


In case you have COVID-19 symptoms like fever, cold, headache, breathlessness, body pains or joint pains, you should call 104 without any delay.



Dr. Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy  
Hon'ble Chief Minister  
Government of Andhra Pradesh

In case it is necessary for anyone to get admitted into a COVID-19 hospital one can get admitted within 3 hours



Jagananna Government provides totally free treatment for COVID-19.



# 104 CALL CENTRE SERVICES

**DON'T BE SCARED OR WORRIED ABOUT GETTING TESTED or TREATED FOR COVID-19!**

In case you have COVID-19 symptoms like fever, cold, headache, breathlessness, body pains or joint pains, you should call 104 without any delay.

## By Calling 104...

1. In case it is necessary for anyone to get admitted into a COVID-19 hospital one can get admitted within 3 hours  
**Jagananna Government provides totally free treatment for COVID-19.**
2. One can get ambulance services to get admitted to COVID-19 hospitals.
3. One can get information about the nearest COVID-19 hospital and the availability of beds in the respective hospitals.
4. One can get contact details of the local government doctor and ANM.
5. One can avail the 24/7 health services, medical advice.
6. One can get information about the nearest COVID-19 vaccination centre and other related aspects.
7. One can get updates about the health condition of their dear ones admitted in hospitals.

## THIS IS HOW THE 104 HELPLINE WORKS..

Doctors dedicated to 104 helpline attend to every single caller who reports symptoms of COVID-19 immediately. Upon determining the severity of symptoms, the doctor will decide whether the individual has to be :

- 1) Placed under home isolation,
- 2) Shifted to a COVID-19 care centre or
- 3) Shifted to a COVID-19 hospital and communicate the same to the district health desk accordingly. The local health authorities will spring into action immediately and render health services without any delay... Entire process will be completed within 3 hours.

**Sri. Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy**  
Hon'ble Chief Minister  
Government of Andhra Pradesh

## UPON RECEIVING A CALL FROM A COVID SYMPTOMATIC PATIENT AT 104 CALL CENTRE, IF THE DOCTORS SUGGEST..

1

### ...To stay

#### under home quarantine..

The PHC doctor & ANM deployed at your Village/Ward Secretariat will get in touch with you, render treatment, continuously, **deliver free medicine kits** to you and monitor your health from time to time .

2

### ...To shift to a Covid Care Centre..

In case an individual is suggested home isolation and if he doesn't have a dedicated room at his house for such isolation, the government authorities will shift the individual to a nearby Covid Care Centre and provide quality healthcare, quality food and hygienic accommodation **free of cost.**

3

### ...To shift to a Covid-19 hospital

The individual can avail absolutely free treatment at all government and government recognized special private covid hospitals **free of cost.** Jagananna government is the first of its kind to provide **free treatment** for covid under Dr. YSR Aarogyasri.

In case anyone wants to get treated in an Aarogyasri unempannelled private hospital, Jagananna Government has issued order fixing rates for all relevant medical procedures so as to reduce the financial burden on the people. Please report grievances, if any, pertaining to hospitals charging rates over and above the fixed price caps and any other complaints related to COVID at **1902.** Stringent action will be taken against the concerned hospitals, if found guilty.

These are the Rates

Rates fixed by Government for treatment of COVID-19 (Critical & Non-Critical) in Private Hospitals (Includes medical personnel, PPE, Disinfection, Investigation, Medicines, Nutrition etc.,)		
CATEGORY	TREATMENT	RATE PER DAY
Non-Critical COVID-19	Non-Critical COVID-19 Treatment	Rs. 3,250
	ICU without ventilator & without NIV	Rs. 5,480
	ICU with NIV	Rs. 5,980
Critical Care COVID-19 treatment	ICU with ventilator	Rs. 9,580
	SEPSIS without ventilator	Rs. 6,280
	SEPSIS with ventilator	Rs. 10,380
	Septic with ventilator Septic Shock/MODS with ventilator	Rs. 10,380
Antiviral Drugs	Remdesivir	Rs. 2,500 per dose

If any individual wants to take COVID-19 test on his own, he can do so by availing the testing facility at the nearest PHC, free of cost. Even if an individual admits himself on his own in an Dr.YSR Aarogyasri empannelled hospital, he will be given free treatment.

The Government is providing real time updates about the availability of beds through [http://dashboard.covid19.ap.gov.in/ims/hospbed\\_reports](http://dashboard.covid19.ap.gov.in/ims/hospbed_reports) and take necessary action whenever a need arises.

**Wear a mask-maintain Physical Distance-Sanitize your hands frequently..**

Dr. Y.S.R. Aarogyasri Healthcare Trust  
Government of Andhra Pradesh

**Modern healthcare.. within reach of common man**

Sri Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas (Nani)  
Dy. Chief Minister & Minister for Medical Education,  
Health & Family Welfare, Government of Andhra Pradesh



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

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

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

# WhatsApp messages and human psychology

saging, make audio and video calls, and transfer media files.

Recently, WhatsApp was in the news for their intention to change the privacy norms that led to massive migration from WhatsApp to Signal, Instagram and other platforms.

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

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

maintain the status quo.

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

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

App.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Murdered family of daughter's 'rapist' to take revenge: Accused

**PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM**

Battina Appala Raju, who surrendered to the police after hacking six members of a family living next door, on Thursday defended his horrifying act by saying that he wanted to take revenge for the rape of his daughter.

The murders, committed at Juttada under Pendurthi police station limits in Vizag city on Thursday, sent shockwaves across the city.

Shockingly, some twitterati supported the murders arguing that delay in the justice delivery system could have forced the man to take the extreme step.

According to the locals, Appala Raju tried to kill B Vijay Kiran, who he claimed had raped his daughter, and also his family members. However, Vijay Kiran and his elder son escaped unharmed as they were not at the scene of crime.

Tension prevailed in the area when Vijay reached there and wanted to kill Appala Raju. Police intervened and pacified him.

The victims were identified as Vijay Kiran's father Bamidi Ramana (57), Kiran's wife Bamidi Usha Rani (30), his son B Uday (2), daughter B Urvasi (six months), Allu Ramadevi (53), mother of Usha Rani and Nakettlu Aruna, a relative of

Usha Rani. The victims were found in a pool of blood.

The police said that Bamidi Ramana's son Vijay Kiran was accused of raping Appala Raju's daughter (20-year old) in 2018. A case was also registered against Vijay Kiran for raping Appala Raju's daughter and the case was investigated.

Vijay Kiran (son of the victim Ramana), moved very closely with Appala Raju's daughter and her family despite being a married man since he had evil intentions, the accused said.

He claimed that Vijay Kiran called her to his house and offered sedative laced soft drinks to her and later he

raped her several times.

Vijay Kiran's wife Usha Rani blackmailed the Appala Raju's daughter by showing her semi-nude photos and demanded money from the victim.

Maniyala Vinay, Bammidi Sai, Pilleni Durga Prasad and Challa Nagaraju also cooperated the rape accused and blackmailed her and demanded money from the victim, Appala Raju said.

The rape victim's brother Vijay Prasad noticed Whatsapp messages on his sister's phone and filed a police complaint.

In this case, the police filed a charge sheet against the

accused Vijay Kiran and the case was under trial.

Inspector of Pendurthi police station, Ashok Kumar said that Vijay Kiran and his family have been staying in Vijayawada. A few days ago, Vijay Kiran's family members came to Juttada to attend a wedding in the family.

Learning about it, Appala Raju who has been waiting to take revenge on Vijay Kiran and his family, hacked six persons to death in the wee hours on Thursday when they were asleep, Ashok Kumar said.

A case has been registered against Appala Raju. The police shifted the dead bodies to mortuary for post-mortem.

## CID summons...

*Continued from Page 3*

The video clip shows Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy.




The former minister alleged that the Chief Minister has belittled the town of Tirupati and cited the video clip that he displayed on his mobile as proof of his allegation.


Soon after, one Narayana Reddy, who is an advocate from Kurnool, lodged a complaint that the video showed the Chief Minister in bad light and that it was forged and morphed.

In his complaint, Narayana Reddy said that the context and time of the video was different. Moreover, in the clip, Jaganmohan Reddy was explaining the difficulties involved in attracting talent to cities like Tirupati from cities like Hyderabad.

Acting on the complaint, the CID registered a case.

Devineni Uma was booked under Sections 464, 465, 468, 469, 470, 471, 505, 120 (b) of CrPC. The notice also stated that the video clip displayed at the press meet should also be brought by him when he appears before the CID sleuths.

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	₹ 47, 670 (10 gm)
	<b>SILVER</b>
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	₹ 100
CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
	
Dressed/With Skin	₹177
Without Skin	₹201
Broiler at Farm	₹122

EGG RATES ₹/100	
	
VIJAYAWADA	452
HYDERABAD	441
VISAKHAPATNAM	505
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## Covid explosion...

*Continued from Page 3*

The active caseload was at its lowest at 1,35,926 on February 12 and it was at its highest at 10,17,754 on September 18, 2020.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,24,29,564, while the case fatality rate has further dropped to 1.23 per cent, the data stated.

India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

According to the ICMR, 26,20,03,415 samples have been tested up to April 14 with 13,84,549 samples being tested on Wednesday.

The 1,038 new fatalities include 278 from Maharashtra, 120 from Chhattisgarh, 104 from Delhi,

73 from Gujarat, 67 from Uttar Pradesh, 63 from Punjab, 51 from Madhya Pradesh, 38 from Karnataka, 31 from Jharkhand, 29 from Rajasthan, 25 from Tamil Nadu, 24 from West Bengal, 22 from Kerala, 21 from Bihar, 18 each from Andhra Pradesh and Haryana, 13 each from Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

A total of 1,73,123 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 58,804 from Maharashtra, 13,046 from Karnataka, 12,970 from Tamil Nadu, 11,540 from Delhi, 10,458 from West Bengal, 9,376 from Uttar Pradesh, 7,672 from Punjab and 7,339 from Andhra Pradesh.

The health ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

## AP hurtles towards 10 lakh...

*Continued from Page 3*

Given the upward trend of the cases and projection of the state health department, AP would reach the 10 lakh milestone soon.

Among the districts, Chittoor recorded 835 cases, Kurnool 626, Guntur 611 and Srikakulam 568 cases.

According to the projection of the state health department on April 12, the number of active cases could go up to 1.48 lakh by April 25. It indicated that around 1.25 lakh cases could be recorded in the next 13 days, which reduces to around 10,000 cases per day.

All the district administrations were directed to make necessary arrangements in order to ensure hospital beds with oxygen, non-oxygen beds and beds in Covid care centres to accommodate and manage the projected active cases in the next two weeks.

While 81,000 cases could be managed with home isolation and the state may require 70,000 hospital beds by April 25. The state may also need around 7,000 beds with oxygen facility.

As per the Central government, 16 states, including Andhra Pradesh are displaying an upward trajectory in the number of daily new cases.

The state, meanwhile, administered a record 6,28,961 Covid-19 vaccine doses in a day on Wednesday the largest in any state since the vaccination programme began in the country on January 16.

So far, 45.93 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the state, including 5.92 lakh second dose.

But now, no stock of the vaccine is left in the state and Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy asked Health Department officials to write to the Centre seeking fresh supplies, a CMO release said.

The overall infection positivity rate climbed to 6.05 per cent while the recovery rate slid to 96 per cent.

The percentage of active cases has risen to three per cent while the case fatality rate remained stable at 0.8 per cent.

Chittoor district reported 835 fresh cases and five fatalities in a day.

## Jagan sets 6 lakh jabs per...

*Continued from Page 3*

Referring to the shortage of Covid-19 vaccines, Jagan asked the health officials to write a letter to the Central Government seeking the required number of doses and said he would write a letter if necessary.

He asked the officials to prepare a protocol for regular monitoring of people who are home quarantined and added that they should be provided Covid Kits with seven types of tablets and capsules.

Jagan asked officials to ensure that there is no shortage of oxygen supplied to hospitals and to ensure oxygen is produced at full capacity in the Vizag production centre. He said all required medicines should be made available in all hospitals.

The officials said the positivity rate is 6.03 percent and 108 hospitals are under the health department for Covid

treatment.

They informed the Chief Minister that 15,669 beds are available of which 4,889 are occupied and 1,987 ventilators are available and added that 22,637 patients are in home isolation.

Jagan instructed the officials to give huge publicity to 104 services and to ensure hospital beds and treatment are provided through these services.

The patients should be admitted to hospitals or advised for home isolation based on suggestions of doctors, he said and added that ambulance services should be provided and the treatment should be expedited with the help of ASHA workers. The Chief Minister said the health of the people in home isolation should be followed up.

He asked officials to allot '1902' for grievances and directed officials to give full publicity to 1092 and 104 services.

## Curtains down on...

*Continued from Page 3*

From the YSRCR, a handful of Ministers and MLAs managed the entire campaign this time around. Although Jagan had planned a public meeting in Tirupati on Wednesday, he called it off in the wake of rise in the number of Covid cases.

Jagan had deployed one Minister for each Assembly segment as the campaign in-charge in addition to an MLA. He also directed his party leaders not to be over-confident but work with coordination to ensure the victory of Dr Gurumoorthy with a good margin.

The Chief Minister told the leaders that as YSRCR won a landslide in local body elections the whole country will be observing Tirupati by-poll and the result should send a message.

He also wrote to voters in Tirupati explaining the welfare schemes being implemented by his government in the last 22 months.

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu and his son Nara Lokesh too toiled hard, considering the result as a do-or-die battle for the party that has been facing existential crisis from back-to-back defeats since TDP's drubbing at the hands of YSRCR in 2019.

More significantly TDP's poll consultant Robbin Sharma, former aide of Prashant Kishor had put all his efforts on Tirupati by-poll, personally visiting the temple city several times to strategise for the party's victory.

The father - son duo had addressed several road shows over the last few days and undertaken door

to door campaigns.

Though it appeared that BJP was successful in turning the by-poll into a triangular fight from the bipolar contest in 2019, the party is said to have failed to make any major impact in the ground.

Several top leaders, including BJP national president JP Nadda, too participated in the poll campaign.

Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan too campaigned for the BJP candidate. BJP had also deployed more than 300 'vistaraks' drawn from various parts of Andhra Pradesh exclusively to work in Tirupati until the by-poll ended.

BJP's stupendous gains in West Bengal where party bagged 18 Lok Sabha seats and eight in Odisha in 2019 puts attributed to these 'vistaraks' a brainchild of party stalwart Amit Shah.

## Rain forecast for next 5 days


*Continued from Page 3*

On Saturday, light to moderate rain is likely to occur at isolated places in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Guntur, Chittoor, Anantapur and Kurnool districts.

On Sunday, very light to light rain is likely to occur at isolated places in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari,

Anantapur and Kurnool districts.

On Monday, light to moderate rain is likely to occur at isolated places in Visakhapatnam and East Godavari district, very light to light rain is likely to occur at isolated places in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam, Nellore, Chittoor, Kadapa, Anantapur and Kurnool districts.


**AP STATE HOUSING CORPORATION**

**TENDER NOTICE**

Tender Notice No.2458/SPHCL/EP&P/P/2020/01.12.24.2021 Dt: 12.24.2021

Tenders are invited through Reverse Tendering process for procurement of Construction materials namely 1.Galvalume Sheets 2.Flush Door Shutters 3.MS Angular Section 4.Supply of PVC/SWR/CPVC Pipes & accessories 5.Supply of Water Storage tanks & Taps 6. Powder coated GI Door frames 7. Pre painted Steel (GI) Window Frame with Glazed Shutter & S.Painting items (2 call) for construction of houses under "NAVARATNALU - PEDALA NDARIKI ILLUP" in all Districts of Andhra Pradesh.

The details can be downloaded from 16.04.2021 at 11.00AM onwards at apee procurement market place in [www.ap.eprocurement.gov.in](http://www.ap.eprocurement.gov.in)

DPFR R.O. No. : 21PP-PP/CL/NDVT/1/2021-22

Sd/ CHIEF ENGINEER







## the pioneer

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

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'WILL PURSUE BOTH, MUSIC AND MEDICINE'

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

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



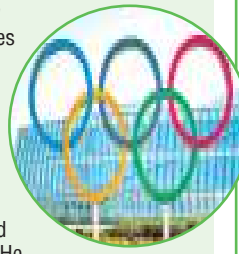
## VIRAT KOHLI REPRIMANDED FOR IPL CODE OF CONDUCT BREACH

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



## TOKYO GAMES: OFFICIALS SAY CANCELLATION, NO FANS STILL OPTION

Two top officials of Japan's ruling LDP party on Thursday said radical changes could be coming to the Tokyo Olympics. One went as far to suggest they still could be canceled, and the other that even if they proceed, it might be without any fans. Toshihiro Nikai, the secretary general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, suggested the cancellation just a day after Tokyo reached the 100-days-to-go mark on Wednesday. He made his comments in a show recorded by Japan's TBS TV. If it seems impossible to go on with the games, they must be definitely canceled, Nikai said.



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

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



## Covid explosion propels case count past 2L mark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India added a record over 2 lakh new Covid-19 infections in a day pushing the total tally of cases to 1,40,74,564, while the active cases surpassed the 14-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

A total of 2,00,739 new Covid-19 cases have been registered in a span of 24 hours. The death toll increased to 1,73,123 with 1,038 daily new fatalities, the highest since October 3, 2020 the data updated at 8 am showed.

With over 1 lakh infections per day for the ninth consecutive day, India has added 13,88,515 cases in nine days.

Registering a steady increase for the 36th day in a row, the active cases have increased to 14,71,877, comprising 10.46 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid-19 recovery rate has dropped to 88.31 per cent.

The active caseload was at its lowest at 1,35,926 on February 12 and it was at its highest at 10,17,754 on September 18, 2020.



## AP hurtles towards 10 lakh cases mark

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Even as the nation looked on with incredulity at the cow dung hurling ritual in Kurnool district in violation of Covid-19 safety guidelines, Andhra Pradesh continued to report an upward trend in the number of infections and is fast moving towards the 10 lakh cases mark.

Continuing the steady and

rapid rise in the number of cases, AP reported 5,088 new infections in the last 24 hours on Thursday, taking the total number of positive cases to 9.39 lakh and active cases to 31,710, the highest single day count after October 11. As many as 14 infected persons succumbed to the virus in the past 24 hours alone.

## Tirupati by-poll campaign ends with all candidates optimistic

■ Jagan banks on welfare schemes, Naidu on poll consultant

SNV SUDHIR ■ VIJAYAWADA

It's curtains down on the high decibel almost month-long campaign for Tirupati Lok Sabha which will go for polls on Saturday, with all parties in the fray exuding confidence of victory.

While leaders of the ruling YSRCP have toiled to improve the party candidate's victory margin, the main opposition TDP and the BJP have put in efforts to emerge victorious.

YSRCP supremo and Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's personal physiotherapist M Gurumoorthy, former Union minister Panabaka Lakshmi from TDP and former senior bureaucrat K Ratna Prabha from BJP and Congress's Chinta Mohan are the prominent candidates in the fray.

Interestingly, a few pre-poll surveys conducted by various pollsters have projected that the YSRCP may improve its vote share at the cost of the TDP.

The surveys also say that the BJP may slightly improve its vote share. However, if the pre-poll surveys are to be believed, the BJP's ambitious dream to occupy the main opposition space by pushing the TDP aside appears to crash.

Fresh from the winning streak in the polls for both urban and local bodies, the Chief Minister had set a target for his aides that the victory margin should be such that the entire nation should look at Tirupati by-poll result.

Tirupati Lok Sabha which is a reserved seat fell vacant due to the demise of YSRCP MP Balli Durga Prasad due to Covid-related complications.

In the 2019 polls, Durga Prasad had defeated his closest rival - TDP's Panabaka Lakshmi with a majority of 2,28,376 votes. The YSRCP won the Tirupati Lok constituency in 2014 and again in 2019, improving its vote share from 47.84 per cent to 55.03 per cent.

Page 3- Opposition has lost hope, conceded defeat: Peddireddy



Full report on PAGE 2



M Gurumoorthy



Panabaka Lakshmi



K Ratna Prabha



Chinta Mohan

## Of novices and seasoned veterans

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

'Jagan Seva versus Jana Seva' (service to Jagan versus service to people) has been the war cry in the campaign for the by-election to Tirupati Lok Sabha constituency in Andhra Pradesh, where the stakes have become high for all the main parties.

What triggered this was the choice, of the ruling YSR Congress Party, of a political novice M Gurumoorthy as its candidate, whose only credentials were that he accompanied the party chief YS Jaganmohan Reddy in his 3,600-km-long padyatra in 2017-19 and tended to the latter as a physiotherapist.

"If you elect Gurumoorthy, he will be only in the service of Jagan and not raise voice in Parliament for you," the opposition BJP and TDP have been telling people in

**Tirupati, an SC reserved constituency, is going to the by-poll due to the death of sitting YSRCP member Balli Durga Prasad Rao.**

the run-up to the April 17 by-election, referring to his role as Jagan's personal physio.

The YSR hit back at the opposition parties saying the latter were seeking to make everything an issue as they had nothing else to speak about.

Spread over seven Assembly segments in Chittoor and SPS Nellore districts, Tirupati is witnessing a triangular contest with the BJP, in particular, making a desperate bid to win the seat it last bagged way back in 1999.

## Rainfall forecast for state in next five days

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Moderate to heavy rain is likely to occur at isolated places in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts over the next five days, according to the Meteorological Analysis weather outlook released by the Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority (APSDMA) on Thursday.

According to the APSDMA, a western disturbance as a trough in mid and upper tropospheric westerlies with its axis at 5.8 km above mean sea level roughly along longitude 70°E to the north of latitude 25°N has moved away east-north-

eastwards.

The APSDMA stated that on the first day Thursday, moderate to heavy rain is likely to occur at isolated places in the Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts, very light to light rain is likely to occur at isolated places in West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam, Nellore, Chittoor, Kadapa, Anantapur and Kurnool districts.

On Friday, very light to light rain is likely to occur at isolated places in Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Guntur, Chittoor and Kadapa districts.



WhatsApp messages and human psychology

2



Jagan had 25 TDP activists murdered in 2 years: Lokesh

4



'Need to create room for quick scaling up of vax production'

8

## TODAY

## ALMANAC

Month &amp; Paksham:

Chaitra &amp; Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Chaturthi 06:05 pm

Nakshatram: Rohini 11:40 pm

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

Rahukalam : 10:42 am - 12:15 pm

Yamagandam : 03:22 pm - 04:55 pm

Varjyam : 02:37 pm - 04:26 pm, 12:00 am - 07:44 am

Gulika : 07:36 am - 09:09 am

Good Time : (to start any important work)

Anurakalam : 08:03 pm - 09:51 pm

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

## VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy

Temp: 37/26

Humidity: 53%

Sunrise: 05:59 am

Sunset: 06:32 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated april 15, 2021 5:00 PM

## CID summons Devineni over CM's morphed video

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CID sleuths on Thursday served notice to former minister and TDP senior leader Devineni Uma Maheswara Rao, asking him to appear before them in Kurnool as part of investigation into a case registered against him.

Devineni Uma in turn wrote to the CID seeking 10 days to appear before them, citing the Covid pandemic and that he is in Tirupati currently due to the by-poll.

The CID had last Saturday registered a case against Devineni Uma for allegedly forging an electronic document (video clip)

which he displayed in a press meet on April 7 in Tirupati. The video clip shows Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

The former minister alleged that the Chief Minister has belittled the town of Tirupati and cited the video clip that he displayed on his mobile as proof of his allegation.

Soon after, one Narayana Reddy, who is an advocate from Kurnool, lodged a complaint that the video showed the Chief Minister in bad light and that it was forged and morphed.

## Man hacks six neighbours, including 2 kids

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a barbaric murder over a past enmity, a man brutally hacked to death six members, including two infants, of a family living in next door in Pendurthi area of Vizag early on Thursday.

The bodies, some with intestines pulled out, were found in a pool of blood. The news sent shockwaves across Visakhapatnam, a peaceful city, since such brutal incidents are rare for the city.

According to police, B Appalaraju killed three women, a man, a 2-year-old boy and a 6-month old baby girl with a scythe



used to cut grass. He has been taken into custody.

According to police, Appalaraju and the family of Bommididi

Ramana were at loggerheads. Visakhapatnam Assistant Commissioner of Police (West) V Sripad Rao said the gruesome incident might have happened around 6 am on Thursday.

"The victims were found lying in a pool of blood in their home. The accused Appalaraju is a neighbour of the deceased and he indulged in the heinous crime due to an ongoing dispute between their families," Sripad Rao said.

He added that a dispute had occurred between the two families

PAGE 2: Killed family of daughter's 'rapist' to take revenge: Accused



# Integrated cycling track to connect Beach Road, air and sea ports

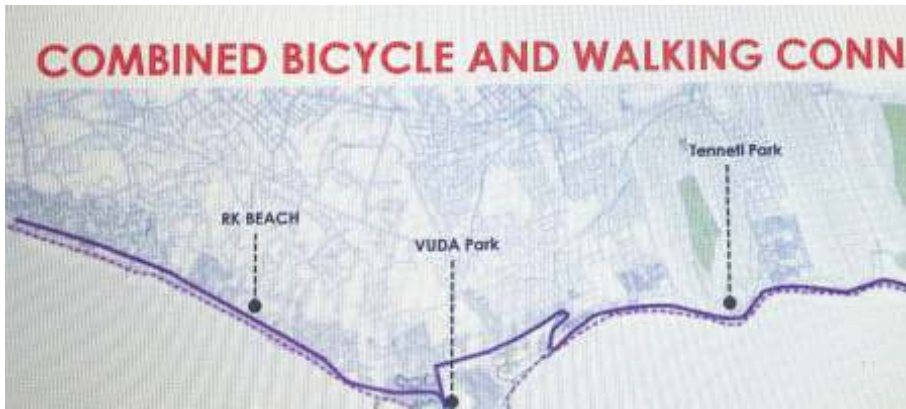
SUMIT ONKA  
■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a major plan to promote green transport and fitness, an integrated bicycle track connecting Vizag beach road, air and sea ports will be coming up soon.

Earlier, the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation, as part of the beach redevelopment projects, had planned to lay a 27-km dedicated bicycle track from VMRDA office to Bheemili.

A tender was also called to prepare the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the same. However, the project was kept on hold after the proposal for the integrated bicycle track surfaced.

The bicycle track, planned on the Vizag beach road, needs to be extended to Bhogapuram in Vizianagaram as the new airport is being built there. The



National Highway Authority of India has also evinced interest in it.

Speaking to The Pioneer, GVMC chief engineer M Venkateswara Rao said: "We had invited tender for the DPR of 27-km bicycle beach road from VMRDA to Bheemili. Meanwhile, the integrated

bicycle proposal also came up which is a future-savvy too."

The project will get a shape when the agency will be finalised. "As the project is integrated one, we are finalising the agency that will take up the work. Discussion is on among the NHAI, state government and other stakeholders.

Once the agency is finalised, the project could take off," said the GVMC chief engineer.

It may be recalled that the master plan for the beach redevelopment has already been prepared.

According to the master plan prepared for the beach redevelopment, the aim is to construct

beautiful greenery along the stretch, coupled with separate walking and cycling tracks, benches on the sidewalks with drinking fountains, and public washrooms. GVMC had issued a request for proposal (RFP) to prepare a detailed project report for the same.

The main component of the DPR will be the focus on integration and strategic approach for merging the green infrastructure with the existing roads, transit areas, bus stands, proposed metro stations, and residential areas.

The strategic plan would focus on providing an ecosystem of bi-cycle tracks by creating off-road bicycle tracks and trails running along the beach at various identified stretches.

The estimated budget for the dedicated cycling and jogging track from VMRDA to Bheemili was Rs 112 crore.

# Jagan had 25 TDP activists murdered in 2 years: Lokesh

D H V SAMBASIVA RAO  
■ KAKINADA

TDP national general secretary Nara Lokesh on Thursday compared the YSRCP government to that of the Jambhi Reddy administration, accusing it of foisting false cases against TDP leaders, activists and deriving sadistic pleasure in doing so.

Lokesh was on a tour of Anaparthi and Bikkavolu in a convoy visiting various places in the region.

Former MLA Nallamilli Ramakrishna Reddy apprised Lokesh of his arrest, which he termed as illegal, and how the government foisted false cases against him. Lokesh assured the former MLA's family of his full support. He described Nallamilli Ramakrishna Reddy as a great hero who is resisting the irregularities of YSRCP. He said that he would not keep silent if the YSRCP tries to harm TDP leaders.

Lokesh accused Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan



Reddy of deriving sadistic pleasure in foisting false cases against TDP cadres, instead of deriving pleasure in implementing development activities.

Addressing the media later, he alleged that Jagan got 25 TDP activists murdered during the past two years. "Foisting a false case against a TDP leader every day and get-

ting a TDP leader arrested every other day has become the order of the day," the party national general secretary said.

Describing Suryanarayana Reddy, MLA of Anaparthi, as an 'actor', Lokesh alleged the MLA was involved in a Rs 400-crore gravel scam in 200 acres belonging to Nagarjuna Fertilisers land in Kapavaram.

## ‘Oppn confined to false propaganda’

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Asserting that the 22 month governance of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy will ensure YSRCP victory in Tirupati by-poll, Government Advisor (Public Affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy on Thursday said that the Opposition parties were confined to false propaganda rather than publicising achievements during their regime.

Speaking to the media at party central office here, Sajjala said running out of issues for campaign in Tirupati by-poll, Opposition parties have been targeting the Chief Minister personally and spreading communal hatred.

He slammed the TDP, BJP and Pawan Kalyan for not fulfilling the promises made during 2014 elections, including Special Category Status to the state and said BJP and TDP should explain what they have done for the state or explain the reasons why they didn't fulfil the promises made.

Sajjala said rather than asking apology for not fulfilling the promises made or pointing out mistakes in the gover-



nance of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, opposition parties have been indulging in false accusations.

He slammed N Chandrababu Naidu and Nara Lokesh for not demanding an explanation from former minister K Atchannaidu or issuing show cause notice and letting him accompany them despite his comments on TDP and Lokesh.

He said Tirupati by-poll should teach a lesson to non-serious political parties working with vested interests in the state.

He said the Chief Minister has written a letter to the electorate of Tirupati parliamentary constituency explaining the welfare schemes and development works and sought votes for YSRCP but didn't criticise opposition parties.

## Opposition has lost hope, conceded defeat: Peddireddy

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Claiming that the TDP has conceded defeat and BJP has been trying to get more votes than NOTA, Panchayat Raj Minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy on Thursday said that the YSRCP would win the by-poll for the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat.

Speaking to the media here, the Minister said he had challenged TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu that YSRCP MPs would resign in case the party loses in Tirupati and TDP MPs should quit otherwise. "There is no response from Naidu. The TDP chief and his son Nara Lokesh don't have the guts to even reply to the challenge," Peddireddy said.

He said Naidu has orchestrated a drama of stone pelting, but no evidence was found in CCTV footage and TDP activist Akula Venkatesh said it was not stone, but a shirt that was thrown. "It's unfortunate that Naidu is trying to gain sympathy and get votes through the stone pelting charade," the Minister said.

Mentioning Nara Lokesh's



drama challenging the Chief Minister to promise at Alipiri regarding YS Vivekananda Reddy murder case, the Minister said the father-son duo lacked the courage to seek votes in Tirupati by-poll and has been diverting people's attention.

He said Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has been working with the agenda of welfare and development in the state and YSRCP has been seeking the votes in the by-election with the same.

The Minister demanded Naidu to explain the video

that went viral where TDP State president Atchannaidu spoke against the party and Nara Lokesh and said there is no confidence in the leadership of Naidu and Lokesh among TDP leaders.

Stating that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has implemented more welfare schemes and development works in last 22 months compared to 14 years governance of Naidu and urged the people of Tirupati parliamentary constituency to vote for Dr Gurumoorthy and ensure his victory with a thumping majority.

## Distressed at testing positive, woman jumps off KGH

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

With the explosion of the new Coronavirus cases again, the Covid beds are getting filled in the hospitals. The rise in cases is triggering psychological issues among people just like it did during the first wave of the pandemic.

It was evident on Thursday when a woman, aged around 50, jumped off a CSR block building on the King George Hospital premises.

According to KGH sources, she along with three other family members was admitted to the KGH after testing positive. However, her health deteriorated further and



hence was being treated in the ICU.

Her other three family members tested negative on Thursday and so was discharged from the hospital.

When they were leaving the hospital and were at the downstairs of the CSR block, she jumped off the building.

## Absconding TDP Srikakulam chief surrenders

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

TDP Srikakulam district president Kuna Ravi Kumar, who had been absconding, surrendered before the Ponduru police station on Thursday. He was shifted to Rajam Court by the police.

Doctors tested him for Coronavirus at the Rajam Government Health Centre and then moved him to the court. A case had been registered against him in connection with the attack on the house of Penubarti YSRCP MPTC candidate along with his followers.

It is learned that Kuna Ravi Kumar had fled the area fearing arrest by the police. In addition, Kuna Ravi Kumar also allegedly obstructed the duties of the police.

## Auto driver murdered, wife commits suicide in Ongole

PNS ■ ONGOLE

In a bizarre incident, an auto driver was murdered and his wife found dead in her house at Sanjay Gandhi Nagar in Ongole on Thursday.

According to reports, Kabali Nagaraj married Srivalli against the wishes of her parents.

Nagaraj was murdered at Marlapada village near Ongole, while his wife Srivalli was found dead. It was suspected that she committed suicide. Police said the couple got married after they loved each other. The parents of the girl have opposed the marriage. Nagaraj and Srivalli

were living separately following the disputes that erupted between them. They complained against each other in the police station. The police registered a case and were investigating the case. Ongole sub-division police officer Prasad inspected the spot where Nagaraj was killed.



## A NRI family found burnt to death in Visakha

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam woke up to the two gut-wrenching incidents on Thursday. While six of a family members were killed by their neighbour, four members of a NRI family were found charred to death under mysterious circumstances at Madhurawada here in the wee hours of Thursday.

Prima facie evidence suggests murder and role of the eldest son who also died in the incident is being suspected.

After inspecting the scene of offence this afternoon, Vizag

Police Commissioner Manish Kumar Sinha told reporters that they were investigating whether the deaths were accidental, suicidal or homicidal.

Murder angle also comes into play as injuries were found on the bodies of three of the deceased. He said a team of forensic experts was collecting evidence.

"We will get a clear picture after the forensic evidence is examined," the top official added.

Bangaru Naidu (50), head of the family, settled in Bahrain and returned to

Visakhapatnam a few years ago. His wife was a practitioner of homoeopathic system of medicine. The couple had two sons.

Bangaru Naidu's hometown is in Gantayada in the Vizianagaram district.

Bangaru Naidu had also participated in the 'Mee Lo Evaru Koteswaradu' reality programme in the past. The family had moved into the apartment eight months ago.

According to the police, neighbours noticed smoke billowing out of the flat in the early hours, following which

they alerted the fire brigade and the police.

The fire and the police teams reached the flat, broke open the main door for an entry and found the charred bodies.

Quoting neighbours, the Commissioner of Police said Naidu's family was engaged in a verbal spat on Wednesday night.

Sinha pointed a finger of suspicion at the elder son and said all was not well in the family.

"Except on the elder son's body, there were injuries on the other three," he pointed out.

Police suspect that Deepak, the eldest son was behind the killings and he might have set himself on fire after killing his mother, father, and younger brother. Deepak might have argued with his family members due to mental stress.

Deepak completed engineering from NIT and had taken coaching in Delhi while preparing for the Civil Services. It is suspected that Deepak was said to be mentally unstable and might have killed his family members and committed suicide himself in that condition, police said.

## Friends, relatives remember GVG's ties with Chirala

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Residents of Prakasam district expressed grief at the death of GVG Krishnamurthy, the former Chief Election Commissioner of India, who was born in Chirala and had made a name for himself nationally.

There were no strangers to him, especially in the town of Chirala. His birth, childhood, and education all took place in Chirala, and friends and relatives who studied with him were saddened when they came to know he was no more. Despite holding key positions, the arrival of Krishnamurthy in Chirala was remembered by many as memorable.

GVG often spent the winter months in Chirala and always talked about local issues with his friends and relatives. He used to greet relatives and friends by their name and asked their well-being. He always used to say



that it was his connection with Chirala that had taken him to such heights.

GVG often visited the school where he studied in Chirala and discussed his experiences with students and also their future.

He is said to have met Gandhiji at the Chirala rail-

way station in 1945. The last time Krishnamurthy came to Chirala was two years ago, locals said.

His friends and relatives want to perform a good deed in his memory in his favourite Chirala town as an inspiration for generations to come.

## Brahmotsavam at Chandragiri temple from April 21

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The TTD was organising the annual Brahmotsavams of Sri Kodandaramaswami temple at Chandragiri from April 21 to May 1 in Ekantham in view of Covid guidelines. As part of Sri Rama Navami celebrations, a special abhisekam was performed for both Mula Virat and also to the utsava idols on April 21 and also Ankurarpanam for the Brahmotsavam.

Follow are prominent events of the Brahmotsavam: Dhvajavarohanam would be performed on April 22 between 11.30 am and 12.15 pm. While on April 25, Tiruchi utsavam instead of Hanumanta vahana will be performed and Sri Sitarama Kalyanotsavam on April 27 and Tiruchi at night instead of Garuda vahanam, a press release said on Thursday.

## Buy books by weight, not cover price at this unique exhibition

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The ongoing book exhibition "BooksByWeight" at Lions Club of Visakhapatnam is proving to be a major attraction for book lovers.

Bibliophiles across the city are turning up at the exhibition, buying their choicest books by weight, and not by its cover cost. The exhibition will continue till April 18.

Pre-owned books are sold at the rate of Rs 100, Rs 200 and Rs 300 per kg. The book exhibition, right opposite Omni RK Hospital on the Ram Nagar road, is crowded during evenings.

"You get approximately 4 A format paperback books – at the rate of around Rs 25 per book or 3 B format Paperback books – approximately Rs 33 per book in a kilogram. We take Rs 300 per kg for children's premium books including picture books, children's fiction, reference books and children's book sets," said the



organisers.

Entry is prohibited without a mask. In wake of the Covid pandemic, people are expected to sanitise their hands before and after touching a book and maintain physical distancing at the venue. Also,

people will have to carry their own bags or boxes since the organisers won't provide any.

For more details, people can contact at 9821026234.

BooksByWeight is being organised by a Mumbai-based bookshop called Butterfly

Books. They organise this sale at all major Indian cities and have recently concluded one at Chennai. The book sale is happening in Visakhapatnam for the second time, having earlier taken place in February 2020.





## Hailstorm creates havoc in Markapuram

PNS ■ ONGOLE

A hailstorm lashed some parts of Prakasam district on Thursday accompanied by strong gales.

About 50 mm of rainfall was recorded at Peddaraveedu and B Cherlopalli mandals of the Markapur division.

A maximum of 64 mm rainfall was recorded in Markapur town and 36 to 50 mm rain in Padda Bommalapuram. Moderate rainfall was recorded in Dornala, Y Palam, Kambham, Ardaveedu, Konakalamitla, Pamur and Addanki Mandals.

Hailstorm created havoc in rural areas of Markapuram. As a result, the power poles were damaged and the power supply was cut off.

Despite the cool weather conditions with rain, people feel the mercury was likely to intensify in the coming days.

# Naidu taken 3 doses of corona vaccine: Nani

PNS ■ SATYAVEDU

Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao (Nani) said on Thursday that he had information that Opposition leader and TDP National President N Chandrababu Naidu had taken three doses of corona vaccine. He said that while the people were taking only two doses, Chandrababu had taken a third booster dose.

Kodali Nani addressed the media persons in the Satyavedu constituency on Thursday as part of his campaign for the Tirupati by-election. With the good governance by CM Jaganmohan Reddy and the strength of the YSR Congress Party, the Telugu Desam Party led by Chandrababu would soon disappear.

Jaganmohan Reddy was like a medicine to the people of the state. Refuting Chandrababu for describing Jagan as a virus, he said only Chandrababu has a virus.

Reacting to the recent Tirupati by-election campaign rally of Naidu, he said that no stone was pelted there. But Chandrababu showed a stone which was offered by one of their activists and alleged that it was a rowdy kingdom and a goonda kingdom, he lamented. He claimed that TDP state



**Jaganmohan Reddy was like a medicine to the people of the state. Refuting Chandrababu for describing Jagan as a virus, he said only Chandrababu has a virus. He claimed that TDP state president Acchennaidu said that the TDP was destroyed by Chandrababu's son Pappu Lokesh.**

president Acchennaidu said that the TDP was destroyed by Chandrababu's son Pappu Lokesh. Kodali Nani has made it clear that the party would

win the by-polls with a thumping majority of votes from the Satyavedu constituency which comes under the Tirupati Parliament constituency.



## Ignore myths about corona, take a jab: Chief Whip

PNS ■ KADAPA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Whip Gadikota Srikanth Reddy on Thursday said that people above the age of 45 should be vaccinated against the myth of the Corona vaccine. Speaking to media persons here on Thursday, he said people should be vigilant about the corona pandemic and suggested: "we need to protect our own health as people shall not neglect and come out from homes only in the case of emergencies and important tasks".

He appealed to the people to wear masks, maintain physical distance and personal hygiene adhering to Covid-19 guidelines. Authorities have been taking all possible steps to make the vaccination process a success. Extreme care must be taken at markets and shops, he said.

Reddy said that the central and state governments were taking steps to provide 100 per cent vaccination to all.

# Why father, son silent on Achennaidu's video: Suresh

G SHEKAR BABU  
■ NELLORE

Education Minister Adimulapu Suresh has come down heavily on TDP National President Nara Chandrababu Naidu, who always claimed that he has 40 years of experience in the industry, for not being able to announce what he did during his tenure for people in the campaign. Since he did nothing for Tirupati during his tenure, he has no right to ask for votes, he added.

Addressing the media persons at the party office here on Thursday, the Minister lashed out at the TDP leaders. He criticized BJP for allying with another party for its political existence in AP and was trying to increase the vote bank. Referring to the assurances given in the State Re-organisation Act, he said the BJP was in a piquant situation where it could not say anything about the Visakhapatnam steel plant and the special status. The minister also criticised the Congress party, which was responsible for the state bifurcation, was now in a confusing situation about what to tell the people.

He claimed "We have been able to tell the people very clearly what we have done in the past two years in the election campaign. The people were laughing at the campaign of TDP, BJP-Janaseena and Congress." The TDP state



**The Amma Vodi scheme, which was giving an assurance to poor mothers, has been criticised for using the scheme against 'Ayya Buddi' as Chandrababu was saying drink alcohol and vote for TDP, there can be no other evil than this.**

president himself said that there was no party in the state. But, Lokesh was still throwing challenges. The TDP's bankruptcy came to light with Achennaidu's video. They may claim that the video of Achennaidu was a fake one. He demanded Lokesh and Chandrababu to talk about the video. Why the father and

son were not complaining about it, he asked.

Chandrababu, on the other hand, was criticizing Amma Vodi' scheme. Was it right to criticise such ideal schemes? He further said that every school in the Kuppam constituency was modernized though it was represented by Chandrababu Naidu, he said. The Amma Vodi scheme, which was giving an assurance to poor mothers, has been criticized for using the scheme against 'Ayya Buddi' as Chandrababu was saying drink alcohol and vote for TDP, there can be no other evil than this, he lamented.

The TDP, BJP-Janaseena and Congress were only making personal criticism against Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy. They know they would not win this election anyway, and those parties have been vying for second and third places. The war was already one-sided and the voters have already made up their mind. The people of Tirupati were about to deliver a historic verdict. The education minister commented that the state was implementing non-partisan welfare programs and hence about 70 per cent of the voters were going to vote for the YSRCP candidate.

All the Dalits would openly support the YSR Congress Party and Gurumurthy was going to win with a record majority, he said.

# Will work hard to solve issues: YSRCP candidate Gurumurthy

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

YSRCP MP candidate Dr Maddila Gurumurthy on Thursday appealed to the electorate of the Tirupati parliamentary constituency to vote for the 'fan' symbol and give a thumping majority in the by-poll.

Speaking to media at the Press Club here on Thursday, Gurumurthy said Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has given him the opportunity to contest for the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat and urged support and cooperation from everyone. He said he was a Tirupati local and came from an ordinary family and added that he would move forward by working hard to solve every



problem with the support of everyone.

Meanwhile, Information and Public Relations Minister Perni Venkatramaiah said Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has chosen a common man for Tirupati by-poll thinking of better service he can do to the constituency. He said Gurumurthy was a resident of Tirupati and urged the electorate to support the MP candidate who belongs to a poor family.

MLA Bhumana Karunakar Reddy said Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has chosen Gurumurthy to represent the people of Tirupati in Parliament and it clearly shows the commitment of the Chief Minister to give importance to poor people in the political space.

## Sanctity of Tirupati at stake with YSRCP: Naidu

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

"The Tirupati Parliament by-election was not limited to Tirupati. This was an opportunity to safeguard the future of Andhra Pradesh. Tirupati voters should take advantage of this opportunity for the state. People need to remember what happened during the two-year rule of the YCP. The onus was on the Tirupati electorate to protect the state. The people of Tirupati have a diamond weapon (Vajrayudham) in their hands," TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu said on Thursday.

Addressing an election rally in Tirupati on Thursday, Chandrababu Naidu said "Coming from Satyavedu constituency, I saw hundreds of JCBs and tippers plundering sand in the river between Uthukota, Surukupalli and Nandam. The Common Voter was asking that what was this unfair. The green tribunal granted a stay on sand digging. No clearance on this. But YCP mafia digging sand up to 60, 70 feet," he said.

Naidu said people were afraid that SC and ST cases are being filed if asked. Peddiredy and Srikanth Reddy's men laid down here. Wherever you look suffering and unspeakable anxiety was prevailing in the state. Not understanding what was going on in the state.

Rising prices, attacks on people, exploitation of natural resources and corruption were rampant. The state was being robbed in all ways and now the No. 1 state in debt and price rise.

Reacting to the police version on Tirupati stone-pelting, he said the police said the stones did not fall. If there was a theft anywhere we have to bring the evidence ourselves.

# 2,400 beds to be ready for corona patients

PNS ■ ELURU

State Health Minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas has directed the district officials to take precautionary measures to control the second wave of corona in the district as a total of 70 coronas positive cases were registered in a single day in West Godavari district on Wednesday.

He enquired about 35 corona cases that were reported in Eturnagaram. Despite the low number of cases compared to other districts in the state. He

asked the officials to make arrangements on war-footing in view of the sudden surge in cases and directed them to arrange 2400 beds in various hospitals across the district.

The Minister held a meeting with District Collector Revu Muthyala Raju, Joint Collector Himanshu Shukla, DM & HO Dr Sunanda and suggested measures to be taken. He ordered to arrange 150 beds in Eluru Hospital, 500 in Bhimavaram Tidco Housing Complex, 1000 in Tidco Housing Complex in



Tadepalligudem, 200 in Eluru CRR Engineering College, 400 in Eluru Ashram Hospital, 30 each in government Hospitals in Tadepalligudem, Palakollu,

Bhimavaram and Jangareddygudem. The minister directed the District Collector to provide immediate medical care to 35 cases that registered in a single day in Eluru.

Speaking to media persons on the occasion, the minister said that corona cases were high in the state and directed the respective district collectors and district medical officers to take immediate steps to reduce corona intensity in Krishna, Visakhapatnam, Nellore and East Godavari districts.

## 864 beds kept ready for Covid patients in Nellore

PNS ■ NELLORE

In the wake of the Covid epidemic, District Collector Chakradhar Babu on Thursday said about 864 beds were kept ready for Covid patients in the district. He directed that steps should be taken to make more beds available at the district government hospital in the city as well as other corporate hospitals to provide treatment to patients suffering from the corona. He appointed a special officer for overseeing the corona treatment.

On this occasion, the Collector said the details of the officers including their name and phone number must be displayed. A total of 864 beds were available at Nellore Government Hospital.



# MLA flags off '108' ambulance

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy introduced special 108 ambulances for the health of children and taking special care of the health of adults, MLA Granthi Srinivas said on Thursday while flagging off a special 108 ambulance at the local camp office here.

He inspected the medical equipment provided in the ambulance to ensure the

health care of the children. He said that the Chief Minister had taken steps to reduce infant mortality in the state.

The function was attended by AMC Chairman Thirumani Yedukondalu, ZPTC candidate Kondregula Narasimha Rao, MPP candidate, Pericharla Vijaya Narasimha Rao, State Gowda Corporation Director, Kamana Nageswara Rao, State Party Secretary AS Raju and 108 staff.



Narasaraopet MP Lau Srikrishnadevarayalu speaking at a meeting of the Sri Krishna Devaraya Balija Sankshema Sangham held at Srikalahasti on Thursday as part of the campaign for Tirupati by-election. He explained the schemes introduced by the YSRCP government for the welfare of people. The MP sought support for the victory of YSRCP's Tirupati Lok Sabha candidate Gurumurthy.

## KEEP COVID AT BAY



AP Home Minister M Sucharita receiving a jab for Covid at Sai Bhaskar Hospital in Guntur on Thursday.

# Make ready beds for Covid patients: JC



PNS ■ KAKINADA

District Joint Collector (Development) Kirti Chekuri directed the authorities to take strong measures to control the number of cases and effectively deal with Covid in the district.

Kirti Chekuri held a review meeting at the Kakinada Collector's office on Thursday with the District Medical

Health Officers, Arogyasree, district coordinators of 108 and 104 vehicles. She said all preparations have to be made to provide treatment for the Covid patients as there was a surge in corona cases in the district. She directed them to identify the beds available in the government and private hospitals and asked them to monitor the Covid diagnostic tests in the district.

# Irregularities galore in Cocanada Annadaana Samajam

SAMBASIVA RAO DHV  
■ KAKINADA

Irregularities galore in Cocanada Annadaana Samajam in Kakinada as endowments department turning a blind eye to the encroachment of the valuable sites of the samajam, not conducting regular auctions to the shopping complexes owned by the charitable institution and not taking suitable action against those who fail to vacate the shops and collection of rent dues, which accumulated to over Rs 20 lakh.

The Samajam was located on Cinema Street in the city. It daily provides food free of cost to beggars, lepers, orphans and stu-

dents belonging to other parts of the state pursuing education here.

Earlier, the Cocanada Annadaana Samajam was floated by some Good Samaritan individuals and set up a trust to run the Samajam. Over a period of time, the trust came under the administration of the endowments department.

The trust owned sprawling sites in Kakinada rural mandal. The Endowments Department is not in a position to identify them. The sites over a period of time became encroached.

The trust owned godowns at Ghaati Centre in the city and shopping complexes titled Annapurna Plaza and

Kamadhenu Shopping Complex located on the main road of the city.

The Samajam is equipped with an executive officer, senior assistant, junior assistant, record assistant, attendant, watchmen and some personnel to cook food and serving them to beneficiaries.

Some bigwigs of the city eyed on commercial complexes of the Samajam. According to allegations, the endowments department paid no attention to these properties like auctioning them and collecting rent and so on.

A person has been keeping some shops in Annapurna Plaza with him for several years. No auction was conducted to lease

them to new parties and no action was taken to recover the rents. The condition of the Kamadhenu complex was no better. In fact, the shops should be auctioned once in three years.

Some political leaders have obtained a lease deed for 11 years in respect of five shops. The rest of the shops should be auctioned once in three years.

As the shops command good demand from businessmen, the Samajam executive officer and some private individuals have been pulling the strings. In fact, there are 85 shops in Annapurna Plaza. Some individuals operated a lodge here. The total rent owed by the leaseholders to the Samajam was put at Rs 20 lakh

so far. The leaseholders are not paying the rent or not vacating the shops. In the Kamadhenu complex, there are 16 shops. An individual has owned five shops illegally under his control and not paying rent for the past six months. Auction of the Godowns is not being conducted.

On the pretext of lack of revenue, the Samajam has reduced the number of guests who dine at the samajam. In fact, the city has more free food choultries being run by the endowments department that provide two square meals a day to students. But the Samajam, citing lack of revenue as the reason, is providing free food to students only once.



## Walk the talk

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

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

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

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

### PICTALK



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

## Matters of faith

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

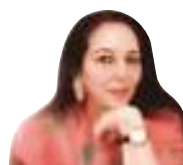
Even as lakhs of devotees throng the Kumbh Mela venue every day in Haridwar, with practically non-existent observation of the COVID-appropriate behaviour including face masks and social distancing, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat kicked up another controversy by saying that the Coronavirus won't infect the pilgrims. The corollary to his logic: The devotees are "our own people" (read Indians) spread over a "vast open area" and "Ma Ganga's blessings will ensure the devotees' well-being". His reasoning flies in the face of all expert warnings and empirical evidence — the authorities detected 1,701 COVID-19 cases between April 10 and 14 at the congregation. Rawat's pearls of wisdom sprang forth when some sceptics dared to compare the largest human gathering in India to the Jamaat at the Nizamuddin Markaz, which was tainted in April last year as the "hotspot" and "epicentre" of the COVID-19 cases in Delhi and across India. He said the Kumbh was different because the Tablighi event was organised

in a small enclosure, with several overseas attendees and when the Markaz was held, neither was there much awareness about Corona nor were any guidelines.

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

# Socio-economic divides in 2021

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



BINDU DALMIA

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### GOOD DECISION TO CANCEL BOARD EXAMS

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

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

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

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

### SERVE THE GREATER GOOD

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

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

## Respect our jawans



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

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

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

Dennis Fitzgerald | Australia

### STICK TO COVID PROTOCOL

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

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

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

Ganapathi Bhat | Kola

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

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

CK Ramani | Mumbai

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

## SOUNDBITE

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

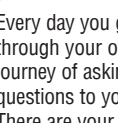


Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



Over the past two years, we've been reducing our military presence in Afghanistan from a high of over 1,500 personnel to around 80 personnel currently.

Australian Prime Minister — Scott Morrison



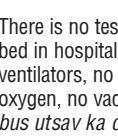
Every day you go through your own journey of asking questions to yourself. There are your own challenges and weaknesses. You have to overpower them.

Actor — Fatima Sana Shaikh



It's nice to have batters behind you, you have the freedom with AB to come and it's a very similar role I have in the Australian cricket team.

Cricketer — Glenn Maxwell



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

Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi



FIRST COLUMN

AN INVESTMENT FOR PEACE



SNEHA GAUTAM

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



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

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

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

# Engineering a better future for humankind

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

In this age of unprecedented technological revolution, genetic engineering is fast occupying the centre stage. Susan Hockfield, a Professor of Neuroscience at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), says that virus-powered batteries, protein-based water filters, cancer-detecting nanoparticles, mind-reading bionic limbs, computer-engineered crops, and so on, have the potential to overcome some of the greatest humanitarian, medical and environmental challenges of our time. These are going to be next generation products that have the potential to reshape our lives. For instance, the discovery of products like aquaporin to purify water for our use that functions like a parking lot that permits only cars identified with a specific transponder to enter, is nature's marvel. All these frontier technologies have inputs of genetic engineering.

Genetic engineering has come a long way since 1971, when two scientists, Berg and Jackson, created the first molecules of a recombinant DNA. Many milestones have been accomplished since then to make genetic engineering almost child's play in the hands of a molecular biologist. But gene therapy, which genetic engineering promised, has been fraught with pitfalls despite a multitude of methodologies. As a result, inherited disorders resulting from aberrations in one's genes could not be treated by replacing or correcting a faulty gene. Correcting the gene in its specific location was an issue and when this was overcome by employing viruses, our immune system would play the spoilsport apart from other issues that sprung up. Ever since the failure of the Jesse Gelsinger trial for the cure of a rare metabolic disorder called ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency syndrome, (OTCD) in 1998, gene therapy was left gasping for breath amid stringent regulations. This is where a serendipitous observation of bacteria having the ability to specifically target the DNA of viruses to inactivate the invader, provided the breakthrough to overcome many of the pitfalls of the earlier methodologies.

**CRISPR and GENE editing:** CRISPR technology is a simple yet powerful tool for editing genomes. It allows researchers to easily alter DNA sequences and modify gene function. Its many potential applications include correcting genetic defects, treating and preventing the spread of diseases and improving crops. The CRISPR-Cas9 can do the job easily and precisely as CRISPR is a part of the bacterial immune system and germs, too, can get sick from viruses. Bacteria fight them by chopping their DNA or RNA with CRISPR sequences and then remember them by pasting their DNA bits into their own genome, allowing to ward off any future infections. These genetic scissors, whose use for targeted modification of genomic DNA was perfected by Jennifer Doudna and Emmanuelle Charpentier, have given a new life to genetic engineering and gene therapy. Both these scientists were the recipients of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2020.

**The use of CRISPR-Cas9:** Many diseases that were incurable through traditional means can now be treated easily, thanks to genetic engineering. There are ongoing clinical trials using



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

also gained from the advancements in genetic engineering.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POINT COUNTERPOINT

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



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



# Arrest the COVID wave as lockdown is not an option

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



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

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

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

Messages of total lockdown

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

- on April 14.

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

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

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



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

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

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

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



by India and South Africa.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Sterlite Power, Vinci Energia to buy Vineyards Project

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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



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

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

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

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

## Boeing partners with IAA, USC for training

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

# FB partners CleanMax for renewable energy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

The first project to be

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## HCL raises Rs 500 crore via QIP issue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

## Flipkart to acquire Cleartrip

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

The deal closing will be subject to applicable regulatory approvals.

## MONEY MATTERS

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



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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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



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



# UNFAIR TO COMPARE MY PERFORMANCE WITH ABHISHEK BACHCHAN’S: PRATIK GANDHI

Ever since Abhishek Bachchan as Harshad Mehta in the feature film *The Big Bull* started streaming, critics and audiences have been comparing him to Pratik Gandhi's Harshad Mehta in the web series *Scam 1992*. Pratik feels the comparison is unfair. "I don't think any two individuals especially artists can be or should be compared, as we are different human beings. The way we think, feel, emote is bound to be different. So there is no sense in any comparison. The two performances should be seen in reference to the script and the character requirement for the same."

What is Pratik's take on another film on Harshad Mehta so soon after the first? "I'm yet to watch *The Big Bull*. But it's exciting to see a new take on the same story." Coming up next from Pratik Gandhi? "I am doing a web series with Tigmathu Dhuliya based on Vikas



Swarup's novel *Six Suspects*. You and I had discussed this earlier. It is now confirmed though they haven't announced it yet." Pratik is also excited about



a feature film. "It's called *Woh Ladki Hai Kahan* with Taapsee Pannu being produced by Siddharth Roy Kapur. There are a couple of other web series and films about which some announcement should come soon." Abhishek Bachchan will next feature in *Bob Biswas* with Chitrangda Singh and Dasvi co-starring Yami Gautam.

## Chehre to release after Covid spike slows down

Just as the film industry was showing signs of recovery from the massive economic impact of the 2020 lockdown and learning to adapt to the pandemic by going back to work and screening films in theatres, a fresh spike in Covid-19 cases has left it gasping for breath again.

Many new releases all set to grace the silver screen have now been postponed and one of them is veteran producer Anand Pandit's labour of love, *Chehre*. The Rummy Jafray directorial has faced numerous delays due to the pandemic and having surmounted them, the film was all set to release this April amid rising media buzz and intense audience curiosity.

Says Pandit, "The film has created so much buzz because of its star cast, its stunning international locations and an obviously dramatic and suspenseful theme. We have been approached by OTT platforms that want to stream *Chehre* with a grand, publicity-fuelled premiere but this is a larger-than-life film that merits the silver screen. That is why I would like to wait out the current Covid crisis to give the film the theatrical release it deserves. I am a patient man and an optimist as well!"



*Chehre* is produced by Anand Pandit Motion Pictures and Saraswati Entertainment Private Limited. It also stars Krystle D'Souza, Rhea Chakraborty, Siddhanth Kapoor, Annu Kapoor, Dhritiman Chatterjee and Raghubir Yadav.

## Vin Diesel: People feel they've grown up with Fast & Furious saga

Hollywood action superstar Vin Diesel has opened up about what makes his *Fast & Furious* franchise so popular globally. He also spoke of the biggest difference between the first film, which was released in 2001, and the ninth installment that is all set to release.

"I think the greatest difference is when the first film came out, you had no idea who these characters were. You had no idea what world you were entering when you came into the theatres to see this movie. Now, people feel that they have grown up with this saga. People feel like this is their franchise," said, while conversing with select world media while launching the trailer of the latest edition of the franchise.

*Fast & Furious 9: The Fast Saga* also stars John Cena, Michelle Rodriguez and Dwayne Johnson. The film is directed by Justin Lin.

Diesel stressed that each time the makers embark on a new chapter they always thought of how to reach higher. "How do we dazzle the audience or engage the audience even more? As John (Cena) articulated these are characters that are very familiar to the moviegoer, and the moviegoer has their own relationship with this family of characters that live in the saga. I will just say there is a familiarity," said Diesel.

He added: "I remember when the cast members used to say the release of *Fast And Furious* is like a holiday the world expects to see it every two years."

*Fast & Furious 9* is the penultimate film in the franchise, and the next part will be done in two films. As of now, it has been decided the two-part tenth film would wrap up the series.

"When my daughter heard that ten would be the last, broken into two films, she started crying and I can't tell you how bad I felt. I tried to console her but she just didn't want to hear



that this world saga could finally have a finale," Diesel, whose real name is Mark Sinclair, said.

The 53-year-old macho star finds it incredible that the fans can finally have a look at the ninth installment.

He said: "It feels incredible to be a part of something that will bring the world together again. There is something I think we as society never anticipated we'd be losing by not being able to be entertained together as a community."

"There is something special that happens when people see *Fast And Furious* in a packed audience with your family, friends and your loved ones, and you can feel the rumble of excitement and you can feel the emotions in the theatre building," he said.

"To be a part of the return to the theatrical experience is something so right, and I feel so proud of. To do it with my family that has been doing it for two decades is a dream come true," he concluded.



## Hayley Hasselhoff makes history as first curve model to cover Playboy Germany

Hayley Hasselhoff has made history as the first curve model to grace Playboy Germany.

The 28-year-old star —whose parents are actors David Hasselhoff and Pamela Bach — has admitted she is "overcome with emotion" after landing the cover on the European edition of

the iconic magazine. Hayley — who wears just a racy red robe draped over her on the cover — explained how she wanted to "use this platform" to show others that they hold the "power" to "love [their] body without hesitation."

Alongside the landmark cover, she wrote on Instagram: "I am deeply humbled and honored to be the first ever curve model on a European cover of PLAYBOY @playboygermany. I am overcome with emotion around what this cover signifies for inclusivity and its greater purpose towards female empowerment. I wanted to use this platform to express that you have the power to love your body without hesitation because of societies' standards of beauty. With @ellenvonunwerth iconic female gaze and cinematic love for showcasing

a woman to her truest self, we chose to celebrate my body by shooting in this artful way. (sic)"

The blonde beauty has vowed to "live unapologetically myself" and hopes to "inspire women to face their fears of the unknown" and not feel defined by their body.

She continued: "My relationship with my body has always stemmed from my relationship with my mental wellbeing. With May being Mental Health Awareness month, I feel empowered to be able to wake up and know that I get to live unapologetically myself. I hope to inspire women to face their fears of the unknown and to lead a life of purpose in which your body does not define you."

"If there is one thing I would tell my younger self it would be that you are worthy just as you are. Now, more

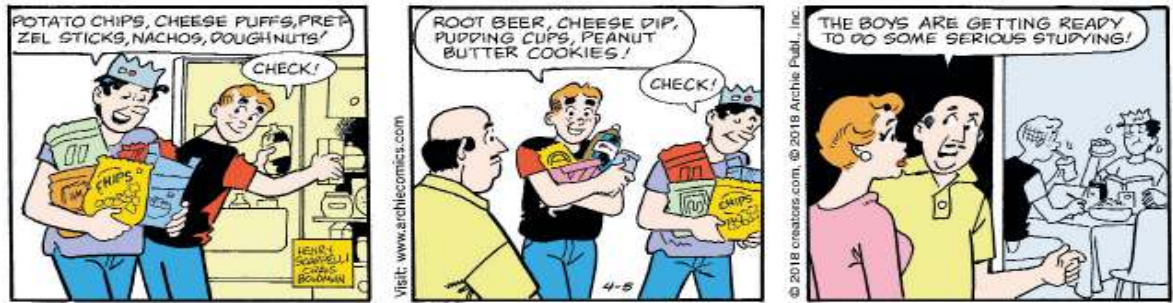
than ever, we should be grounded in the exploration of self and feel encouraged to celebrate ourselves in ways that feel most authentic. I can only hope this cover will allow women to know that they are loved, valued and desired just as they are — right here, right now."

Hayley has also shared how "supportive" her parents have been about her career moves and how proud they are of her journey to where she is today.

She told a news agency: "We all have different journeys in the curve industry but for me, I started out as a curve model and I am still a curve model today. To see the progression of where I've gone, to where I am today, I think they're both very, very supportive and they believe in me and all the choices I make in my own career, just like I do for them."

## FUN

### ARCHIE



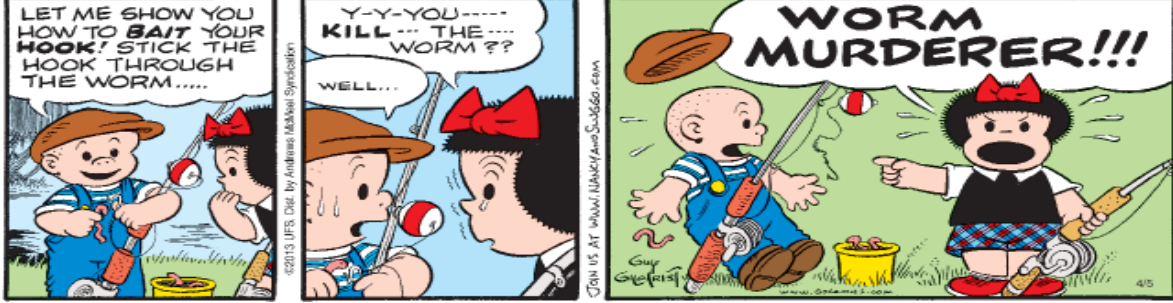
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



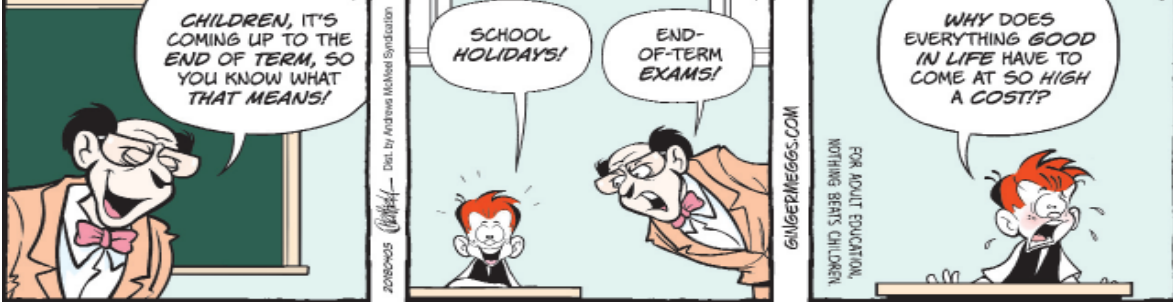
### GARFIELD



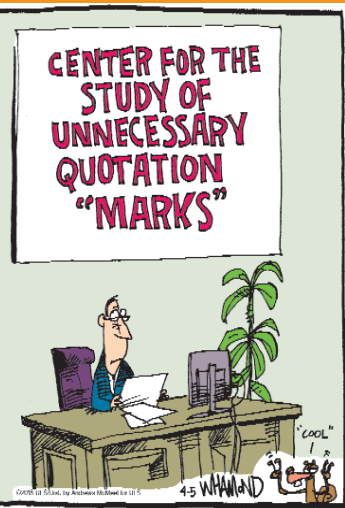
### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



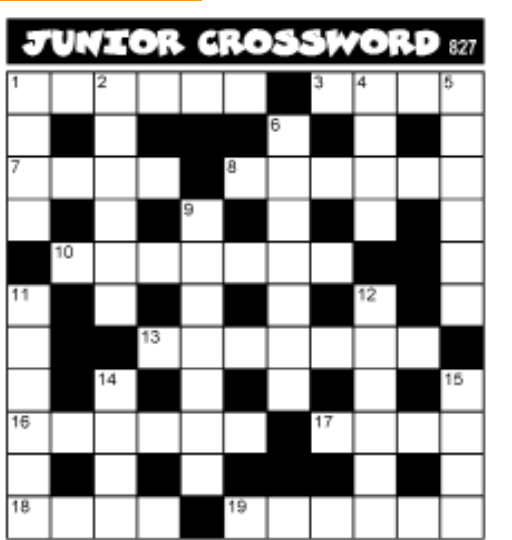
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



#### ACROSS

- Meat from a sheep
- Talk in a friendly way
- A sewed joint
- Wound someone
- Envious
- A green gemstone
- Cunning
- Moist
- Border
- Jail
- A region's weather conditions
- Save from danger
- Forever
- A long sharp animal tooth
- Twirl around

#### DOWN

- A face disguise
- Go on a journey
- Drag along
- Three times four
- Ask



### SUDOKU

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





## PINK SALT TO HEAL YOUR BODY AND MIND

**T**here are many reasons why Himalayan salt has grown in popularity! But before you delve into its benefits let's try and understand what exactly Himalayan salt is. It's a rock salt found in Pakistan's Punjab district. Mined in the Himalayan foothills, it has hundreds of essential nutrients that give it its rosy hue. Previous research indicates that it is one of the purest salts available. It comes in a variety of ways, from exfoliating bath salts to cooking brines and salt lamps.

### Assists the body in detoxification:

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

### Reduces blood pressure:

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

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

### Improves digestion:

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

### Improves respiratory health:

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



# BRINGING COMEDY AND COOKING TOGETHER

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

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

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

Holding the flag high of a funny business, his famous character 'chutki' has taken over his online forum like crazy! Inspired by his regular life experiences, the crazy random stories Gaurav Gera is bringing to us leaves us in splits. Having a lot of influences from the west, he takes the ownership of being likeable somehow. Performing antidotes that are fun, light-hearted and without any undertones of social critiques, he's a self-deprecating comedian. In

awe of actor and comedian Sunil Grover's humour, he describes, "I love Sunil so much, the ability to blend in any character that he has to play on screen is phenomenal. Even while performing he's living life and not putting up a rehearsed stand-up act. It's interesting to watch that."

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

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

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

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

Having discussed that, another facet to the comedy fraternity is that nowadays deep dark humour is landing many of them in jails. Comedians who are into making



people laugh today, just like Gaurav, are to be so alert that they re-evaluate their content multiple times before posting it online because the funny man firmly asserts that he doesn't want to offend anyone!

"I don't touch on the topics of religion, sexuality or body-shaming. There's a careful quality control check that I do. I would rather have pure funny videos instead of landing up into any sort of controversies. Nonetheless, you never know, because at times, people tend to still get offensive on such silly notes which is beyond my

imagination."

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

Does Gaurav Gera wants to be one of them? "The fact of the matter is that stand up comedy gigs have become a rage these days, especially in privileged environments! It's got so popular that citizens tend to think they're both the same. They think comedy means stand-up, which isn't true. I

personally love acting out my humour, to shoot it like fiction. I like to have the appropriate plot lines! Others are doing a really fine job at being stand-up comedians, why should I bother myself now?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

### How does the cost of education differ?

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

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

# Take your call



### How do we judge the education quality?

The curriculum, the faculty and the scope of

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

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

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

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

### What about job opportunities?

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

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

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

### Where is it safer?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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







# 'WILL PURSUE BOTH, MUSIC AND MEDICINE'

Who knew his rendition of *Life of Ram* from *Jaanu* would take him this far. Well it's not just the song, but his talent coupled with hardwork that gave him the much deserved love, work and fame. *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa* winner Yasaswi Kondepudi, in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer's* K RAMYA SREE, talks about his journey thus far, his upcoming projects cutting across language barriers, his plans, and more.

**T**aking the *Life of Ram* song from *Jaanu* to the next level, Yasaswi Kondepudi, the Kakinada-lad pursuing his MBBS, emerged as the winner of Zee Telugu's *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa - The Next Singing Icon* recently, and is now busy with the nine films that he has in his kitty, and is no less than a celebrity.

Yasaswi calls the win a dream come true and says he is yet to sink in this news.

Speaking about how he gained interest in music, Yasaswi shares, "Since my childhood I have been in an orchestra along with my parents, who are both singers. My parents had a love marriage. After I was born, they set up their own orchestra. The group grew along with me. I grew up listening to music every single day."

"I was never into singing during my formative years. However, I think playing the keyboard helped me gain swaragnam. On one occasion, when one of the singers could not make it, I was asked to be his replacement. That particular music night was a big hit and everyone appreciated my singing. That's when I embraced singing fully," he says.

For 30 musical weeks, Telugu audiences across the world were obsessed over this young medico's renditions. Millions tuned in every week to watch him sing.

The MBBS lad has set up his own musical band YK Concerts while in college. "We held concerts across both the Telugu states," he says.

The youngster never knew he would get through *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa* auditions, let alone winning the show.

Sharing one of the most bitter-sweet moments in life, he says, "I have the habit of recording my every concert and uploading the same on YouTube. From 100 my subscribers grew to 40,000. A day

after singing *Life of Ram*, someone hacked my channel and I lost all my work. It really disappointed me. I started a new channel. Two days after *Life of Ram*, I gained two lakh subscribers."

The singing star now has celebrity status. While he is enjoying the fame, he sometimes feel uncomfortable as he cannot roam openly now with people recognising him wherever he goes.

Not just Telugu, the youngster also has a Bollywood and Sandalwood (Kannada) project. He is still celebrating his win, by performing concerts across Telugu states.

Currently pursuing his final year of medicine, Yasaswi, dreams of becoming a medical officer while continuing his stint in singing.

"Nothing comes for free. I worked hard and reached my final year of medicine."

I neither want to leave practicing medicine nor music. I want to do both in my life," he concludes with immense joy and pride for making his family, and near and dear, happy with his work.

## Patriotism, the reigning flavour in South films

**S**uperstars of the south industry seem to be in a race to announce patriotism-themed mega projects. Filmmakers are going all out to launch teasers, trailers and announcements of films that hoist the Tricolour spirit high.

Here are recent announcements in the southern film industry that are high on the patriotic spirit:

1947



*Ghajini* director AR Murugadoss will co-produce the pan-Indian film (simply put, the term means it will be made and released in multiple languages). Murugadoss co-produces with Om Prakash Bhatt, and the film will be directed by Pon Kumaran. The Tamil film will be released in multiple languages across the country.

RRR



SS Rajamouli film — *Roudram Ranam Rudhiram* — is said to be one of the costliest films ever produced in India. The film is a fictional account starring Ram Charan and Jr NTR as freedom fighters Alluri Sitarama Raju and Komaram Bheem, who fought against British and the Nizam of Hyderabad.

MAJOR



Adivi Sesh stars as 26/11 martyr Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan. The film is a biographical drama and its teaser was recently released. The film marks Telugu superstar Mahesh Babu's debut as producer and is directed by Sashi Kiran Tikka. The film is slated to release on July 2. It is being shot in Telugu and Hindi and will be dubbed in Malayalam.

WILD DOG



The Telugu film released recently. Superstar Nagarjuna plays an NIA agent in the film that references contemporary terrorist attacks. The film also features Dia Mirza and Saiyami Kher.

## TAMANNAH UNVEILS KAJAL'S FIRST LOOK FROM GHOSTY

**K**ajal Aggarwal's colleague and her good friend Tamannah

Bhatia unveiled the first look of her upcoming horror-fantasy dark comedy film *Ghosty*, where the actress plays a cop.

In the poster, the actress is seen sitting in front of the Parliament House surrounded by politicians.

*Ghosty* is being

helmed by director Kalyaan and is bankrolled by Seed Pictures banner. It is a female centric film. Apart from Kajal, the movie also has Yogi Babu, Urvashi, Jagan, Suresh Menon, Motta Rajendran and KS Ravikumar in the crucial roles.

The sources close to the makers of *Ghosty* revealed that Kajal Aggarwal is playing the role of a cop who has to deal with the ghosts

troubling her. The *Chandamama* actress has already joined the sets and started the shoot of her part. The film is being made in Telugu and Tamil languages.

On the work front, Kajal will also be seen in Acharya alongside Chiranjeevi. She will also be seen in *Mumbai Saga*, *Indian 2* and *Hey Sinamika*. She has also been roped in Nagarjuna-starrer film recently.



## 'Power Play helped me experiment with genres'

**A**ctor Raj Tarun and director Konda Vijay Kumar's *Power Play* is being streamed on Amazon Prime.

Produced by Mahidhar, Devesh under Vanamalee Creations Pvt Ltd as their Production No - 1, the film opened to fairly good response in theatres.

The film now has the highest viewing count on Amazon Prime. "Our *Power Play* is getting very good appreciation from

Amazon Prime similar to its theatrical release. I am receiving phone calls from friends, industry people saying that they have watched a very good thriller."

Director Vijay Kumar Konda said, "I am very happy that *Power Play* is getting very good reach on OTT too. I did this film in a genre that is new to me. This film gave me a boost to experiment with genres in the future."

The film, which is touted to be a thriller, also stars Hemal Ingale,



Poorna, Madhunandan, Ajay, Kota Srinivas Rao, Raja Ravindra, Dhanraj, Kedari Shankar, and others in pivotal roles.



## Kichcha Sudeep's Vikrant Rona to release on August 19

**E**ga fame Kichcha Sudeep's multilingual upcoming film, *Vikrant Rona* is all set to have a theatrical release on August 19. The actor shared the news on Twitter along with a motion poster of the film. "After enjoying the process of preparations and it's making,, its now time for a

new excitement. We the team of *Vikrant Rona* is all excited and happy to mark August 19th 2021 for its theatrical release," Sudeep wrote in a tweet.

In a follow-up tweet, the actor thanked his co-stars, colleagues and fans for showing him and his upcoming film with abundant love. "Thanks to many from my industry n other

fraternities,, n to all my frnzz,for the luv and support u have shown through and through. The team on the post production is surely doin an awesome job. Proud of you guys. #VikrantRona #VikrantRonaOnAug19 @VikrantRona #WorldGetsANewHero (sic)."

Sudeep's *Vikrant Rona* was supposed to be one of the first big-budget films to have arrived on floors in the early days of the pandemic, however, it was delayed due to subsequent lockdown.



**T**ollywood actor Nikhil Siddharth inaugurated 'Gismat Mandi' Jail-themed Arabic restaurant in Vijayawada. On the occasion, the *Happy Days* actor said that Bezawada stands as a destination to serve different food and flavours, adding that it is commendable to set up an Arabic theme to provide unique flavours to the food lovers of the city.