming with nonchalant people ahead of the Assembly elections, because their future depended on it. The religious leaders found it exigent



for us to wash away our sins by bathing in the millions in the holy Ganga. Now, here's the result of our collective endeavours: The Coronavirus cases across the country hit a record 2,17,353 fresh infections in the last 24 hours, the eighth record daily increase in the last nine days. In the same period, 1,185 people lost their lives due to the viral disease. The numbers coming out of the Health Ministry say that India registered a steady increase in the number of active Corona cases for the 36th day in a row. Now, we are scrambling to control the damage. The Home Ministry has asked its officers up to the level of Under-Secretary to avail the WFH option while the Deputy Secretary and above-ranking officials have been asked to attend office regularly with the option to stagger timings between 9 AM and 10 AM.

Various States, including the Capital, have also come up with local-level restrictions — ranging from shutting of malls, gyms, swimming pools and auditoriums, prohibiting dining at restaurants, besides imposing a weekend lockdown and night curfew. The Government has assured the citizenry that the “test, trace, treat” and vaccination drive will continue unabated and that the national drug controller will take just three days to process applications of the foreign-made vaccines once they've been approved for emergency use in India. One can only hope that this time around, the Government grits its teeth and stands by the Prime Minister's words that “we must learn to live with the virus”. No matter how many restrictions are placed on recreation and how many weekends are spent imprisoned indoors, the nation's economy must not be shut down again. The first wave gave us many lessons on how to identify hotspots, impose local lockdowns and create containment zones in order to keep the wheels of the industry churning. We have to ensure that our march towards a self-reliant, New India continues; our ailing economy that was just beginning to revive cannot be delivered another body blow in the form of a hard lockdown. Else, we risk having a comatose economy in our hands. So, the nation would do well to gird up its loins and prepare for a bumpy road ahead, but the wheels of the economy cannot stop, no matter what.

### PICTALK



Smoke billows from a forest fire at the Ketti area in Shimla

PTI

## Good omen

It's time for the CJI's wish for a woman judge to head the nation's top court to come true

Chief Justice of India SA Bobde deserves nothing less than the nation's applause and compliments for recently stating unequivocally that the time has come when a woman should head the top court. Hinting that the apex court was already moving along the right path on the issue, he underscored that there was “no need for a change of attitude” of the Collegium to ensure greater representation of women in the judiciary. Hearing a plea by a women lawyers' body seeking consideration of the “meritorious” lot among them for appointment as judges in the High Courts, a Bench comprising Chief Justice Bobde and Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Surya Kant said: “Why only higher judiciary? We think the time has come when a woman should be the Chief Justice of India.” At this juncture, it would be pertinent to mention that currently there are only 81 female judges in the 25 High Courts across the country against 1,078 male judges. Among them, the Madras High Court tops the list with 13 female judges, followed by Punjab and Haryana with 11, and the Delhi and Bombay High Courts have eight women judges each.

Interestingly, while the Supreme Court's emphasis on gender issues is to be lauded, it would truly have credibility and value if its own actions were consistent on this subject. Consider this: There is only one female judge among the 34 positions that currently constitute the Supreme Court. With Justice Indu Malhotra's retirement last month, the Collegium is considering a few women judges for elevation. The nation's top court has had only eight women judges since it came into existence on January 26, 1950. The first one, Fathima Beevi, made it to the elite club only as late as in October 1989. Not a single woman judge has figured in the list of 48 CJs since its inception. It would perhaps not be out of the context here to mention that the Supreme Court had recently pointed to the delay in giving women permanent commission in the military, blaming it on the “systemic bias” within the Ministry of Defence. While there certainly seems to be some truth in what it said, it is a complicated issue, especially the impact of women in combat roles. That said, in either case, there's no denying that women are up to performing any professional job with panache while balancing with finesse their roles as mother, daughter, sister, wife and homemaker.

# India's flaming forests play havoc

Natural causes and human intervention are to blame for the rising number of conflagrations not only in India, but the world over



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR



The surge of forest fires in Uttarakhand once again underlines the growing incidence of the phenomenon in India. There has been a series of these this year in Himachal Pradesh, the Nagaland-Manipur border, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. According to the *India State of Forest Report 2019* (ISFR) — the latest in the line of such reports — released by the Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun, over 30,000 forest fires were reported in the country in 2019. The report identified nearly 21.67 per cent (7,12,249 sq km) of the country's land area as forested. Another 2.89 per cent (95,027 sq km) was under tree cover.

The report identified 2,77,758 forest fire points across the country, and stated that about 21.40 per cent of India's forests are prone to fires. Of this, 3.89 per cent belonged to the category of extremely fire-prone, 6.01 per cent very highly fire-prone and 11.50 per cent highly fire-prone.

The forests in Assam, Mizoram and Tripura are “extremely prone” to conflagrations. According to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) annual report for 2020-21, the States with large forest areas and falling under the “very highly fire-prone” category — including Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Maharashtra, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh — were turning into “extremely fire-prone” hotspots; so were regions like western Maharashtra, southern Chhattisgarh and areas of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, along with central Odisha. Areas under the “highly prone” and “moderately prone” categories make up about 26.2 per cent of the total forest cover — a staggering 1,72,374 sq km.

A State prone to forest fires is Haryana which suffered at least 540 of these from 2016 to 2020. Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh are witness to the most frequent forest fires annually. According to the National Forest Inventory under the MoEFCC, the fires severely affect almost 10

per cent of the country's forest area while mildly affecting about 54 per cent, which makes about two-third of India's forests vulnerable to fires.

The question is: Why is it so? Lightning is the most important natural cause. Another is the spontaneous combustion of dried-up leaves and sticks. The one that has been an increasingly potent factor, and is set to become even more so, is global warming. It dries up the leaves and shrubbery on the ground, making them highly inflammable. It also dries up the soil. Thus, the lack of soil moisture as a result of rainfall deficiency during monsoons — less than 18 per cent and 20 per cent in 2019 and 2020, respectively — has been an important factor in this year's Uttarakhand fires. In fact, it has been a cause not only in many other parts of India but the entire world — the blazes bedeviling Australia, California in the US and the Amazon rainforests in Brazil are examples.

Human activity, however, is responsible for the overwhelming majority of forest fires the world over. In India, these blazes are mainly caused by the slash-and-burn method of shifting agriculture, known

FOREST FIRES ARE AS OLD AS FORESTS AND WILL CONTINUE TO OCCUR AS LONG AS FORESTS EXIST. ONE, HOWEVER, CAN LIMIT THEIR INCIDENCE AND ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES BY FIRMLY DEALING WITH THE TIMBER, BUILDER AND MINING MAFIA, AND THE POACHERS

as *jhum* in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura and Assam, where it is practised over about 15,000 sq km of forest land. The blazes are also set off to clear the ground for mining, timber felling and the construction of human settlements and industrial units, besides warding off the wild animals.

People burn dry leaves and shrubbery on forest grounds, believing that it would lead to the sprouting of new and healthier grass. Poachers light fires on three sides to corner fleeing wild animals in one area as their concentrated presence helps killing. People visiting forests are often careless and leave behind lighted butts of cigarettes or *bidis*, besides inflammable material.

Things are made worse by the fact that it is difficult to extinguish forest fires. The absence of roads prevents fire tenders from reaching the sites and high winds carry the sparks to new areas. Helicopters are pressed into service — as in Uttarakhand recently where two Indian Air Force helicopters, each with a 5,000-litre water tank, were deployed. There are, however, limits to the number of helicopters that can be used

and the availability of large lakes or rivers from which these can draw water.

Forest fires wreak havoc in India every year. They destroy forests, cause pollution, turn streams dry or adversely affect their water quality, damage soil nutrients and increase the risk of soil erosion. They kill wildlife and insects, including endangered species, and destroy their habitats, damage national parks and sanctuaries, driving the wild animals like tigers, leopards and elephants towards human settlements, thus aggravating the human-animal conflict. And, of course, they kill humans and destroy their property.

The question is: What is to be done? Forest fires are as old as forests and will continue to occur as long as forests exist. One, however, can limit their incidence by firmly dealing with the timber, builder and mining mafia, and the poachers, and simultaneously enlightening people not to carelessly leave incendiary material in forests. The Central and State Governments will have to launch sustained campaigns to this end. The consequences of not doing so will be severe.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### NEGLECTED RESPONSIBLE FOR SITUATION

Sir — Instead of getting stunned by the rising number of COVID cases in the country, we must admit the fact that we are not moving towards a second wave but are actually in its grip. As the demand for Remdesivir surges, the Centre has fast-tracked applications from companies to manufacture the critical anti-viral drug in order to ensure its smooth availability. Night curfews and partial lockdowns are being imposed in many parts of the country as a measure to control the deadly virus. Amid the rising cases, the Centre has announced the cancellation of the CBSE Board exams for Class 10 and has deferred Class 12 exams.

On the other hand, lakhs of devotees have been taking a holy dip in the Ganga on the occasion of the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar, flouting the COVID norms. It is however ironic that while the Government has no compunction about cancelling the Board examinations, elections in the country are continuing as if nothing has happened. These fears have been magnified all the more with the dismal disregard shown by various State Governments to clamping down on mass public events and gatherings. While a proactive approach to control and manage the crowds when it comes to stonewalling the widely contagious virus, is a remedy to the problem, the complete disregard shown towards the basic safety precautions is indeed perplexing!

Pachu Menon | Goa

### TROOP WITHDRAWAL WILL CREATE VACUUM

Sir — The US' decision to withdraw troops from Afghanistan is not good at the present moment as the situation on the ground is far from satisfactory. The Taliban is still controlling parts of Afghanistan and there is considerable influence of Pakistan and support from China, too. The chances of disintegration of Afghanistan are quite high. The withdrawal of the US troops might create a vacuum which, if acquired by the disruptive forces, will push the country into turmoil. President Joe Biden has said the US troops will be withdrawn from

## Politicisation of vaccines



Politics over the anti-Coronavirus vaccine started the day Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced free jabs to the people of Bihar in the run-up to the Assembly elections in October-November last year. The vaccine policy suffered from the play of politics and one-upmanship. Besides, appalling naivety in assessing the demand during the second wave, differing norms for affording authorisation for use, inertia in augmenting in-house capacity, exports as a policy and imports in fetters together impacted the availability of vaccines in the country. After the

Afghanistan beginning May 1 and the process will be completed by September 11. For his part, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said he spoke to Biden and that his country respects the US decision.

Maybe the US troops might be shifted to some other regions of the world. The US is also facing domestic problems and is ravaged by the COVID pandemic. Washington needs a war to run its economy. The weapons industry needs insecurity among the countries to sell weapons and make profits. In my opinion, the US troops will be shifted to another war. Let's wait and watch till the withdrawal in September.

Sunil Pradhan | Odisha

### BAN SUPER-SPREADER EVENTS

Sir — It refers to the editorial 'Matters of faith' (April 16). At a time when the Government has done away with bridging trials for foreign-made vaccines for

authorisation of the Oxford-assisted Covishield and the indigenously-developed Covaxin for emergency use, the authorities soft-pedalled on giving authorisation and import/production licence(s) to other popular vaccine candidates in the world. According to the *Lancet*, Russia's vaccine Sputnik V had the efficacy of 91.6 per cent. While the chronic shortage was being felt, the Government allowed the exports to showcase India as a powerhouse of vaccines. To draw an analogy, the US has accumulated stocks which could vaccinate its entire population.

In fact, the possibility of a furious second wave was overlooked. India's daily COVID count has crossed 2 lakh now. This surge must be viewed against the overloaded hospitals, shortage in oxygen supply, inadequacy in life-saving ventilators and shortfalls in vaccines and medicines. There is an urgent need to reassess the situation carefully and honestly to mount a multipronged action to crush the climbing curve and augment treatment facilities.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

COVID-19 to facilitate acceleration in vaccination, it should seriously think about banning religious events like the Kumbh Mela which has become a super-spreader. In just five days, 1,701 people have tested positive for COVID-19 in the Kumbh Mela area. The Uttarakhand Police was unable to impose the standard operating procedures (SOPs) on the seers of *akhadas* and the ash-smearing ascetics crowding the Har Ki Pauri on the two *shahi snans* because of time constraints. Now Niranjani *Akhada*, one of the 13 *akhadas* of seers participating in the Kumbh, has decided to return from the event in the wake of the deteriorating COVID-19 situation. But it is too late as the damage has already been done.

Bal Govind | Noida

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

## SOUNDBITE

Being a tourist State, if we impose night curfew, it will create a spin-off effect. People should remain alert. We have issued an advisory. We are continuing to create awareness.

Goa Chief Minister — Pramod Sawant

If we were to lift the border restrictions, you would see these cases increase and Australians would have to become used to dealing with 1,000 cases or more a week.

Australian Prime Minister — Scott Morrison

I would love to sing in films that I am going to be a part of, as well as for others, as a playback singer.

Actor — Adarsh Gourav

He is not the MS Dhoni which he used to be probably four or five years back, where he could just come in and start taking on the bowlers from the word go.

Former cricketer — Gautam Gambhir

There is no shortage of Remdesivir drug but if anyone is trying to misuse the pandemic situation by black-marketing, then all those will be punished severely.

Karnataka Home Minister — Basavaraj Bommai

FIRST COLUMN

THE NEW REALTY FOR INDIANS



SONAM CHANDWANI

The pall of gloom over the real estate industry on account of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light several unconventional methods being applied to keep the dreams of property buyers alive, while developers strive to stay afloat. A growing number of Indians are acquiring slices of rent-yielding residential and commercial properties in a way that is comparable to investing in the stocks of a company. Fractional real estate, as the concept is known, allows investors to buy, say, one per cent of a vacation home for a minimum amount and use it whenever they want, while earning rental income, too. While weekend properties are neither essential nor urgent, the outbreak has changed this perception. Such a realty ownership concept has arisen predominantly from the Work-From-Home (WFH) culture and the work-vacation culture, attracting NRIs and domestic buyers alike. Such a property acts like an asset, attracting a plethora of investors, in the end becoming a potential Special Purpose Vehicle-related investment. From the taxation standpoint, the fractional ownership of a property opens up such owners to a plethora of taxable liabilities, when comparing the yearly taxation related costs of such interests, prospective buyers or their counsel/advisors need to be sure of the usage arrangement, location, ownership size, basic amenities and other items.



A unicorn investment refers to a startup avenue/venture, occupying less than \$1 billion of the industry share. Considering the fact that this sort of timeshare arrangement is a novel arena of investment for Indians, the value of such investment could possibly render the whole idea as a potential cash cow for real estate developers adapting to such forms of investment. With the pandemic having rendered the traditional and conventional real estate an under-yielding area of investment in the markets currently, fractional ownership might just pave way for a steady boom in the real estate sector. While fractional ownership may appear to be an inexpensive mode of investment to potential investors, it has its pros and cons. Procedures involving the investment in such ventures could involve detailed due diligences and legal red-tapism. Not paying attention to such procedures could end up putting stressed properties in the hands of lesser advised investors.

Moreover, expenses considering maintenance and management of the property and any such costs could essentially tip the scales against the owners should they not be able to actually utilise the property within their arrangements. Having said that, the benefits accruing out of part ownership of vacation properties, while not accounting monumentally in financial terms, are manifold where it comes to utilisation. Such a property allows the investors to change their workspace surroundings and choose rather inexpensive modes of vacation and even earn some money out of renting it out to other vacationers. Though fractional ownership could lead to a real estate investment boom the sector so greatly yearns for, the legal procedures involved might turn off a certain class of investors. Moreover, a relatively-new arena of investment always ends up taking a lot more time in yielding benefits, even if the time-value of money is rather unaccountable, since the property provides more leisurely than commercial benefits. Timeshare investments, while popular in the West, are considered to be a nascent area of investment, particularly while fractional ownership is considered. However, given the correct legal framework and taxation incentives, the current status of such investment could be elevated to providing the work-vacation culture the stability that the recent short-lived boom is testament to.

*(The writer is Managing Partner KS Legal and Associates. The views expressed are personal.)*

Time to turn Nocebo to Placebo in India

We must widely propagate the positives of getting inoculated, underplay the negatives and whole-heartedly support the Govt’s initiatives towards massive vaccination drives



DEEPIKA BHASKAR

The pandemic and its prevalence have taught us many lessons in perseverance and patience. We have raced from one decision to the next, hoping that the latest one will make everything normal again. While the scientists have been working relentlessly to understand the virus and come up with increasingly promising vaccine candidates, the virus has been playing truant and evolving in new forms to ditch human efforts and survive as more robust variants. In the wake of the ever-changing variants, efficacy statistics and reported side effects, the so-called ultimate solution to end the pandemic, the anti-Corona vaccine, doesn't appear to be so attractive anymore. People are hesitant to take the shot, confirming the 'Nocebo Effect' to the perceived solution of the pandemic that doesn't seem to be getting anywhere close to its end. The hesitancy is spread across the globe. Some think they will never get the disease while others believe the virus is on its way out. Social media has been most instrumental in spreading the hesitancy due to varied opinions of people who have wide social media presence and have contributed to turning the solution from placebo to nocebo.

Understanding and addressing vaccine hesitancy has become very important in the drive towards normalising life, avoiding deaths and allowing the economy to run to its full capacity. These were the very reasons why a COVID-19 vaccine was needed in the first place. What made the long wait for a solution turn into vaccine hesitancy needs serious thought. As per the World Health Organisation (WHO), vaccine hesitancy is the delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccines despite their availability. Medical practitioners and scientists have been making all out efforts to discuss and address the common causes of concern. Fear and hesitancy come from the unknown, hence the awareness needs to rise. This has led to a negative mindset against the vaccine. The hesitancy has also been triggered by the side effects reported in some cases as a result of administering the vaccine. The directions to continue with the safety measures and stay with COVID-appropriate behaviour along with reporting of positive cases in some vaccinated individuals have amplified the vaccine hesitancy.

With many cases of blood clotting reported as a side effect of the AstraZeneca jab and discontinuation of the vaccine thereafter in at least a dozen European countries before resuming them again, doubts have grown more than ever. The latest news that Denmark has totally stopped the use of the AstraZeneca jab in its inoculation drive is not helping the cause and instilling confidence in people.

While Governments across the globe have rolled out the vaccine and invited people to get vaccinated at the earliest, the vaccination centres report a different story. Dealing with vaccine hesitancy has become the next big challenge, even in a country like India, which is now the second-most badly hit nation in the world after the US.

In order to build trust and confidence in the jab, a multi-pronged strategy is required with transparent communication as the key. With the second wave already in full swing and numerous variants of the original virus here, the danger is far from over. Herd immunity, as it was being perceived, is nowhere in sight as there are people who have reported a second infection. The diversity of the disease is unfathomable.

“

WHILE THE RUSSIAN VACCINE SPUTNIK V HAS BEEN GIVEN THE GO AHEAD AND WILL HIT THE MARKET SOON AFTER SHORT TRIALS HERE, THE CENTRE IS ALSO LOOKING AT FAST APPROVALS FOR VACCINES FROM OTHER NATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN APPROVED BY THE WHO FOR EMERGENCY USE. IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME AND THE SHORTAGE WILL BE A THING OF THE PAST. BUT THE BIG QUESTION IS WILL VACCINE HESITANCY, TOO, BE GONE SOON?



Attitudes towards the COVID-19 vaccines have changed overtime and varied greatly. The theory of developing antibodies on being infected has also led to a decrease in the relevance of the vaccine. Infected individuals feel they have developed antibodies and are immunised against the disease, so they do not need a shot. However, the protective abilities of antibodies in sero-surveys is unknown and their effectiveness in preventing reinfection is still to be studied. The belief that the vaccine is rushed and has not been tested properly is another setback.

That some of the scientists have been supporting this belief has also given boost to hesitancy. It is also assumed that the efficacy of the vaccine is being underplayed so that people do not become lax in observing COVID-appropriate behaviour. Another view being expressed is that the immunity after vaccination lasts for only six months, which wrongly implies that the shot is not effective. People also think that if the survival and recovery rate is 99.6 per cent, why even bother getting a jab.

All these supposed opinions and views have stopped people from getting vaccinated. Giving compensation for getting vaccinated has always backfired as people think that they are being paid because there is something to hide. The only groups that have justifiable concerns are the elderly, people with co-morbidities, pregnant women and those with high allergic reactions to vaccines. Also,

there is no vaccine to protect our children, as of now. Though getting vaccinated is a personal choice, the most successful inoculation drives have been built on knowledge exchange, accessibility and successful stories of those getting vaccinated.

Sherita Hill Golden, vice-president, chief diversity officer and a Professor of Medicine at Johns Hopkins Medicine talks of 12 things you need to know in the wake of the current vaccine hesitancy. The facts and insights into making a personal choice to get inoculated include the following: Getting vaccinated can protect you from getting COVID as your body will be ready to fight the Coronavirus if you are exposed to it; the people of colour are especially vulnerable to severe COVID-19 and its risk factors; getting inoculated helps others in the community, more so when people have chronic medical conditions; more vaccinations mean a chance to return to normal after having to experience closures, cancellations and postponements; though the vaccine development was fast, no steps were skipped while testing for safety and efficacy; diversity in vaccine testing helped assess safety and effectiveness; side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine are sparse and temporary, mainly limited to a sore arm, mild fever or body aches; it is possible to get the shot despite allergies except if you have severe allergic reactions to vaccines; the vaccine is safe for breastfeeding mothers, though pregnant women should discuss it with their doctors as the vaccine have not been tested in pregnant women; the jab can give you extra protection, if you already had COVID-19; waiting too long allows the virus to spread in the community, hence, time is of the essence for the vaccine; the pandemic can only be shortened if the vaccine is well-received.

Hence, people have been advised to do their own research from reliable sources and take an informed decision regarding getting vaccinated. Where the issue of the shortage of the vaccine in the country is concerned, the Government is doing all it can to ensure that the needs of the people are met at the earliest. While the Russian vaccine Sputnik V has been given the go ahead and will hit the market soon after short trials here, the Centre is also looking at fast approvals for vaccines from other nations that have been approved by the WHO for emergency use. It is only a matter of time and the shortage will be a thing of the past. But the big question is will vaccine hesitancy, too, be gone soon?


It is time to put resolve into widely propagating the positives of getting vaccinated, underplaying the sparse negatives and whole-heartedly supporting the Government's initiatives towards massive vaccination drives so that the pandemic situation can be controlled, the economic downturn can be lifted and normalcy restored. Its time we turned this nocebo to a placebo and support humanity.

The Maha Kumbh of COVID and environmental risks

The Govt is not ignorant of the health costs of these events during the ongoing second wave of the outbreak but populist measures are the top priority during elections

The Kumbh Mela was first mentioned in the accounts of Hiuen Tsang, the famous Chinese traveller who visited India in the seventh century. The grand event, with a 2,000-year-old history, commenced this year in January and will continue till the end of April. Currently, at over two lakh new cases, India accounts for one in six of all new COVID infections globally. But these rather grim facts did not deter nearly 13.5 lakh devotees, including the members of the 13 Akharas from taking the holy dip or the *Shahi Snan* on April 13.

The consequences of the ongoing Maha Kumbh upon public health have been devastating, to say the least. In the last 24 hours, Haridwar has reported over 1,000 fresh Corona positive cases. With the Indian Railways running



KOTA SRIRAJ

The writer is an environmental journalist. The views expressed are personal.

25 special trains to ferry the pilgrims across the country, the Maha Kumbh is all set to become a "Maha COVID-19 super-spreader." The situation looks hopeless unless either the event is immediately terminated or social distancing norms are strictly adhered to. But nothing significant seems to have been done by the Government regarding it.


Health risks aside, the Kumbh Mela is also not something that is known for environment friendliness. The Maha Kumbh is held at four locations — Nashik, Haridwar, Prayagraj and Ujjain — on a rotational basis after an interval of 12 years.

While the Kumbh, in general, is celebrated four times over the course of 12 years, with the site of the observance rotating between

four pilgrimage places on the four sacred rivers, namely, at Haridwar on the Ganga, at Ujjain on the Shipra, at Nashik on the Godavari and at Prayagraj at the confluence of the Ganga, the Jamuna, and the mythical Sarasvati.

The Nashik Kumbh Mela held in 2015 resulted in 25,000 tonnes of solid waste and faecal sludge that crept into the groundwater table from 33,000 hastily set-up mobile toilets without any effective waste disposal mechanism. It took an international outcry triggered by media coverage and the eventual intervention of the Bombay High Court to clean up the Nashik Kumbh Mela mess and rescue the environment. The event also caused a spike in river pollution making it unfit for bathing and other purposes. The

maximum permissible Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) for safe bathing is 3.0 milligrams (mg) per litre but it ranged between 3.4-8.5 mg per litre during the event. Meanwhile bacterial coliform ranged between 3,300 and 39,000 Most Probable Number (MPN) per 100 ml while the permissible limit is 500 MPN per 100 ml for human



bathing. The Maha Kumbh at Haridwar, too, is no different either in terms of the colossal health risk it poses or the ecological collateral damage it brings.

In the run-up to the Haridwar Maha Kumbh, the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has been working tirelessly to prevent ecological damage and as a part of its efforts, the NMCG has diverted one of the biggest local sewage drains — the Kassawan nullah — to a sewage treatment plant. But it should have been done a year ago. This nullah has emptied its effluents into the Ganga for years.

A recent study by the Doon University on the pollution levels in the Ganga establishes that in the stretch from Rishikesh to Haridwar the river was high on pollutants due to the pilgrim

bathing load and urban waste effluent flow.

The study also revealed that the overall concentration of Polypropylene Copolymer (PPCP), a form of plastic pollutant in the Ganga was found to be up to 1,104.84 nanograms per litre. Further, the presence of chemicals was also found to be high in the river water samples.

The election season, too, symbolised by huge political rallies, coupled with unrestrained religious gatherings are in total defiance of COVID-appropriate behaviour and protocol. Surely the Government is not ignorant of the health costs of these unabated events during the ongoing second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic, but populist measures and appeasement tactics are the top priorities during elections and they seem to score over

environmental and health concerns.

This is not surprising, but what is unfortunately startling is the inaction on the behalf of the judiciary which could have taken a *suo motu* initiative to shorten the duration of the Kumbh Mela, thereby, saving lives and the environment. In the absence of this, the Non-Government Organisations working in the field of environment protection and other individuals could have filed a Public Interest Litigation to this effect, but unfortunately, that also did not happen yet.

It is a classic case of who will bell the cat? Sadly, the reluctance of people to take on what is obviously a communally-sensitive issue will cost the environment and the health and economy of the country dearly. Where are the true nationalists now?

# Exports rose to \$13.72 bn during Apr 1-14: Commerce Ministry data

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The country's exports have increased to USD 13.72 billion during April 1-14 this year on account of healthy growth rate in sectors such as engineering and gems and jewellery, according to the provisional data of the Commerce Ministry. Exports during April 1-14 last year were aggregated at USD 3.59 billion.

In April 2020, the outbound shipments had contracted by a record 60 per cent due to COVID-19 related lockdown. Imports during the period under review swelled to USD 19.93 billion as against USD 6.54 billion during April 1-14 last year, the data showed. The final figures for April 2021 would be released during mid-May by the ministry.

Exports have surged by 60.29 per cent to USD 34.45 billion in March, even as the outbound shipments contracted by 7.26 per cent during the full 2020-21 fiscal to USD 290.63 billion.



## Maruti hikes prices by up to Rs 22,500



**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Friday said it has hiked prices of most of its models by up to Rs 22,500 with immediate effect to partially offset the impact of the rise in input costs.

Barring Celerio and Swift, all the models of the company will be covered under the price increase exercise.

"The company is increasing the price for select models owing to increase in various input costs," the auto major said in a regulatory filing.

The weighted average price increase in ex-showroom

## L&T receives multiple orders across business segments

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Friday said its construction arm has received multiple orders across business segments in the domestic and international market.

The company did not provide the value of the contracts but said the orders fall under the "significant" category, which ranges between Rs 1,000 crore and Rs 2,500 crore according to the classification of contracts.

"The construction arm of L&T has secured orders from prestigious clients for its various businesses," L&T said in a regulatory filing.

The company said its power transmission and distribution business has won orders to design and construct two 132/11kV substations in Dubai, UAE.

## Boat raises funds from Qualcomm Ventures

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Consumer tech products brand Boat on Friday said it has received funding from Qualcomm Ventures, the investment arm of Qualcomm Incorporated. While Boat did not disclose the quantum of funding received, it said the investment will support the brand's plans of rolling out new audio and lifestyle products across geographies as well as building up R&D and manufacturing capabilities.

Qualcomm is a world leader in wireless technologies and Boat has a shared vision of building world-class products for India and the world, Boat co-founder Sameer Mehta said in a statement.

"As Boat enters the next phase of growth and innovation, we look forward to building a relationship with Qualcomm to deepen our R&D capabilities and further augment our efforts to manu-



facture products in India. We believe this relationship will contribute to greater technology collaboration," he added.

Boat has clocked a rapid revenue growth, witnessing over 100 per cent over the past several years. In the past year, it doubled its employee strength and built up a local R&D in Bengaluru.

The company also expanded into newer categories like smartwatches, besides launching over 20 new products in the audio category in 2020-21.

In January this year, Boat had announced raising USD 100 million (about Rs 731.6 crore) in funding from an affiliate of Warburg Pincus, a global private equity firm.

## Senators to Biden: Waive vax intellectual property rules

**PNS ■ WASHINGTON**

Ten liberal senators are urging President Joe Biden to back India and South Africa's appeal to the World Trade Organisation to temporarily relax intellectual property rules so coronavirus vaccines can be manufactured by nations that are struggling to inoculate their populations.

The lawmakers, in a letter delivered to the White House on Thursday evening, wrote that Biden should "prioritize people over pharmaceutical company profits" and support the temporary waiver of the rules. A waiver could pave the way for generic or other manufacturers to make more vaccines.

The letter was led by independent Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, along with Democratic Sens. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin and Sherrod Brown of Ohio.



Democratic Sens. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, Chris Murphy of Connecticut, Edward Markey of Massachusetts, Jeff Merkley of Oregon, Chris Van Hollen of Maryland and Raphael Warnock of Georgia also signed the letter.

"Simply put, we must make vaccines, testing, and treatments accessible everywhere if we are going to crush the virus anywhere," the lawmakers say in the letter, which was obtained by The Associated Press. More than 100 nations support a temporary waiver,

which could help vaccine manufacturing ramp up in poorer countries that are struggling to acquire vaccine supplies. The Biden administration has said it is studying the issue.

Opponents, including pharmaceutical companies, worry that it would set dangerous precedent in allowing scientists around the globe to copy American and European companies' research — some of which was funded by the US government — long before patents expire. The Trump administration had opposed calls for the waiver.

The White House did not respond to a request for comment on the lawmakers' letter.

The lawmakers' appeal to Biden came after a group of 170 former world leaders and Nobel laureates earlier this week sent a similar letter to Biden urging him to support a temporary waiver of the WTO's intellectual property rules.

## Rupee zooms 58 paise to settle at 74.35 against US dollar

**PNS ■ MUMBAI**

The rupee strengthened by 58 paise to end at 74.35 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, supported by positive domestic equities amid improving risk appetite.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 74.76 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 74.28 and a low of 74.76.

It finally ended at 74.35 against the American currency, registering a rise of 58 paise over its previous closing.

On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 74.93 against the American currency.

## MONEY MATTERS

### Escorts Heart Institute gets SEBI notice in funds diversion case



Fortis Healthcare on Friday said its subsidiary, Escorts Heart Institute and Research Center Ltd, has received a notice from capital markets regulator SEBI in the matter related to the alleged diversion of funds from the company by its erstwhile promoters. SEBI has issued a notice under Rule 4 of SEBI (Procedure for holding inquiry and imposing penalties) Rules, 1995 read with Section 15(1) of Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992 in the matter of Fortis Healthcare Limited, among others, Escorts Heart Institute and Research Center Limited (EHIRCL). Fortis Healthcare said in a regulatory filing. Fortis Healthcare on Friday said its subsidiary, EHIRCL, received the notice on April 15, 2021.

### Transporters' body seeks more reduction fuel prices



Transporters' body AIMTC on Friday termed the recent 14-16 paise per litre cut in petrol and diesel prices across major cities as "ostentatious", and said there is still a room to reduction their prices by up to Rs 40 per litre. In a statement, the All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC), which claims representing over 95 lakh truckers and entities, said it is an open fact that this small cut in the petrol and diesel prices has a bearing on the election in four states — West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Assam. All India Motor Transport Congress Chairman (Core Committee) Bai Milkit Singh said,

## China's economic growth surges to 18.3 per cent

**PNS ■ BEIJING**

China's economic growth surged to 18.3 per cent over a year ago in the first quarter of 2021 after factory and consumer activity returned largely to normal following the coronavirus pandemic.

The figures reported Friday were magnified by comparison with early 2020, when the world's second-largest economy fell into its deepest contraction in decades.

Manufacturing, auto sales and other consumer activity have revived to above pre-pandemic levels since the ruling Communist Party declared victory over the coronavirus last March and allowed factories and stores to reopen.

The economy "delivered a stable performance with a consolidated foundation and good momentum of growth," the NSB said in a report.

The outside jump in the headline number was in line with expectations by forecasters due to the low basis for comparison in early 2020.

Some warn that despite China's impressive recent performance, a recovery still is uncertain because global demand is weak as some governments reimpose anti-disease curbs that disrupt business and trade.

The economy shrank by 6.8 per cent in the first quarter of last year as the ruling Communist Party took the then-unprecedented step of closing most factories, shops



and offices to fight the outbreak that started in the central city of Wuhan in late 2019. It was China's worst performance since at least the mid-1960s.

Growth recovered to 6.5 per cent over a year earlier in the final quarter following the economy's relatively early reopening while the United States, Europe and Japan struggled with renewed disease outbreaks. China eked out full-year growth of 2.3 per cent, becoming the only major economy to expand in 2020.

## 'Operating Pune plant as per norms'

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Tata Motors on Friday said it is operating its Pune-based manufacturing facility with a limited number of employees as per the guidelines issued by the Maharashtra government amid surge in Covid cases.

Tata Motors rolls out models like Nexon, Harrier, Altroz and Safari from the Pune plant.

"The company is running Pune plant in strict compliance with the guidelines mentioned in the Break the Chain order of the Maharashtra government. A limited number of employees are attending duties adhering to all safety protocols, distancing norms and hygiene standards," Tata Motors said in a statement.

## Wipro shares jump 10% after Q4 earnings

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Shares of Wipro zoomed nearly 10 per cent in morning trade on Friday after the company posted a 27.7 per cent jump in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,972 crore for the March 2021 quarter, and exuded confidence of sustaining strong growth momentum in the coming quarters. The stock jumped 9.51 per cent to Rs 472 -- its 52-week high -- on the BSE. At the NSE, it rallied 9.67 per cent to Rs 472.35 -- its one-year high. The results were announced after market hours on Thursday.

Wipro had registered a net profit (attributable to equity holders) of Rs 2,326.1 crore in the year-ago period, as per Indian Accounting Standards (Ind-AS).

Its revenue from operations rose by 3.4 per cent to Rs 16,245.4 crore in the reported quarter, from Rs 15,711 crore in the same period last fiscal.



Wipro -- which gets a bulk of its topline from IT services -- said it expects revenues from that unit to be in the range of USD 2,195 to USD 2,238 million in the June 2021 quarter. This translates into a sequential growth of 2-4 per cent.

Wipro's IT services segment revenue was at USD 2,152.4 million in the March quarter, a sequential growth of 3.9 per cent.

"Our Q4 performance was built on top of our momentum that we saw in the last quarter. We have reported a solid growth in revenue, healthy order booking and great execution, resulting in robust margins.

## WIMWIsure conducts 2L inspections remotely in FY21; turns profitable

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

WIMWIsure, AI-enabled insurance service platform for on-demand inspection of insurable assets, on Friday said the company conducted over 2 lakh virtual inspections of passenger and commercial vehicles through its on-demand artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled video inspection platform in the financial year ended March 2021 and also turned profitable during the year.

The Indian motor insurance marketplace has noted a clear shift towards remote "Do-It-Yourself" checks and inspection-as-a-service because of COVID-19 which has necessitated moving away from physical vehicle inspections, WIMWIsure said in a release.

"During the lockdown, Insurtech WIMWIsure has conducted more than 2 lakh virtual inspections for passenger and commercial vehicles through its on-demand artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled video inspection platform in the financial year 2020-21," it said. The nearly four-year-old company said it saw the bulk of its over 3.5 lakh inspections till date during the lockdown, witnessing strong demand from tier-II and III cities for mid-range SUVs, sedans and hatchbacks.

## 'Covid 2nd wave poses risk to recovery'

**PNS ■ MUMBAI**

The spike in coronavirus cases poses a risk to economic recovery, and the GDP is unlikely to achieve the earlier projected 3 per cent growth for March quarter 2020-21, Wall Street brokerage Bank of America Securities said on Friday.

Noting that a month-long nationwide lockdown can shave off 100-200 basis points off the GDP, the brokerage said growth is still weak, amplified by the steep fall in key economic activity indicators and the anaemic loan growth, and the surging pandemic cases is only increasing the worries on the growth front.

However, the report by BofA Securities did not offer a likely GDP number for the March quarter 2020-21.

The seven-component BofA India activity indicator slowed to 1 per cent in February from 1.3 per cent in January, the report said, as 4 of the 7 constituents of the India activity index slowed in February over the previous month.

The report also pointed out that this poses risks to their 3 per cent real GVA growth forecast for the March quarter. The index had first time in 2020-21 turned positive in

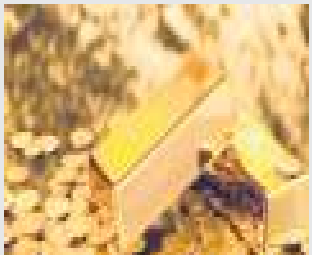


December 2020 after declining for nine straight months.

Spike in pandemic cases poses a rising risk to recovery. "We estimate that a month of national lockdown costs 100-200 bps of GDP," the report warned.

The pandemic caseload in India has been surging hitting new records everyday for the past fortnight. The latest official number puts the daily infections at 2.17 lakh in the past 24 hours and 1,185 deaths -- both are the highest in the world and more than the combined numbers of the second and the third most affected countries -- Brazil and the US.

## Gold, silver marginally up



Gold prices rose marginally by Rs 9 to Rs 46,431 per 10 gram in the national capital on Friday, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at Rs 46,422 per 10 gram. Silver also gained Rs 53 to Rs 67,460 per kg from Rs 67,407 per kg in the previous trade. In the international market, gold was quoting higher at USD 1,764 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 25.87 per ounce. "Gold prices rallied supported by dollar decline and fall in US bond yields," according to HDFC Securities, Senior Analyst (Commodities), Tapan Patel. Navneet Damani, VP -- Commodities Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, "Gold traded higher to a more than one-month peak as US Treasury yields slipped despite better-than-expected US economic data, pushing investors to bullion as a refuge against possible inflation ahead."

## EU-UK talks over Brexit fail to reach breakthrough



Top European Union and British officials failed to get a breakthrough at talks on Northern Ireland trade rules and said Friday that contact would continue over the coming weeks. The dinner meeting late Thursday between European Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic and U.K. Brexit minister David Frost took place a month after the EU started legal action against its former member country, arguing that the UK had not respected the conditions of the Brexit agreement and violated international law. A British statement said that "a number of difficult issues remained and it was important to continue to discuss them." Frost said that "there should be intensified contacts at all levels in the coming weeks." The two sides are trying to find common ground on trade rules in Northern Ireland, where Britain's exit from the EU has unsettled a delicate political balance.

# Hyderabad

Born in Lucknow, educated in Delhi, Calcutta and Singapore, he landed in Hyderabad, and absolutely loves how his life panned out. In a candid interview, IT Secretary Jayesh Ranjan talks to *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL about his life in Hyderabad, what he loves most about the city, how it has been growing, and more.



## 'SOCIAL HIERARCHY IS LOW, LIVELIHOOD HIGH IN HYDERABAD'

Jayesh Ranjan regards this city's culture as very valuable. He has shared experiences of it as a resident, he views the city as a patchwork of super cultures. The deccani language used here can be variations of the many languages spoken here and what's even more special about it is that the ethnic neighborhoods thrive on it! "I am from Lucknow. Coming to Hyderabad for the first time, I was more concerned and apprehensive about the cultural differences, but to my pleasant surprise, I found that Hyderabad had a very syncretic culture which was very reassuring. The culture of food that exists in the city is quite commendable. What I appreciate the most about this city as compared to the other three other cities I have lived earlier, is that it is a very liveable city. Social hierarchies are low, livelihood opportunities are aplenty, the city is affordable and there is something of interest for everyone," he adds.

He holds a Masters Degree in Psychology from the Delhi University, a degree in Business Management from the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, and a Masters in Public Management from Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. But little did he know he'd end up in the neighborhoods of a Nawabi city serving the state government. The iconic visual scenes of Hyderabad made him realise the symbolic identity of the city! The one thing that comes to his mind when he



thinks of Hyderabad is the Nizams. The fascinating lifestyle led by the Nizams is what leaves the dignitary in awe of it! From their palaces touching the sky, to the fact that they own one of the most precious diamonds in the world and stories about all the fancy cars they owned – there is a lot Jayesh has heard about the opulence and the luxurious lifestyle of the Nizams.

Sharing one of his fondest memories in the city, he reminisces, "I enjoy my early morning walk everyday at the KBR Park! Apart from imbibing the best of nature from closed quarters, it also gives me a chance to plan for my entire day. Although, I would definitely prefer a more civic engagement from the common people in all the vital matters that concern everyone."

Talking elaborately about

his association with the Telangana government and his distinct role in the progression of the IT industry, he gives a detailed account of it saying, "I look after the subjects of IT and industries in Telangana government and provide close support to our Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao. Both these subjects have done exceedingly well in the last six years, and I feel proud of the contribution that we have made. IT is one sector that has flourished and thrived after the new state of Telangana has come into being. In our entire country, Hyderabad has recorded the best annual growth in terms of IT turnover and number of new jobs created year after year."

With the many unspoken advancements of the economy vitality and dynamism, Jayesh Ranjan wholeheartedly wants to continue to settle here post his services because the very characteristics of people to assimilate with others is seemingly very beautiful to see for him.

While his close relatives are so awestruck about the Falaknuma Palace here, the Golconda Fort and Charminar continue to remain their perennial favourites!



Whether you're trying to treat your loved ones after dinner or you want to impress your friends on social media, you can't afford to go wrong with a pretty cake. Here are top 10 pastry tools every home-baker should have

**H**ome-made pastries are becoming a new trend in India. It has become a form of expression, a stress relief exercise and most importantly a display of skills. As a beginner, whether you're trying to treat your loved ones after dinner or you want to impress your friends on social media, you can't afford to go wrong with a pretty cake.

Before you decide to go into a kitchen, start with the list of baking tools you must have. We'll help you set up a baking kit for beginners. For those who already own these tools, the list may provide motivation that you need to prepare the yummiest pastries or cakes. Building your essential baking toolbox starts here:

### Pastry brush

This tool is one of the most important and has uses more than you can realise. It can be used to grease a pan before pouring cake in it, to coat dough with melted butter or egg wash or to paint milk on the top of pie crust. This is a must-have.

### Measuring cups

Baking is all about accuracy, so having a full set of measuring cups and spoons is a must. One type of cup for measuring isn't enough for baking. You will need both dry and wet measuring cups to precisely measure all the ingredients you're



putting in your recipe. Most measuring spoons sets have a tablespoon, ½ teaspoon, and ¼ teaspoon, while most measuring cups come in sets with ½ cup, ⅓ cup and ¼ cup.

### Whisk

Whisk is used to beat together a few eggs, but it is used for other things too. In particular, it's one of the best to thoroughly mix various ingredients but it is also great for stirring together a homemade custard.

### Baking pan

From flat baking trays for cookies and loaf tins for breads and loaf cakes to square tins for brownies and round tins for classic sponge cake, the baking pans come in different sizes and shapes. Non-stick aluminum baking pan is better than a glass one.

While glass one looks more stylish and presentable, aluminum has high heat conductivity so that you cook evenly.

### Stand mixer

An electric stand mixer is expensive, but once you use it, you'll wonder how did you ever manage without it, especially when you make

things like marshmallows, they require beating for 10 or more minutes.

It makes your cooking easier, takes off the physical load and saves a lot of time. Most importantly, it gives a better result in the final product.

### Icing spatula

It is needed to evenly spread the cream all over the cake. It comes in different sizes and is needed as per the size/height of the cake. If you don't have an icing spatula, you can use the back, straight edge of a large knife to smooth your butter cream and then clean up the bottom of your cake plate with a paper towel.

Next, take a freezer bag and fill it with your icing. Push the icing into one corner and twist the bag.

### Metal bowls

Baking often necessitates frostings, caramels, and creams, which can be finicky if they're not kept at a steady temperature, are too warm. A frosting might not whip properly, for example, if ingredients are too warm. Metal bowls are really helpful as they are a better conductor of heat than glass.

### Serrated knife

This is the best knife for cutting a cake in half or thirds. It will help maintain a smooth, precise cut that's perfect for when you want to add a flavourful layer of fruit jam or fluffy buttercream to a pastry or a birthday cake.

### Pastry decorating kit

If you want to decorate your pastries with rose petals or a basketweave to the top, then you'll need some pastry decorating tools. This kit contains six different shaped tips and two reusable nylon bags, which are more eco-friendly than disposable plastic bags because they can be used over and over again.

### Gel-based food dye

Gel-based food dye is used to create vibrant pastries and cakes. You should avoid water-based dyes found in little tubes at the supermarket as these dyes are so weak they'll produce pastels in place of bold, saturated ones.

Natural dye is great too, but don't expect the same results.

(The list is shared by top chefs from the Academy of Pastry & Culinary Arts.)

**H**yderabad's 17-year-old teenager, Trisha not only conceptualises one of the earliest thrift stores in South India but also runs it successfully. The gen Z entrepreneur asks people to shop clothes sustainably for a price that will not leave a hole in the pocket.



When the Coronavirus pandemic resulted in lockdown, quarantine and shutting down of schools, what would a 17-year-old girl have done? Sit back, enjoy the unexpected holidays and chill? But Trisha Reddy, an 11th grader girl then (currently in 12th grade) studying at Oakridge International School in the city conceptualised and founded 'ThriftChicByTrish', an online thrift store. Three months into it, she shares her success as one of the earliest entrants into online thrifting business.

"With the increased conversation about repurposing pre-loved fashion and sustainability, thrift stores are growing in popularity particularly those with an online presence," says Trisha Reddy.

"ThriftChicByTrish is an age-old practice in India. In the days of my parents' childhood, unused clothes were always given to the younger siblings in the family. It was a well-accepted practice and nobody minded it. But,

somehow the present generation lost the practice. I wanted to revive that age-old practice very unique to our country but add a business element to it. Thus my online thrifting store 'ThriftChicByTrish' was conceived on Instagram," she informs. So, she became a CoronaStudentPreneur. Her thrift store that started just a few months ago in January, currently has almost 1000 followers.

She began with a sum of Rs 35,000/- loaned by her parents. The investment has gone basically into the packaging material for the store, she shares. "I have done a business of INR 70,000/-, having sold 75 pieces of garments out of 87 on display. Most of those clothes are mine and of a few of the people I know," Trisha adds.

ThriftChicByTrish uses Instagram as a platform and offers carefully curated pre-loved, trendy, affordable,

## GIVING LIFE TO pre-loved clothes



pre-owned clothing pieces for sale on a particular day of the week and at a given time that are just a phone click away, and encourages

thrifting to become more than just a passing trend, a trend here to stay.

The good thing about thrifting is giving life to

clothes lying unused in wardrobes. It is an online sale of pre-used items at discounted prices. Thrifting is a new way of selling high-

end clothing well below retail prices.

When asked about her inspiration for the idea she said "Since I've always had a



passion to start something of my own in the field of fashion and have already gained an insight into it through blogging. I thought why not combine my love for fashion, contemporary and high street trends and turn it into a business that enables a sustainable life? So, I introduced 'ThriftChicByTrish'."

"The new trend in the fashion industry today is 'Sustainable Fashion'. Socially conscious and responsible fashion is more important today than ever before. Eco-friendly fashion, ethical clothing, affordable luxury, clothing rental, buying second-hand clothing are the trends the industry is witnessing," says entrepreneur Trisha.

"I curated the collection of clothes I sell, style them for the picture and sport as a model wearing those clothes to showcase them to customers," Trisha explains how a thrift store works. "I then promote them through my store on Instagram. If there is any defect on the clothes it is mentioned in

the description. I have customers from Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai but most of them are from Hyderabad. My sister Anoushka Reddy helps me with the photography aspect and conceptualising the brand name, logo, packaging etc. All my pictures are taken on either an Android Samsung phone or an iPhone-11."

Currently, it carries only female clothes. Soon she is planning to add male clothing as well as Indian wear. She doesn't rule out expanding further.

Naturally, people are more inclined to give their old clothes a second life. Price is now an additional incentive for them to give clothes to thrifting stores, says the teenage entrepreneur. "No one expects any money for the discarded clothes. But, my venture adds monetisation, which is now encouraging more and more people to explore this."

Trisha is confident of doing well, she wants to go slow but leave her mark.



● Pooja Raj



● Sruthi



● Akshatha



● Amit Bagaria



● Shazia Ilmi

**TALKING FUTURE**  
Social activist Shazia Ilmi was the main attraction at a fireside chat with Amit Bagaria, best selling author at an event organised by the Yi (young Indians) chapter of Hyderabad. Many insights into the political climate of today's India were discussed and pondered upon.

Photos by SV Chary

PARTY

KARTIK AARYAN REPLACED IN *DOSTANA 2*; KJO DECIDES TO NEVER WORK WITH HIM?

There were reports that Kartik Aaryan will no longer be a part of Karan Johar's *Dostana 2*. The movie was announced in 2019 but the shoot had to be delayed due to the pandemic. While no one officially confirmed the news, a trade source has announced that the actor has been replaced from the movie and that Dharma will no longer work with Kartik Aaryan in the future. The reason stated behind this decision is a fallout between Karan Johar and Kartik Aaryan. Along with the creative differences, it has also been reported that Janhvi Kapoor and Kartik have had a fallout.

The actor initially had problems with his dates and schedule, later on, he started having creative issues. It was earlier reported that Kartik was replaced from the project for dilly-dallying the shoot for months now. He decided to first wrap up Ram Madhvani's film *Dhamaka* and that annoyed Karan. A source told us, "For the longest time, Kartik gave a genuine reason of the Covid 19 pandemic to not start shoot. He wanted to ensure safety so Karan didn't push him much. But when he shot for *Dhamaka*, Karan was upset. They had an indoor meeting where Karan expressed his disappointment."

Kartik later did the unthinkable and that led to major fallout with Karan Johar. "Kartik got upset with the banner when they gave Shashank Khaitan's *Yodha* to Shahid Kapoor. Although Shahid soon quit, they never approached Kartik for the role anyway. Also, since Kartik's dates were not available for *Dostana 2*, Karan

decided to go ahead and start *Mr. Lele* with Vicky Kaushal and Janhvi Kapoor from April. The moment Kartik got to know about this development; he informed the production house that the only dates available for *Dostana 2* this year will be April onwards. Karan understood what Kartik was doing and quickly reprimanded him for the same. He was genuinely upset with Kartik as Janhvi had to pick between *Dostana 2* and *Mr. Lele*. The last we heard, Karan and Kartik are not speaking a word to each other."

Another source said, "The reason for Kartik Aaryan to not continue with the film as stated by him is the cre-

ative differences after one and a half years and completing over 20 days of the shoot. This has never happened in the history of Dharma where an actor has walked out of the film for creative issues. Dharma has decided not to work with him in the future." Karan Johar has decided to replace Kartik and not work with him in the future having enough of his tantrums. The source further informed, "Dharma is such a prestigious banner and KJo is reputed for launching careers – but never at the cost of a film's future and the livelihoods of its cast and crew."

There have been no reports as to who will step in for Kartik Aaryan's role in *Dostana 2*.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



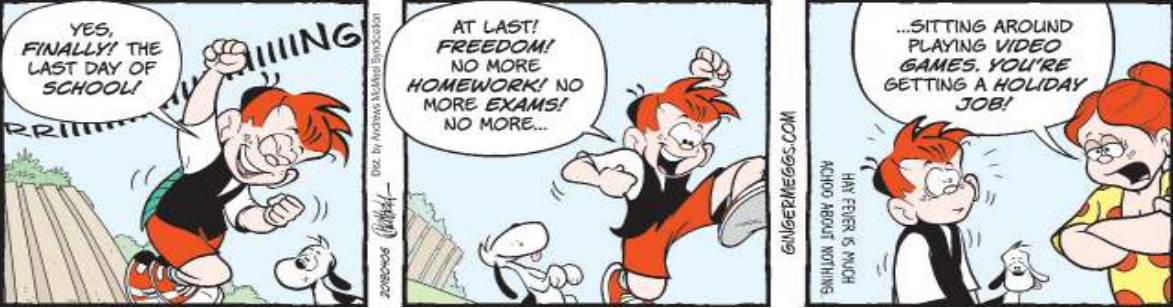
GARFIELD



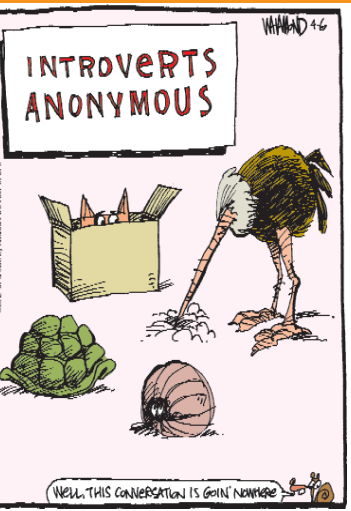
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



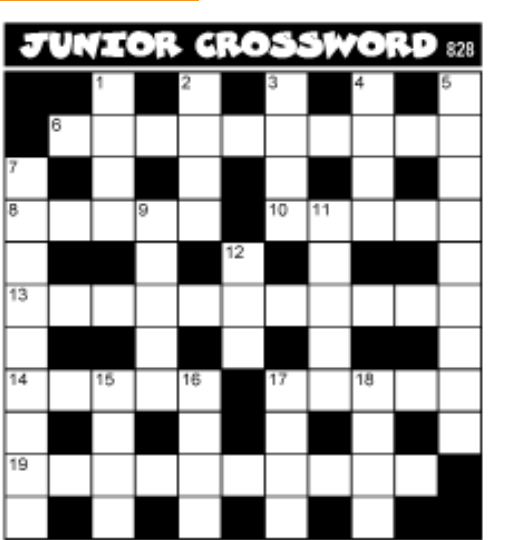
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



**Yesterday's solution**  
5 8 7 2 6 9 1 4 3  
6 4 1 5 3 8 2 9 7  
9 3 2 7 1 4 6 8 5  
3 1 6 9 4 7 8 5 2  
2 5 9 3 8 1 4 7 6  
8 7 4 6 2 5 3 1 9  
4 2 5 1 7 3 9 6 8  
1 9 3 8 5 6 7 2 4  
7 6 8 4 9 2 5 3 1

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

ACROSS

- 6 A flying machine
- 8 Light a fire with this
- 10 Our planet
- 13 In a coma
- 14 A feeling of rage
- 17 Less
- 19 Carrying on

DOWN

- 1 Remaining
- 2 Wealthy
- 3 Sleep lightly
- 4 Mix with a spoon
- 5 A large group of musicians
- 7 An emergency vehicle
- 9 Nearby



# NEW BEE FARNAZ ON SHOOTING AMIDST PANDEMIC

**W**ith increasing Covid cases in the country, Maharashtra government has already announced further restrictions on public movement in the state resulting in film and TV shoots coming to a halt. Much like many other industries, this is the second time showbiz will be going through a major setback. Farnaz Shetty, who will be making her Tollywood debut with *Indu Vadana*, is anxious too but trying to stay positive.

Directed by MSR, story, and screenplay by Satish Aketi, the film is produced by Madhavi Adurti along with Giridhar.

"I just finished my second schedule of the film in Hyderabad. We started facing complications in the last few days but somehow managed to finish our work. Now only the climax part is left to be shot. I just hope we finish shooting that portion soon otherwise everything would go for a toss," Shetty sounds worried.

"The pandemic is far from over and those who thought 'corona is gone' and flouted norms should now learn their les-



son hard", added the actor.

Farnaz shared a pic with a bridge in the background captioned: "We Build too many walls, and not enough bridges ?? #induvadana"

The actress urges everyone to follow Covid protocol.

"You have to understand the gravity of the situation and act accordingly. We have to follow all protocols to break the chain. Panicking is not the solution. I just hope this pandemic comes to a full stop. We need to go back to our normal lives soon. The entertainment industry is facing a cri-

sis of this sort for the first time. 2020 shouldn't get repeated, we must work towards that. Everyone should get vaccinated at the earliest," she adds.

Farnaz is known for shows such as *Laal Ishq*, *Kahaan Hum Kahaan Tum* and *Siddhi Vinayak*.

## Aditi voices against street harassment

**T**his International Anti-Street Harassment Week, Aditi Rao Hydari, proudly

raises her voice against street harassment. Via a social media post on her official Instagram page, Aditi asked her followers to take the training and StandUp Against Street Harassment. In her video, Aditi shares, "StandUp is a program that is designed towards creating awareness and imparting training to combat street harassment. Sadly, street harassment is something that we all have been through, whether as bystanders or as victims and I know that it makes me very angry, it makes me feel very helpless and I am sure it does that to you as well. So, recently I went through this training program and I was lucky to

have this opportunity. It is called the Stand-Up 5 D's training created by L'Oréal Paris in partnership with Hollaback! Internationally and Breakthrough in India. It has really opened my eyes and showed me how easy it is and how we have such effective tools so readily available to us — which is basically our own mind — our presence of mind. So that we can effectively and confidently combat street harassment. I would really recommend that each one of us goes through this training program. It is simple, effective, it builds so much confidence and it gives us an amazing solution to help someone and to help ourselves. So spread the word, tell your friends, tell everyone. Because I think this one is essential. Let us help combat street harassment effectively."

## NTR AS AN INNOCENT MAN FOR KORATALA'S NEXT?



**I**t is all over the internet that Young Tiger Jr NTR and Koratala Siva is coming together once again for a big-budget movie, NTR 30, after

successful venture *Janatha Garage*, a message-oriented film.

According to the latest buzz, in this new film, NTR will be seen playing an innocent, naïve man, who comes to the city from the Himalayas, trying to bring change in the society for a good cause. The actor will be seen in a never-before avatar which will surely please fans.

This yet-to-be-titled film will be presented by Nandamuri Kalyan Ram. Kosaraju Harikrishna of NTR Arts and Mikkilineni Sudhakar of Yuvasudha Arts will be co-bankrolling this big-budget pan-India project.

Koratala Siva is currently busy with *Acharya* starring Chiranjeevi and Ram Charan in the lead roles which is on the verge of the completion whereas Tarak is working with SS Rajamouli for a pan-ndian film *RRR*, which will be released on October 13.

## tollywood 'Busy exploring shades of myself'

**K**riti Sanon is the busiest bee of tinsel town currently with more than six films in her kitty. What makes these even more interesting is the range of her films in terms of their genres. From a horror-comedy to an action film, the actor will be seen leading multiple genre films.

Talking about having so many different genres in her lineup the Adipurush girl says, "My work is so exciting because no set, no film is like the other. Doing such varied genres is helping me explore different shades of myself as an actor."

She adds, "From *Bhediya* being a horror-comedy to action in *Ganpath*, mythology in *Adipurush*, and an entertainer

like *Bachchan Pandey*, I have many genres that I am working on right now, which makes all the work even more exciting and interesting. It does also keep me on my toes."

Sanon has a bag of big-budget films in her lineup for which she has been shooting non-stop for a while with all safety measures being taken as per government guidelines. She has been shooting in Arunachal Pradesh for *Bhediya* with Varun Dhawan, which is a horror-comedy.

She will be seen playing Sita in Om Raut's mythological drama *Adipurush* with Prabhas. She has also signed an entertainer film *Bachchan Pandey* with Akshay Kumar and the drama — *Mimi*, which will star her as the solo lead.



## Vishwak Sen's next a love entertainer

**H**it actor Vishwak Sen's upcoming film's makers announced his seventh film's title as *Ashoka Vanamlo Arjuna Kalyanam* on Twitter. Going by the film's poster, the look and name of it reveal that it could be of a romantic genre.

From *Vellipomakey* to *Paagal*, the young star has mostly done mass action genres and this could be his first out and out love entertainer.

This new film of Vishwak had its pooja muhurtham on Friday. Vidya Sagar Chinta will be directing the movie which is touted to be an emotional drama. Ravi Kiran has penned the story. Vishwak, it is being said, will undergo a slight makeover for this film and sport a new look.

To be produced by Bapineedu and Sudheer Eedara under SVCC Digital banner, *Ashoka Vanamlo Arjuna Kalyanam* will be presented by noted producer BVS N Prasad.

**Hit actor Vishwak Sen's upcoming film's makers announced his seventh film's title as *Ashoka Vanamlo Arjuna Kalyanam*. The film, whose story was penned by Ravi kiran, will be helmed by Vidya Sagar Chinta. Touted to be an emotional drama, the film will be produced by Sudheer Eedara.**



