



Congress stalwart Rosaiah departs

THE FUNERAL, WITH STATE HONOURS, WOULD BE HELD ON SUNDAY

Rosaiah died while being taken to a private hospital here after he fell ill on Saturday morning, Cong sources said.

HE PRESENTED UNDIVIDED AP BUDGET 15 TIMES

PM Modi condoles demise of Rosaiah

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday condoled the death of former Andhra Pradesh chief minister K Rosaiah and said that his contributions to public service will be remembered. A veteran Congress leader, Rosaiah died on Saturday. He was 88. In a tweet, Modi said, "Saddened by the passing away of Shri K. Rosaiah Garu. I recall my interactions with him when we both served as Chief Ministers and later when he was



Tamil Nadu Governor. His contributions to public service will be remembered. Condolences to his family and supporters. Om Shanti."



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PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh and veteran Congress leader Konijeti Rosaiah passed away here on Saturday.

He was 88. Rosaiah died while being taken to a private hospital here after he fell ill this morning, Congress sources said.

Union Tourism Minister G Kishan Reddy, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, state Congress president and MP A Revanth Reddy and several other leaders condoled the death of Rosaiah. Chief Justice of India N V Ramana paid homage to the late leader.

The Chief Minister, who visited Rosaiah's house in Hyderabad and paid his tributes, instructed the officials to conduct the funeral of the departed leader with State honours, an official press release said.

The State government also declared three days of mourning, it said. The funeral would be held on Sunday afternoon.

Congress sources said Rosaiah's mortal remains would be kept at Gandhi Bhavan, the party headquarters in Telangana, on Sunday to enable party leaders and workers to pay their last respects.

Expressing grief over the demise of Rosaiah, Congress leaders in Telangana recalled his stellar contributions to party and in successive Congress governments in undivided Andhra Pradesh. PCC president A Revanth Reddy, who was in Delhi to attend Parliament session, returned to Hyderabad to pay tributes to the veteran leader.

Rosaiah had the unique distinction of presenting the State budget for 15 times, Revanth Reddy said.

The Congress leaders observed two-minute silence at Gandhi Bhavan in Rosaiah's memory.

Rosaiah's political journey began in 1968 as an MLC.

2

A trusted, time-tested politician

B RAJESWARA PRASAD ■ HYDERABAD

The departure of Konijeti Rosaiah, arguably the last of Congress stalwarts in the state, is indeed a great loss to value-based politics, ethics of governance, and to those who believe in profound commitment to public service. He proved to be a time-tested

politician, who faced many political upheavals, troubles, and turmoil, but came out unscathed.

A true-blue dyed-in-the-wool Congressman, Rosaiah worked always with zeal to save and sustain the party against all odds and imbibed the party's ideologies and values in its true spirit and followed them to the last. Whether in position or in opposition, Rosaiah's always left his mark. His

patience, simplicity, and gentleness made him most sought-after by all Congress leaders.

As a man with a good command of the Telugu language and exemplary oratorical skills, Rosaiah could easily surpass or overpower any speaker with his statements backed by unimpeachable facts and figures.

2

India's 4th Omicron patient in Mumbai, travelled unvaccinated

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A 33-year-old man from Maharashtra who travelled to Mumbai from South Africa via Dubai and Delhi late last month has tested positive for the Omicron variant of the coronavirus, in the fourth such case confirmed in India.

On 24th November, the passenger reported mild fever after landing in Mumbai. He had not taken any COVID-19 vaccine. However, no other symptoms were observed. "This mildly symptomatic patient is being treated at the Covid Care Centre in Kalyan-Dombivali," a government note said.

Twelve of the passenger's high-risk contacts and 23 low-risk contacts have been traced and all have tested negative for COVID-19. Additionally, 25 of his co-passengers from the Delhi-Mumbai flight have also tested negative. More contacts are currently being traced.

Explore mediation, courts should be last resort: CJI to business community

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Justice of India N V Ramana on Saturday said that the option of going to courts for dispute resolution should be used as the "last resort", only after exploring Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms like arbitration and mediation.

"My advice, after practicing in the legal profession for over 40 years in different capacities, is that you must keep the option of going to courts as a last resort. Use this last resort only after exploring the option of ADR- arbitration, mediation and conciliation," he said.

Justice Ramana, who was speaking at the Curtain Raiser and Stakeholders' Conclave of International Arbitration and Mediation Centre (IAMC) here, recalled Lord Krishna's attempt to mediate between the Pandavas



Chief Justice of India N V Ramana and TS Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao at the Curtain Raiser and Stakeholders' Conclave of the International Arbitration and Mediation Centre.

and Kauravas in the epic Mahabharata. "It may be worthwhile to recall

that the failure of mediation led to disastrous consequences," he said. The reasons for conflicts are

many, including misunderstandings, ego issues, trust and greed. Ultimately, small differences of opinion can lead to a big conflict and even big conflicts can be resolved with some effort in understanding one another, he said.

If conflicts arise in personal life, they can be resolved by avoiding the people we do not like or by sacrificing some money to get mental peace, among others, the CJI said. A prudent person tries to find ways to resolve conflicts amicably, he said.

But in a business, money, honour or reputation cannot be lost and the interests of business or industry cannot be sacrificed. In such a situation also, an easy way of settling disputes without wasting much time or money or losing peace of mind can be thought of, he said.

2

KCR draws parallel between Rachhabanda and ADR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao on Saturday drew a parallel between 'Rachhabanda' and the Alternative Dispute Resolution system in the legal dispensation.

He was speaking at the Curtain Raiser and Stakeholders' Conclave of the nation's first International Arbitration and Mediation Centre

(IAMC) scheduled to be inaugurated in the city on December 18. The IAMC will be inaugurated initially in a temporary building having 25,000 sq ft space in Madhapur. The state government on Saturday allocated land in Puppulaguda in the city for constructing a permanent building.

Rachhabanda refers to a raised platform, where traditionally vil-

lagers in India got together to discuss their social, economic or other problems or issues, which were addressed by the village head known as munsabu, who sits on the Rachhabanda. Over time Rachhabandas came to act as local courts, though largely confined to respective villages.

2

Rosaiah-a rare breed of politician who practiced value based politics

P:4

Amit Shah called for talks, can end protest, say farmers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah called farmers' leaders last night to discuss the remaining issues following the success of their year-long campaign to repeal the three new agricultural laws, the growers said on Saturday, announcing a five-member panel to hold talks with the government.

For now, the farmers will continue the protest over their demands like widening the Minimum Support Price or MSP programme that guarantees prices for certain crops and dropping cases filed against protesters over the last year.

"Amit Shah called last night. He said the laws have been rolled back and the government is serious about finding a solution to the ongoing stir. The Home Minister wanted a committee to communicate with the government, so we finally have made that committee now," Yudhvir Singh, a leader of one of the farmers' unions told media.

2

Rs 1,100 cr super-specialty hospital at Warangal approved

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has accorded administrative sanction for an amount of Rs 1,100 crore towards the construction of a super-specialty hospital over an extent of 11 acres at Warangal.

A GO in this regard was issued by Health Secretary S A M Rizvi on Saturday. The 2,000-bed hospital would be spread over 24 floors. The civil works relating to the hospital are

estimated to cost Rs. 509.00 crore; while water supply and sanitary works are expected to cost Rs. 20.36 crore. Mechanical, electrical and plumbing works are to be taken up at a cost of Rs. 182.18 crore and ancillaries are estimated to cost Rs 54.28 crore. Additionally statutory provisions & taxes are expected to total Rs. 229.18 crore. Medical equipment and furniture would cost Rs. 105.00 crore.

2

PM for Delhi-Dehradun corridor, not Hyd-Nagpur

NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD

A couple of months after Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao had requested Prime Minister to sanction a Hyderabad-Nagpur Industrial Corridor (HNIC) on the lines of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, on Saturday Prime Minister Narendra Modi inspected the finalized model of the upcoming Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor.

Modi laid the foundation stone for the Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor, which will connect the two cities via the Eastern Peripheral and the Delhi-Meerut Expressways. It is expected to reduce travel time



Representational picture

from six hours to two-and-a-half. The corridor will be built at a cost

of around Rs 8,300 crore.

KCR, during his meet in

September, had requested Modi to sanction the Hyderabad-Nagpur Industrial Corridor, covering a length of 585-km. The project aims to exploit the central location of Nagpur, which is proposed as a multi-modal international cargo hub and Hyderabad, which is a major IT and manufacturing destination.

Former AP CS IYR Krishna Rao, commenting on the Delhi-Dehradun corridor, said in a tweet: "Looking forward to the day Narendra Modi announces Hyderabad and Bengaluru economic corridor. This is something the Chief Ministers of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka should together fight for."

FARMERS' PROTEST

SKM forms panel for talks with govt, wants written assurance on demands

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha on Saturday formed a five-member panel for dialogue with the government on their pending demands including MSP, compensation to kin of farmers who died during the agitation against the agri laws and withdrawal of cases against the protesters.

The development comes after Union Home Minister Amit Shah, according to sources in the SKM, spoke to a senior farmer leader over the phone earlier this week.

"The five-member committee will now hold talks with the government on our pending demands. There have been informal talks with the government in the past but we want a written assurance on the remaining issues, including withdrawal of cases and a legal guarantee on MSP," a farmer leader said.

The sources said that in the coming days, the SKM's state committees are likely to have



meetings with the home ministers of states where cases have been registered against the protesting farmers.

"We will not end this agitation without a formal response on each of the issues being raised by us. We want to see all the cases foisted against farmers as well as their supporters, who were part of this movement, to be withdrawn and assurance to be made formally," the SKM said in a statement.

Farmer leaders Balbir Singh Rajewal, Ashok Dhawle, Shiv Kumar Kakka, Gurnam Singh Chaduni and Yudhvir Singh were named the members of the committee after a meeting was held by the SKM here on Saturday.

Addressing a press conference with other SKM members at the Singhu Border protest site, farmer leader Rakesh Tikait said that the next meeting of the Morcha will take place on

December 7 at 11 AM to decide the future course of the movement.

SKM, an umbrella body of 40 farm unions, in the statement said that farm unions have had a "bitter experience" in the past of securing oral assurances and ending their agitation only to find that the government reneges on them.

"The Government of India has chosen to work informally and in a piecemeal fashion of responding to some of the issues being raised by the protesting farmers, the SKM statement said.

Protesting farm unions have been pressing for their demands to be considered including withdrawal of cases filed against farmers during the movement, legal guarantee on MSP and compensation to kin of farmers who died during the agitation.

SKM leaders, after the meeting, said they will not move from the protest sites until cases filed against farmers are withdrawn, and demanded an assurance in writing.

Farmers from Punjab,

Haryana and Uttar Pradesh under the aegis of various farmers' unions have been protesting at the borders of the national capital since November 26 last year to demand repeal of the three farm laws.

On Monday, a bill was passed in parliament to repeal the three contentious farm laws, one of the main demands of the protesting farmers.

But the stalemate continues with the protesters demanding that the government fulfil the other demands also.

The next meeting of SKM has now been fixed for December 7, with the next two days kept for the Government of India to respond to SKM and work along with the 5-member Committee to resolve this agitation to its logical conclusion, the SKM statement said.

Shiv Kumar Kakka, farmer leader and SKM member, said that the five-member panel will be a coordinating agency between the SKM, and Centre. Kaka is a member of the newly formed panel.

TN Governor, CM Stalin condole Rosaiah's death

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi and Chief Minister M K Stalin on Saturday condole the death of Konijeti Rosaiah, former Governor of Tamil Nadu and former Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh.

Governor Ravi expressed shock and grief on Rosaiah's demise, who had served as Governor of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka as well.

Ravi praised Rosaiah as a senior statesman and parlia-

mentarian known for his administrative acumen. Rosaiah had been Minister of Finance in Andhra Pradesh and presented budget for 16 times.

His contributions to Andhra Pradesh as its longest serving Finance Minister are well recognised. He had also served as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Ravi said adding Rosaiah was a humble and pious person.

"His death is an irreparable loss to the nation and to the State of Andhra Pradesh

in particular. I convey my sincere condolences to the bereaved members of the family and pray to God to rest his soul in peace," Ravi said.

Stalin tweeted, "Pained to hear about the passing away of former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and former Governor of Tamil Nadu Dr. Konijeti Rosaiah, a man of vast experience, knowledge and a veteran statesman. I offer my deepest condolences to his family and friends in this hour of grief."

Explore mediation, courts should be last resort: CJI to...

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"Now to come back to the reality, in business you might have a difference of opinion and disagreements. One would usually start by initiating a dialogue to clarify issues. If it doesn't happen, you may still look for people who can help you resolve such issues by negotiating. If this also doesn't work, then the only option people consider is to go to courts," he said, advising that going to courts should be the last option.

Observing that arbitration and mediation are efforts at restoring a relationship, he said the most important factor behind the resolution of any dispute is having the right attitude of leaving aside ego, emotions and embracing practicality. Once the conflicts enter a Court, much gets lost in the practice and procedure, he said.

Dispute resolution mechanisms like arbitration and mediation are nowadays the preferred modes of dispute resolution and the reasons for opting for mediation or arbitration over traditional litigation include, fewer delays, more involvement of the parties in the process and more comfortable and amicable environment for the parties, the CJI said.

Mediation also has the benefits of allowing for settlements and compromises between parties, possibility of a continued relationship between parties after the dispute resolution process, he said.

Supreme Court judge L Nageswara Rao, Telangana High Court Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and several other legal luminaries, besides Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, were present on the occasion.

AP Guv, CM and others mourn Rosaiah's demise

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan, Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, Leader of Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu and a host of others on Saturday expressed profound grief over the demise of Konijeti Rosaiah, who served as the CM of the then united AP.

I pray for rest to his soul and offer my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members, the Governor said in a message.

Rosaiah became Chief Minister of erstwhile united

AP on September 3, 2009, following the death of incumbent Y S Rajasekhara Reddy. He served as Chief Minister till November 25, 2010, and became Tamil Nadu Governor in August 2011.

The Chief Minister said he was deeply pained by news of Rosaiah's death.

In his long political career, Rosaiah rendered yeoman services as a legislator, minister, parliamentarian, Chief Minister and Governor.

His death is a deep loss to the two Telugu states, Reddy said in a statement.

Chandrababu Naidu

described Rosaiah as a good administrator and an economic expert.

From a student leader, Rosaiah rose in ranks to become a state Governor. He remained non-controversial throughout his political career," Naidu observed and recalled his long association with the veteran leader.

Jana Sena Party president K Pawan Kalyan noted that Rosaiah had been a blemishless political leader.

He was a personification of values. He left a distinct mark as a member first of the Legislative Council and later the Legislative Assembly and

Parliament.

His rich political experience and wisdom will always be remembered, Kalyan said.

Expressing grief over Rosaiah's demise, former Speaker of the Assembly Nandendla Manohar recalled the former led the then united state with adroit acumen when it was passing through testing times.

AP Congress Committee president Sake Sailajanath, state BJP president Somu Veerajulu, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan Vice-Chairman Vishnuvardhan Reddy and several others mourned Rosaiah's death.

Sonia, Rahul condole death Rosaiah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi and party leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday condole the demise of former Andhra Pradesh chief minister and veteran party leader K Rosaiah.

Both Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi spoke to Rosaiah's son K Shiva Subba Rao, and expressed their condolences to him and family members. Rosaiah was a chief minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh and he had also served as governor of Tamil Nadu.

India's tour of South Africa confirmed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's tour of South Africa will go ahead "as originally scheduled" despite concerns over a new COVID-19 variant, Cricket South Africa confirmed through a press release on Saturday. The South African board, however, said that a few adjustment to the logistical arrangements have been made with arrival timings of the Indian team "moved out by a week". India will play three Tests and as many ODIs in South Africa as scheduled but the four-match T20I series will be held at a later date. "Cricket South Africa can confirm that the India Tour will continue as originally scheduled, with a few adjustment to the logistical arrangements, such as the arrival time of the India Team, CSA said in a media release.

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It is very rare to find a leader of the nature and stature of Rosaiah, who could adjust with any leader with his exceptional qualities; for, he was a man for all reasons and for all leaders.

This speaks volumes about how he could work comfortably with many Chief Ministers of the United Andhra Pradesh who one after another preferred and adored his skills of managing things. From Anjaiah to Rajasekhara Reddy, he saw many Chief Ministers with each of whom he got along well. If a politician's ability to achieve things is backed by vision, he can do miracles. This is where Rosaiah's visionary leadership stood out during many testing times. One of them was during his tenure as Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh when a massive cyclone caused extensive damage with what looked like unmanageable consequences. With his studied, timely steps

Congress stalwart...

Continued from page 1

He served as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh from September 3 after the demise of YS Rajasekhara Reddy till November 25 in 2009. He had a challenging time as the Chief Minister in view of political developments following the sudden demise of charismatic YSR in a chopper crash and the separate Telangana agitation gaining momentum. He was elected to the Lok Sabha from Narasaraopet in Andhra in 1999, Congress sources said. He had also served as the Governor of Tamil Nadu from August 31, 2011 to August 30, 2016.

Eatala: Nobody can stop BJP victory in 2023 TS polls

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP legislator from Huzurabad Eatala Rajender has asserted that the Huzurabad outcome will serve as a compass for people of the state. Huzurabad people had infused life to democracy in the State through the freedom given to them by the Constitution by ensuring his victory, he said.

Eatala alleged that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had spent Rs.600 crore in the Huzurabad constituency to destroy him. KCR indulged in the worst of the worst acts during the Huzurabad elections, he claimed.

Addressing the BJP Jangaon district training classes on Saturday at Pembarthi village in Janagoan mandal, Eatala lashed out at KCR saying the Chief Minister was encouraging family rule and resorting to undemocratic rule in the state. Only BJP had the power to control KCR, he said.

The BJP, which once had two seats in Parliament, was now ruling the nation winning more than 300 seats across the nation. So, nobody can stop the victory of the BJP in Telangana state in the 2023 elections, he maintained.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹212
Without Skin	₹232
Broiler at Farm	₹115
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	455
VIJAYAWADA	409
VISAKHAPATNAM	420
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.55

Nearly 2 years after Covid outbreak, cook Island reports its first case

PNS ■ WELLINGTON

The Cook Islands on Saturday recorded its first case of Covid-19 since the pandemic began, as the South Pacific country edges toward reopening its borders to tourists.

The nation of around 17,000 people has one of the highest vaccination rates globally, with 96 percent of the eligible pop-

ulation double-dosed.

The virus was detected in a 10-year-old boy quarantining after arriving on a repatriation flight with his family on Thursday, Prime Minister Mark Brown said in a statement. The boy was believed to have flown in from New Zealand.

"We have been preparing ourselves for the time we

reopen our borders. Our testing regimes have shown the value of that preparation by catching this case at the border," Brown said.

The island nation, which shut itself off from the world when the pandemic hit, has announced plans to resume quarantine-free travel with New Zealand on January 14.

Amit Shah called for talks...

Continued from page 1

"The result of the meeting between the government and the committee will be discussed on December 7th, and if a compromise is

found, then there is a possibility of farmers going back from borders," he said.

The decisions were taken at a meeting organised by the Samyukta Kisan

Morcha (SKM) - the umbrella body of farmers' organisations - held at the Singhu border near Delhi to decide on the future of the agitation and discussed vacating the protest sites.

KCR draws parallel between Rachhabanda...

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In this context, the Chief Minister said: "All of us are aware that since ancient time, in India, settlement of disputes by village elders has been prevailing. The new trend of Alternative Dispute Resolution system stems from that traditional resolution of disputes at Rachhabanda in olden days. Now, the arbitration is recognized as one of the best modes of Alternate Dispute Resolution".

He expressed gratitude to Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana for his decision to set up an International Arbitration and Mediation Centre (IAMC) in Hyderabad.

KCR said, "Unfortunately, India is lagging behind when it comes to enforcement of contracts. Though it is very late in establishing such a centre in the country, we should be happy that it is coming up now and in Hyderabad. Hyderabad is a very appropri-



ate choice, given its thriving IT and industrial sectors, and best quality supporting infrastructure like airport and hotels, and our central location and excellent connectivity with rest of the country and the world".

KCR said that he was aware that sometimes due to various reasons beyond control; com-

panies often ended up facing contractual disputes and other forms of litigation with their suppliers, customers or partners. Sometimes, even the Central and State governments became a party to such litigation.

KCR observed: "The alternate dispute resolution mechanism that the proposed

Arbitration and Mediation Centre provides would be of tremendous value to the industries and business in India. Due to absence of such a facility hitherto in our country, I am aware that many companies have to face enormous challenges in getting their disputes resolved in courts and centres located in foreign cities like Singapore, Paris, Dubai and London".

The Chief Minister said that TS had decided to provide a suitable land parcel for the construction of a permanent building for the Centre, which will receive huge patronage not just from our state and the whole country, but also from the entire Asia, thereby making it stand out as a premier institution of global repute.

Pilot to synergise facilitation council and IMAC

Addressing the gathering, IT & Industries Minister K T Rama Rao on Saturday announced the launch of a

pilot to harmonise the functioning of the state's facilitation councils for MSMEs with that of IAMC.

KTR observed: "This Center can also be extremely beneficial for the MSME sector. Mega industries do not need as much support from the government and institutions as the small and medium entrepreneurs. For this purpose we have set up facilitation councils both at the state level and the district level to facilitate any dispute redressal for the small and medium entrepreneurs". He added: "I will ensure from our side, we will stay engaged through the facilitation councils with the arbitration and mediation center so that we can bring about a lot of synergies and help small and medium entrepreneurs. I look forward to continuing engagement with the Center".

KTR spoke at length about TS-iPASS policy and the initiatives taken up by Telangana government to woo investors.

213 new Covid cases, one death in Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana continued to witness a slight but steady rise in COVID-19 cases with 213 new infections being reported on Saturday, pushing the tally to 6,76,787.

The toll rose to 3,998 with one more fatality, a health department bulletin said.

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) accounted for the most number of cases with 72, followed by Ranga Reddy (21) and Sangareddy (20) districts, the bulletin said, providing details as of 5.30 PM today.

It said 156 people recov-

ered from the disease, taking the cumulative number till date to 6,69,010.

The number of active cases in the state is now 3,779, the bulletin said.

It said 39,495 samples were tested on Saturday, taking the total number tested till date to 2,87,38,462.

The samples tested per million population was 7,72,124.

The Case Fatality Rate in Telangana was 0.59 per cent and the recovery rate, 98.85 per cent.

The state logged 160 cases on November 27 when the cumulative number of cases was 6,75,479.

Will Dharani portal go into the hands of US firm Quantela?

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

In May 2018, the development of the Dharani portal was awarded to TerraCIS Technologies, a subsidiary of the IL&FS group.

Within a month, that is, in June 2018, the IL&FS defaulted close to Rs 1 lakh crore bank loans and was declared insolvent by rating agencies.

As a prudential measure the TS government should have cancelled the Dharani Project awarded to the bankrupt IL&FS and given it to reputed IT companies like the NIC, TCS, Infosys etc.

In 2009, when the Satyam scam was exposed the united AP Government immediately cancelled the Hyderabad Metro Project awarded to Maytas and gave it to L&T.

Even after knowing this, the Telangana Government has decided to work with the bankrupt IL&FS regarding the Dharani Portal which is



a brainchild of our Chief Minister.

In October 2020, the TS Government launched the Dharani Portal in a hurry without testing it, and that resulted in a lot of errors like

missing survey numbers and errors in land extants.

Many survey numbers were blocked under Section-22 A, and there were no modules for transactions initially. Even a year after imple-

mentation, the problems have not been resolved and the public is unable to sell lands to raise money for emergencies. This is also a violation of the right to property given by Article 300-A of the Constitution. On November, 25, 2021 the IL&FS group sold its 52.26 per cent stake in Terracis Technologies Ltd (TTL) to Falcon SG Holdings, Inc. (Philippines) for Rs 1,275 crore.

Falcon SG is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Falcon Investments Pte Ltd, a part of the Gateway Partners and Avenue Capital Group.

Now Dharani is in the hands of a Philippines company. Within a week, on December 1, 2021, Quantela Inc. entered into an agreement to gain management control of the Indian business of TerraCIS Technologies Ltd.

Quantela gets 100 per cent ownership through a restructuring process in the next six

months. Now Dharani goes to Quantela (a US company) from Falcon SG (a Philippines company).

Quantela is a start-up launched by Sridhar Gadhi in 2015 and it has only around 280 employees. The company is headquartered in Burlington, Massachusetts, in the US.

When we have the Government-owned National Informatics Centre (NIC) and reputed Indian companies like the TCS, Infosys etc. why has the Telangana Government handed over a sensitive project like Dharani to a bankrupt company or to small foreign unlisted companies which don't have any track record of managing large projects.

The Government should hand over the Dharani Portal to NIC immediately to ensure data security and to prevent tampering with land records by vested interests.



Hyderabad zoo's Asiatic lions adopted for a year

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Asiatic lions Vicky and Laxmi have been adopted for a period of one year.

Upasna Kamineni Konidela, the Vice-Chairperson of Apollo Foundation, adopted the lions and presented a cheque of Rs 2,00,000 to S. Rajashekar, Curator, Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad towards adoption charges and maintenance of a pair of Asiatic lions for a period of one year. Speaking on the occasion, the Curator, S. Rajashekar, thanked Upasna Kamineni Konidela and Anushpala Kamineni for adopting the Asiatic lions, and for helping the zoo's wildlife conservation programme.



He also said that their commitment to the conservation of wildlife is an inspiration to many and hoped that more people will come forward to adopt wild animals at the Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad. Speaking on the occasion, Upasna

Kamineni Konidela said that she is impressed with the maintenance of the animals at the zoo.

She congratulated the Curator and his team and appreciated the zoo management and staff for their dedication.



MNJ Cancer Hospital to be developed, Harish contributes salary

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government is developing the MNJ Cancer Hospital as a State Cancer Centre at a cost of Rs 120 crore, Minister Harish Rao said. "The Telangana Government is paying special attention to cancer. We are allocating an additional five acres and upgrading the 250-bed hospital to a 450-bed hospital," Harish said.

Finance and Health Minister Harish Rao was the chief guest at the Grace Cancer Foundation anniversary function held at Hotel Das Palla, Madhapur, on Saturday.

He praised the Grace Cancer Foundation's services. Congratulating the founders of the organisation, he said that Chinnababu is working hard

as a doctor and as a social worker. There will be government support for the Foundation, he said.

Harish announced that he would be contributing his one-month salary to the Grace Foundation.

"Cancer is troubling the world. My mother and father are both cancer victims. Only families who have suffered know its severity. There is a lot of research to be done on cancer. Governments and NGOs need to work together," Harish said. Harish said that the government is thinking of cancer screening at PHCs.

Harish said that in the next two years, the government will spend Rs 10,000 crore as the Chief Minister wants to provide free quality medical care to everyone.

First ever Vegan Expo in Hyderabad on December 5

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad's First-Ever Vegan Market will be held at Hi-Tech City here on Sunday. Vegan Market is an exhibition of plant-based food and edible items.

It is the first of its kind plant-based market to be organised jointly by Alt Mart & Enya, the women led Vegan startups and passionate Vegans who believe in a more compassionate world-one that is animal, health and planet friendly. Alt Mart is founded by Rupa Obulreddigari, a one stop Vegan e-commerce market place that services pan Indian markets. Enya is a dairy alter-



natives brand and cloud kitchen founded by Pranavi Pangnuri and Vishwatej that aims to change the way people perceive Veganism.

It will be organised in association with Beyond Meat, Vijay Sweets(who shot into

fame for introducing veganised Mysorepak), Vegan First(an online vegan portal in India, a one-stop solution to going vegan), People For Animals (India's largest animal welfare organisations), The Weekend Cafe (the health food cuisine restaurant, a vegan cafe), AWBP Trust (a non-profit organisation that connect people to animals so that animals get water round the clock) and Hyderabad Save.

The expo will feature exhibitors who will showcase microgreens, fresh veggies, healthy snacks to mock meat, ice creams, dairy alternatives, lip-smacking desserts and more.

Flipkart delivery boy among three drug peddlers held

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's Task Force, West Zone Team, Hyderabad, has nabbed three drug peddlers aged below 25, and seized hash/weed oil worth Rs 55,000 from them, police said here on Saturday. One of the arrested youths is a delivery boy of

Flipkart.

Following a tip-off, the West Zone Task Force Police laid a trap and nabbed the suspects near Bangaru Maisamma Temple, Rahmath Nagar, and seized drugs from them.

Police said that one Praveen, 30, a resident of Kukatapally in the city, who supplied the drugs is at large.

The arrested suspects are Bora Santosh, a native of Srikakulam district (Andhra Pradesh), Kollapaynindi Shoban Shiva alias Chinnu, a native of Mahaboobnagar district (Telangana) and Nethala Vijay Kumar (all residing in Hyderabad), who were found with drugs.

Police seized 20 bottles of hash/weed oil (each bottle containing 5 ml) from them.

Police said that the suspects were addicted to smoking and drugs were friends and used to meet at Rahmath Nagar in Yousufguda in the city.

They came into contact with drug supplier Praveen who procured

weed/hash oil from the agency areas of Paderu village of Visakhapatnam District in Andhra Pradesh.

They also observed that many people earned money by selling drugs in Hyderabad. The three suspects hatched a plan to purchase drugs from Praveen and sell it at higher prices.

L&T to woo investors with Metro's 60-year concession period

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a bid to make Hyderabad metro a sustainable project, L&T is reportedly thinking of wooing investors by showcasing the concession period.

The concession period of the project is 35 years, from the appointed date of July 5, 2012, including the initial construction period of five years.

This is extendable for another 25 years, subject to the fulfillment of certain conditions by the SPV (special purpose vehicle) as set out in the concession agree-



ment.

L&T in a discussion with

stock market analysts reportedly said that it is

evaluating a range of options to make the project sustainable. Its 60-year concession period will also, hopefully, make it an attractive prospect for investors.

The Hyderabad Metro Rail project is losing money as of now and L&T has invested Rs18,000 crore in it.

The company is looking at selling it off and becoming debt free. However, after the lockdown was lifted, the number of passengers rose from 50,000 to 2.4 lakh a day.

Recently the L&THMRL sent an SOS letter to the government as it was incur-

ring a loss of Rs 5 crore every day. The Telangana Government empowered committee is examining the issue and is trying to come up with a pragmatic solution to help L&T.

With uncertainty still looming over the resumption of Metro rail services, L&T Metro Rail (Hyderabad) Limited may invoke the force majeure clause with the Telangana Government seeking extension of the concession period equivalent to the time it could not operate due to the lockdown, the company said in its annual report.

Promoting EVs foremost priority: Minister

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Transport Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar has said that promoting Electric Vehicles (EVs) is the foremost priority of the government.

Speaking at the high-level ministerial round-table conference organised by the Union Ministry of Heavy Industries in Goa for the promotion of electric vehicles, Kumar, said that TS has become the third state in India to launch an electric vehicle and energy storage policy after Delhi and Gujarat.

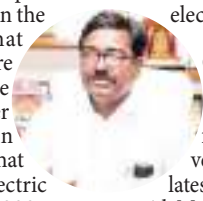
The Minister said that the Telangana Government, as part of its policy to promote electric vehicles, offers 100 per cent

exemption of road tax and registration fee for the first two lakh electric two-wheelers purchased and registered within the state. He said that many concessions are being given to those who buy and register electric vehicles in the state and said that the first two lakh electric two-wheelers, 20,000 autos, 10,000 light goods vehicles, 5,000 electric cars and the first 500 electric buses would be exempted from road tax and registration fee.

The Telangana Government is also promoting the use of electric vehicles in the public transport system and taking steps for

setting up charging stations. Measures are also being taken by the State government to promote electric vehicles.

The Telangana Government will develop new policies and provide incentives for the manufacture and use of electric vehicles in line with the latest policies, the Minister said. Mr Kumar said Telangana is a major base for the EV and ESS (Energy Storage System) sectors and will attract investments worth USD 4 Billion that will create employment for 1,20,000 persons by 2030 through EVs, charging infrastructure development and EV and Energy Storage System (ESS) manufacturing.



GHMC owes contractors Rs 500 cr, some have ended lives

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Contrary to their image of affluence, the GHMC contractors - numbering about 2,000 - are actually in dire straits as the GHMC owes Rs 500 crore to them. Unable to pay EMIs to banks or pay interest on money borrowed from private lenders, the contractors find themselves in a debt trap and some have suicide. At least 15 contractors have ended their lives.

But some major contractors manage to get their bills cleared in half an hour after executing the works.

In addition to repairing roads and desilting drains, contractors execute many other works, including providing food to vaccination staff and tables, tents and chairs during elections. In the last three months, the government did not clear the contractors' bills. The government has to pay at

least Rs 50-60 crore to contractors for supplying food to vaccination staff.

The GHMC has not yet cleared contractors' bills worth Rs 500 crore.

The pending bills till March 2021 stood at Rs 200 crore. The government did not clear any bills in April, while it paid Rs 17 crore in May and Rs 20 crore in June. It is yet to clear bills worth Rs 75 crore in July, Rs 80 crore in August, Rs 110 crore in October and Rs 100 crore in November.

The GHMC authorities have been saddling the contractors with election duties like providing tents, tables and chairs during elections.

Contractors pay salaries to data entry operators. God alone knows when the officials will clear the contractors' bills. Instead of clearing the bills, the GHMC entrusted the responsibility of providing food to the



medical and health staff on vaccination duty which came to Rs 60 crore.

Contractors who made several visits to the GHMC head office say that it was no use. Even meeting the Commissioner has no effect.

The higher authorities respond blaming the non-release of funds by the government or promise to clear the bills after receiving property tax. Small contractors who ex-

ecute works in the range of Rs 30 to Rs 50 lakh are many compared to big contractors. The lives of small contractors have become miserable.

The story of the big contractors who execute works between Rs 50 lakh and Rs 1 crore is also pathetic.

The only saving grace is that the GHMC is clearing a portion of the bills to applicants who cite marriages or deaths or hospitalisation expenses.

"We borrow money at Rs 3 interest to execute the works. Whether the government clears our bills or not we have to pay salaries to our workers. It is a long time since we defaulted on payment of EMIs to banks," a contractor requesting anonymity said. "Private moneylenders have been insulting us at homes demanding repayment. At least 15 contractors ended their lives, driving their families on to the streets. There were instances of widows of contractors selling properties and repaying the debts," he added.

"If this is the fate of our colleagues, what will happen to us in future," a contractor said, expressing anguish over the future of contractors.

"We do not know any other profession nor can we start new businesses. Moreover, we cannot exit our existing business. Pending clearance of bills, how can we pay labourers and

employees," asks another contractor.

In the post-Covid-19 scenario when workers are hard to find, contractors went to villages and managed to hire them. Now the contractors do not know how to pay the labourers.

What about the payment of rent for machinery hired and the payment of EMIs to banks? How to repay the loans borrowed from moneylenders.

It is a myth that contractors are rich. They have been borrowing money to fund works pending clearance of bills.

If the government does not respond immediately, the contractors have no alternative, but to commit suicide, says the Greater Hyderabad Contractors' Association General Secretary Hanmanth Sagar. He wants the government to bring all contractors under one umbrella.

Sarpanch attempt to suicide

PNS ■ SURYAPET

The woman sarpanch family attempt to suicide incident took place on Saturday in the presence of MPDO at the Chintalapalem Mandal Parishad office in Suryapeta district. According to the source, Dalit Sarpanch Aduri Swathi from Adluru village in Chintalapalem Mandal came to the MPDO office with her husband and children on Saturday morning. Unable to cope with the pressure from the Mandal authorities to complete the rural development work, the Sarpanch poured petrol in front of MPDO and attempt suicide. Staff reacted and protected them. On this occasion, the

victim Sarpanch Swathi said that they did works with their own money due to non-receipt of funds from the government. Those bills are still swollen with many difficulties in arrival. On the other hand, She said that she could not bear the pressure from the authorities and committed suicide. In response, the Mandal MPDO said, The sarpanches had issued memos to all to complete the rural development works in the Mandal, as part of which memos were also issued to Adluru Sarpanchi Swathi. She was upset and came to the office with a bottle of petrol and explained that she had attempted suicide.



Lost an elder brother in the death of Rosaiah, says KVP

Senior Congress leader KVP Ramachandra Rao has said that he lost an elder brother in the death of former chief minister Konijeti Rosaiah.

He said that he and the late Dr YSR shared an inseparable bond with Rosaiah. KVP said that he had learnt fiscal discipline from Rosaiah.

Describing Rosaiah as a great Congress leader he said his death has caused a void which is difficult to fill. KVP said that doctors had told him that Rosaiah passed away in sleep.

The mortal remains of Rosaiah would be kept at Gandhi Bhavan. The funeral procession of Rosaiah will begin at 12.30 pm on Sunday from Gandhi Bhavan and he will be cremated at the electric crematorium in Jubilee Hills.

AP govt deutes 3 ministers to attend last rites

The AP government deputed three ministers to attend the funeral of Konijeti Rosaiah and issued a circular about the same on Saturday. The government informed that Botcha Satyanarayana, Minister for Municipal

Administration & Urban Development, Balineni Srinivasa Reddy, Minister for Energy, Forest, Environment, Science & Technology and Velampalli Srinivasa Rao, Minister for Endowments, will attend the funeral programme of the departed dignitary at 02.00 pm onwards on Sunday in Hyderabad.

CM pays tributes to Rosaiah, consoles his family

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao has expressed his condolences over the death of former united AP chief minister K. Rosaiah, (88).

Soon after hearing about the death of Rosaiah, the CM visited the house of Rosaiah in Hyderabad and placed a wreath on his body.

The CM consoled the members of Rosaiah's family. KCR recalled that Rosaiah who had served as finance minister, chief minister and governor brought laurels to the posts.

The CM also recalled that in politics too, Rosaiah had left a mark of his own with his dignity, patience and gentlemanliness.

The TS Government has expressed condolences over the death of former United AP CM Rosaiah. The government has decided, as per instructions from the CM, to extend state honours for the last rites of Rosaiah. It has also declared three days of mourning.

The last rites of Rosaiah will be held on Sunday afternoon. The government has instructed the Hyderabad and Ranga Reddy district Collectors to make arrangements for the last rites.

Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan has expressed grief at the passing away of K. Rosaiah, a former governor of Tamil Nadu and former chief minister of the United Andhra Pradesh.

Paying tributes to his memory, the Governor described him as an iconic politician of United Andhra Pradesh. The Governor said that Rosaiah adhered to the highest ideals in politics and public life.

"It is a great testimony to his administrative acumen that he presented the AP Budget for a record 15 times," the Governor said.

Rosaiah said Brahmins and Vaishyas were fearful: IYR

HYDERABAD: Retired IAS officer IYR Krishna Rao took to Twitter to share his experiences with former United AP CM K. Rosaiah. He said, "During my tenure as Chairman of the Brahmin Corporation, I discussed with him that if the Brahmin and Vaishya castes work together politically they will have an impact in 20 to 30 Assembly seats and the discussion in the Assembly wouldn't stoop to lows. But he said, 'It is true that these two castes can make an impact, but they are very fearful and said that my view may not be practical in today's political climate.'" Condoling Rosaiah, IYR said that he was a reflection of the older generation. "The post of Chief Minister is reserved for the strongest castes. But Rosaiah becoming CM was a recognition of his talent."

Rosaiah a great statesman: Pawan Kalyan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The leaders of Jana Sena Party (JSP), Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Congress have expressed grief over the sudden demise of former Chief Minister K. Rosaiah. In a statement issued here on Saturday, Jana Sena Party chief K. Pawan Kalyan expressed deep sorrow over the death of Rosaiah. He said that Rosaiah was a great statesman and his demise created a void. He said that he had close association with Rosaiah and his death saddened him. Lauding him as a spotless leader, Pawan Kalyan recalled that Rosaiah presented the State Budget in the Assembly in the united Andhra Pradesh 15 times. When the united AP was facing a crisis after the death of Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy, he led the State for 14 months. Moreover, he won the appreciation of Tamil people when he worked as Governor of Tamil Nadu. Pawan Kalyan conveyed his sympathies to the bereaved family. Jana Sena Party's political committee chairman Nandendla Manohar paid homage to K. Rosaiah by garlanding his portrait in Tenali.



Rosaiah-a rare breed of politician who practiced value based politics

As Finance Minister, ensured balance of welfare and development in combined AP

ML MELLY MAITREY
■ HYDERABAD

The sudden demise of Konijeti Rosaiah (88) on Saturday morning ended an era in which he stood out as a rare breed of a politician who took pride in sticking to legislature conventions and good practices and being a loyal Congressman who remained faithful to the party high command and executed its decisions always like a disciplined soldier.

Known for his incisive criticism, keen observation, and excellent recall of past events to put forth his views in a manner in which even his political opponents could not fault him, Rosaiah's long innings as an MLA, MLC, and MP would serve as guidepost on how a legislator should be persuasive while debating and discussing any issue on the floor of the House without disrupting the proceedings.

When Rosaiah would rise to make a point either in the Legislative Assembly or the Council, not only the treasury and opposition members in the House but even the press gallery would be alert to get hold of every word he would say; for, he would always give a convincing response with logic, rationale, and backed by

facts. His intelligent repartees to counter opposition criticism would make the proceedings lively and lighten the mood of the House.

He was known for his wit, satire, gift of the gab, clear diction and clarity of thought. Age never interfered with the veteran Congress leader's stamina for debates and discussions. Remarkably, he would do all that without ever resorting to unparliamentary language even when he would get angry with a provocative remark.

Accessible, humble and down-to-earth, Rosaiah indeed remained a towering personality with his distinct stature and demeanour, reflecting Telugu culture, and would share several wise-cracks with legislators from all parties and media persons and would share valuable insights without ever criticizing the party's decisions.

Born on July 41, 1933 in Vemuru of Guntur, Rosaiah was the disciple of freedom-fighter and farmer leader N. G. Ranga and maintained a distinct identity and dignity which he imbibed from him. He entered the Legislative Council first time in 1968 and again in 1974 and 1980. He served in the cabinets of several Chief Ministers in the combined State from T. Anjaiah, Kotla Vijayabaskar Reddy, Marri Channa Reddy, N. Janardhan Reddy to Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy and became a confidante of every CM, particularly late YSR who used to regard him as a father figure.

Although he handled various portfolios - Transport, Commercial Taxes, Home, Health, Education, Power, he left an indelible imprint as Finance Minister. He had the unique distinction of presenting the State Budget in the combined State for 15 times and seven times consecutively in YSR's Cabinet.



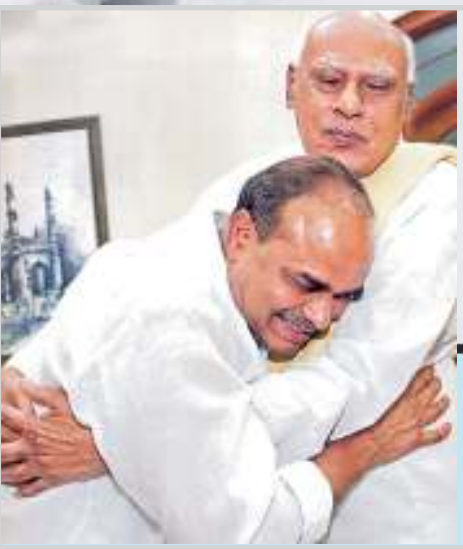
Sharing lighter moments with TN ex-chief minister M. Karunanidhi



As the Governor of TN Rosaiah receiving Prime Minister Narendra Modi



Jagan with Rosaiah



Sharing a happy moment with YS Rajasekhara Reddy



In deep discussion with Ratan Tata



United AP last CM Kiran Kumar with Rosaiah



With Actor Chiranjeevi

Rosaiah sowed the seeds of TS State

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

K. Rosaiah becoming the Chief Minister of United AP in 2009 changed the political fortune of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) as it sowed the seeds for a Telangana State.

After the sudden demise of Chief Minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy in a helicopter crash senior leader Rosaiah was made Chief Minister by the Congress high command. If someone else had been the CM other than Rosaiah at that time AP politics would have been different.

After YSR became Chief Minister a second time after winning the 2009 Assembly elections the TRS was in trouble. During the YSR government, the TRS was on the verge of disappearing from politics as YSR had taken a firm decision against AP bifurcation.

At that moment, Rosaiah became Chief Minister and the decision on bifurcating AP was

left to the Congress high command and to the Central government led by the Congress.

When asked about the stand on state bifurcation, chief minister Rosaiah had said, "Sitting here, there is no chance for us to say yes or no. If it is an issue that could be decided by me or someone else here we can do it. But this is an issue that has to be looked into by the Centre and they will have to give us a permanent solution."

While YSR took a firm decision against AP bifurcation Rosaiah always said that this is an issue that has to be examined by the Centre. Understanding the mood of Rosaiah, the TRS intensified its movement for a separate Telangana.

At the same time, TRS chief K. Chandrasekhara Rao went on a fast into death to bring pressure on the Centre and the Congress high command. Students also gave a call for a Million March to tank bund in Hyderabad.



Glowing tributes paid to Rosaiah

A big loss to Telugu states, says P. Nannu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Condolences poured in from all corners to former chief minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh, K. Rosaiah, who died of ill health on Saturday. Transport Minister P. Nannu Venkatarao (Nannu) said that the demise of former CM Rosaiah is a big loss to the Telugu people. In his long political journey, he had scaled many heights and whatever position he served, he did it to the fullest and brought pride to that position. YSRCP MLA Malladi Vishnu said the death of Rosaiah is an irreparable loss to the people of Telugu states. Speaking at the condolence meeting on Saturday, Vishnu said that Afterwards Malladi Vishnu said that Rosaiah was very honest, committed and dedicated to public service during his entire career. He recalled that he was the minister under five chief ministers and later became the chief minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh.

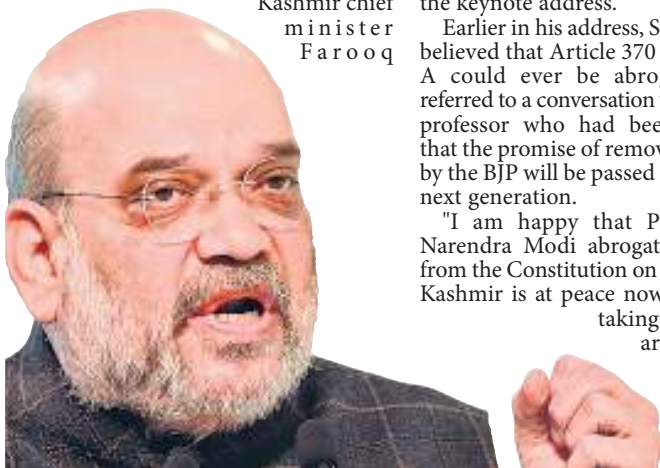


There was no peace in J-K under Article 370: Amit Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Article 370 was in place for decades but was there peace in Jammu and Kashmir, Union Home Minister Amit Shah asked Saturday, asserting that the 2019 abrogation of the Constitutional provision has ushered in peace, good business investment and an influx of tourists.

Shah made these remarks during an interaction at the HT Leadership Summit here, referring to a statement by former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq



Abdullah who had said that the government will not be able to bring peace in the union territory until Article 370 is restored.

"There was Article 370 for the last 75 years. Why was there no peace? If there is a relation between peace and Article 370, was the Article not in place in 1990? It was there in 1990 why there was no peace? Even if we include figures of targeted killings, we are not even close to 10 per cent. This means there is peace," Shah said at the event where he also delivered the keynote address.

Earlier in his address, Shah said no one believed that Article 370 and Article 35-A could ever be abrogated, and he referred to a conversation with his English professor who had been maintaining that the promise of removing Article 370 by the BJP will be passed on as it is to the next generation.

"I am happy that Prime Minister Narendra Modi abrogated Article 370 from the Constitution on August 5, 2019. Kashmir is at peace now, investment is taking place, tourists are visiting and Jammu and Kashmir is gradually looking to

stand united with the rest of the country," Shah said.

Article 370, a temporary provision in the Constitution, gave special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir while Article 35-A prohibited people from the rest of India to buy properties in the erstwhile state.

Both provisions were abrogated on August 5, 2019 and the state was divided into two Union Territories -- Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Shah said a common statement was issued against him and Prime Minister Narendra Modi that curfew was imposed for so long in J&K and Internet services were blocked in Jammu and Kashmir.

"When I went there and asked youths if we had lifted curfew, who would have lost lives? There was initial silence but then they said on video conference they would have been killed. Then I asked whom did Modiji save by imposing curfew. They said they were saved. Then I said the people of the country have to decide what do people, who oppose curfew, want," he said.

On the demand of J-K political parties that elections should take place after statehood is restored, Shah said Parliament has passed the act that elections will be followed by delimitation exercise.

Cyclone threat: Bengal govt evacuates thousands in coastal areas; heavy rain

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The West Bengal government on Saturday evacuated thousands of people in South 24 Parganas and Purba Medinipur districts and urged tourists in popular sea resorts to stay away from beaches, as cyclone 'Jawad' loomed large over the Odisha-Andhra Pradesh coast.

Several places in the metropolis, North and South 24 Parganas, Purba and Paschim Medinipur, Jhargram, Howrah and Hooghly districts received light rainfall since morning, the weather office said.

"Jawad' moved slightly northwards with a speed of 4 kmph during the past six hours and lay centered about 230 km south-southeast of Vishakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh), 340 km south of Gopalpur (Odisha), 410 km south-southwest of Puri (Odisha) and 490 km south-southwest of Paradip (Odisha) at 5.30 am," the IMD said in a bulletin.

The administration in South 24 Parganas and Purba



Medinipur districts evacuated around 11,000 people from the coastal areas to safer locations, while boats with fishermen returned in Kakdwip, Digha, Shankarpur and other coastal belts, an official said. "The system is likely to move north-northwestwards and reach west-central Bay of Bengal and thereafter is likely to recurve north-northeastwards, move along Odisha coast reaching near Puri around December 5 noon, and weaken gradually," a met office spokesman said.

However, the cyclone may weaken into a deep depression by the time it reaches the Puri coast, he said.

Rescue teams were seen asking scattered groups of tourists and locals to vacate beaches in Digha, Shankarpur, Tajpur and Bakkhali. A total of 19 teams of the National Disaster Response Force have been deployed in the state in the wake of the cyclone.

The met office has forecast heavy to very heavy rainfall at one or two places in Kolkata, Purba and Paschim Medinipur, North and South 24 Parganas, Jhargram, Hooghly and Howrah districts.

Heavy rain is also likely to occur on Monday in the districts of North and South 24 Parganas, Nadia and Murshidabad, it said.

Goyal reviews preparedness for cyclone Jawad

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday reviewed the arrangements and preparations made by state governments of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal to deal with cyclone Jawad. Industry associations like CII, FICCI, ASSOCHAM and PHD Chambers were also represented at the conference. The minister underscored the need for drawing of a comprehensive action plan towards managing this natural disaster in the most effective way by incorporating the inputs and suggestions of all stakeholders. Goyal said public private partnership is necessary for disaster management and mitigation and for protecting the lives and livelihoods of those affected. "We must constantly upgrade our learnings and keep upgrading our capabilities. He also called for preparedness in the banking and insurance sectors to tackle the effects of the cyclone," an official statement said.

India's defence exports in past 7 yrs touched 38K crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has exported defence items worth more than Rs 38,000 crore in the past seven years and the country hopes to become an overall net exporter soon, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Saturday.

"We have an estimated Rs 85,000 crore industry of aerospace and defence. The contribution of the private sector in this has increased to Rs 18,000 crore," he said in his speech at the MSME conclave of the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM).

Singh urged the MSMEs to invest more in research and development as it would help strengthen the nation's security.

"You should bring new technologies, new products. You should not think that just because of your small, you cannot do great innovation," he added.

Around 12,000 MSMEs have joined the defence industry due to the government's initiatives, he added.

"Defence exports from India during the last seven years have been of more than Rs



38,000 crore due to the government's initiatives," he noted. Innovation, research and

development and the number of startups have increased in the defence industry due to these initiatives, Singh said.

Reiterating the government's focus on encouraging exports, the minister expressed hopes that India will soon become a net exporter from a net importer.

"The government aims to achieve the export target of Rs 35,000 crore by 2024-25. Presently, India is exporting defence equipment to around 70 countries. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2020 report,

India is in the list of top 25 countries in defence exports," he said.

The Indian armed forces have completely supported the self-reliance initiative of the government, he stated.

"Therefore, the number of contracts given to indigenous defence industry has increased," he said.

Singh accepted that the big companies have a major role to play in defence manufacturing but the reality is that the work of numerous small companies is hidden behind that of big companies.

MP: 49 children take ill after consuming poisonous fruit

PNS ■ SEONI

At least 49 children studying in a government-run primary and middle school took ill after allegedly consuming a poisonous fruit in Madhya Pradesh's Seoni district, an official said on Saturday.

The children had consumed Ratanjot (Alkanet) fruit from a tree near their school in Barghat area of the district on Friday, the official said.

The students complained of vomiting, colic and uneasiness after returning home, and were admitted to a healthy facility in Barghat, duty officer Dr Yogesh Agrawal told PTI.

While 47 children have been discharged, two were referred to Seoni district hospital for further treatment, he said.

Similarly, 13 students of another government primary school in Barhat had taken ill on Thursday after consuming Ratanjot fruit. All of them were later discharged from hospital, officials said.

Naidu calls for debate on freebies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu on Saturday called for a wider debate on freebies for harmonising welfare obligations with developmental needs and urged the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament to examine this aspect to enable wider discussion.

Underlining that Parliament must meet for a minimum of 100 days and state legislatures for at least 90 days every year, Naidu said that there should be a political consensus on this issue.

Naidu was speaking at an event in the Central Hall of Parliament to mark 100 years of the Public Accounts

Committee (PAC) that was also attended by President Ram Nath Kovind, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and the committee chairman and Congress leader of Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.

Noting that the PAC examines public expenditure to find out irregularities, Kovind said the parliamentary committee not only looks at it from the legal perspective but also from the 'point of view of the

economy, prudence, wisdom and propriety".

"It (PAC) has no other objective but to bring to notice cases of waste, loss, corruption, extravagance, inefficiency. If more paise out of every rupee coming from honest taxpayers are reaching those in need and also for nation-building initiatives, the PAC and its members have played a large role in the process," Kovind said.

Stating that the main responsibility of democratic institutions is to make the government accountable and transparent to the people, Lok Sabha Speaker Birla noted that the parliamentary committees have contributed significantly in making this possible through their functions.

The parliamentary committees, which are like mini parliament, are also seen as effective platforms to solve the problems of the people and fulfillment of their expectations, Birla said.

In his address, Naidu suggested that the PAC examine the utilisation of resources from a socio-economic perspective to check wastages and called for a wider debate on doling out freebies.



Why Savarkar's name is missing from literary meet, asks Fadnavis

PNS ■ MUMBAI

BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Saturday objected to the name of freedom fighter Vinayak Damodar Savarkar being 'missing' at the ongoing annual Marathi literary meet at Nashik in north Maharashtra.

The late Hindutva ideologue was born at Bhagur near Nashik in 1883.

There was a demand from

some quarters that a pandal at the Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, being held at Bhujbal Knowledge City, be named for Savarkar. Maharashtra minister and NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal is involved in the organization of this year's meet.

Speaking to reporters here, Fadnavis said Savarkar had presided over both the Marathi literary meet and Marathi theatre

conference, and he had also been president of the Marathi Patrakar Sangh, a journalists' union.

"He would be probably the only person to have achieved this feat and still his name is missing from the entire event," the BJP leader said.

"He is an idol for us and if our idols are not respected, why should we even bother to go there," said Fadnavis, a former chief minister.

Modi announces projects worth over Rs 18,000 cr in U'khand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday announced development projects worth Rs 18,000 crore in election bound Uttarakhand before addressing a rally at the Parade Ground here to kickstart the BJP's campaign for the state assembly polls.

He laid the foundation stones of 11 projects worth Rs 15,728 crore and inaugurated seven projects worth Rs 2,573 crore after inspecting their models on display at the rally venue.

"These projects will help making this decade that of Uttarakhand," Modi said at the rally.

People have already given 'casino capital' title to Goa: Kishan Reddy

PNS ■ PANAJI

Union Tourism Minister G Kishan Reddy on Saturday said that people have already given the title of 'casino capital' to Goa.

"People have already given the title of casino capital to Goa. We (government) need not give it. Public has already declared it," he said while addressing press conference.

Reddy was here to announce various tourism promotion initiatives for the coastal state. Union minister Shripad Naik was also present.

Replying to a query on whether Goa would be tagged as the 'casino capital of India' by the government, he said, "Public is here (for casinos). They are either here or in Sikkim (both the places where casinos are

allowed)."

"If Goa benefits by declaring it as a casino capital, we can certainly do it," the minister said.

On COVID-19, he said that the pandemic has impacted the tourism sector in the state, which is witnessing a revival as the domestic travellers have started going across the country.

"The domestic tourism season is picking up, but there are now apprehensions about the third wave. I appeal to people to abide by all the necessary protocols while visiting various tourism destinations in the country," he said.

Reddy said that the state governments are geared up to implement the protocols against COVID-19 as recommended by the Centre.

"We are also keeping a watch

on the international developments as far the virus is concerned. We are monitoring the arrival of foreign tourists. I am confident that we will be able to control the third wave and ensure that it does not hit India," the minister said.

He said that 125 crore people have been vaccinated so far, while 25 crore more vaccines are in stock in different states.

"I am confident that by December end, the production of vaccines will be increased," he said.

Reddy said that in order to raise international footfalls, tourism officers have been appointed in Indian Embassies of 20 different countries, who have been given the task of promoting Indian tourist destinations.

BSP forms security squad with 'ranks' to protect leaders

PNS ■ SIDHI (MP)

Alleging that BSP leaders are facing discrimination in getting security, the Mayawati-led party has said that it has set up a "security force" to protect its leaders and cadres, an office-bearer from Sidhi district in Madhya Pradesh said on Saturday.

BSP's Sidhi zonal in-charge Ram Khilawan Rajak said the party has sought permission from the police for approving this security squad.

Karnataka HM slams cops, claims they take bribe

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Home Minister Araga Jnanendra has hit out at a section of police, saying they take bribe from cattle smugglers and 'sleep like dogs' as they let them operate with impunity.

In a video clip that has gone viral, Jnanendra is purportedly seen shouting at a police officer over phone for their failure to check the theft and smuggling of cattle, especially cows.

"Those who are transporting cattle are habitual offenders. Your officers know it well but they take bribe and sleep like dogs. Your police need self-esteem," Jnanendra is heard saying in the video.

"I did not say anything till now but should I continue as a home minister or not?" Jnanendra is heard saying and claims cattle smuggling is going on in Chikkamagaluru and Shivamogga districts.

"The entire police force is rotten today. We are giving salary but no one wants to live only on the salary. They want to live on the leftover (bribe)," Jnanendra is heard saying.

The Minister later clarified that he did not liken all the police officers but a section of them.

He, however, said in his village in Teerthalli Taluk of Shivamogga district, cattle smugglers in their vehicles tried to run over two animal



rights activists when they tried to stop them.

"Their (animal rights activists) condition was so serious that I arranged their admission in the Manipal Hospital in Bengaluru. I was deeply hurt. This is an inhumane act," Jnanendra said.

He alleged that some police were not acting tough against the cattle smugglers despite being armed with a new law banning cow slaughter in the state.

"Some policemen were hand in glove with them. Against this backdrop, I spoke with anger (in the video)," Jnanendra clarified. He alleged the smugglers come to the cattle owners with machetes in Malnad region and forcibly take away their cattle. The minister said Karnataka police has earned a good name in the country but there were some shortcomings.

"My only concern is complete ban on cow slaughter after the promulgation of law," the state home minister said.

The Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Act, 2020 was introduced last year in the state and came into effect from February.

Under the law, slaughter of cattle will lead to imprisonment of up to three to seven years and a fine ranging from Rs 50,000 to Rs 5 lakh, and subsequent offences will attract imprisonment of up to seven years and a fine from Rs one lakh to Rs 10 lakh.

Recently, many animal rights activists such as the members of Go Gyan Foundation were allegedly attacked by the smugglers and owners of slaughter houses in various parts of Karnataka including Bengaluru.

Delhi court grants bail to Peter Mukerjea in INX case



Delhi court on Saturday granted bail to former media baron Peter Mukerjea in the INX Media money laundering case linked to former Union minister P Chidambaram and his son Karti. Special Judge M K Nagpal granted relief to Mukerjea, the erstwhile director and COO of INX Media. The court had earlier granted interim bail to Mukerjea till the pendency of his regular bail application. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had registered a case on May 15, 2017, alleging irregularities in a Foreign Investment Promotion Board clearance to the INX Media group for receiving overseas funds of Rs 305 crore in 2007 during Chidambaram's tenure as finance minister. Subsequently, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) lodged a money laundering case. Chidambaram was arrested by the CBI on August 21, 2019, and by the ED on October 16, 2019.

Stars aligned for me to do it in Mumbai: Ajaz Patel



"The stars have aligned for me to do it in Mumbai," New Zealand spinner Ajaz Patel said Saturday said after achieving the rare feat of scalping all 10 batters in an innings at the city of his birth. The 33-year-old Patel, who had migrated to New Zealand from Mumbai with his parents back in 1996, ended the Indian innings with figures of 47.5-12-119-10 to equal England great Jim Laker and Indian legend Anil Kumble, who had earlier achieved the rare feat in Test cricket. "Honestly, it's surreal and to be able to do that in my career is pretty special. The stars have aligned for me to do it in Mumbai," Patel said after his feat. "Quite a special occasion for me and not just me but my family. Unfortunately for me, they're not here because of Covid. I'm in very illustrious company with Kumble sir as well." Asked which scalp out of the 10 was special, he said, "Not anyone in particular and just trying to be repetitive and ask questions of batters."

Take cases to logical conclusion expeditiously: Nirmala to DRI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday urged officials of intelligence wings to take every case to logical conclusion expeditiously, so that it can deter perpetrators of economic crime like smuggling.

Speaking at the 64th DRI Foundation Day, the Finance Minister said logical conclusion is important but speedier conclusion is what will keep the heat on people who are promoting these kinds of activities.

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), under the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), is an intelligence and enforcement agency of the Government of India on anti-smuggling matters.

She stressed on capacity building so that the officials are quick to pick up right intelligence inputs and act on time.



"You get a lot of intelligence input, but sometimes and many times it is difficult to identify if it is really actionable, sometimes they're so generic.

To act on it becomes difficult...capacity to be built within these institutions to make sure you're able to see which of these intelligence

inputs are so quickly actionable," she said.

Agencies like DRI based on their experience can give ideas on the methods through those

illegal acts can be prevented, she said.

"I think attempts at preventing will also have to be undertaken by us while deterrence and detection will always have to be on the high," she said.

She exhorted the DRI to be vigilant with regard to toxic waste being dumped into the country.

In emerging economies "because of the way in which we have built over the decades capacity to recycle materials, I'm afraid quite a large attempt and frequent attempt is being made on bringing in toxic waste to our shores and leave them there. So I would think that is an area on which I would like to see DRI more active", she said.

She also observed that greater media coverage of success of DRI's would also deter the perpetrators of illegal activities.

UP Cabinet okays Atma Nirbhar Krishak development scheme

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Ahead of the upcoming 2022 Assembly elections in the state, the UP Cabinet has approved a scheme aimed at boosting the agriculture sector, which will be implemented from the current financial year.

In a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Cabinet on Friday gave its nod to implement Atma Nirbhar Krishak Integrated Development Scheme in Uttar Pradesh from 2021-22.

Under this scheme, 1,475 Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) will be formed in the next three years in each development block of the state, the UP government said in a statement.

The state government is likely to bear an expenditure of Rs 1,220.92 crore for implementation of the scheme from



financial year 2021-22 to 2031-32.

The scheme will also help in achieving the target of utilising a budget of Rs 12,000 crore allotted to the state by the Centre under Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF).

On July 8, 2020, the Union Cabinet had approved the AIF scheme. The scheme shall provide a medium to long-term debt financing facility for

investment in viable projects for post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and financial support.

Under the scheme, Rs 1 lakh crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans to Primary Agricultural Credit Societies, Marketing Cooperative Societies, FPOs, Self Help Groups, farmers, joint liability groups, multipurpose cooperative societies, agri-entrepreneurs, startups, aggregation infrastructure providers and central/state agency or local body sponsored Public Private Partnership Project.

All loans under this financing facility will have interest subvention of 3 per cent per annum up to a limit of Rs 2 crore. This subvention will be available for a maximum period of seven years.

Over 550 applicants for BEE energy awards

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 550 applicants are in fray for the BEE energy conservation awards that have been instituted to push industries and sectors to develop innovative energy efficiency efforts in their units as well as reduce power consumption, the Power Ministry said on Saturday.

Under the National Energy Efficiency Innovation Awards (NEEIA), a total of 149 applicants participated by the due date. Online applications were invited from Category A (industry, transport, building) and Category B (students & research scholars) under the NEEIA awards.

The ministry said that 408 applicants participated in the National Energy Conservation Awards (NECA), which have been instituted to promote industrial units, institutions and establishments to reduce energy consumption.

The ministry explained that the National Energy Efficiency Innovation Award is the need of the hour to promote newer technologies, ideas, and pave way for the adoption of these innovations by larger groups.

As promotion of energy efficiency and Renewable energy are major pillars for low carbon energy transition, recognition of such efforts undertaken by various participants stimulate further action in accelerating the transition. Outcomes of which eventually contribute towards meeting India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and broader climate goals, it stated.

The BEE recognises and encourages endeavors of industrial units, institutions and establishments in reducing energy consumption by felicitating them with National Energy Conservation Awards (NECA).

Health check-up for 40 plus ESIC members

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Labour Minister Bhupender Yadav on Saturday launched annual preventive health check-up programme for Employees' State Insurance Corporation's insured members aged 40 years and above in pilot mode at ESI hospitals in Ahmedabad, Faridabad, Hyderabad and Kolkata.

Besides, in the ESIC's 186th meeting here chaired by Yadav, a proposal was also cleared for construction of 500-bed ESIC Hospital at Gurugram (Manesar) for expansion of services of existing 100-bed hospital.

Talking to the media after the meeting, Yadav said, "We have started a pilot project under which we are providing for free medical check for insured persons (IPs) of ESIC who are of 40 years or above age every year. We have a dream of 'swasth Bharat'. We have around 3.5 crore IPs. So if we also run preventive care moment in ESIC along with curative, then we can achieve that vision."

The minister also informed that this pilot would be further expanded in coming days with the increase in number of IPs



to five crore with implementation of Social Security Code.

The minister said the ESIC also wants to improve its hospitals to super speciality ones so that referral to others can be reduced in coming days.

The minister also talked about roll out of a mobile app 'Santusht' for ESIC beneficiaries for improving delivery of services.

Yadav further said that the construction of two ESIC hospitals at Bihta in Patna and Alwar in Rajasthan has been completed and soon these would be inaugurated.

Informing about approving the proposal for construction of 500-bed ESIC Hospital at Gurugram (Manesar), Yadav said that ESIC has approved

deposit of funds required for the purpose.

On ESIC's request, the Haryana government has identified 8.7 acres of land for allotment. The ESIC on Saturday approved the proposal to set up 500-bed ESIC Hospital at HSI-IDC, Manesar and of acquisition of this plot for the purpose. He also informed that a 100-bed ESIC hospital would be built.

The Uttar Pradesh government has identified a piece of land measuring 2 hectares and conveyed approval for free of cost transfer of the land for 90 years. The ESIC on Saturday approved proposal and process of acquisition of identified land for construction of 100-bed ESIC Hospital at Meerut.

MONEY MATTERS

Mangalore Refinery to acquire subsidiary's 1,000 cr bonds



Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd on Friday said it has received board approval to acquire compulsory convertible debentures worth up to Rs 1,000 crore issued by its subsidiary ONGC Mangalore Petrochemicals Limited (OMPL). "...the Board has approved...acquisition of up to 100% of CCD issued by OMPL, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Company, from the debenture holders, for an aggregate consideration of up to INR 1,000 crores," MRPL said in a regulatory filing. The company board also discussed raising of funds by issuance of perpetual bonds and advised the management to have further consultations with the proposed investors. "Accordingly, no decision was taken in respect of issuance of perpetual bonds," it added.

Delhi Customs intercepts Pak-origin smuggled cosmetics



Delhi Customs has intercepted Pakistan-origin smuggled cosmetic goods weighing 2,800 kg worth Rs 1.2 crore, the finance ministry said on Friday. Acting on specific intelligence, officers of the Air Cargo Export Commissionerate intercepted an import consignment at New Courier Terminal on

November 29. "A case of outright smuggling of Pakistan origin cosmetic products weighing 2800 kg was detected. The goods were being routed through Abu Dhabi under the guise of household articles to evade detection," the ministry said in a statement. The seized smuggled goods are worth Rs 1.2 crore, it added. A lot of 87 consignments had arrived from Abu Dhabi. Upon examination, 84 consignments were found to contain cosmetics of Pakistani origin, while three consignments were of perfume concentrate from Bahrain. "Any imported goods originating from Pakistan attract Basic Customs Duty at the rate of 200 per cent of the value of the goods. The goods were attempted to be cleared through courier mode by mis-declaring the origin and description of goods, value and, thus evading the applicable customs duty and IGST leviable.

Dish TV to hold AGM on December 30



Direct-to-Home service provider Dish TV, which is facing a notice from its largest shareholder Yes Bank to reconstitute its board, has said it would convene its Annual General Meeting on December 30. "The board of directors of the company vide circular resolution dated December 3, 2021 have approved the convening of the 33rd AGM of the equity shareholders of the company on Thursday, December 30, 2021," said Dish TV in a regulatory filing. Earlier on November 29, Dish TV had postponed its AGM for a month after getting regulatory approval from the Registrar of Companies, Mumbai. The AGM of the Essel Group firm was scheduled to be held on November 30, 2021. Dish TV is facing a notice from Yes Bank Ltd (YBL) to remove its Managing Director Jawahar Goel and four other directors from the board.

China's Didi to leave US stock market

PNS ■ BEIJING

China's dominant ride-hailing service, Didi Global Inc., has said it will pull out of the New York Stock Exchange and shift its share trading to Hong Kong as the ruling Communist Party tightens control over tech industries.

Didi gave no explanation, but China's leaders increasingly fret about who controls information gathered about its public by e-commerce, ride-hailing and other tech companies. Beijing sees that as a valuable asset and security risk.

Regulators said in July they would step up scrutiny of tech companies with shares traded abroad and their information security and cross-border data flows.

Didi's share price fell 25 per cent after regulators launched an investigation into its handling of customer data following its June 30 stock market debut.

"After conscientious research, the company will start delisting operations on the New York Stock Exchange immediately and commence



preparations to list in Hong Kong," Didi said on its social media account on Friday.

A separate statement said U.S. shares would be converted into "freely tradable shares" on another "internationally recognised" exchange.

Hong Kong is Chinese territory but has a separate regulatory system that allows foreigners to invest in its stock market. Mainland markets are mostly off-limits to foreign capital.

Tech entrepreneurs who are largely shut out of the state-run financial system have raised billions of dollars abroad. But the ruling party worries about how that affects control of their companies. It is promising

more access to capital within China.

Didi Chuxing raised about USD 4.4 billion in its market debut. The company earlier denied a news report it planned to buy back its U.S. shares.

Other companies including Alibaba Group, the world's biggest e-commerce company, and Tencent Holding, which operates the popular WeChat message service, also have been hit by data security and anti-monopoly probes.

Investor jitters about the crackdown have knocked more than USD 1 trillion off the total market value of Chinese tech companies on U.S. and other foreign exchanges.

Didi was founded in 2012 by Alibaba veteran Will Wei Cheng. Its president is Jean Qing Liu, a former Goldman Sachs managing director and the daughter of Liu Chuanzhi, founder of computer maker Lenovo Group.

It expanded abroad in 2018 by acquiring Brazil's 99 Taxis and set up operations in Mexico. Didi operates in 16 countries, though almost 90 per cent of the 493 million customers who used the service at least once in the past year are in China.

Didi acquired rival Kuaidi in 2016 and Uber Technologies Inc.'s China operation the following year. Other competitors in the USD 50 billion-a-year market include Caocao Chuxing, a unit of automaker Geely, and Hello Chuxing, backed by Alibaba.

Following its investigation, China's cyberspace regulator said in July "serious violations" were found in how Didi collected and stored personal information. Didi was later ordered to remove 25 of its apps from online stores.

Singapore stops VTL travel for work pass holders

PNS ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore government on Saturday said employers of S Pass and work permit holders in construction, marine shipyard and process sectors will not be allowed to make new applications for their employees to enter the country via the vaccinated travel lanes (VTL).

The decision by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) comes in the wake of rising concern over the Omicron variant globally.

On Friday, Singapore had announced the tightening of rules for VTL travellers in view of the new variant (Omicron). The S Pass allows mid-level skilled foreign staff to work in Singapore.

The ministry said that S Pass and work permit holders in the construction, marine shipyard and process sectors, as well as other dormitory-bound workers, should come in via the work pass holder general lane.

They may also enter Singapore via ongoing industry initiatives such as programmes with "upstream testing" and isolation in the source country, it said.

"The number of workers entering under these lanes meet industry needs while allowing the entry of these workers to be done at a pace where they can be safely onboarded before entering the dormitories and worksites as these are higher risk settings," the Channel News Asia quoted the MOM as saying.

The entry of workers under these lanes is done at a pace where they can be safely onboarded before entering high-risk settings like dormitories and worksites, said MOM in a statement. For instance, workers have to show verification of vaccination and go for medical examination under these lanes.

The Ministry said workers, who have obtained approval prior to the effective date to enter Singapore via VTLs, will still be allowed to do so.

Growth in US services sector reaches new heights in Nov

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Growth in the services sector, where most Americans work, hit an all-time high in November, overtaking a record that was set the previous month.

The Institute for Supply Management reported Friday that its monthly survey of service industries increased by 2.4 percentage points in November from the October record to a reading of 69.1 per cent. Any reading above 50 indicates growth.

Some of the strength in the services sector is coming from supply chain troubles that are making it harder to meet increased demand

‘India exemplary in publishing its forex moves’

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

India has been exemplary in publishing its foreign exchange market intervention, the US Treasury Department said on Friday adding that New Delhi should allow the exchange rate to move flexibly to reflect economic fundamentals.

"The (Indian) authorities should allow the exchange rate to move flexibly to reflect economic fundamentals, limit foreign exchange intervention to circumstances of disorderly market conditions, and refrain from further significant reserve accumulation," it said.

"As the economic recovery progresses, the authorities should continue to pursue structural reforms that can help lift productivity and living standards, while supporting an inclusive and green recovery," the Treasury said.



In its semi-annual Report to Congress on Macroeconomic and Foreign Exchange Policies of Major Trading Partners of the United States, the Treasury reviewed and assessed the policies of its major trading partners, comprising more than 80 per cent of its foreign trade in goods and services, during the four quarters through June

2021.

In accordance with the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988 (the 1988 Act), the Report concludes that no major US trading partner manipulated the rate of exchange between its currency and the US dollar for purposes of preventing effective balance of payments adjustments or gaining unfair

competitive advantage in international trade.

However, it found that 12 economies warrant placement on the Treasury's "Monitoring List" of major trading partners that merit close attention to their currency practices: China, Japan, Korea, Germany, Ireland, Italy, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Mexico, and Switzerland. All except Switzerland were on the Monitoring List in the April 2021 Report.

"India has been exemplary in publishing its foreign exchange market intervention, both monthly spot purchases and sales and net forward activity, with a two-month lag. While the RBI frequently intervenes in both directions, the RBI purchased foreign exchange on net in 10 of the 12 months through June 2021, with net interven-

tion reaching USD 131 billion, or 4.6 per cent of GDP," it said.

"The RBI made large purchases between July 2020 and February 2021, followed by modest sales in March and April this year as India's second outbreak took hold and net foreign portfolio flows turned negative," it said.

Observing that India has battled two outbreaks of COVID-19 since the onset of the global pandemic in March 2020, the Treasury said India's large second outbreak in the second quarter of 2021 weighed heavily on growth.

With cases coming down significantly from the May peak as of end-October, high frequency indicators suggest economic activity has been rebounding quickly since early in the third quarter, the report said.





the pioneer agenda



I think there's a part of a woman that wants to be the thing that breaks a man down
— Dakota Johnson

FROM THE INSIDE

Forgiveness & Peace

Forgiveness leads to inner peace, and inner peace blossoms into outer peace, enriching every heart

8



9

oH! Mi-cron

World Health Organization has declared Omicron (B.1.1.529) a variant of concern. Preliminary

Both India and Russia seek a multi-polar world, where “no single country is able to impose its will through domination or through military force”. This will be the key takeaway of the 21st India-Russia Summit scheduled to be held on December 6, writes ASOKE MUKERJI

COMING OF AGE: THE 21ST INDIA- RUSSIA SUMMIT

The 21st bilateral India-Russia Summit scheduled for December 6, 2021 marks the coming of age of the special and strategic privileged partnership between the two countries. This will be President Vladimir Putin's second foreign visit after the onset of the Covid pandemic in March 2020, and his first to any country in Asia, signaling the salience and resilience of the India-Russia strategic partnership. The annual summit mechanism, proposed by Russia's President during his first official visit to India in October 2000, has vindicated its role in steering the India-Russia strategic partnership through the momentous changes of the past two decades.

BACKGROUND

The 2019 India-Russia Summit at Vladivostok charted innovative approaches to sustain and broaden India-Russia relations. These included the long-term participation of both countries in each other's strategic sectors such as defence, energy, and technology. The resource-rich Russian Far East was added as a new dimension for trade and economic cooperation between enterprises of India's constituent states and Russia's eastern regions, pushing cooperation in Asia as the new frontier of India-Russia relations. A \$1 billion Indian line of credit was earmarked to implement this initiative, which would be sustained by a new maritime link between Vladivostok and Chennai through the Pacific and Indian oceans.

THE COVID PANDEMIC

The unexpected Covid pandemic created a barrier to the smooth implementation of these objectives, leading to the postponement of the 2020 India-Russia Summit. Despite this setback, the close personal interaction between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Putin, who have met 19 times since 2014, bridged the physical gap by using digital communications technologies to maintain the momentum, trust, and dialogue that are the hallmarks of India-Russia strategic relations.

A phone conversation on March 25, 2020 between the two leaders resulted in an agreement on ways to maintain the progress and warmth of bilateral relations. A joint response to the pandemic began in April 2020, when India lifted its ban on export of medicines to Russia to mitigate Covid. By mid-2020, the Gamaleya Research Institute of Russia developed the Sputnik-V human adenovirus vector platform vaccine against Covid. In April 2021, after clinical trials in India, the Sputnik-V vaccine joined Covishield and Covaxin on the list of vaccines registered for emergency use in India. In May 2021, joint manufacturing of the Sputnik-V vaccine in India through the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) was initiated, adding to the pool of Indian manufactured vaccines against Covid for domestic and international use in third countries.

DEFENCE AND FOREIGN POLICY DIALOGUE

President Putin and Prime Minister Modi agreed in a telephone conversation on April 28, 2021 to institutionalise a 2+2 Ministerial India-Russia Dialogue on foreign and defence cooperation to anchor the bilateral strategic partnership. The first India-Russia 2+2 Dialogue is expected to take place on the margins of the 21st Summit.

The ferocious border confrontation between India and China in May 2020 at Galwan caused another challenge for India-Russia relations, as Russia was chairing the trilateral Russia-India-China (RIC) grouping in 2020. However, by par-

ticipating in the RIC videoconference meeting of foreign ministers on June 23, 2020, and subsequently in a physical ministerial meeting in Moscow on September 10, 2020, Indian and Chinese foreign ministers were able to hold a bilateral "frank and constructive discussion" and agree on the need for new confidence-building measures. India has acknowledged its appreciation for Russia's regular arms supplies to India for Russian origin defence equipment during this period.

The focus on long-term India-Russia defence cooperation benefited from regular interaction between India's Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh and Russian Defence Minister General Sergei Shoigu during the past two years. The Raksha Mantri participated in the events in Moscow marking the 75th anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany on June 24, 2020, and interacted bilaterally with his Russian counterpart during his visit to Moscow for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers meeting on September 3, 2020, and the SCO Defence Ministers meeting in Tajikistan on July 28, 2021.

The outcome of this interaction includes the first manufacturing joint venture between India and Russia with transfer of technology for about 600,000 world-class AK-203 Kalashnikov rifles at the Korwa Ordnance Factory in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh. Other outcomes include the manufacture and co-production of four Project 1135.6 naval frigates; the supply of 400 more T-90 tanks; additional supplies of Su-30 MKI, as well as the MiG-29 aircraft; and additional supplies of the MANGO ammunition & VSHORAD systems. The supply of the first unit of the S-400 air defence systems from Russia to India contracted in 2018 is to be completed by the end of 2021. India and Russia are expected to sign an agreement on reciprocal logistic support for each other's armed forces that come for exercises in either country.

The current value of India-Russia defence contracts is between \$9-10 billion, making Russia a top defence partner of India. By participating in the Make in India programme, Russia has committed to the transfer of defence technologies to India that it does not share with other countries, while Russian investments in Indian defence production will generate employment and boost defence exports. This approach mirrors India's investments in Russia's defence manufacturing sector two decades ago, which resulted in the supply of technologically advanced equipment for all three services of India's armed forces, including the BrahMos missile system. The Summit is expected to extend the mandate of the India-Russia Military Technical Cooperation platform chaired by the two Defence Ministers by ten years to 2031.

A similar process of regular interaction between India's External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has enabled the India-Russia strategic partnership to respond in a calibrated manner to international challenges. Besides the RIC meeting of 2020, India's foreign minister has visited Moscow for the SCO Foreign Ministers meeting in September 2020 and for a bilateral visit in July 2021, while the Russian foreign minister visited India in April 2021. The two ministers have interacted in the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) framework twice through videoconferencing during Russia's chairmanship in 2020, and once in 2021 under India's chairmanship.

This interaction has been buttressed by consultations on India-Russia engagement on bilateral, regional, and multilateral issues. Experts



President Putin and Prime Minister Modi at Vladivostok Summit 2019

“THE FOCUS ON LONG-TERM INDIA-RUSSIA DEFENCE COOPERATION BENEFITED FROM REGULAR INTERACTION BETWEEN INDIA'S RAKSHA MANTRI SHRI RAJNATH SINGH AND RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTER GENERAL SERGEI SHOIGU DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS”

from both sides met in December 2020 to coordinate views on issues on the UN Security Council (UNSC) agenda, while discussions on the 21st Summit were held at foreign secretary level in Moscow in February 2021. The convergence of Indian and Russian positions in the UNSC on Myanmar, Syria, Yemen, Palestine, the UNSC Taliban sanctions regime, and UN peace-keeping operations during 2021 reflect the outcome of this cooperation.

MARITIME SECURITY AND CONNECTIVITY

The strategic rapport between the top leaders of India and Russia was on international display on August 9, 2021, when Prime Minister Modi chaired a special meeting of the UNSC on maritime security. President Putin was the only Head of State of a UNSC permanent member who spoke at this meeting, which endorsed a holistic approach to maritime security.

Russia's proposal in August 2019 to establish “a security and cooperation organisation in the Gulf” has assumed a deeper significance for the India-Russia strategic partnership in 2021. Apart from its impact on stability in the Gulf region including Iran, such a regional structure can generate confidence in two major connectivity projects that India and Russia have pursued in recent years — the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) linking Russia through Iran with India proposed in 2000, and the Chabahar project linking India, Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Russia proposed in 2016.

Greater regional cooperation in the western Indian Ocean will provide stability for the free flow of navigation along two major sea lanes of communication through the Red Sea and Yemen, and through the Straits of Hormuz. These routes transport a significant volume of India's international trade, energy imports and international digital traffic.

A similar holistic approach to maritime security will sustain the Eastern Maritime Corridor proposed by the India-Russia Summit in 2019 to link Russia and India through the Pacific and Indian Oceans as part of India's Act Far East policy. The first steps to modernise the port infrastructure of Chennai and Vladivostok have been initiated during the past six months. Eventually, the Eastern Maritime Corridor will connect India to ports in the Arctic.

India has emphasized the “centrality” of the ASEAN in any sustainable maritime security arrangement in the Indo-Pacific. The first-ever Russia-ASEAN naval exercises off Sumatra in early December 2021 demonstrates a similar emphasis on ASEAN-centrality, leading to India-Russia convergence in the maritime domain.

AFGHANISTAN AND COUNTERING TERRORISM

President Putin and Prime Minister Modi held a telephonic conversation on August 28, 2021 on the unexpected takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban disregarding calls for an “inclusive” government. The leaders agreed to cooperate in countering the common threats emanating from Afghanistan, such as terrorism, drug trafficking and the impact on Central Asian security. This objective has been integrated into the India-Russia strategic partnership by the first meeting of the India-Russia High Level Mechanism on Afghanistan on September 8, 2021, India's official participation in the Moscow format talks on Afghanistan in Moscow on October 20, 2021, and Russia's participation at the National Security Advisers Conference on Afghanistan hosted by India on November 10-11, 2021, in which Iran and the five Central Asian states participated, but Pakistan and China did not.



BEFORE THE REWARD THERE
MUST BE LABOR. YOU PLANT
BEFORE YOU HARVEST. YOU SOW
IN TEARS BEFORE YOU REAP JOY
—RALPH RANSOM

FORGIVENESS & PEACE

Forgiveness leads to inner peace, and inner peace blossoms into outer peace, enriching every heart, shares SANT RAJINDER SINGH

If we wish for the world to be better than what we have seen in the past century, then we must be willing to make peace and love a part of our lives. We must wash away any hatreds and prejudices that have stained our hearts and souls. If we want others to be peaceful, we must be models or peace ourselves.

THE FIRST STEP

No one said that attaining peace is easy. The hardest step towards peace is the first step, and that is forgiveness. We must learn to forget the past and forgive our enemies. We must develop compassion for those who have hurt us in the past. We must realise that we have all been victims of the hatred and discord of our ancestors. It is time to put a stop to it. Revenge must be replaced by forgiveness and compassion.

How can we take those first steps? How can we cleanse ourselves of anger and hatred and replace them with love and forgiveness? Compassion, forgiveness, and peace can be ours through spirituality.

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

Spirituality is the recognition that our true self is our soul. It is recognising that our soul is one with God. It is realising that we are not merely our body and mind, but a soul that inhabits the body. We may think of ourselves as being a body bearing a name, that we are a citizen of India or Colombia or France, or that we are from a certain caste or religion. But spirituality is recognising that behind these outer names and outer labels we are all souls, a part of the one Creator. We are all connected at the level of our soul as we are children of the same Creator.

MAKE IT A PART OF OUR LIVES TO BUILD A PEACEFUL FUTURE

When we develop this angle of vision, we no longer see through the eyes of prejudice and discrimination. We start breaking down the barriers that separate one human being from another. We start feeling like we are all connected at the level of soul. When we experience our unity and connectedness, we start caring about each other. We want to help and serve each other. The hungry cries of our neighbour's children will cause us as much pain as the cries of our own children. We will see the homeless person on the street as per own homeless grandfather, and we will be moved to help him. Our vision will be broadened and we will have compassion for the suffering of all human beings and will want to help them with all our heart.

HOW CAN WE DEVELOP THIS NOBLE VISION?

We can do so by awakening spiritually. A method can open our spiritual sight so that we can wash away hatred



and replace it with love and peace. That method is a simple technique of meditation, by sitting in stillness for some time, we can get in touch with our soul. We will find that we are much more than this outer body and mind. We will discover our spiritual essence that is filled with love, peace and bliss. When we identify with our soul, we will realise our oneness with God.

How many of us have yearned to have a divine vision of God? For many, finding God is a dream that hardly seems possible, but many people through the ages have seen God. They have merged with God. How did they do it? They all used one technique. We may call that technique inversion, concentration, or meditation. They sat in the stillness, directed their attention within, and ultimately discovered their soul and God. When we do so, we attain the state reached by all the great saints and founders of religions. We become loving, kind, peaceful and giving human beings.

In Meditation we come in contact

IN MEDITATION
WE COME IN
CONTACT WITH A
DIVINE POWER.
THIS POWER
MANIFESTS
ITSELF AS A
LOVING LIGHT

with a divine power. This power manifests itself as a loving light. When we contact this light within ourselves, we experience a profound peace, bliss, happiness unlike any we can find in this world. The beauty of meditation is that this intoxication remains with us even after we resume our daily activities.

When we rise above our physical body and experience the Divine Light, we also see that all other beings are also souls. We see that the same Light is within us is within everyone else. We start to realise that we are all souls, all part of God. Thus we start caring about all living things. In this way, our personal attainment of peace and happiness will contribute to a golden age of peace and happiness on earth.

INNER PEACE LEADS TO OUTER PEACE

We can develop our spiritual side. By learning meditation, we can spend some time each day coming in contact with God within ourselves. As God bathes us in love and bliss, we are

cleansed of the years of habits that caused us to have hatred and prejudices. In this state of peace and love, we are then able to develop the qualities of forgiveness and compassion for those who have hurt us. God instilled in us the qualities of love, forgiveness, and compassion. The Lord holds our hands as we take our first step toward reconciliation and peace.

As we become more peaceful ourselves, we begin to radiate peace to all those with whom we come in contact. Peace begins with us. By transforming ourselves, we can transform others, including our family, community, society, and eventually the whole world. In this way, we will be building a peaceful, safe world for our children, posterity, and ourselves. It all begins with the first step and that is forgiveness. Forgiveness will lead to inner peace, and this inner peace will blossom into outer peace in the world, enriching every heart and making this world a much better and peaceful place to live.

The writer is a spiritual leader



HIDDEN SOULS
PRAMOD PATHAK



Ethics for the modern times

We are into strange times. Contradictory things are moving in tandem. These are times of vulgar consumerism. These are times of brazen commercialisation. These are times of unabashed consumption. Snobbery is on the rise. But another trend is catching up. A trend that is not in tune with whatever is discernible. The trend of unreserved display of compassion and kindness. So we find that intentional acts of kindness and compassion are being institutionalised and marketed. Special days are observed to market age old values. Values that were passionately adhered to in the past are becoming a fashion. So we observe world kindness day and the like. Even as unnecessary private consumption driven by ego continues unchecked, we are finding that showcasing compassion and kindness also goes with a lot of noise, and is also ego driven. Sometimes for public consumption and sometimes for publicity. While the ancient Indian thought mentioned about 'Gupt Daan' or charity with humility and quietude, in the present days, there's pomp and show. This is not to demean those acts of charity, or question the motive behind compassion. But certainly a gentle reminder that ego driven charity is not as impactful as passionate compassion. Wasteful consumption is antithetical to genuine compassion. A case in point is the kind of food wastage that goes in the elite restaurants which on close observation will seem reminiscent of the Roman kings of the yore, who ate, drank and made merry oftentimes biting more than they could chew. Food wastage in a party is something that can be bracketed as criminal because even by disciplined eating, a lot can be spared for the needy. Ironically, it is the same class that wastes food in the elite eateries that also loudly carries out those acts of compassion. Political correctness and social approval are highly sought after these days and have become key motivating forces driving human action. Without debating on whether this is good or bad, let us think of the essence of ethics which has become a subject matter of popular discourse these days. Goswami Tulsidas had very successfully pointed out that compassion is the essence of Dharma whereas Pride is the source of sin. But these days we find that even compassion is a by-product of pride. So even acts of compassion feed pride though they are mutually exclusive. Conscientious consumption and passionate compassion need to be a self-imposed code of conduct. The world still has enough for everybody's need. But the problem is greed. Even one man's greed can upset the apple cart. Where we do we go wrong? The answer is very simple. Just try to introspect, if whatever we want is actually needed. Next time when you go to have food in a restaurant that offers you whatever you can eat for a given price, assess you need first. How much of what can you eat? It is rather common place to see people order extra to get full value for what they have paid. Be a little reasonable and think of those who are still struggling to get a square meal a day. Perhaps you will save a lot of food wastage. Numbers of poverty reduction make difference to governments, not the governed. Despite all those data about GDP growth and rising economy poverty is still a problem the world needs to contend with.

Pathak is a professor of management, writer, and an acclaimed public speaker. He can be reached at ppathak.ism@gmail.com

FROM PAGE 7

COMING OF AGE: THE 21ST INDIA-RUSSIA SUMMIT

ENERGY, TECHNOLOGY, TRADE

The primary driver of the India-Russia strategic partnership is its contribution to the transformation of the two countries in the 21st century. Bilateral cooperation in energy, technology, and trade to achieve this objective is a priority for both countries. The Summit is expected to endorse three energy cooperation projects, viz. investments by ONGC-Videsh, Indian Oil and Oil India into Russia's Rosneft owned Vostok which has an estimated reserve of about 6 billion tonnes of crude oil; potential Indian investment into the Arctic LNG-2 gas field in Siberia which has 461 billion cubic metres of natural gas; and possible Russian investment into the Paradip cracker plant in Odisha, which will open a new avenue of cooperation in petrochemicals.

Nuclear energy, with its strong linkage with international security, plays a big role in India's energy security framework. Today, Russia is the only major nuclear power partnering India after the historic 2008 waiver given by the Nuclear Suppliers Group. India's largest nuclear power plant at Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu is an India-Russia project for six nuclear power reactors of 1000W each, of which two units came on stream in 2017, two more are expected to be operational in 2027, and construction of the fifth and sixth units was begun on 29 June 2021.

Three areas with a strong technological imprint, viz. cooperation in outer space, the digital economy, and the Blue Economy, are expected to transform the contribution of India-Russia scientific and technological collaboration to the strategic partnership. Space cooperation has built upon on existing satellite launches, the GLONASS navigation system, and cooperation in training India's astronauts in Russia for India's first manned space mission (Gaganyaan) due to be launched in late 2022 or early 2023. Digital cooperation is spearheaded by youth-driven digital innovation involving India's Atal Innovation Mission and Russia's Sirius, and encompasses areas such as additive manufacturing, 3D printing, blockchain, Artificial



At the Sochi informal summit May 2018 watching display of Russian ethnic music

Intelligence, and Big Data Analytics. Cooperation in the Blue Economy, as part of India's SAGAR Indian Ocean policy, will look at deep sea research and shipbuilding. The Summit is expected to agree to establish a Joint Commission on Science and Technology.

The 2019 Vladivostok Summit's target of reaching \$30 billion two-way trade by 2025 has been set back by the unexpected contraction of the economies of both countries due to the Covid pandemic. In the financial year ending March 2021, two-way trade was valued at \$9.31 billion, with Russian exports to India accounting for \$5.83 billion and Indian exports to Russia \$3.48 billion, mostly the result of public sector led trade. Despite a growth of about 30% in the first six months of 2021 compared with the same period in 2020, the Summit will need to find ways to significantly increase private sector participation from both countries in trade and investment relations, including through greater financial sector cooperation.

PEOPLE TO PEOPLE

On 22 January 2020, India hosted the first Ganga-Volga Dialogue, an idea that emanated from discussions between President Putin and Prime Minister

Modi. The Dialogue touched upon four broad themes in the context of India-Russia bilateral cooperation; viz. education, culture, and civilisation; entrepreneurship and innovation; trade routes including inland navigation; and India, Russia and Greater Eurasia. The Summit's endorsement of this initiative will be a major impulse to encourage greater people-to-people interaction and sustain their strategic partnership.

THE WAY AHEAD

On 8 July 2021, speaking at the prestigious Primakov Institute in Moscow, External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar identified "geo-political compatibility, leadership trust and popular sentiment" as the key drivers of the India-Russia special and privileged strategic partnership. Both India and Russia seek a multi-polar world, where "no single country is able to impose its will through domination or through military force." This will be the key takeaway of the 21st India-Russia Summit.

The author was India's Ambassador to the United Nations (2013-2015) and India's Deputy Ambassador to the Russian Federation (2001-2005). He is a Distinguished Fellow of the Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi

Artah worshippers

Driven by needs/difficulties, the *artah* stage of a soul marks the start of spiritual journey, writes AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

This Sanskrit word means distressed, troubled, etc. Lord Krishna refers to such persons in the verse # 7.16 of the *Bhagavad Gita*, when He refers to four kinds of virtuous people, who worship God. Lord Krishna commends them as really noble, because they choose to seek help from God (7.18) Three kinds of sufferings are common to everyone on this planet earth, which the Lord has described as impermanent place of miseries. (8.15) These are what we get due to punishable acts (*karmas*) done in the past, which include previous lives. Then, others give us trouble. And natural forces also cause sufferings, like this pandemic.

The *artah* stage of a soul marks the start of his spiritual journey. Yes, it is driven by material needs/difficulties, but such persons have taken the first step out of four steps needed to reach the final stage of being a wise person. Then, one becomes just like God, that is his consciousness is yoga-based and he remains well established only in God-the supreme destination. (7.18) In the *artah* stage, the consciousness is much lower, and is influenced by all the three modes, with the lower modes still playing substantial roles. In comparison, a person becomes wise after having transcended all the three modes. Some advanced *artah* persons also possess attributes of the next two stages, that is of being seekers of wealth and being inquisitive about God.

Though *artah* stage is the initial stage in the spiritual journey, such persons have faith in the existence of God. That is the reason they approach God for relief. They are aware that God is supreme. However, what everyone does not realise is that the "*karmapha-*



la principle" is being administered by higher authorities. And they act strictly as per guidelines set by God. Another mistake by most people is to assume world to be a place of fun. Yes, this world is not as bad as hell but heaven it is certainly not. The expectation from God is also faulty in most cases. One expects God to erase/delete all troubles instantly. He won't.

What, then, is the proper way to approach God? First of all, one must accept that whatever is happening to him is all due to his faulty past act/acts. This acceptance is crucial to get started. There must be remorse also for what should not have been done. The third important requirement is preparedness to tolerate whatever punishment is being meted out. Yes, God has unlimited powers to do anything, but He doesn't exercise them just like that. Because the creation can only function based on sound principles. Therefore, even if approached properly, God has to see whether the purpose of punishment has been served or not. However, *artah* are much better placed than those

who don't approach God and worry endlessly.

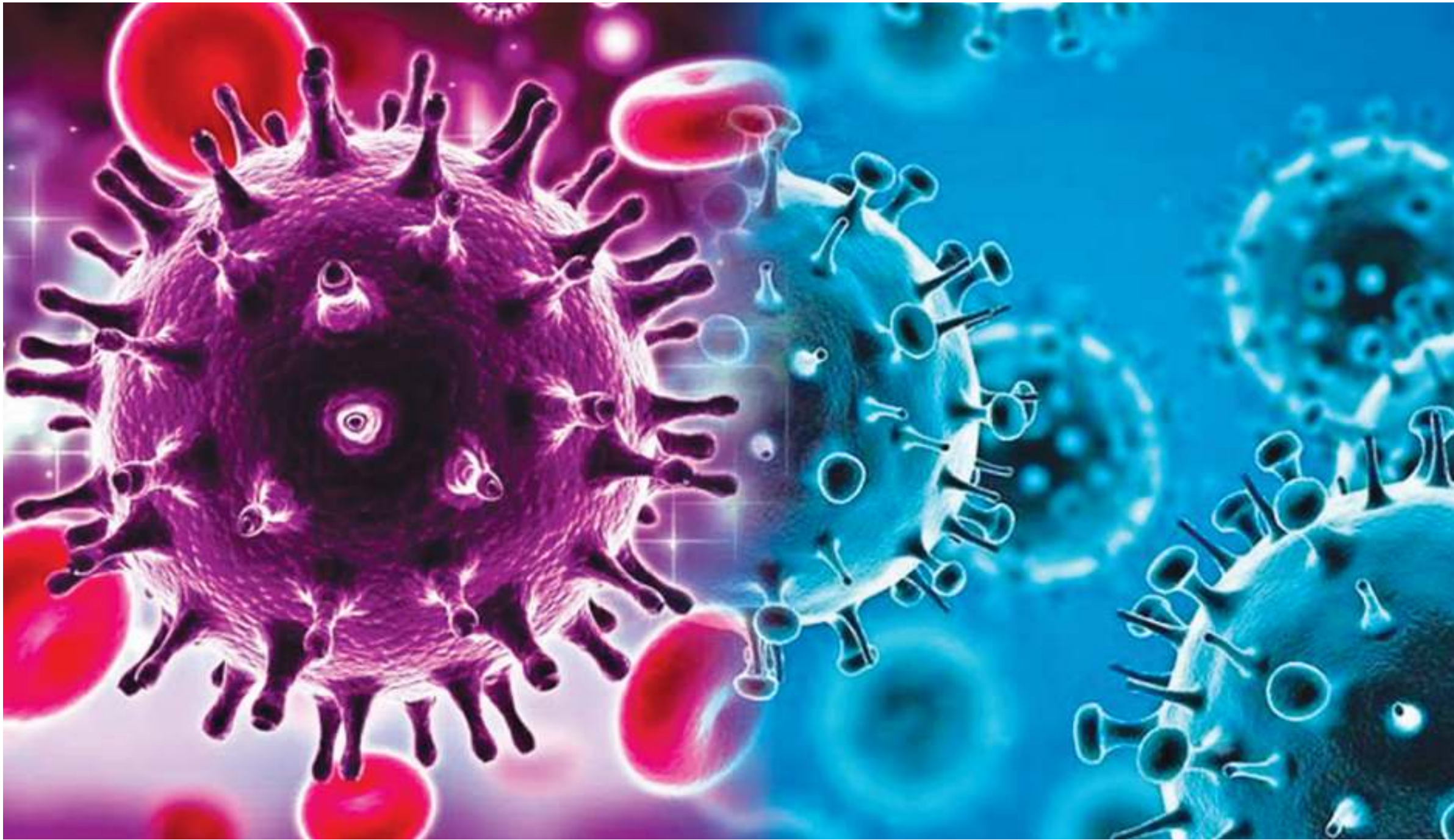
Artah worshippers stand to gain a lot by approaching God. They get relief as decided by God. He does so through mediums chosen specifically for this purpose. Thus *artah* worshippers get chance to reform themselves. At the same time they begin to realise the reality of this world, its *karmaphala* principle. Slowly, they get rid of the false notion that this world is there for lustful enjoyments. There is no doubt that pleasures are also there, but which are according to "*dharma*". They thus begin to stop themselves from doing harmful acts, which would bring punishments in future. God begins to guide and help them in subtle ways. This is also the start of "*bhakti*".

What is the conclusion then? If in trouble, do whatever to try to get out of it, but do not forget the given of real and absolute relief. Take God's shelter for guidance. But one must remember to have the right expectations.

Bishnoi is a spiritual writer and can be reached at spiritual@ajitbishnoi.com

OH! MI-CRON

World Health Organization has declared Omicron (B.1.1.529) a variant of concern. Preliminary evidence suggests there may be an increased risk of reinfection among elderly and the immunocompromised. SUPRIYA RAMESH speaks with experts to bring you a report



After Delta, any other variant which has stirred fear among people is the new Omicron mutant. Originating in South Africa, it has now spread to 24 countries including India. On December 2, 2021, the country observed and confirmed its first two cases in Karnataka. One of them was a South African national.

Based on the evidence presented to the World Health Organization's Technical Advisory Group on Virus Evolution (TAG-VE) that Omicron has several mutations that may have an impact on how it behaves, on November 26, 2021, WHO designated the variant Omicron (B.1.1.529) a variant of concern (VOC) on the advice of TAG-VE. According to WHO, this variant has a large number of mutations, some of which are concerning. Preliminary evidence suggests an increased risk of reinfection with this variant, as compared to other VOCs.

Scientists are still gathering data to establish how contagious Omicron is, and the severity of the illness it causes. "Omicron variant has a large number of mutations, some of which are concerning. Researchers around the world are conducting studies to better understand transmissibility, severity and immune escape capabilities of Omicron. WHO commends countries which have been able to quickly detect and report cases of the new Variant of Concern," says Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region.

Talking about the severity of infection, Dr Anurag Aggarwal, Consultant Internal Medicine, says, "This variant has a large number of mutations, some of which are concerning. Preliminary evidence suggests an increased risk of reinfection with this variant, as compared to other variants of concern."

Aggarwal, citing Professor Tulio de Oliveira, the director of the Centre for Epidemic Response and Innovation in South Africa, tells us that there was an 'unusual constellation of mutations' and that it was 'very different' to other variants that have circulated. "It is incredibly heavily mutated. There were 50 mutations overall and more than 30 on the spike protein, which is the target of most vaccines and the key the virus uses to unlock the doorway into our body's cells. Further, the receptor binding domain (that's the part of the virus that makes first contact with our body's cells) has 10 mutations compared to just two for the Delta variant that swept the world," explains Aggarwal.

After travel rules easing down post-second wave, it is obvious that people would travel everywhere after being caged for more than a year. With that, it is understandable that people will carry the virus from one place to another, even after the major chunk of the population is vaccinated.

“IN THE FESTIVE SEASON, COVID-APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR TAKES A BACK SEAT. BUT, TIME HAS AGAIN COME WHEN WE HAVE TO ADHERE TO ALL THE PROTOCOLS DILIGENTLY — AVOIDING SOCIAL GATHERINGS IS ESSENTIAL. IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE THAT WE'VE ALL BEEN COMPELLED TO STAY INSIDE AND AVOID SOCIAL INTERACTION FOR ALMOST TWENTY MONTHS. HOWEVER, IF WE ARE TO COMPLETELY ERADICATE THIS VIRUS, WE MUST LIMIT ITS SPREAD — DR ARUNESH KUMAR, HOD & SENIOR CONSULTANT-PULMONOLOGY, PARAS HOSPITALS, GURUGRAM



It is incredibly heavily mutated. There were 50 mutations overall and more than 30 on the spike protein, which is the target of most vaccines and the key the virus uses to unlock the doorway into our body's cells

— DR ANURAG AGGARWAL

Consultant Internal Medicine, QRG Super Speciality Hospital, Faridabad



"The confirmation of the Omicron, a variant of concern today by India, the first two cases in WHO South-East Asia Region, was not unexpected in view of the interconnected world that we live in. This emphasises the need for all countries to step up surveillance, to be on alert and rapidly detect any importation and take measures to curtail further spread of the virus," says Singh.

She adds that the response measures for all variants, including Omicron, is the same as that for SARs CoV2. Comprehensive and tailored public health and social measures by Governments, and strict adherence to preventive and precautionary measures by individuals, is a must. People must wear a well-fitting mask which covers their nose and mouth well, keep distance, avoid poorly ventilated or crowded spaces, keep hands clean, cover cough and sneeze and get vaccinated. And continue to take all precautionary measures even after getting vaccinated. All travelers must adhere to public health and social measures at all times and remain vigilant for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

Talking about the number of mutations, Dr Arunesh Kumar, HOD & Senior Consultant- Pulmonology tells us that this new variant is a matter of concern in India too. It has more than 30 mutations. With time, we will get to know more about this new variant. "This virus can invade our immunity. Therefore, we need to follow COVID appropriate behavior" he says.

The existing vaccines might or might not be effective against the Omicron variant and extensive research is being done to find out the same. "It is still to be known how effective vaccination would be in such a case," he tells us.

With the festive season upon us, we need to make sure that we take proper measures and keep safe as much as possible. "Although the so-called third wave has not eventuate as yet, the sudden appearance and the spread of omicron – a new variant of COVID-19 – across several countries has brought back memories of the second wave and its visibly devastating all-round consequences on people in the country. This means that we must shake off the complacency which was creeping in and instead get back to observing the same COVID-appropriate protocols and behaviour as we did before with utmost seriousness and discipline. So, while we resume wearing double masks, using sanitizers and maintaining social distancing, because of the fact that the virus can be airborne and transmitted through the air, we must also continue to employ indoor air purification systems in order to pre-empt any threat from the new strain, or any strain of the virus for that matter. Since people are now more likely to stay indoors for a greater duration due to the newly-perceived threat from the new variant, the role of indoor air purifiers with their ability to inactivate microbial pathogens including viruses and bacteria will continue to be critical to people's health," says Himanshu Agarwal, CEO, Magneto CleanTech.

Talking about the new wave smashing Europe, Kumar says the main reason behind the new COVID wave in Europe is people not wearing masks. From the last couple of months, many Governments have put leniency when it comes to wearing masks. This actually has led to a new wave. "If we don't let our guards down, we can control COVID," he adds.

Dr Shuchin Bajaj, Founder Director, Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals says, "This is the 5th variant of concern and overall the 15th variant of COVID-19. We already have flights being banned and travel restrictions in place. Therefore, we need to follow COVID-appropriate behavior like wearing masks, following social distancing, and regular use of sanitizer.

With the festive season upon us, we need to make sure that we take proper measures and keep safe as much as possible. "Although the so-called third wave has not eventuate as yet, the sudden appearance and the spread of omicron – a new variant of COVID-19 – across several countries has brought back memories of the second wave and its visibly devastating all-round consequences on people in the country. This means that we must shake off the complacency which was creeping in and instead get back to observing the same COVID-appropriate protocols and behaviour as we did before with utmost seriousness and discipline. So, while we resume wearing double masks, using sanitizers and maintaining social distancing, because of the fact that the virus can be airborne and transmitted through the air, we must also continue to employ indoor air purification systems in order to pre-empt any threat from the new strain, or any strain of the virus for that matter. Since people are now more likely to stay indoors for a greater duration due to the newly-perceived threat from the new variant, the role of indoor air purifiers with their ability to inactivate microbial pathogens including viruses and bacteria will continue to be critical to people's health," says Himanshu Agarwal, CEO, Magneto CleanTech.

"In the festive season, people tend to put all the COVID appropriate behavior on the back seat. But, time has again come when we have to adhere to all the COVID-appropriate behavior diligently. Avoiding social gatherings is essential. It's understandable that we've all been compelled to stay inside and avoid social interaction for almost twenty months. However, if we are to completely eradicate this virus, we must limit its spread. This means we'll have to avoid social gatherings for a while longer. Even if you are fully vaccinated, following the protocol and avoiding social gatherings will help. When you're outside, maintain social distance," says Kumar.

SAFETY COMES FIRST

- ❖ Children over the age of five should also be encouraged to wear masks
- ❖ Maintaining a six-foot social distance while outside the home should always be followed
- ❖ Hand sanitisation should be practiced every 5-6 hours or whenever one goes out
- ❖ Masks should be worn at all times when leaving the house. It should be worn in such a way that it should cover your mouth and nostrils properly. Used masks should be washed on a regular basis to avoid opportunistic infections
- ❖ Quarantine guidelines need to be modified by the centre and state government so that we can restrict the transmission of the virus
- ❖ People should immediately get themselves tested if they are experiencing fever, scratchy throat, low oxygen level and feeling lethargic all the time

HIGH RISK AMID OMICRON SCARE PEOPLE MISSING, HUNT IS ON

In Uttar Pradesh's Meerut, 13 of nearly 300 people on flights originating outside the country disappeared after providing false addresses and contact information. Seven flew in from South Africa, where the Omicron variant was first reported, news agency ANI reported. Officials are trying to track and test them for COVID-19, ANI said.

Chandigarh officials have registered a case against a woman who returned from South Africa and broke quarantine rules on landing in India. The woman landed Wednesday and tested negative on arrival. She was asked to home quarantine for a week, but she broke isolation the following day to check into a hotel before returning home. As many as 10 passengers - reportedly South Africans - have gone missing from Bengaluru airport. Karnataka Revenue Minister R Ashok said airport security, police and the health department are working to track them down and carry out Covid tests.

This comes after a 66-year-old South African - India's first confirmed Omicron Covid case - "fled" the country a week after landing in Bengaluru. The man, who had received both vaccine doses, tested positive on arrival and (because he was asymptomatic) asked to self-isolate. His samples were sent for testing.

12 suspected Omicron cases have been admitted to a Delhi hospital after arriving on international flights over the past few days. Eight have tested positive for Covid. Results for the other four have not yet been released. Samples have been forwarded for genome sequencing to confirm the strain on Friday, two international passengers, including a child, coming from an 'at risk' nation tested Covid positive on arrival at Chennai airport. Samples have been sent for sequencing. The Tamil Nadu government has denied reports they are Friday, nine members of a Jaipur family tested positive days after four returned from South Africa. The latter four have been isolated at a government hospital in Jaipur and samples from all nine have been sent for DNA sequencing, news agency PTI said.



Double vaccinate against Covid first, experts say amid calls for booster shots

India should prioritise double vaccinating its eligible population against Covid over booster shots given the large number of people still to get the base layer of protection against the infection, say scientists.

Concerns over the Omicron variant and waning vaccine-induced protection against the infection have highlighted the need for boosters to protect the most vulnerable. And while many countries have already started giving booster shots, several experts here said the priority in India has to be different given that large-scale immunisation programme began only six-eight months ago.

In advocating putting boosters on the back-burner for the moment, the experts' opinion runs counter to the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Sequencing Consortium (INSACOG) that has recommended a booster dose for those above 40 years in high-risk and high-exposure populations.

The INSACOG is a network of national testing labs set up by the government to monitor genomic variations of COVID-19.

"We have a large proportion of our population in the below 18 age-group. Until that is achieved, a uniform policy for second booster, or a third dose, is not advisable," immunologist Vineeta Bal told PTI, pointing out that large-scale vaccination in India began only in March 2021.

What we should focus on, she said, is fully vaccinating all the eligible population in India and pushing for vaccination of the under 18 age group on a large scale.

"Consistent finding with breakthrough infections is that these episodes are less in severity as compared to unvaccinated. That still confirms that immunity does exist in vaccinated individuals in India," Bal, guest faculty at Pune's Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, told PTI.

Satyajit Rath, from New Delhi's National Institute of Immunology (NII), added that it is not clear yet if boosters are needed for any vaccine worldwide yet. "The duration of immune responses and protection are beginning to show differences, too, in recent studies. So I would be loath to jump the gun and say anything very definitive about boosters based on these data," he told PTI.

Bal agreed that there is no solid data on waning immunity in India. In principle, of course, immunity will wane with time.

"Antibody levels in serum will be lower six months down the road than soon after vaccination but that is not the only and adequate evidence of significant lowering of protective immunity which is based on immunological memory," she added.



Modern AK-203 rifles with range over 3 football fields to be made in UP

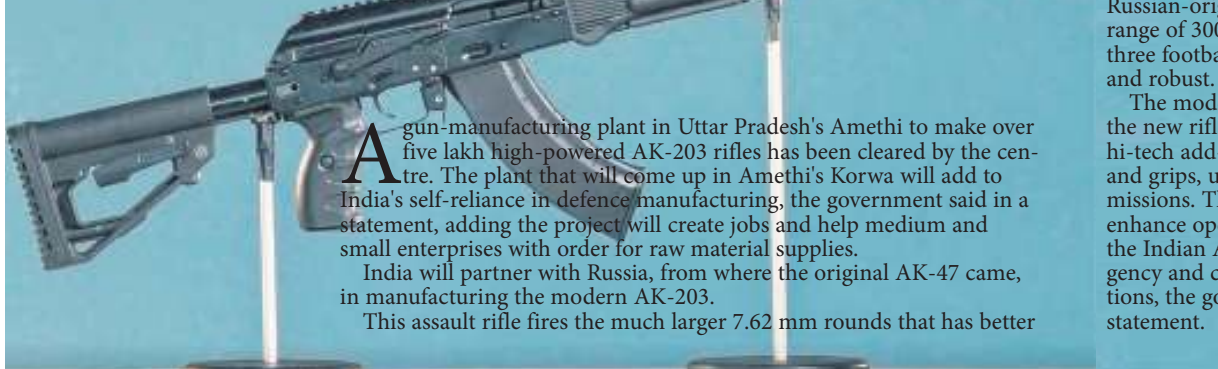
Gun-manufacturing plant in Uttar Pradesh's Amethi to make over five lakh high-powered AK-203 rifles has been cleared by the centre. The plant that will come up in Amethi's Korwa will add to India's self-reliance in defence manufacturing, the government said in a statement, adding the project will create jobs and help medium and small enterprises with order for raw material supplies.

India will partner with Russia, from where the original AK-47 came, in manufacturing the modern AK-203.

This assault rifle fires the much larger 7.62 mm rounds that has better penetrating power, while similar rifles with less stopping power fires the smaller 5.56 mm rounds.

The AK-203 assault rifles will replace the INSAS rifles that have been in service for over three decades. The modern version of the Russian-origin rifle has an effective range of 300 metres or more than three football fields, is lightweight and robust.

The modern technology used in the new rifles will enable them to use hi-tech add-ons like special sights and grips, useful for special forces missions. The assault rifles will enhance operational effectiveness of the Indian Army in counter insurgency and counter-terrorism operations, the government said in the statement.



Ajaz Patel now in league with Laker and Kumble

Mumbai-born left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel on Saturday entered the record books as he became only the third bowler in the 144-year-old history of Test cricket to take all 10 wickets in an innings on the second day of the second match against India here.

Patel, who had migrated to New Zealand with his parents back in 1996, ended the Indian innings with figures of 47.5-12-119-10 to equal England great Jim Laker and Indian legend Anil Kumble, who had achieved the rarest of rare feat in Test cricket.

The 33-year-old Patel, who is playing in his 11th Test, had only two five wicket hauls and a best match haul of seven wickets before Saturday's feat.

He bowled four separate spells of 24-10-57-4, 5-0-16-0, 6-0-16-2, 12.5-2-30-4 and got his 10th and final wicket in the form of Mohammed Siraj, who tried a slog and was caught by another player of Indian origin Rachin Ravindra.

Patel got a standing ovation from the Indian team as the umpires handed him the coveted ball while leading his team off the field. Incidentally, Patel is the second player after Douglas Jardine, who has played against India in his city of birth.



India reports 8603 fresh Covid infections, active cases remain below 1 lakh

With 8,603 people testing positive for the coronavirus infection in a day, India's tally of cases rose to 3,46,24,360, but active cases declined to 99,974, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Saturday.

The death toll, however, climbed to 4,70,530 with 415 fatalities reported on Saturday, the data released at 8 am showed.

The daily rise in infections has been below 50,000 for 160 consecutive days now. The active cases have declined to 99,974, comprising 0.29 per cent of the total infections, the lowest since March 2020, while the COVID-19 recovery rate was 98.35 per cent, the health ministry said.

A net decrease of two cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 cases in a span of 24 hours, according to the ministry.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 0.69 per cent. It has been less than 2 per cent for past 61 days now. The weekly positivity rate was also recorded at 0.81 per cent. It has been below 1 per cent for the past 20 days, the ministry data showed.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease rose to 3,40,53,856 while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.36 per cent.

The cumulative number of Covid



SHO in Rajasthan suspended for refusing to register gangrape case

A police sub inspector was suspended for allegedly refusing to register a case of gangrape in Rajasthan's Bharatpur district, an official said on Saturday.

A 19-year-old woman was allegedly abducted and gangraped by two men when she was on her way to college on November 29. Though she initially kept the incident under wraps, she later revealed her ordeal to her family members, following which they arrived at the Uchain police station on Thursday, Bharatpur Superintendent of Police Devendra Bishnoi said.

"Station House Officer Shrawan Pathak, a sub inspector, refused to register a case. The woman's family members met me yesterday and lodged a complaint. A case of gangrape was registered and the SHO was suspended," the SP said.



Veteran Kannada film actor S Shivaram dies at 83

Veteran Kannada actor S Shivaram, whose stint in the film industry spans more than six decades, died at a private hospital here on Saturday. He was 83.

Speaking to reporters outside the hospital, his son S Lakshmish said "My father Shivaram is no more with us. Doctors at Prashant Hospital had done their best to help him recover but unfortunately destiny had its plan. We have to accept it."

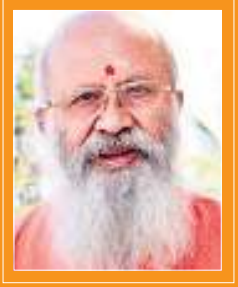
Born on January 28, 1938 in a Tamil Brahmin family, Shivaram, popularly known as Shivaramanna, had been a versatile actor who played various roles ranging from hero to supporting character in over 60 movies, besides directing and producing films.

He started his acting stint with 'Beratha Jeeva' in 1965 but made a mark with the movie 'Dudde Doddappa' and 'Lagna Patrike'.

He was admired for his roles in 'Naagarahavu', 'Nanobba Kalla', 'Yajamana', 'Apthamitra' and 'Hombisilu'.

The veteran filmmaker launched Rashi Brothers by teaming up with his sibling S Ramanathan and gave some hit movies such as 'Gejje Pooje' and 'Upasane'. Shivaram was active in the field and recently did the movie 'Snehitha'.

Mourning his death, former Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa tweeted, "I am deeply saddened by the news that the veteran actor of Kannada cinema is no more. He was also a director and producer. He had also acted in several television serials."



Omicron variant may have picked up a piece of common-cold virus

The Omicron variant of the virus that causes COVID-19 likely acquired at least one of its mutations by picking up a snippet of genetic material from another virus - possibly one that causes the common cold - present in the same infected cells, according to researchers.

This genetic sequence does not appear in any earlier versions of the coronavirus, called SARS-CoV-2, but is ubiquitous in many other viruses including those that cause the common cold, and also in the human genome, researchers said. By inserting this particular snippet into itself, Omicron might be making itself look "more human," which would help it evade attack by the human immune system, said Venky Soundararajan of Cambridge, Massachusetts-based data analytics firm inference, who led the study posted on Thursday on the website OSF Preprints.

This could mean the virus transmits more easily, while only causing mild or asymptomatic disease. Scientists do not yet know whether Omicron is more infectious than other variants, whether it causes more severe disease or whether it will overtake Delta as the most prevalent variant. It may take several weeks to get answers to these questions.

Cells in the lungs and in the gastrointestinal system can harbor SARS-CoV-2 and common-cold coronaviruses simultaneously, according to earlier studies. Such co-infection sets the scene for viral recombination, a process in which two different viruses in the same host cell interact while making copies of themselves, generating new copies that have some genetic material from both "parents."

This new mutation could have first occurred in a person infected with both pathogens when a version of SARS-CoV-2 picked up the genetic sequence from the other virus, Soundararajan and colleagues said in the study, which has not yet been peer-reviewed.

The same genetic sequence appears many times in one of the coronaviruses that causes colds in people - known as HCoV-229E - and in the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes AIDS, Soundararajan said.

South Africa, where Omicron was first identified, has the world's highest rate of HIV, which weakens the immune system and increases a person's vulnerability to infections with common-cold viruses and other pathogens.

In that part of the world, there are many people in whom the recombination that added this ubiquitous set of genes to Omicron might have occurred, Soundararajan said.

"We probably missed many generations of recombinations" that occurred over time and that led to the emergence of Omicron, Soundararajan added.

More research is needed to confirm the origins of Omicron's mutations and their effects on function and transmissibility. There are competing hypotheses that the latest variant might have spent some time evolving in an animal host.

