

ANALYSIS 7
COLOMBO PROJECT GIVES
TACTICAL EDGE TO CHINA**MONEY 8**
DISCOMS' OUTSTANDING DUES TO GENCOS
RISE 1.3 PC TO RS 1,13,227 CR IN DEC**SPORTS 12**
ASHWIN TURNS IT ON AS INDIA
AIM FOR FOUR DAY FINISH

HYDERABAD, MONDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3

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SCARED OF
FLOPS, PRIYANKA
WANTS TO TAKE
THINGS SLOW

Page 11

**13 VILLAGERS, JAWAN DIE IN NAGALAND
AS SECURITY OPERATION GOES AWRY**

Thirteen villagers and a soldier were killed at a Indo-Myanmar border district in Nagaland as a counter-insurgency operation went awry on Saturday, sources said. Union minister Amit Shah said a Special Investigation Team will probe the matter. The security forces were set for a counter-insurgency operation in the Mon district that borders Myanmar, sources said. Following a tip-off about a possible movement of insurgents, they had laid an ambush near Oting village on Saturday afternoon. But they opened fire on a vehicle on the Tiru-Oting road, which was carrying villagers, police sources said.

**17 MORE OMICRON CASES DETECTED IN
INDIA; DELHI, RAJASTHAN REPORT CASES**

India reported 17 more cases of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 on Sunday - nine persons in Rajasthan capital Jaipur, seven in Maharashtra's Pune district and a 37-year-old fully vaccinated man who arrived in Delhi from Tanzania - taking the tally to 21 in the country. Most of those who tested positive either recently arrived from African countries or were in contact with such people. With this, four states and the national capital have now reported cases of the potentially more contagious variant which has sparked a fresh alert across the world.

**MORE THAN 3 CRORE INCOME TAX
RETURNS FILED AS DEADLINE NEARS**

More than three crore taxpayers have filed their income tax returns (ITR) for the assessment year 2021-22 on the new e-filing portal of the income tax department as on December 3, 2021. In fact, the number of ITRs filed per day is over 4 lakh and increasing everyday as the last date for filing returns, i.e. December 31, 2021 is approaching. According to official sources, ITR filing went up to 3.03 crore for the assessment year 2021-22 with 58.98% of these are ITR1 (1.78 crore), 8% is ITR2 (24.42 lakh), 8.7% is ITR3 (26.58 lakh), while 23.12% of these are ITR4 (70.07 lakh), ITR5 (2.14 lakh), ITR6 (0.91 lakh) and ITR7 (0.15 lakh) combined.

**US MAKES COVID TEST REPORT
MANDATORY FOR PASSENGERS**

The US has made it mandatory for all incoming passengers, including those from India, to carry a negative COVID-19 test report or a proof of recovery from the contagion amidst rising number of cases of the new Omicron variant. The new protocol comes into effect from December 6, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has said. "This amendment updates COVID-19 testing requirements for air passengers 2 years or older boarding a flight to the United States," Indian government officials informed Indian-American community leaders.

KCR likely to give full-time party chief post to KTR

TRs chief planning sensational moves to beat the opposition parties' strategy

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

TRS supremo Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao is likely to take some important decisions during the next Cabinet reshuffle.

According to speculations in TRS circles, KCR is thinking of handing over the full responsibility of running the party to his son TRS Working President KT Rama Rao. KCR wants his son KTR to lead the party in the next Assembly elections.

KCR wants to remove his son KTR from the Cabinet so that KTR can dedicate his entire time to party activities.

It may be recalled that in the

recent party plenary session the TRS had changed its constitution giving full powers to the Working President in party matters in the absence of the party president.

KCR is coming to the party office, Telangana Bhavan, only for party meetings and other important occasions. After becoming the Working President KTR is coming to party office frequently.

During local body and other elections KTR spent more time in the office. The responsibilities of party elections were handed over to KTR by the leadership.

KCR is thinking of dropping KTR from the Cabinet so that he can dedicate his full time to party matters and concentrate on prepar-

KCR is coming to the party office, Telangana Bhavan, only for party meetings and other important occasions. After becoming the Working President KTR is coming to party office frequently.



ing party cadres to fight the next Assembly elections.

KCR may take his daughter Kavitha into the Cabinet in place of his son KTR. At present there are four Velamas in the Cabinet.

Vittal and Theenmar Mallanna to join BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana protagonist and former TSPSC member Chinthagattu Vittal is joining the BJP on December 6 at New Delhi in the presence of BJP leaders at 11 am.

He has already gone to New Delhi on Sunday along with Meesala Chandraiah, Vasu, Bukka Venugopal and others.

It may be recalled that Vittal was an RSS idealist from his student days and is entering politics for the first time.

Piyush is speaking lies in Parliament: Niranjan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Agriculture Minister Singireddy Niranjan Reddy has alleged that the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution and Textiles, Piyush Goyal, is speaking blatant lies.

He said the entire responsibility of procuring food grains, milling and export have to be taken care of by the FCI.

He said that there is no response from the Centre although Collectors and the Civil Supplies Department had sent letters to them asking to buy rice from Telangana.

It is unfortunate that the BJP

MPs from Telangana don't know the difference between raw rice and parboiled rice. He said that the parboiled rice system had been introduced by the FCI and not the KCR Government.

Speaking to the media on Sunday at Telangana Bhavan, Niranjan said that the Centre purchased parboiled rice the maximum during the last seven years.

The Telangana Government has been encouraging farmers to rotate crops considering the Centre's policies. Many farmers cultivated sorghum after the Chief Minister's call. He made it clear that the state government will not set up paddy procurement centres for the Rabi season crop.



Telangana Agriculture Minister Singireddy Niranjan Reddy addressing a press conference at Telangana Bhavan in Hyderabad on Sunday.

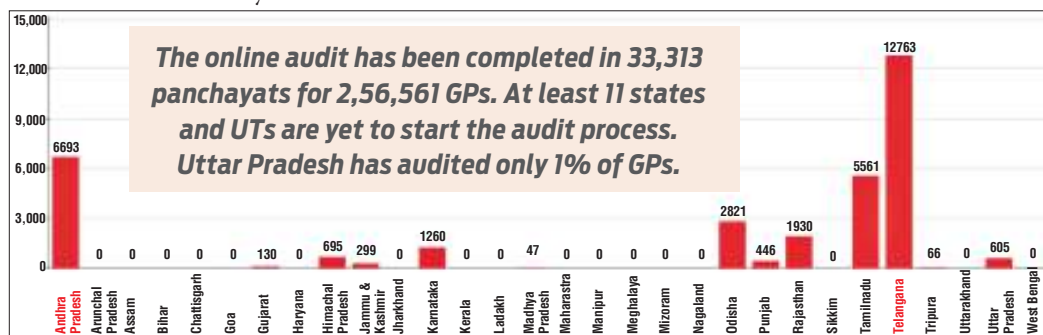
Only TS has completed 100% audit of Panchayats

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

Telangana is the only state in the country to have completed 100% audit of its Gram Panchayats. No

other state has managed to touch even 51% of its GPs. The second position in such auditing is occupied by Andhra Pradesh, which has audited 50% of its GPs.

The state audit department has completed 100% the online audit of 12,769 gram panchayats in Telangana.



The online audit has been completed in 33,313 panchayats for 2,56,561 GPs. At least 11 states and UTs are yet to start the audit process. Uttar Pradesh has audited only 1% of GPs.

TODAY ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Kartik & Krishna Paksha

Tithi : Amavasya 13:12**Nakshatram** : Anuradha 10:47**Rahukalam** : 9:21 am - 10:43 am**Yamagandam** : 1:29 pm - 2:51 pm**Variyam** : 3:41 pm - 5:05 pm**Gulika** : 6:35 am - 7:58 am**Amritakalam** : 12:05 am - 1:29 am**Abhijit Muhurtham** : 11:44 am - 12:28 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: PARTLY CLOUDY

Temp: 28/18

Humidity: 68%

Sunrise: 06:31 AM

Sunset: 05:40 PM

Updated DECEMBER 05, 2021 5:00 PM

Disha panel visits encounter site, locals stage protest

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Disha Commission led by Justice Sirpurkar visited Chatanpally in Shadnagar on Sunday.

The team visited the place where Disha's body was burnt. Later, they visited the place where the encounter killing the rapist-murder suspects in the Disha case occurred.

CRPF troops escorted the Commission members. The encounter occurred on December 6, 2019, and all the four accused in the Disha case were shot dead by the police at Chatanpally.

The commission took clarifications from the police based on info collected during the visit. Later, they visited the Shadnagar

Police Station.

Meanwhile, some locals staged protests against the commission supporting the encounter. They shouted slogans in an aggressive manner. The cops prevented them from entering the police station.

The CRPF team, which provided security to the commission, took precautions at the police station.

The commission inquired with the then Cyberabad Police Commissioner Sajjanar and the police officials of Shadnagar.

The commission has raised many issues during the inquiry and the police failed to give proper answers. Some police officials had filed a petition against the police in the High Court which was rejected by the court.

Actor Jacqueline stopped from leaving India

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Actor Jacqueline Fernandez was today stopped at the Mumbai Airport by immigration officials due to a LOC (Look Out Circular). The Enforcement Directorate had opened a LOC against the actor in the Suresh Chandrasekar case. Ms Fernandez wanted to go to Dubai for a show. She has been let go after brief questioning and has been informed that she has to appear before the probe agency in Delhi.

The ED will issue fresh summons to her for appearing at the Delhi office tomorrow.

More skeletons tumbling out in Shilpa Chowdary cheating case

G RAVI KIRAN
■ HYDERABAD

Many names are coming up during the inquiry into the cheating case involving Shilpa Chowdary.

The police are going to call everyone named by Shilpa Chowdary in this case. She said that many have given black money to her for converting to white. The police are going to inquire about those business persons and others from Monday.

As of now only three persons have given formal complaints against Shilpa Chowdary. The three complainants are Divya Reddy, Priya Darshini and Rohini.



Harsha, an actor who revealed that he had given Rs 3 crore as a loan has not complained formally till now. One person informed the

police that he gave Rs 11.5 crore to Shilpa Chowdary, but had not filed a complaint against her formally.

Shilpa stated during the inquiry that she gave money to a woman named Radhika Reddy, who is engaged in business.

But during the police inquiry, Radhika said that she had not taken any money from Shilpa and that she had given money to Shilpa. She showed cheques and notes sent by Shilpa to the police as proof.

"Many names are coming out in this case. Within a week everything will be clear. The victims of Shilpa Chowdary should come forward," a police official said.

OU doubles Ph.D. thesis fee, scholars protest

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

The 100-year-old Osmania University is known for being student-friendly. But the OU authorities have suddenly doubled Ph.D. thesis submission fee.

The OU authorities have increased the Ph.D. thesis submission fee from Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000 suddenly shocking Ph.D. scholars.

The University Standing Committee held a meeting on July 31, 2021, and appointed a committee under the chairmanship of the Dean, Faculty of Commerce, to look into the enhancement of remuneration to adjudicators,



chairman of the board of studies, heads of departments and the fees to be collected from research schol-

ars at the time of submission of theses.

OU Vice-Chancellor Prof. D

Ravinder has approved the enhancement of the Ph.D. thesis submission fee from Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000 based on the committee's recommendations.

With the recommendations, the remuneration of the three adjudicators per thesis has been enhanced from Rs 1,500 to Rs 3,000 each.

As per the new rules, Rs 500 has to be paid to the Board of Studies Chairman, the two internal examiners and the supervisor at the time of the viva-voce instead of Rs 400. The orders were issued on November 24, 2021, and took immediate effect.

Monday Mirchi

Differing insights from divine dispensation

When someone dies, it is natural for the police to determine the cause of death. Not many in the police force look at the time or day of death from a non-legal angle, considering its significance say from the standpoint of merit acquired by a spiritual or famous personality. The past week saw the deaths of lyricist Sirivennela and TTD senior priest 'Dollar Seshadri'. IPS officer and DCP East Zone Ramesh Mashipuram, however, shared his insights on the religious significance of these two departures. As for Dollar Seshadri, who prayed to and served Lord Vishnu, he expired on Monday in Karthika masam, known to be an auspicious day dedicated to Lord Shiva. Sirivennela, who is known to have adored Lord Shiva, expired on Ekadashi - an auspicious day dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Clueless on the significance of the divine dispensation, the IPS officer, however, questioned: 'Is this daivayam's advaityam?'

Twin losses for Metro chief

For Hyderabad Metro, the completion of four years of operations with 20 crore ridership would ideally have been an occasion to celebrate, had it not been for the pandemic-induced losses. As if the current poking 'Loss-making Metro' is not enough, the HMRL MD had to bear with the deaths of two persons who were very close to him. NVS Reddy, himself a poet, was at a loss of words over the death of Sirivennela Sitarama Shastri. He recalled that his last poetic session with Sirivennela was about six months ago at his house when the departed lyricist was at his poetic best as usual. While this felt like a personal loss, moments of grief spread with Congress peddaina Rosaiah's demise. NVS Reddy said that the former AP chief minister had played a vital role in the sanctioning of Hyderabad Metro Rail project. The Concession Agreement for the Hyderabad Metro Rail project was signed in his presence when he was the Chief Minister of the

combined AP on September 4, 2010. Naturally, NVS is yet to come to terms with the loss of the two great personalities.

Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown

It is one thing to hog the limelight as the sole official spokesman of the State Health Department amidst a pandemic and quite another to be taunted by critics who mistake such attention as something that came only because the official was there at the right time in the right position. Director of Public Health Dr G Srinivasa Rao is facing this peculiar situation. He has been enjoying media glare right from the outbreak of Covid-19. However, he has been criticised in some circles for being elevated to the top position "in a short time". May be he is so fed up with this constant poking that he has offered to give way to any eligible person who comes forward to shoulder the responsibilities of the Director of Public Health. He has been reportedly directed by the state government to be the only official voice from the state that speaks on Coronavirus and gives updated regularly.

Rejig in AP administration on the cards?

Some determined officials leave their imprints with quick-fixes that nobody forgets. Now that Chief Secretary Sameer Sharma has got six months' extension, the focus of some of the babus' circles has shifted to whether there would be another round of reshuffle in the state administration. Two months ago, within a day of taking charge as the Chief Secretary, Sameer Sharma had effected transfers of some bureaucrats. It is now understood that some senior bureaucrats have been continuing in their posts for two years. Since bureaucrats are generally moved every two to two and a half years, there is buzz that rejig is on the cards. Some babus can't wait for the new transfer list to be out.

- Yours truly

Omicron: Parliamentary panel recommends evaluation of vaccines

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid growing concerns over the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2, a parliamentary committee has recommended that the efficacy of Covid vaccines must be evaluated and the government conduct more research to examine the need for booster doses to contain the new strain.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health, which presented its report on Friday, also said that concerns with regard to the new strain developing immunoescape mechanism should be critically addressed. In view of loss of life during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the committee noted that the measures taken by the health ministry to contain or prevent the spread of SARS-COV-2 proved to be squarely inadequate and suggested that the focus should be on strengthening health infrastructure, ensuring adequate availability of beds, supply of oxygen cylinders and essential medicines.

With the threat of a third wave looming around, the government should utilise the time in strengthening public health infrastructure. This is evident from the fact that unlike the first wave (which peaked in September 2020) of the COVID-19 pandemic, which largely was restricted to urban areas where testing was introduced rapidly, the second wave (peaked in May) largely spread through rural towns and villages, it said in its report.

The committee, thus, observed that there is a dire need for improving the geographical spread of testing facilities in rural regions of the country. It also recommended establishing sync between PHCs/CHCs with the VRDLs in the states. In its report, the committee said it apprehends that a rise in mutations in the virus may lead to reporting of more virulent and transmissible strain of the Covid virus in the country and strongly recommended the Union health ministry to adopt a zero-tolerance COVID-19 policy and closely track Covid cases across the country.

"The committee believes that timely detection and isolation of potentially infectious people is very crucial in reducing the impact of the pandemic. The importance of diagnostic testing therefore, cannot be overlooked," the panel said in its report. Besides, the government must aggressively keep pushing the vaccination programme in terms of granting approval to more vaccines, ramping up vaccine production, enhancing delivery capacity and increasing the vaccination rate, the committee said in its recommendations.

"With the incidence of highly mutated Omicron (B.1.1.529) strain of Covid virus, the committee strongly believes that the efficacy of the vaccines must be evaluated. The concerns with regards to the new strain developing immunoescape mechanism need to be critically addressed," it recommended.

Actor Jacqueline stopped from leaving India

Continued from page 1

The probe agency has filed a charge sheet in a Delhi court against common man Suresh Chandrasekar and others in the 200-crore money laundering case, alleging that he extorted Rs 200 crore from a businessman's wife while he was lodged in Tihar jail. The central agency has unearthed evidence showing financial transactions from Chandrasekar to Ms Fernandez. A horse worth Rs 52 lakh and a Persian cat worth Rs 9 lakh were among gifts worth Rs 10 crores given by Chandrasekar to Ms Fernandez, the ED has said in its charge sheet, according to sources.

Investigation into alleged proceeds of crime reaching the Bollywood actor from Suresh is still on, and the actor is to be questioned again.

Can KCR and Mamata defeat BJP in the next LS polls?

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

Can the TRS supremo, Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, or Trinamool Congress President and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee achieve what TDP supremo N. Chandrababu Naidu could not do in the last Lok Sabha elections?

In the present political scenario Chief Ministers Mamata Banerjee and K. Chandrasekhar Rao have become enemies of the BJP and both are determined to defeat

the BJP in the next Lok Sabha elections.

During the last Lok Sabha elections, Chandrababu Naidu had extensively campaigned against the BJP and had tried to bring all anti-BJP parties under Congress leadership.

But Chandrababu lost power in Andhra Pradesh and the BJP won at the Centre with more than the required number of seats to form government at the Centre on its own.

Now West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is playing the role of Chandrababu Naidu and is mobilising anti-BJP parties.

Mamata strongly believes that the Congress cannot defeat the BJP at the Centre.

Mamata is now trying to extend her Trinamool Congress to all northern states. Mamata wants the support of both Telugu Chief Ministers who together have about 30 Lok Sabha seats.

Mamata is confident that the TRS and the YSR Congress would retain power in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in the next Assembly elections.

She has also the confidence that both these parties will win 30 to 35 Lok Sabha seats in the

next elections and the support of these parties is crucial in preventing the BJP from coming to power at the Centre.

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao also has the same opinion. He too wants to defeat the BJP in the next Lok Sabha elections. It is not yet clear whether both Mamata and KCR will work together or put in efforts separately.

Before the next Lok Sabha elections, KCR has to face Assembly elections. In the Assembly elections the future of TRS will be known. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee does not have this

problem as Assembly elections were held there a few months ago.

In the Assembly elections if the TRS retains power it will have hope in the Lok Sabha elections. If the TRS cannot retain power it will affect its prospects in the Lok Sabha elections too.

In Andhra Pradesh, Assembly and Lok Sabha elections will be held simultaneously. At present, YSR Congress is in a comfortable position in Andhra Pradesh and it has the confidence that it can increase its Lok Sabha seats in the next elections.

JAWAD IMPACT

High tides damage parapet wall of children's park

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The high tides with rip currents damaged the most popular tourist attraction in Visakhapatnam, Rama Krishna (RK) Beach, in the wee hours of Sunday. Influenced by the cyclonic storm Jawad, high tides damaged the parapet wall of the children's park on the RK Beach and led to coastal erosion of about 200 metres. The police erected barricades at the affected beachfront and did not allow visitors into the beach to prevent untoward incidents further.

On several occasions, the high tides have come close to the beach road. Earlier, over 40 percent of the beach near INS Korusura, submarine museum, eroded. The damage was patched up after a massive effort from the government and other stakeholders. With the Cyclone Jawad, the sea tides almost reached the parapet wall of the RK Beach.

Several studies have been conducted on sand erosion



on the Visakhapatnam beach. The government has appointed an international consultancy to study the problem and suggest concrete steps to arrest sand erosion.

"After the harbour expansion works including high concrete constructions, when tides with high rip currents hit the other side, sand is eroding. In fact, the Visakhapatnam beaches are

very narrow and there is not much lung space. The issue started after the development of the beach road into two-lane with dividers. The stakeholders are just patching up the damage and not trying to find a long-lasting solution. Significantly, the issue is only in the city, not on the other side towards Bheemili," a scientist of the National Institute of Oceanography opined.

Continued from page 1

He worked for Telangana as the leader of the Telangana Employees Union before Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao launched his Telangana movement in 2001 under the leadership of Prof. Jayashankar and others.

Due to his participation in the Telangana movement he was given the nickname 'Telangana Vittal'.

Vittal announced on Sunday that he is joining the BJP as he thinks that Telangana would get justice only under Modi. Vittal thanked BJP President JP Nadda, Telangana BJP affairs in-charge Tarun Chugh, Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy land eaders DK Aruna, Dr K. Laxman, AP Jithender Reddy, Vivek, Raja Singh, Eatala Rajender, Arvind, Soyam Bapurao, M. Raghunandan Rao, Swamy

Goud and others for inviting him into the BJP.

Meanwhile, eminent journalist and Qnews chief Theenmar Mallanna alias Chintapandu Naveen Kumar has announced that he is joining the BJP on December 7 (Tuesday). He tweeted on his Twitter account saying that he has completed all formalities.

He also thanked BJP President JP Nadda, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Union Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy, BJP Telangana President Bandi Sanjay Kumar and others through his Twitter account.

He said "Completed all things thanks to @bandisanjay_bjp @Arvindharmapuri @kishanreddybjp @vivekvenkatswam @apijithender @aruna_dk @PMuralidharao @RaghunandanraoM@AmitShah @JPNadda@PMOIndia and all others 7th December is conform."

Last rites of former CM Rosaiah performed...



Continued from page 1

Telangana state Congress president and MP A Revanth Reddy and several other leaders and workers paid their last respects.

His body was taken to a farmhouse here and the funeral of the departed leader was conducted with State honours. Union Tourism Minister G Kishan Reddy, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and several other leaders consoled the death of Rosaiah.

The State government also declared three days of mourning. Rosaiah's political journey

began in 1968 as an MLC. He served as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh after the demise of YS Rajasekhara Reddy in 2009.

He had a challenging time as the Chief Minister in view of political developments following the sudden demise of the charismatic YSR in a chopper crash and with 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.

No TS Minister at Rosaiah's funeral...

Continued from page 1

but there was no minister from Telangana at the funeral. It is painful as it is a tradition for ministers to participate when state honours are provided, he said.

VH said that AP Ministers attended the funeral extending AP state honours to Rosaiah. Andhra Pradesh Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister Botla Sathyanarayana, AP Transport and I&PR Minister Perni Nani, AP Energy, Forest & Environment, Science & Technology Minister Balineni Srinivas Reddy and Endowment Minister Vellampally Srinivas attended the funeral.

MLAs from the YSRC and the TDP also attended Rosaiah's funeral. The lead-

MLAs from the YSRC and the TDP also attended Rosaiah's funeral. The leaders of AP political parties and Cong leaders attended the funeral held at the Kompally farmhouse, VH said.

ers of AP political parties and Congress leaders attended the funeral held at the Kompally farmhouse, VH said.

TRS Vysya leaders MLA Beegala Ganesh, MLC Boggarapu Dayanand, TSIDC Chairman Amaravadi Laxminarayana, TSTDIC Chairman Uppala

Srinivas Gupta, Telangana Police Housing Corporation Chairman Koleti Damodar Gupta and others too attended the funeral.

Earlier, Telangana BJP Chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Union Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy and others visited Rosaiah's residence to pay their respects.

Congress leaders shifted Rosaiah's body to Gandhi Bhavan from Dharam Karan Road in Balkampet.

AICC Chief Sonia Gandhi's emissary and Opposition Leader in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjuna Kharge, paid tributes at Gandhi Bhavan along with other Congress leaders.

Later, Rosaiah's funeral procession started from Gandhi Bhavan and reached the Kompally farmhouse where Rosaiah's sons performed the final rites.

Staff will get option to specify preferred cadre: Chief Secretary

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

Ahead of the issue of guidelines for arriving at the number of employees to be deployed in each of the districts following reorganization of the erstwhile 10 districts into 33, the state government has decided to give government employees the option to specify their preferences with regard to cadres.

The state government had embarked upon organisation of local cadres after obtaining presidential assent for the Telangana Public Employment (Organisation of Local Cadres and Regulation of Direct Recruitment) Order 2018 upon reorganisation of the districts. Following consultations with employees' unions, orders were issued in August this year department-wise for categorising posts into district, zonal and multi-zonal cadres. Most of the departments have categorised



the posts into different cadres and notified them as part of the exercise. Presently employees are working on 'order to serve' basis in various districts, while awaiting communication from the government for exercising their options relating to the districts in which they prefer to work.

As per the instructions of Chief Minister K.Chandrasekhar Rao, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar on Sunday held a meeting with TGO and TNGO Employees'

Unions at BRKR Bhavan to finalize the steps taken by various departments at district, zonal and multi zonal level cadres and allocation of employees as per the Presidential Order-2018.

The Chief Secretary discussed with State unit presidents and representatives of TGO and TNGO Associations the basis for the allocation of the local cadres to the newly formed districts within the erstwhile districts. The Chief Secretary

gave an assurance that all employees would be given an option to give their preferences with regard to cadres. He said that the State and District Level Committees had been formed to complete the process smoothly. The TGO, TNGO and district level employee associations recognized by the government would be invited at the time of allocation. This process would be taken up initially in the districts where the Model Code of Conduct is not in

force. In the remaining districts, it would be taken up after the Model Code of Conduct is lifted.

Vikas Raj, Principal Secretary, GAD, Sheshadri, CIG, Ronald Rose, Special Secretary, Finance, Mamatha, President of TGO, Rajender, President of TNGO, and other representatives attended the meeting.

Speaking to media persons after the meeting, TNGO president Mamindla Rajender said that the government had taken a decision as per the presidential order to see that not a single employee would experience loss. "We told the officials to accommodate the employees in their own districts. The officials assured that they will implement the suggestions. First priority is to be given to the wife and husband and the employees suffering from ailments. We asked them to follow the roster system for SC, STs", he said.

Court directs Rapido to stop airing advt defaming TSRTC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A city court has barred app-based bike taxi aggregator Rapido from telecasting an advertisement against the TSRTC featuring Tollywood actor Allu Arjun.

The Xth Junior Civil Judge of the City Civil Court, Nampally, on Friday restrained Rapido and its legal successors, directors, employees, servants, agents and representatives from telecasting, broadcasting, streaming, reproducing, distributing, or making available to the public the 'original or any modified' version of the ad films on their websites or through the Internet in any manner.

The commercial had defamed bus services operated by the TSRTC.

The court also directed Google's online video sharing platform YouTube to block access to the original and the modified version of the video on the lines identified by the plaintiff.



Since a month, Rapido had been widely airing ads in which actor Allu Arjun was seen suggesting that it is 'uncomfortable and dangerous' to travel in TSRTC buses by directly showing a TSRTC bus which was hired by Rapido for the commercial.

On being issued a notice by the TSRTC, Rapido slightly modified the ad films but continued to display the TSRTC bus.

Since Rapido refused to stop

airing the ads on various TV channels and YouTube, TSRTC approached the court.

Senior counsel K. Vivek Reddy appeared for TSRTC and argued that while Rapido had the right to promote its service, it cannot do so by making defamatory statements about the TSRTC and mass transport.

He contended that the TSRTC is a state-run corporation which takes several precautions to ensure the safety of passengers and it is illegal to make false, demeaning statements about it.

The court has directed Rapido to stop airing the defamatory ad film and YouTube to remove the ad films. Anybody who is found flouting the order is liable to be prosecuted.

"I appeal to the public to strengthen the TSRTC which is a State-run corporation meeting the transport needs of the people," VC Sajjanar, IPS, the Vice-Chairman and MD of TSRTC, said.

Woman ends life after tiff with husband over blouse

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 36-year old woman allegedly died by suicide at her house here after an argument with her tailor husband for not stitching a blouse as per her liking, police said on Sunday.

The woman, was found

hanging at their house on Saturday, they said.

The woman reportedly quarrelled with her husband, a tailor after she did not like the stitching of a blouse for her by him and following an argument with him she seems to have felt hurt and resorted to the extreme step,

a police official attached to Amberpet police station said.

The woman went inside a room and bolted its door from inside, and the door was subsequently forcibly opened, police said.

No suicide note was found. A case was registered.

Man held for cheating businessman of Rs 1.10 crore

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The CCS has arrested one Syed Ahmed in a case of cheating on Saturday. Earlier, another suspect named Pediripati Shekhar Goud was arrested on November 12. Syed Ahmed was absconding.

Both the suspects created a fake document for a 1500 sq.yd. property at Moosapet and tried to sell it.

They pretended to be bonafide owners of the land and forged documents. Actually, the land belonged to a private company, police said.

The suspects approached a businessman of Banjara Hills and offered the land for sale for Rs 11.5 crore. The victim gave Rs 1.10 crore as advance to the suspects, police said.

VROs want Govt to address their problems

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State VROs Association has alleged that the government is not responding even 15 months after abolishing 5,485 VRO posts and has been destroying the self-respect of VROs.

Association President Golkonda Sathesh said that the government had insulted VROs by abolishing VRO posts on September 9, 2020, without consulting VROs' unions and leaders.

The government has been neglecting VROs by not giving them promotions in the Revenue Department and increments. The government is also not granting mercy appointments or caring for the families of dead employees.

At the Association meeting held at the VV Function Hall in Hyderabad on Sunday,

Sathesh said that they didn't understand how long the government would continue in this manner.

Higher officials are not giving appointments to listen to their problems although they had sought appointments hundreds of times. There is no humaneness on the part of the government, Sathesh said.

He demanded that the government should take steps to strengthen the revenue department.

Sathesh warned that they will announce their action plan if the government failed to respond to their demands immediately.

VROs leaders Palapati Naresh, Kandhari Bikshapathi, Moulana, Rameshwara Rao, Ashanna, Ramesh, Ramchander, Rajanna, Murali, Venkatesh and others attended the meeting.

THE CATCHY SHOW OF CAT LOVERS



With an aim to promote cat adoption, "cat show-all breed fun show" was organised in Hyderabad on Sunday accompanied by free pet health camp. In the show that attracted many people almost 80,000 cats took part. The event was organised by "VSAWRD" - Photo by SV Chary

Only TS has completed 100% audit of Panchayats

Continued from page 1

As part of the new online audit system implemented by the Panchayati Raj Department of the Central Government, only 13 per cent of the Gram Panchayats in 30 states and Union Territories have completed the audit.

The online audit has been completed in 33,313 panchayats for 2,56,561 GPs. At least 11 states and UTs are yet to start the audit process. Uttar Pradesh has audited only 1% of GPs.

Of the 33,313 audited GPs nationwide, 12,769 panchayats are from Telangana. Andhra Pradesh came in second with 6,691 GPs completing the audit. The other notable figures are 5,561 in Tamil Nadu, 2,818 in Odisha, 1,260 in Karnataka, 695 in Himachal Pradesh and 1,930 in Rajasthan.

While there are 6,703 Mandal Parishads across the

country, 171 Mandals out of 540 Mandals in Telangana have been completed. Even though Telangana is yet to complete auditing of Mandals, it tops in the country with 32% auditing. Of the 211 Mandals audited, 171 are from TS.

The audits of 11 zones in AP and 29 zones in Odisha have been completed. Only Telangana, AP and Odisha have started the audit of Mandal Parishads.

The Centre had directed an online audit. In TS, under the supervision of Finance Minister Harish Rao, Telangana Audit Director Venkateshwar Rao had prepared a special action plan to implement the online audit from June onwards as per the instructions of the Special Secretary to the Finance Ministry K Ramakrishna Rao. State audit employees, who were engaged in panchayat audit for five months, completed

the task.

Speaking on the occasion, Telangana Audit Director Venkateshwar Rao said that 100 per cent audit could be completed online with continuous monitoring and it was possible only with the efforts of the auditors. He said other states were also taking steps to replicate the Telangana audit system in their states. The rest of the zonal councils will complete their audits this month. He said the state's online audit policy would guide other states. He directed the Zilla Parishad to conduct audits and put the reports online. He congratulated the auditors on this occasion.

It may be mentioned here that Audit Online facilitates the financial audit of accounts at all the three levels of Panchayats viz District, Block and Village Panchayats, Urban Local Bodies (ULB) and Line department by Auditors (State AG/LFA).

City-based Qentelli to hire 200 techies this month

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

Qentelli, a US-based technology company that has its development centre in the city, is planning to hire more than 200 people by the end of December 2021.

The company's current global headcount is about 700 and it is expecting to close adding 300+ by the end of the year.

Rashi Srivastava, Executive Vice President -- Engineering at Qentelli, said: "We have got a lot of offers rolled out and a lot of workforce joined us in the last two months. We still have about 200 positions for



this year. We have a very good pipeline for the next

year. We wanted to cross the 1,000 mark and are on track

to achieve it by December."

Although a majority of the hiring was at experienced levels, she mentioned that the firm was hiring freshers as well. Rashi said, "We hired a batch of 35 people who are undergoing training as well. There are challenges in hiring. With the pandemic, the digital transformation across the globe has accelerated and there is a demand for skilled people, especially in niche skills like Cloud, Devops, automation, security, full stack development as well as AI/ML. There is a challenge in ensuring to get the right set of people and they have

multiple offers at hand".

The company is following a hybrid model in hiring. Rashi said, "We have people from pan-India and all different parts of India - Rajasthan, Udaipur, Assam, Kolkata, Bengaluru. We will continue to have in-person and virtual drives".

The attrition rate of the company had been low and maintained below 5 per cent. The opportunities that the firm had given to the workforce were across all the technologies and so it was retaining them by giving them training. "We are doing a smooth transitioning from current project to another."



No water supply in some city areas on December 8

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

There will be no water supply from 6 am on December 8 to 6 am on December 9 in the areas given below coming under KDWS Phase-I reservoirs.

The areas are Miralam, Kishanbagh, Al Jubail Colony under O&M Div.I, Santoshnagar, Vinay Nagar, Saidabad, Chanchalguda, Asmangadh, Yakurpura, Madannapet, Mahaboo Mansion under O&M Div.II(A), Riyasathnagar, Aliabad under O&M Div.II(B), Boggulakunta,

Afzalgunj under O&M Div.IV, Narayanguda, Adikmet, Shivam, Nallakunta, Chilkalguda under O&M Div.V, Dilsukhnagar under X(A), Bonguloor under O&M Div XX and Mannguda under O&M Div. XXV reservoir areas.

The shutdown is intended for taking up junction work on 600 mm and 450 mm diameter MS lines in KDWS Phase-I for facilitating construction of the Nalgonda-Owaisi Flyover's down ramp at Santosh Nagar Junction.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Amid rising concerns over 'Omicron', the new variant of COVID-19, surveillance mechanism has been intensified at the international airport here, a senior health official said on Sunday.

Though, no cases of Omicron variant have been reported in Telangana so far, the official said, "It would not be surprising if the new variant gets reported in Hyderabad or Telangana."

The Telangana government has also geared up for the possible third wave and has also intensified vaccination programme, he said. "Towards this new Omicron variant we intensified our surveillance mechanism at the international airport here. Since December 1, as many as 979 international travellers from "at-risk" countries arrived at Hyderabad international airport and on Saturday 70 international travellers came," Director of Public Health (DPH) Dr G Srinivasa Rao told reporters here.

RT-PCR tests were conducted on them and so far 13 of them were found positive for COVID-19 and their samples sent for genome sequencing in view of Omicron variant threat, he said.

The genome sequencing reports of the 13 passengers is expected to come today evening or tomorrow after which it will



be known whether they have Omicron or Delta variant, he said adding the 13 have been shifted to the designated health facilities.

He further said the Telangana government has fully geared up to meet any eventuality and has also intensified vaccination programme and plans are afoot to further increase vaccination coverage in the coming days.

So far 92 per cent of the population has been covered under first dose and 48 per cent in the second dose, he said.

An action plan has been chalked out to improve the coverage with two doses by December 31, he said.

The official said people need not panic and reiterated that it is high time to be more careful and adhere to all the COVID appropriate behaviour by wearing masks, frequent hand sanitisation, physical distancing, not to participate in large gatherings and to take vaccination.

TS sees 156 new coronavirus cases

Telangana on Sunday recorded 156 fresh COVID-19 cases taking the total number of those affected by the disease in the state to 6,76,943. Out of the new cases, 43 students of a private medical college in Karimnagar district tested positive for COVID-19. The medical students had participated in various events as part of annual day celebrations recently, a health official said adding the college and the hostel has been shut. The toll rose to 3,999 with one more person succumbing to the virus, a medical bulletin said. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) accounted for the most number of cases with 54, followed by Karimnagar 47 and Ranga Reddy 12.

Give jobs to the unemployed, demands CPM

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

The CPM executive held here on Sunday demanded the state government take steps to provide employment to the unemployed in the district, whose number crossed 1.32 lakh.

The other demands of the executive included the construction of a by-pass road to prevent road accidents in Peddapalli and a ROB at Kunaram road, the construction of a 500-bed super speciality hospital, RTC bus depot, Ambedkar study circle, the establishment of a mining university among other things.

It also requested the government to provide drinking water to SCCL employees colonies and build a 200-bed super speciality hospital in Ramagundam area.

Further, it asked the government to stop playing histrionics on paddy procurement and lift the paddy with the farmers immediately, including the damp paddy.

Mesolithic, Neolithic remains found in Buddhavaram: Experts

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Remains of Mesolithic and Neolithic age are noticed in the premises of Buddhavanam, a Buddhist theme park developed by Telangana Tourism on Sunday according to Dr. E.Sivanagireddy, Archaeologist and Buddhist Expert Consultant, Buddhavanam. He says that he has noticed a good number of Neolithic (New Stone Age) grooves formed out of grinding on the surface of the laterite sheetrock located along the left bank of the river Krishna while inspecting the recently formed walking track.

The grooves measure between 5 VN to 10 cm in length and 3 to 19 cm in width with an average depth of 2.5 cm and reveal the factory site during the Neolithic age (4000 -1750 BC). The Mesolithic stone tools which include blades, burins, borers, and flakes made of local material like chert are also noticed profusely indicat-



ing the Mesolithic habitation datable to 8500 BC.Mr. Laxmaiah said that possibility of introducing archaeological tours as supplementary to the existing leisure and Buddhist

tourism operated by Telangana Tourism. He added that the walking and trekking track all-around Buddhavanam would be ready in a few months. Mr. Sudhanareddy,

OSD, Krantibabu, SE, and Syamsunder Rao, Designs in charge, Buddhavanam project participated in the archaeological explorations led by Dr.E.Sivanagireddy.

Grow remunerative crops instead of paddy: DC tells farmers

PNS ■ BHUTPUR

Mahabubnagar District Collector S Venkata Rao on Sunday urged farmers to grow better alternative crops to paddy that will help farmers achieve economic self-sufficiency as there is no scope for the government to procure rabi paddy.

Addressing participants of an awareness programme, held at Sherpalli village of Bhutpur Mandal of Mahabubnagar district, as the chief guest, asked farmers to raise crops like black gram, green gram, millets, and oil palm. The oil palm is beneficial to the farmers as a tonne of oil palm fetches Rs 18000.

The yield will begin from the third year onwards. As the lands of Mahabubnagar district are suitable for oil-palm cultivation the government has been encouraging farmers to raise the crop, he said advising the farmers to visit the Devarakadra MLA A Venkateswar Reddy's oil palm fields near Bhutpur.



He wanted the farmers to increase their awareness of the crop and grow oil palm. Agriculture officers and agriculture extension officers will sensitise the farmers on the economic benefits of growing crops like pulses, millets, and so on.

A meeting of seed dealers has been held and necessary seeds have been kept ready, he said adding that some seeds carry a subsidy component in them. If farmers form as a group and approach the authorities, seeds will be given

to them as a unit, he said asking the farmers to raise the crops that are in high demand in the market and derive benefit.

He also spoke about Rytu Bandhu, Rytu Bima, 24x7 power supply to the farm sector, free power, construction of check-dams, and provision of irrigation facility through tanks and irrigation projects. Bhutpur municipal chairman Baswaraj Goud, ward councillor Srinivas Reddy, agriculture officer, extension officer, and others were present.

Why fewer applications for pre-matric, scholarships, asks Collector Sangeetha

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

District Collector Dr. Sangeetha Sayanarayana has expressed dissatisfaction over only 78 applications, out of 4452, received for the issue of pre-Matric scholarships and asked the district authorities to take steps to ensure all students submitted their pre-Matric and post-Matric applications. Reviewing the progress of the scholarships and activities of hostels at his camp office here on Sunday, he asked the authorities to ensure all school students have zero-balance bank accounts in two weeks. He was responding to the complaint of the officials that the schools' students did not have zero-balance accounts leading to the delay in submission of the application forms.

He asked the Mandal educational officer to hold a meeting with headmasters on Monday to prepare a list of the school students required to open bank accounts and those who require caste and income certificates. Further, he asked the headmasters to hold a parents' meeting and submit a report to him on the students



who did not apply so far for the pre-Matric scholarships. Expressing concern over the refusal of the banks to open the zero-balance bank accounts, he asked the Lead Bank Manager to cooperate with headmasters in opening the bank accounts for the students. He felt that the practice is not acceptable to him and wanted the Lead Bank Manager to take steps to prevent such practices.

He asked the bankers to give applications required for starting a new bank account to the Mandal Education Officer to ensure opening of new accounts immediately. Moreover, he said he would direct Tahsildar to release income and caste certificates through Mee-Seva centers as early as possible and told headmasters to depute a teacher to

the nearest Mee Seva centers for the purpose.

Regarding the post-Matric scholarships, only 1420 have registered names against the total of 2154. In fact, 1127 students are required to apply for the scholarship. Responding to it, the District Collector has asked the authorities to inform students as soon as colleges started and submit the balance of the applications. He asked the hostel officials to ensure 100 percent sanitation in them and advised precautions in the food served to students. The hostels are told to submit a report on minor repairs required to bathrooms, dining areas, bedrooms, drinking water facility, and so on listing everything separately.

He advised hostel students to guard their health carefully adhering to the Covid-19 protocol. Mandhani Revenue divisional officer K Narasimha Murthy, District Educational Officer Madhavi, District SC Welfare Office Nagalaiswar, district BC welfare officer J Ranga Reddy, Head Masters, college principals, and others took part in the review meeting.



'Lions' services in 50 years memorable

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

Lions District Governor Nagula Santosh has said that the services rendered by the Lions Club during the past 50 years in the district are memorable.

He was taking part in a string of development programmes in the district on Sunday in connection with the organisation completing five decades in public service along with Lions Club president Medisetty Gangadhar. The district governor gifted five benches each to the Bhaktanjaneya temple and to the Saibaba temple in Gautami Nagar of the town, two benches to Gautami Nagar Society Bhavan, and five benches to

Government school in Gandhi Park at Godavarikhani on the occasion. He donated 100 kg of rice to NTPC Sri Sai Seva Samiti, distributed saris among the poor women, gifted sewing machines at a programme held in Lion's Bhavan. He inaugurated a sewing center on the occasion besides performing. bhumi puja for construction of kitchen to the Lion's Bhavan.

Lion's Club secretary Tilak Chakravarty, treasurer Manoj Kumar Agarwal, regional chairman Banka Ramaswamy, zonal chairman Ravindrachary, former governors Minesh Narayana Tandon, M Pramod Kumar Reddy, and others were present on the occasion.

'Funds being released only to get votes'

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Nalgonda ZPTC, MLC candidate Vanguri Lakshmaiah alleged that funds are being released to MPTCs, ZPTCs before the election only for votes. Speaking to media at Nalgonda on Sunday he said that announced Funds are not sufficient. He also alleged that the Telangana government is weakening local bodies and diverting funds. He criticized the TRS party for using alcohol and money to win local body elections. He said the MPTC, ZPTCs, MPPs, and ward councilors were not ready to vote for the TRS party candidate. He, however, alleged that the Telangana government was pressuring its party candidates to win. In the Suryapeta district, a Dalit MPTC could not bear the officer's harassment and attempt to suicide inside the MPDO office.

He said MPTCs in the villages had sold their properties and undertaken development works but no funds were coming in.

Check on narcotics yielding results: SP

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

'Law and order situation in the district is fully under control and the task force constituted to check to control pedaling and smuggling of narcotics is yielding positive results,' says Mahabubnagar Superintendent of Police R Venkateswarlu.

He stated that the police department always maintains cordial relations with the people and the people's support enables police to notch up many successes while appreciating the people's support to the police department.

The SP warned anti-social elements of stern action as the police teams have kept a hawk-eye on district headquarters and some suspected areas on the national highway where there is scope for the anti-social activity.

Asking the youth to keep aloof from the online games as such games will burn a hole in their pockets, he stressed that youth and students should realise that education and work culture alone are responsible for their growth to top



positions. He advised the parents and family elders not to neglect to keep track of the style of functioning of their wards.

The SP reminded the people that the police teams, SHE teams with the help of artiste troupes sensitising college and school students conducting a series of awareness programmes. He warned people against supporting those who indulge in anti-social activities and maintained that they would be punished as per the law.

Foreign affairs delegation lauds Ramappa temple

PNS ■ MULUGU

A delegation of the foreign affairs department, led by secretary Sanjay Bhattacharya, visited the Ramappa temple in Palampet village of Venkatapur Mandal of the district on Sunday following the UNESCO granting the temple the world heritage status. The other members of the delegation are joint secretaries T Armstrong Changan and Abbagani Ramu and the chief administrative officer, Dr. Surabhi Singh. They arrived here to warm welcome extended by district collector S Aditya extending them various courtesies. The priests at the temple conducted special pujas and blessed the officials. District Revenue Officer Ramadevi felicitated the official delegation



presenting them with shawls.

Tourist guide Vijay explained the significance of the Ramappa temple, which reflects the Kakatiyan style of architecture. The delegation lauded the excellent sanctum-sanctorum of the temple and wonderful stone carvings, jewelry depicted on

the idols. Especially, the delegation took awe as the light reflected after impinging upon the stone pillars. Later, the District Collector conducted the officials on a boating trip in Ramappa Lake, which the delegation felt very pleasant while passing through two hills.

6 dead, 2 hurt as car crashes into divider, overturns

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

In a ghastly road accident, six persons of two families including a six-month-old infant, were killed and two others were injured when the car in which they were travelling overturned after hitting the road divider at Itapalli village in Chandragiri mandal.

Police said that eight persons of two families, belonging to Medamarti village in Santhakaviti mandal and Perapuram in Pusapatirega manal in Vizianagaram district on pilgrimage to hill shrine Tirumala.

They went to Kanipakam Siddi Vinayaka temple and fulfilled their vows. While going to Tirumala, their Maruti Swift car dashed



against the road divider on the Puthalapattu-Naidupet national highway, veered off the road and overturned.

Flames erupted after the car overturned. Six persons including Govinda Raju (61), Suresh (36), Sri Ramamurthy, Paidi Hymavathi (51), Meena (30) and Jishita (6 months). Five were killed instantly

while another died while undergoing treatment in hospital. The condition of one of the injured women is said to be very critical.

The fire tenders rushed to the place and put out the flames. Chandragiri CI Srinivasul told the media said that overspeeding was the reason for the ghastly accident.

High tides damage park wall at Vizag's RK Beach

JAWAD IMPACT

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The high tides with rip currents damaged the most popular tourist attraction in Visakhapatnam, Rama Krishna (RK) Beach, in the wee hours of Sunday. Influenced by the cyclonic storm Jawad, high tides damaged the parapet wall of the children's park on the RK Beach and led to coastal erosion of about 200 metres. The police erected barricades at the affected beachfront and did not allow visitors into the beach to prevent untoward incidents further.

On several occasions, the high tides have come close to the beach road. Earlier, over 40 percent of the beach near INS Kurusura, submarine

museum, eroded.

The damage was patched up after a massive effort from the government and other stakeholders. With the Cyclone Jawad, the sea tides almost reached the parapet wall of the RK Beach.

Several studies have been conducted on sand erosion on the Visakhapatnam beach. The government has appointed an international consultancy to study the problem and suggest concrete steps to arrest sand erosion.

"After the harbour expansion works including high concrete constructions, when tides with high rip currents hit the other side, sand is eroding. In fact, the Visakhapatnam beaches are very narrow and there is not much lung space.

'Vaccination even at night to reach target'

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

As the government has decided to achieve the vaccination target, the District administration has initiated steps to realise it. District Collector S Venkata Rao on Sunday exuded confidence of meeting the target of administering 15 lakh doses of vaccine by December-end by administering the vaccine from 8 am to 8 pm. ANMs and other health personnel have been working in two shifts to reach the deadline. The health workers are also working at night to meet the targets. In a statement, he said the additional collectors, district senior officials inspecting the vaccination centers daily in the morning, in addition to him, and mobilisation teams and vaccination



teams have been deployed to step up the vaccination against the Covid-19. Special officers and ward officials have been working hard to increase the rate of vaccination in villages under various PHCs that are

lagging behind in administering the vaccine. Further, the teams have been approaching paddy procurement centers, workplaces, hotels, shops, and laborers working in fields to administer the vaccine, the



DC said. The vaccination teams have been administering the vaccine at night at the homes of the agricultural workers who return to homes after 6 pm after a hard day in the fields. The ANMs working in two shifts will cover one village

during the morning and another at night. The panchayat secretary ASHA and Anganwadi workers are identifying those who are yet to be vaccinated and motivating them to receive the vaccine. After they return home in the evening from their fields, they have been administered the vaccine. The Panchayat Raj Department, ICDS, and other government departments have been extending necessary support for the same.

The migration of laborers has been affecting the vaccination programme. It is described as a stumbling block in achieving 100 percent vaccination. In spite of this, the district administration has initiated steps to ensure 100 percent vaccination by December-end.

A humanitarian teacher Helps deceased student's parents by collecting donations

PNS ■ MULUGU

A Good Samaritan primary school teacher has extended financial support of Rs35,000, mobilized through donations, in a humanitarian gesture to old grandparents of her one of the students who died recently. She presented the cheque to the old couple on Sunday.

While the couple thanked the teacher for her gesture, others appreciated the teacher for the support to the family. She taught the couple's grandchildren - Raju Kumar and Kaveri at the primary level when she was posted in Venkatapur.

The children were under the care of their grandparents as their parents died. The old couple worked as casual labor-



ers and raised the two children and provided them education. She was identified as Ma rippalli Srilata of Hanmakonda who now works as a primary school teacher at Banjerupali in Mulugu Mandal.

Earlier she had worked for 20 years at Nallagunta and

Venkatapur in Venkatapur mandal. On learning about the death of Raju Kumar, she was reduced to tears and a moved Srilata offered a donation of Rs 5000 to the family and raised the rest of the amount through contributions from colleagues and students.

INDIA CORNER

Sena MP Priyanka Chaturvedi quits Sansad TV show after suspension from RS

Shiv Sena MP Priyanka Chaturvedi, who is among the 12 Rajya Sabha suspended recently for their "unruly" conduct in the House, on Sunday said she has stepped down as the anchor of the Sansad TV's show "Meri Kahaani". Chaturvedi, in a letter, dated December 5, to Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu, said, "After my arbitrary suspension, that has totally disgraced established parliamentary norms and rules, to stifle my voice, my party's voice inside the chamber, I am unwilling to continue taking space on Sansad TV when my primary oath to the Constitution is being denied to me." The 12 opposition MPs – six from the Congress, two each from the Trinamool Congress and Shiv Sena, and one each from the CPI and CPI(M) – were suspended from the Rajya Sabha on Monday for the entire Winter Session of Parliament for their "unruly" conduct in the previous session in August.



Mamata demands thorough probe into Nagaland firing incident

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee on Sunday demanded a thorough investigation into the killing of at least 11 civilians by security forces in Nagaland. At least 11 daily wage labourers were gunned down by security forces in Nagaland's Mon district while they were returning home from work at a coal mine on Saturday evening, police said, adding that it was investigating whether the incident was a case of mistaken identity. "Worrisome news from #Nagaland. Heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. I pray for the speedy recovery of those who were injured. We must ensure a thorough probe into the incident and ensure that all victims get justice!" Banerjee tweeted. Army personnel, while conducting an operation after receiving inputs about the movement of militants belonging to the Yung Aung faction of proscribed outfit NSCN (IM), opened fire on the pick-up truck in which the labourers were travelling, police said.



Nadda inaugurates OPD at AIIMS in HP's Bilaspur

BJP president and Rajya Sabha member Jagat Prakash Nadda inaugurated an outpatient department (OPD) at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Bilaspur in Himachal Pradesh on Sunday. Nadda, who hails from Bilaspur, inaugurated the OPD before a function at AIIMS to mark the achievement of Himachal Pradesh of becoming the first state to fully vaccinate 100 per cent of its adult population against COVID-19. Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur and Union minister Anurag Thakur were present on the occasion. The function also honoured those COVID-19 workers who played a significant role in the vaccination drive and gave them certificates. As many as 53,86,393 eligible adults have been administered the second dose, a state official said. Himachal Pradesh was also the first state to achieve the 100 per cent first dose vaccination of its adult population by the end of August.



'Like farmers, people of J-K may have to make sacrifices'

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

National Conference president Farooq Abdullah on Sunday said the people of Jammu and Kashmir may have to make "sacrifices", as farmers protesting the new farm laws did, to restore its statehood and special status. Addressing a convention of the NC's youth wing on the occasion of the 116th birth anniversary of party founder Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah at his mausoleum at Naseembagh here, Abdullah, however, said his party does not support violence. After almost a year of protests by farmers, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on November 19 announced the decision to repeal the farm laws passed last year to ease rules around the sale, pricing and storage of crops. Parliament passed a bill to repeal the farm laws on the first day of the ongoing Winter Session on November 29. ("The farmers protested for



11 months, more than 700 farmers died. The Centre had to revoke the three farm bills when farmers made sacrifices. We may also have to make sacrifices like that to get back our rights. "Remember this, we have promised to get back (Articles) 370, 35-A and statehood and we are ready to make any sacrifice," Abdullah said. The NC, however, is not against brotherhood and does

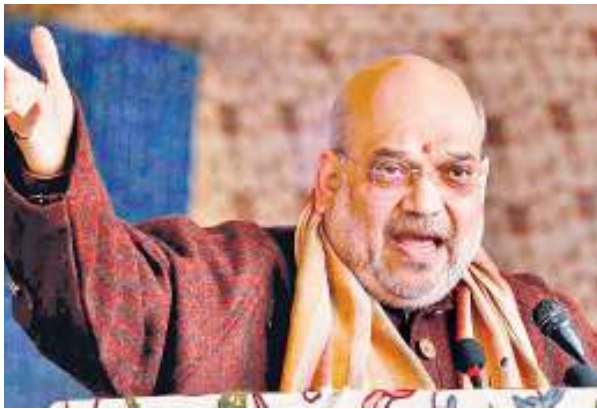
not support violence, he said. The Centre revoked the special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and split it into two union territories on August 5, 2019. On the recent Hyderpora encounter and how the families of two civilians killed in the operation forced the administration to return their bodies, Abdullah said it was made possible because people showed unity. He demanded that the body of another person, Amir Magray, killed in the encounter also be returned to his family. "Three innocent people were killed (in the Hyderpora encounter). When people raised their voices, they (the administration) returned the bodies so that their kin could bury them. This is what unity can do. But the body of one person has still not been returned to his family. How many innocent people would they have killed this way? We will hold them accountable. He (God) will

also hold them accountable and no one will escape that," the NC chief said. Referring to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks that tourism has increased in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370, Abdullah said "as if tourism is everything" when it comes to the union territory. "You had promised 50,000 jobs, where are they? Rather you are terminating our people. Where there no people for employing in the (Jammu & Kashmir) Bank that you got people from Punjab and Haryana? "Where will the boys and girls from J&K go? But if we raise our voices, they are crushed. The media is facing pressure, they (journalists) are summoned to police stations if they write anything against (the government). And they (government) say there is freedom," he said. Abdullah asked NC workers to remain united and hold the party flag high.

'Modi govt showed no one can take India's borders lightly'

PNS ■ JAISALMER

The Modi government showed that no one can take India's borders and jawans lightly after it took the "strong decision" to conduct cross-border strikes following attacks in Pulwama and Uri, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday. Speaking on the occasion of the 57th Raising Day of the Border Security Force (BSF) here, Shah said for the Modi government, "border security is equal to national security". "This government under the leadership of Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi has accorded a different importance to border security since 2014. If our borders were breached or security personnel were attacked anywhere, we responded immediately. We showed that no one can take our borders and jawans lightly," Shah said at the Shaheed Poonam Singh Stadium here. The BSF was raised on December 1, 1965, and is for the first time holding its Raising Day celebrations out-



side Delhi and in this strategic desert town along the Pakistan border. After taking salute of the parade, Shah said the Modi government took the "strong decision" to conduct air and surgical strikes post the Pulwama (2019) and Uri attacks (2016) on Indian troops. "Our action was lauded by the world," he said. The minister said he believes that any country can progress and prosper only when its borders are protected and the BSF and other

security forces are doing an "exemplary job" in this domain. Talking about the recent emergence of the threat from drones on the country's borders, Shah said it is the government's "commitment to provide the best global technology for the protection of troops and the security of borders". "We are working in this direction... BSF, NSG and DRDO are jointly working to develop indigenous counter-drone technology and that should be brought out soon," he said.

J-K: Fresh snowfall in higher reaches, rain in plains

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Many areas in the higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir received fresh snowfall on Sunday, while rains lashed the plains, ending the dry spell, officials said. The minimum temperature improved and stayed above the freezing point at most places in the valley on Saturday night, they said. Fresh snowfall was recorded at many places in the higher altitude areas of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, the MeT officials said. They said the famous tourist destinations of Gulmarg, Sonamarg, and Kupwara and Gurez recorded light to moderate snowfall. Light snow was recorded in Drass-Kargil areas on the



Srinagar-Leh highway. The plain areas of the valley and the Jammu region were lashed by rains, while some areas such as Poonch and Udhampur received hailstorm, the officials said. The MeT office has forecast widespread light rain in plains and snowfall over the hilly areas in

Kashmir and light rain with thunder at scattered places of Jammu region. The weather is expected to improve from Sunday night, it said. Meanwhile, the minimum temperature rose across Kashmir and settled above the freezing point at most places of the valley on Saturday night.

Delhi reports first case of Omicron variant

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A 37-year-old man who arrived in Delhi from Tanzania has tested positive for Omicron, making it the first case of the new COVID-19 variant in the national capital and the fifth in the country. The patient, currently admitted to the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash (LNJP) Hospital, has mild symptoms, hospital officials said. "So far, 17 COVID-19 patients and six of their contacts have been admitted to the Lok Nayak Hospital. The Omicron variant has been found in one of the 12 samples tested for genome sequencing so far, according to a preliminary report," Delhi's Health Minister Satyendra Jain said. "The patient is an Indian

and had returned from Tanzania. He was admitted to the hospital on December 2 with mild symptoms – sore throat, fever and body ache," Medical Director Suresh Kumar said. "The patient's travel history is being collated and his contacts are being traced," he said. The Delhi health minister said banning international flights is the most effective way to contain the spread of the Omicron variant. "It is being reported that the gestational period in case of Omicron could be more than other variants. This means an infected person may go undetected at the airport... All the cases have come from affected foreign countries. The central government should take it seriously," he said.

Honours for Indian Navy's Killers' squadron that sunk Pak warships

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Indian Navy's 22nd Missile Vessel Squadron, that bombed the Karachi Port and sunk Pakistan Navy's vessels in the 1971 war, will receive the President's Standard, a rare honour for its distinguished service, from President Ram Nath Kovind on Wednesday, the Navy said. This year also marks 50 years of inception of the Missile Vessel Squadron, also known as the "Killers", which over the past five decades has maintained the capability of delivering a credible offensive punch from the sea, a Navy official said on Sunday. Based in Mumbai, the Missile Vessel Squadron has participated in the Operation Vijay, Operation Parakram and most recently, during the heightened



security state following the Pulwama attack, it was deployed within striking distance off the Pakistan coast. "The ships in this squadron have the ability to move swiftly and are missile-ready. Their deployment also acts as a deterrent," said an official posted in the squadron.

The Indian Navy was awarded the President's Colours on May 27, 1951 by the then President of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad. The President's Standard is the same honour as the President's Colours, awarded to a relatively smaller military formation or unit, the Navy said in a statement.

Sidhu does a Kejriwal, joins protesters

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu joined the sit-in protest of Delhi guest teachers demanding regularisation of their jobs outside Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence in Civil Lines on Sunday. Last month, Kejriwal had joined the contractual teachers in Punjab's Mohali, who staged a protest making a similar demand.



In the run up to the Punjab polls, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener has announced a slew of sops for different sections of society,

including teachers. Among the assurances are regularising contractual teachers and revamping the education system in the state if voted to power. Punjab goes to polls in early 2022 and the AAP is not leaving any stone unturned to make a decisive presence in the border state. Hitting out at Kejriwal, Sidhu said the Delhi government was following a contractual model of education.

'Param Bir Singh not whistleblower, flagged corruption'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Mumbai Police commissioner Param Bir Singh cannot be considered as a "whistleblower" under the law as he chose to speak out against alleged corruption involving former home minister Anil Deshmukh only after his transfer, the Maharashtra government has told the Supreme Court seeking dismissal of his plea. A bench headed by Justice S

K Kaul had granted a major relief to Singh on November 22 by directing the Maharashtra Police not to arrest him in criminal cases lodged against him and had wondered if he was being hounded for filing cases against police officers and extortionists, "what could happen to a common man". Seeking dismissal of Singh's plea for a CBI probe into the entire matter and against any coercive action by the state, the Maharashtra government has

filed a reply affidavit in the apex court and said that the ongoing probe in criminal cases against the former top cop not be interfered with. In the affidavit, Joint Secretary of Maharashtra Home Department Venkatesh Madhav said, "Petitioner (Singh) cannot be considered a whistleblower. I state and submit that, contrary to what is stated in the SLP (special leave petition), I deny that petitioner is a whistleblower as contemplated under the Whistle

blowers Protection Act, 2014 or that the ratio laid down in the case of... applies to the facts of the present case. "As evident from the petitioners own letter dated March 20, 2021, the petitioner cites instances of alleged corruption that took place few months prior to March, but only sought to expose these allegations on March 20, that is three days after he was transferred. Thus it is denied that the petitioner's letter

dated March 20 was issued in public interest or for a bonafide purpose and therefore it is denied that the petitioner is a whistleblower." In the 83-page reply, the state government said Singh who was recently suspended from the Mumbai Police over allegations of misconduct is indirectly trying to seek a stay on the criminal investigations pending against him through the petition and has failed to disclose material and relevant facts.

'Naidu says corruption eats into heart of democracy'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Noting that corruption eats into the heart of democracy, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday called for zero tolerance towards it. He stressed the need for stringent and timely action under the Prevention of Corruption Act against erring civil servants and public representatives. Naidu also pushed for fast-tracking disposal of cases related to corruption involving public servants. At the same time, the vice president cautioned, officials taking bona fide actions



should not be discouraged or harassed. "While corrupt civil ser-

vants must be strictly dealt with, we must not dissuade officials from taking bold deci-

sions in the larger public interest," he said, according to an official statement from the Vice President Secretariat. Naidu made these remarks at the release of a book by former cabinet secretary and former Jharkhand governor Prabhat Kumar here. The vice president felt that there was also a need to celebrate the achievements of honest civil servants and recognise their contributions. This, he suggested, will not only be an incentive for younger officials to push for excellence, but such publicity will also encourage the replication of innovative efforts by others.

He called for a moral resurgence of civil services in the country to improve the delivery of services to the common man and to ensure the fruits of development reach the people. In this regard, he urged zero tolerance towards corruption and ensuring total transparency and accountability at all levels of governance. Noting that corruption eats into the heart of the democracy, he stressed the need for stringent and timely action under the Prevention of Corruption Act against erring civil servants and public representatives, according to the statement.

Goa polls: AAP promises remuneration hike for women

PNS ■ PANAJI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday announced that it will increase the remuneration provided to women in Goa under a state-sponsored scheme and also promised financial assistance to women not covered under it, if it is voted to power in the forthcoming state Assembly elections. "This is going to be the biggest and most important women empowerment pro-



gramme in the world, not only in India," AAP's nation-

al convener Arvind Kejriwal claimed, while addressing a women's convention in South Goa's Navelim Assembly segment. The expenses under the scheme would be around Rs 500 crore annually, which would be funded by the state government by completely eliminating corruption in the system, he said. The Delhi chief minister is on a two-day visit to Goa, where the Assembly polls are due early next year.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

‘Birth’ right

The law prohibiting abortion after six weeks of pregnancy questions women’s federal rights

The United States is caught in a raging debate over human rights violations after its Supreme Court backed an unprecedented Texan law that prohibits medical abortion after the first six weeks of pregnancy. The law came into force on September 1. Democrats and liberals say they are stunned that their Supreme Court would support a law that assaults women’s reproductive rights. The issue has snow-balled into a controversy with four Supreme Court justices, including the Chief Justice, dissenting against the 5-4 verdict. Texas is a Republican stronghold and pushed the law through. In a State where the majority of abortions generally happen after the six-week mark, the new law gives a woman barely over a week to detect her pregnancy, consult family and get the abortion done. Doctors admit it is difficult for a woman to know she is pregnant in the time the law allows her. The law is being flayed also because it denies a woman the right to abort even when she is pregnant because of rape or incest. The Republicans have been dismissive saying, with a straight face at that, that they will rid Texas of rapists. The law has determined that the foetus gains a heartbeat at the sixth week of pregnancy. Doctors say the heartbeat sound is created by the cardiac valves which do not exist at six weeks of gestation. However, the most controversial part of the law is that it empowers any private citizen to drag a doctor to court for an abortion after the sixth week and impose a hefty fine. The law explicitly



refuses to consider the woman’s consent as moot.

The Texas law stands out as a glaring example of where the conservative American society is going with laws concerning women. For close to 50 years, American law protected a woman’s federal constitutional right to have an abortion during the first stage of pregnancy. The law also provided that nobody has the authority to regulate such abortion. The Texas law dismisses both laws summarily. What is surprising is that the Supreme Court did not address the constitutionality of the State law before supporting it. The petitioners did raise the matter, but the court said they did not meet the burden to prove their point. It is also without precedent of the apex court deciding such a crucial case without full briefing or argument and after less than 72 hours of thought. That is what the dissenting justices said. The first inadequacy is the apex court backing such a law. The ruling amounts to protecting the Texas law from judicial review until the Supreme Court takes up another petition challenging the law. Secondly, the Supreme Court has to look into the prospect of the Texas law turning ordinary citizens into bounty hunters and making pregnant women subjects of illegal surveillance and possibly, stalking. Is Texas outsourcing the implementation of a questionable law to its citizens? Who but the Supreme Court can protect women’s choice on birth or abortion?

PICTALK



Police use tear gas to disperse demonstrators during a protest in Brussels, Belgium

AP

Clouds in balcony

Efforts to get acquainted with the culture and customs of North-east is in our best interest

It’s like being on that Assam-Meghalaya highway; on your side, you are in one State but take a U-turn and are into the other. No differentiators, weather is the same, temperature is the same, even the people are more or less the same. But somehow the warmth that you get, and need, up in the higher altitudes, is missing. Like the warm embrace of the *ma*, or a sibling, or just a loved one. Like so many other places on earth, the North-east has developed in a major way: in terms of *bhasha*, in terms of inclusivity, in terms of food. From the frontier gateway of Guwahati (the old-timers though these days miss the romance of calling it Gauhati, which mostly remains in the High Court’s name) to the scenic beauty of Meghalaya and the lonely cherubs of Arunachal Pradesh, it’s all there. A feast for the eyes and the hungry soul. But let’s not try to forcibly convince you until after you’ve seen it yourself. Like the gent, Rakesh Sharma, said while offering compassion to a visually impaired child, telling him how the Moon looks: ‘*Ab main kaise bataun; dekh paate toh to batata. . . ?*’



People are lush with friendly smiles, kids glow with inherent purity, neighbours and acquaintances will follow up with queries about the well-being of your own self and the larger family, including *chachi* and *naani*, and they all offer special warmth during the festive Christmas season; basically get enveloped in the Yuletide spirit, and share it fully with an open, overflowing-with-love heart! Now what we – as an entire nation, because they are reaching out and giving us dollops of love and affection – need to do with utmost urgency is to throw out our limbs and cling on to them, making them feel not as different from the mainstream. They are our brothers, sisters, and friends, after all! We met a few who have been in Assam via Bangalore and Chennai, and even earlier, Frank Anthony’s school in *saadi Dilli*’s Lajpat Nagar. So, the theme here should be that the Government’s ‘Look East’ policy is very welcome, but it rather not turn out to be a case of myopia. There are many good things that the rest of India doesn’t know well about the North-east and its inhabitants and we shall do ourselves a great service if we make sincere efforts to get acquainted with their culture and customs. Let’s keep all our good people on our side, and let’s row the boat with them.

Women: Significant other of humankind

Education, rather than reservation, may well be the key to women’s emancipation and genuine progress as compared to mere tokenism



PRAFULL GORADIA

An Arabic proverb says, “Trust neither a king, nor a horse nor a woman”. Another one questions, “What does a woman have to do with the council of a nation?” A third one says, “Obedience to a woman will have to be repented of” (*Dictionary of Islam* by Thomas Patrick Hughes; Rupa & Co, 1999). Prophet Mohammad improved upon such sentiments. Nevertheless, it is not easy to erase what has been part of a culture for long. As a result, even today, in any matter, if a man happens to be a witness, two women will be required to counter him, according to the Sharia. Which means a woman is half a person compared to a man. But in our sub-continent, we have worshipped *devis* — Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati and many others. As far as I know, the pantheon of no other religion practiced today worships any goddess.

A possible explanation is that Hinduism has intuitively followed nature’s trail of man and woman being indispensable for the perpetuation of the species. Hinduism is not the gift of any prophet, unlike most other faiths. Mostly, religions were founded by men who assigned a subordinate role to the woman.

Intriguingly, foreign faiths that came to India have been influenced by the peculiarity of Hinduism. *Devas* and *Devis* both have to be worshipped, not just the male deities or messiahs. It is possible that other faiths have been deeply influenced or affected through the converts who came into their fold. This possibly explains why Bangladesh has had two women Prime Ministers, Sheikh Hasina Wajed and Begum Khaleda Zia. Pakistan, with comparatively more imported blood, has had only one lady Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto. The cultures of both countries allowed their womenfolk to reach the portals of politics, but not into the gates that may lead them to godliness. We can only hope that the era may not be far when this too will come about. A clergyman, I am friendly with, told me that this is very unlikely as it would threaten our god-given faith.

Upon arguing further, the



clergyman was rather obstinate on the issue of women. My contention was that shutting out women means excluding half the population from participating in civilisation’s progress. If the wheel of progress is to move on as well as accelerate, such exclusion would mean the loss of half the people. Having done so, one cannot complain that one’s community is poor and backward. Prof Timur Koran of the Duke University, USA, has dwelt at length on the backwardness of most of West Asia. What embarrasses me is that the community whose princes ruled large tracts of India should now claim to be poor and backward. Some speakers even compare the condition of their community with that of the Dalits.

Uncannily, the USA, the world’s great democracy, has yet to elect a woman president. Only recently has a lady become the Vice-President of America after 240 years of the country’s flourishing. This evokes the question as to whether female backwardness is an Abrahamic flaw and not merely an Islamic fault? The prejudice against women, however, clashes with the current march of time. Women

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THE GENUINE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMENFOLK CAN ACHIEVE NOT ONLY SOCIETAL BALANCE BUT ALSO A CIVILISATIONAL ETHOS BASED UPON EMPATHY, WHICH ARE NATURAL FEMININE ATTRIBUTES

have progressed in many fields except perhaps in the realm of power. This is not to suggest that the current Hindu ethos merits unqualified applause. It too needs to lockstep with time and enable its womenfolk to attain and avail of a wider scope, without resorting to the escapism of reservations. Such marking out of seats has been an Indian obsession, which has not really taken anyone forward.

What is perhaps necessary is to create special opportunities for women to get educated. Education, rather than reservation, may well be the key for women’s emancipation and genuine progress as compared to mere tokenism. Especially so if a girl is encouraged in accordance with her aptitude. This lever of learning has not been consciously attempted even for the Dalits.

It is no mere cliché to state that empathy for and acceptance of women as equals in the endeavour of life brings about greater harmony in societies and nations. Setting aside the religious aspect briefly, we cannot overlook the fact that societies and cultures that have traditionally relegated womenfolk to a subordinate position have also been less tol-

erant of ways of life that differ from their own. Historically, this has engendered societal tension, conflict and warfare which humankind is still forced to endure and come to terms with. It is not a coincidence that the most debilitating projects of expansionism, wars and civilisational upheavals emanating from them have come from the western side of the world.

On the other hand, genuine empowerment of womenfolk can achieve not only societal balance but also a civilisational ethos based upon empathy, which are natural feminine attributes. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen’s contention that education and health are the best guarantors of economic development is particularly relevant when it comes to the application of these two very crucial indices for women. It would be no exaggeration to state that the better half of humanity must be really worshipped, for the sake of not only democracy and progress, but for a secure future of human society itself.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ELEPHANTS FACE A MAMMOTH RISK

Sir — The information accessed from the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) via the Right to Information Act by activist R Pandiarajan, in wake of the deaths of five elephants in railway accidents at Madukkarai in Tamil Nadu’s Coimbatore district on November 26, and at Jagiroad in Assam’s Morigaon district on November 30, observed that 1160 elephants lost their lives to electrocution, train hits, poaching and poisoning in the last 11 years; it has lent a new urgency to elephant conservation.

The elephant is a fascinating animal; it is a delight to behold; its bigness, its hue and attributes stand out and capture our eyes and imagination. With its thick grey skin, large ears, tusks and a trunk, it is an aesthetically pleasing giant. As per a 2017 count, India has a total of 29,964 wild elephants; it is a small number that should alert us to take steps in real time to save them and create an environment congenial to an increase in the elephant population. Live wire fences and train collisions account for most of the casualties; it should prick our conscience that we are solely responsible for the avoidable deaths of elephants for ‘reasons other than natural causes’.

G David Milton | Maruthancode

ARE WE PREPARED FOR OMICRON?

Sir — Despite the concerns over the detection of a new COVID variant Omicron, mask compliance still remains at the lowest. A latest survey conducted by digital community based platform LocalCircles reported that one in three Indians, say the majority of people in their area, don’t even carry masks with them when stepping out. The Government’s efforts have not proved enough to educate people about the virus, spread awareness about mask compliance and complete vaccination amid growing concerns of the newly emerged variant.

Getting each person’s attention is not an easy task but the Government should adopt different mechanisms. The OTP system for vaccination has achieved its

A life lived large comes to an end



It’s always a daunting challenge to encompass in words the personality and contributions of a man such as veteran TV journalist Vinod Dua, who passed away yesterday. He was arguably one of the country’s most popular and influential news broadcasters, who will be best remembered as the doyen of Indian television journalism. When TV was at a budding stage in India, he worked at Doordarshan and NDTV. His

wife Chinna Dua had succumbed to COVID-19 earlier this year. He was also the host of the highly popular food show ‘*Zaika India Ka*’ for NDTV that saw him exploring distinct food cultures of different cities and towns in India.

For his excellence in journalism, the veteran journalist was honoured with several awards, including India’s fourth highest civilian award Padma Shri by the Government of India. He was also the first electronic media journalist who was awarded the coveted Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Award in 1996. The nation is poorer when great personalities like Vinod Dua fade away. He will always be remembered as a towering figure in the world of Indian TV journalism and with his demise, an era ends leaving behind a legacy of excellence. A glorious chapter of Indian TV journalism has come to an end. May you be at peace, Vinod Dua.

Ramesh G Jethwani | Bengaluru

goals. Now, such systems should be replaced by a non-OTP system to achieve 100 per cent vaccination because a significant number of people residing in rural areas don’t have a mobile number linked with their Aadhaar which is mandatory to receive an OTP. The public should realise that it is the need of the hour to think out of the box by supporting the Government’s efforts to combat the new variant. After the horrific consequences followed by the first and second wave of COVID-19, neglecting the new variant is not a wise move at all.

Shivesh Patidar | Ujjain

WEATHER IN GOA IS ACTING DRUNK

Sir — Goa is in the throes of a peculiar weather pattern which threatens to disrupt normal life in all respects. The rather strange phenomenon where the State gets to experience all the three weathers of the year in the course of 20 hours truly merits a discussion in international science forums. The region’s ‘sensational’ climat-

ic upheaval which could be hailed as a tourism ‘attraction’ leads the locals through a pleasant winter in the early hours of the morning, peak summer in the afternoon and light to heavy showers accompanied by thunder and lightning thereafter.

This is precisely what has been happening in the past few days. Suffice to say that the undulating climatic ‘configurations’ have left everyone in a state of utter confusion. However, the erratic weather conditions are indeed a matter of concern. As two of the most pressing issues of the world today — global warming and climate change — have purportedly reached a point where it is almost irreversible. If that in itself is not portentous, the increase in the frequencies of cyclones and other natural disasters is a veiled warning about the dangers in store for mankind in the coming future.

Pachu Menon | Margao

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

What exactly is the Home Ministry doing when neither civilians nor security personnel are safe in our own land?



Congress leader —Rahul Gandhi



President Biden will underscore US’s concerns with Russian military activities on the border with Ukraine.

White House press secretary —Jen Psaki

I am not a part of any Bollywood camp. I have reached here because of my talent.



Actor —Kartik Aaryan



England will take confidence from India’s win over Australia at the Gabba earlier this year.

England captain —Joe Root

It looks like that Mamata Banerjee is contemplating something new excluding the Congress.



Shiv Sena MP —Sanjay Raut

FIRST COLUMN

HANDLING STRESS OF THE TIMES

A scientific response to the threat is going to take some time and a bit of luck as well



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The 'World International Day of Kindness' has come and gone. The planet has perhaps never needed such a theme for focussed attention as now. Just about everyone is under some kind of stress; personal, social, financial, wellness, travel related and more. The surfacing of Omicron has sent a new wave of fear in a situation showing its first sign of recovery from a pandemic after nearly two years. The regulatory system globally, nationally and state-wise has not always been aligned. Threat perceptions are determining the regulatory system. It multiplies the burden of the individual's response to keeping on the right side of the regulations which often come in suddenly and at times get changed abruptly. The argument for this would be lack of clarity and variegated data on the nature of the threat itself. This, however, does not mitigate the stress burden of the individual or groups that have to respond.



Consider the case of the Omicron threat. As of now there seems to be little consensus on the efficacy of the vaccines to handle it. This is understandable because of the nature of the mutations in the virus continue to be undefined and are still under study. That being so, the line of treatment also becomes a matter of dealing with a situation which in many ways remains undefined.

Omicron has been detected in 38 countries. Predictably, the response has been to tighten the screening system. There is the inevitable option of the administration taking over the monitoring system directly if there is a perceived violation. This could be in the way of taking the suspected person infected with this virus to a government quarantine system. The adequacy of the government quarantine is in many cases open to doubt. Media reports have the description of a couple in a Dutch airport offloaded from the aircraft and sent to a government-monitored quarantine in a tuberculosis cure centre. There was a reported attempt at escape by one of the couple. It was infructuous. What followed is another story. The substantial point is that the overall environment of stress has magnified many times in the last few days and threatens to intensify with passage of time.

Under such circumstances, a scientific response to the threat in all its dimensions is going to take time and perhaps a bit of luck. Scientific breakthroughs cannot always be programmed and it is good when they can happen.

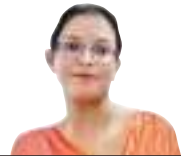
The simple point till then is the practise of the virtue of kindness and understanding. This thought is not new but the practise of it over the years has not intensified. In dealing with another person and in interacting with him, it is important to keep reminded that the other person may be as much under stress as one is oneself. This requires the quality of patience, reasonableness and empathy. The sooner it becomes a two-way street, the less painful would be the response to a totally unprecedented situation which this planet is faced with.

To sum up, therefore, where it is obvious that tracks keep changing and the scientific response is tentative, one has to keep faith alive. Kindness to oneself and the other person has to be the desired underpinning of relationships. Perhaps under such circumstances, urges of consumerism and profiteering may be somewhat kept under control. Several narratives are available on the behaviour of people when pushed to the brink because of COVID-appropriate anxiety. There will be wisdom in trying to control the threats with sensitivity, greater logic and some lead time built into getting to know of the updated regulations.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal.)

Colombo project gives tactical edge to China

The Hambantota and the Colombo ports can serve as nodal points involving future Chinese military communication and intelligence network systems



NISHTHA KAUSHIKI

In 2014, on his visit to Sri Lanka, China's President Xi Jinping launched the Colombo Port City (CPC) Project worth \$1.4 Billion, second biggest after the Hambantota Project. In February 2021, the cabinet ousted India and Japan from the tripartite agreement and a month later, Sri Lanka awarded a contract to China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) to construct the second phase of Colombo Port's East Container Terminal (ECT) for a lease of 99 years. The Rajapakse administration further approved the Colombo Port City Economic Commission Bill that established a Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

The most striking feature of the Bill is that it establishes a "Commission" whose geographical jurisdiction extends to the entire 'Area of Authority of the Colombo Port City', thereby giving China the 'right to decline' to any other third country, or to Sri Lanka itself, requests for establishing businesses. It also gave China a freehold over the 'Area' for 99 years as per Clause 67, which explicitly states that the "permit" cannot be cancelled before the stipulated time or till China wished for it. Thus, any other foreign presence on the port will require a Chinese nod, and even if Sri Lanka objects to any of the Chinese officials or the activities resulting from the agreement, there would be little that the island country would be able to do. Sri Lanka would not be able to oust China if it increases its hostile behaviour against its neighbouring states or Sri Lanka itself. It would not be wrong to say that it will genuinely establish a "Chinese Enclave", a terminology coined by the opposition political parties of Sri Lanka.

The importance of the Project is ascertained from the fact that Colombo ranks among the top 25 busiest container ports of the world and gives access to the Arabian sea and the Bay of Bengal. The approved Bill thus has international ramifications from a security aspect. Located in India's strategic backyard, CPC gives the PLA-Navy (PLAN) of China a tactical and strategic edge. The presence of China in Hambantota has already raised the threat perception for India and other countries like Australia. The distance between the two ports is approximately 250 nautical miles. The logistical limitation that PLAN had in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) now seems to be done away. The debt trap policies of China aim to disturb the traditional balance of power in the IOR. The dual-use capabilities of the Hambantota port might be an intelligence and surveillance hotspot apart from providing the deep berthing rights to the Chinese submarines. Both the ports are close to Djibouti and create a for Beijing a safety lane for PLAN in times of open hostilities. The dots of its 'ports' can be connected with the Chinese strategic intent of joining them with Chabahar, Gwadar and the Karachi ports, apart from the news of Uganda's airport takeover. China's peacekeeping force in



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROJECT IS ASCERTAINED BY THE FACT THAT COLOMBO RANKS AMONG THE TOP 25 BUSIEST CONTAINER PORTS OF THE WORLD AND GIVES ACCESS TO THE ARABIAN SEA AND THE BAY OF BENGAL. THE PRESENCE OF CHINA IN HAMBANTOTA HAS ALREADY RAISED THE THREAT PERCEPTION FOR INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES, LIKE AUSTRALIA

(The writer is an Assistant Professor at Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. The views expressed are personal.)



Africa multiplies the magnitude of the problem as they can be immediately called upon to participate in case of conflict. In this way, China is an active threat to the critical choke points of world trade.

In the Eastern sector of the IOR, China has overcome its 'Malacca Dilemma' through its presence in Myanmar, and its naval presence in the Coco and the Greater Coco islands and Thailand's. The strategic experts well understand the use of canals for military purposes. China has militarised the IOR by disturbing the 'zone of peace', which India has focused on since 1947. The Hambantota and the Colombo ports can serve as nodal points involving future Chinese military communication and intelligence network system.

Apart from the port acquisitions, China simultaneously internally balanced itself, which is evident through its Science of Military Strategy (2013) had spoken of local wars and then rapidly shifted to prioritising an enhancement of its capabilities for 'system warfare' (2015). The warfare encompasses overall strengthening of its reconnaissance, early-warning and command and control systems apart from the rapid development of medium and long-range precision strike capabilities through land, air and sea joint operations. Accordingly, what we see today is the culmination of its strategy in initiating battles in the enemy land (Galwan) and heightened vertical proliferation of its precision strike capabilities (hypersonic missiles and quantum increase of missiles).

Nevertheless, China has also made critical technologies available to Pakistan (horizontal proliferation).

Apart from the doctrinal incorporations at a tactical level, to confuse its enemies, the ports of OBOR provide China with a camouflage wherein anything ranging from critical arms such as conventional missiles to its military personnel can be hidden to 'act' at a suitable time. The military build-up in these ports can be used for deception purposes to hide its 'intent and area of action'. The intelligence agencies need to keep a stern watch over what military facilities are placed in the Sri Lankan ports apart from the LAC. Indian ministries of foreign affairs and defence should not miss the rising sentiments against India and Japan in Sri Lanka. The ports of Karachi and Gwadar are feasible options for China, but the Sri Lankan ports will serve as the nodal points of its future military actions given their strategic position in the IOR. Further, the ports are a gateway to the European shipping lanes. A new war theatre near the southern coastal states of India thus seems to be rapidly building up.

However, most actions have a flip side too. The political resolve of AUKUS to restrict Chinese hegemonic designs against India and Australia exposes China to immense vulnerabilities. Whether the Chinese supply chains use the Malacca Straits or the Kyaukphyu port, they have to pass through the Southern IOR and cannot solely depend upon the CPEC which lends Beijing to the mercy of the Taliban in the vicinity. The military dependence

on these ports, especially at Hambantota as a 'stocking point' of Chinese military assets, can cost Beijing significant disadvantages in a short "local war" or a few hours of tension build-up.

The democratic nations have already been vocal about ensuring a free passage of the IOR in other critical international waters such as the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. The joint naval drills only display the building resolve against the Chinese hegemony. Multilateral naval presences in batches of two to three nations at different locations on high seas in the Southern IOR and Taiwan Strait can counter the Chinese threat and militarily confuse Beijing. The options of various permutation combinations by the joint armed forces of AUKUS can implement economic and military blockages in case of a, first, collusive Sino-Pak threat to India, second, military actions to usurp Taiwan. It is possible that the 'game' that China has planned for others, especially India, fails miserably, and it might suffer multiple losses.

For this reason, Xi had stated that AUKUS aims to "stifle China in its Asian areas of influence". His statement was followed by Qi Zhenhong, the Chinese ambassador to Sri Lanka, reiterating that AUKUS would endanger Sri Lankan security. The previous week, the Chinese Envoy Wang Qun bitterly criticised the deal and stated it jeopardised the 'post-war international security order. Perhaps it becomes easy to understand who is at more risk — China or Sri Lanka.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

I WANT TO ASSURE YOU THAT I ADDRESSED THE ISSUES OF TEACHERS IN DELHI AND WILL RESOLVE ISSUES IN PUNJAB AS WELL.
—DELHI CHIEF MINISTER
ARVIND KEJRIWAL



THE AAP PROMISED TO REGULARISE CONTRACTUAL TEACHERS AND GIVE THEM EQUAL WAGES, BUT MADE IT WORSE BY HAVING GUEST TEACHERS.
—PUNJAB CONGRESS CHIEF
NAVJOT SINGH SIDHU

The creeping-in tendency of global capital

The manner in which global finance sought to creep into the power sector through reforms should be a warning for the farmer community

Finally, the central government repealed the three contentious farm laws buckling under pressure from a sustained peaceful movement of farmers. The victory of the farmers makes us to reflect on the linkage between public resistance and policy makers' response. Whether the central government is honest in its commitment to the farming community is the core question.

Though the net outcome partially meets the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) demands, the government failed to present a reasoning why it initially thought the farm laws would enhance the living conditions of the farmers and why it backed out from that stand. In the whole exercise, the Union Minister for



VEERAIIAH KONDURI

(The writer is an independent researcher and runs Mana Manchi Pustakam Youtube Channel. The views expressed are personal.)

Agriculture is nowhere visible. When the three acts were passed, several commentators from government and autonomous think tanks seriously defended the government. But such voices are missing when the laws were repealed. At the time of passing the repeal bills, surprisingly, the government was not inclined to debate them clause by clause. All in all, the time spent on Farm Laws Repeal Bill 2021 in Lok Sabha was a mere two minutes; eight minutes in the Rajya Sabha.

The statement of objects and reasons mentioned in the Farm Laws Repeal bill curiously sticks to the euphemism that only a group of farmers were protesting against these laws. This clearly indicates the fact that nothing has changed in



the government's perception about the year-long peaceful agitation and the demands of the farmers cutting across the political spectrum. Through the repeal bill, the government tried its best to miscommunicate when it said: "These enactments were made for the overall socio-economic develop-

ment of the farmers and rural sector after extensive consultations with various stakeholders following the felt need and demand of the farmers' organisations, suggestions and recommendations of the experts, professionals, agricultural economists, expert committees over the years." This is exactly contrary to the argument of the SKM which alleged that the government seldom consulted any one of them.

There are several other justifications the government tried to put forward in the repeal bill that we cannot find in the Prime Minister's address to the nation on Guru Purab day. That is because it does not want to expose itself before the global investor community for buckling under pressure.

The government's dishonesty was evident when it used the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav to substantiate backtracking on the farm bills.

The above facts clearly bring us back to the tendency of global finance capital that tries until it succeeds in its ventures. The creeping-in nature is the most dominant form of international finance capital's maneuvering capacities. To buttress this impending danger, we should recollect what had happened to power sector reforms as a whole.

The deregulation and privatization of power sector was prescribed to India by Fund-Bank think tanks two decades ago. They found their brand ambassador in Chandrababu Naidu who wanted to be a pioneer of reforms at the state

level and often at national level. After resuming power, he immediately resorted to unbundling of the power sector in the then Andhra Pradesh. He had to encounter a sustainable resistance from the Left as well as government employees. The subsequent agitation culminated in the then Telugu Desam government letting loose police action in which five people died. Following that movement, the power sector reforms failed to pick speed like the proponents of globalization wanted to and neither Telugu Desam nor Chandrababu Naidu were successful in retaining the public trust. And this was the agitation that catapulted the late YS Rajasekhara Reddy to power and played a solid role in mopping up numbers for

Congress during the UPA years.

Despite the heroic struggle of the people of Andhra Pradesh, the international finance capital crept into the power sector slowly but steadily, charting out the progressive reforms at its own pace by co-opting government after government. Now, it is struggling to push through complete privatization of distribution which is being met with stiff resistance.

The two-and-a-half-decade experience with power sector reforms compels any keen observer of the reform path in India and warn the farming community about the creeping tendency. This is further buttressed by the government through what it states in repeal bill.

Discoms' outstanding dues to gencos rise 1.3 pc to Rs 1,13,227 cr in Dec

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Total outstanding dues owed by electricity distribution companies (discoms) to power producers rose 1.3 per cent year-on-year to Rs 1,13,227 crore in December.

Discoms owed total Rs 1,11,762 crore to power generation firms in December 2020, according to portal PRAPTI (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators).

Total dues in December 2021 also increased sequentially compared to Rs 1,13,081 crore in November this year.

The PRAPTI portal was launched in May 2018 to bring in transparency in power purchase transactions between generators and discoms.

In December 2021, the total overdue amount, which was not cleared even after 45 days of grace period offered by gen-



erators, stood at Rs 1,01,436 crore as against Rs 98,334 crore in the same month a year ago. The overdue amount stood at Rs 1,00,417 crore in November this year.

Power producers give 45 days to discoms to pay bills for electricity supply. After that,

outstanding dues become overdue and generators charge penal interest on that in most cases.

To give relief to power generation companies (gencos), the Centre enforced a payment security mechanism from August 1, 2019. Under this

mechanism, discoms are required to open letters of credit for getting power supply.

The Centre had also given some breachers to discoms for paying dues to gencos in view of the COVID-19-induced lockdown. The government had also waived penal charges for the late payment of dues. In May 2020, the government had announced a Rs 90,000-crore liquidity infusion for discoms under which these utilities got loans at economical rates from Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and REC Ltd.

This was a government initiative to help gencos remain afloat. Later, the liquidity infusion package was increased to Rs 1.2 lakh crore and further to Rs 1.35 lakh crore.

Discoms in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu account for the

major portion of dues to gencos, the data showed.

Overdue of independent power producers amounted to 51.18 per cent of the total overdue of Rs 1,01,436 crore of discoms in December 2021. The proportion of central PSU gencos in the overdue was 23.95 per cent.

Among the central public sector gencos, NTPC alone has an overdue amount of Rs 4,344.75 crore on discoms, followed by NLC India at Rs 2,772.47 crore in December 2021.

Among private generators, discoms owe the highest overdue of Rs 25,141.73 crore to Adani Power, followed by Bajaj Group-owned Lalitpur Power Generation Company at Rs 4,503.45 crore in the month under review.

The overdue of non-conventional energy producers like solar and wind stood at Rs 20,318.79 crore in December 2021.

RBI likely to keep key policy rate unchanged, say experts

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Amid global scare due to new coronavirus variant Omicron, the RBI is likely to maintain status quo in its upcoming monetary policy and wait for a more opportune time to calibrate benchmark interest rate to promote growth without sacrificing the main objective of containing inflation.

The Reserve Bank Governor-headed Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is scheduled to meet during December 6-8, 2021. The decision of the rate setting panel would be announced on Wednesday (December 8). The central bank had kept the benchmark policy rate unchanged in October.

"...we believe the talks of a reverse repo rate hike in the MPC meeting may be premature as RBI has been largely able to narrow the corridor without the noise of rate hikes and ensuring market cacophony," said an SBI research report.



According to it, the RBI is not obliged to act on reverse repo rate only in MPC.

"Also, change in reverse repo rate is an unconventional policy tool that the RBI has effectively deployed during crisis when it moved to a floor instead of the corridor," it added.

A Kotak Economic Research report said with uncertainty around the new Covid variant, the RBI would possibly wait for some clarity before moving decisively on rates.

"We maintain our call for a reverse repo rate hike in February with the December meeting remaining a close call. We expect the RBI to continue on its path of normalisation with the reverse repo rate hike in February policy and repo rate hike in mid-2022-23," it said.

Property consultant Anarock said there have been expectations that the RBI may raise the reverse repo rate to a nominal extent during the forthcoming monetary policy.

MONEY MATTERS

SBI invites bids to sell NPA account KSK Mahanadi

SBI has invited bids from asset reconstruction companies, and other financial institutions to sell an NPA account KSK Mahanadi Power Company, with total outstanding against the company standing over Rs 4,100 crore. In terms of the bank's policy on sale of financial assets, in line with the regulatory guidelines, we place the account (KSK Mahanadi) for sale to ARCs/ Banks/ NBFCs/ FIs," SBI said in an auction notice. The e-auction of KSK Mahanadi is scheduled to take place on December 31, 2021. With fund based outstanding of Rs 3,815.04 crore and non-fund based outstanding of Rs 286.83 crore, company's total loan dues towards SBI stands at Rs 4,101.87 crore as on date, as per SBI. The country's largest lender has set a reserve price of Rs 1,423.17 crore for selling this non-performing asset (NPA).



RSWM to foray into knitted fabric, to pump Rs 700 crore

RSWM Ltd, a group company of the LNJ Bhiwara, is foraying into knitted fabric in line with the demand trend which will contribute Rs 800 crore to its topline over the next two to three years, a senior company official said on Sunday. One of the largest makers and exporters of synthetic and blended spun yarns from India, RSWM Ltd was also exploring opportunity into garmenting fabrication franchising as international brands are now keen on finished garments rather than buying yarns. The Rs 3,000 crore company has earmarked Rs 200 crore for the foray and is implementing the first phase of the 400 tonne capacity project. The company hired off woven fabric brand Mayur and was in process of using the same land and building to install the knitted fabric plant at a cost of Rs 80 crore in the phase I. Demand for woven fabric has dwindled while there is a surge in knitted fabric from both domestic and international brands. We have earmarked Rs 200 crore for the segment and are currently investing Rs 80 crore in plant and machinery in our existing facility," RSWM Joint MD Brij Mohan Sharma told PTI.

Aurobindo, Unichem recall products in US market

Aurobindo Pharma and Unichem Laboratories are recalling different products in the US market, the world's largest market for medicines, due to manufacturing issues. As per the latest enforcement report issued by the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA), Aurobindo's US-based unit is recalling 7,296 containers of hypertension drug Carvedilol tablets. The affected lot contains 6.25 mg Carvedilol tablets, which have been produced in India and distributed in the US by Princeton-based Aurobindo Pharma USA Inc. The company is recalling the lot due to "failed impurities/degradation specifications", the US health regulator noted in the report.



Excavation work has started in 3 coal blocks in Jharkhand: Official

Excavation work has started in three out of 29 coal blocks of Jharkhand, according to a senior official of the Ministry of Mines. Additional Secretary in the Union Ministry of Mines, M Nagaraju called on Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Saturday and informed him that excavation work has already started in three coal blocks and in the coming months work will start in Keredari, Chhatti Bariatu, Badam, Tubed, Tokisud and Lohari coal blocks also, a state government release said.

SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED
EXTENSION & SHORT TENDER NOTICE
Short Tender Notice for Tender Specification Nos: T-17/21-22 (1" Extension), & T-19/21-22 to T-20/21-22 (New) of SEOP/Sangareddy. The Bid document will be available for Tenders from Dt. 05.12.2021, Bid Document Sale and Dt. 14.12.2021 up to 17.00 hrs. Submission of Bid Dt. 05.12.2021 upto 15.00hrs. & Opening at 16.00hrs. The Tender details information can be obtained from website: www.spsdte.com & <http://tender.telanganapower.co.in> Phone: 9490612311. Email: IDae.purchase@spsdte.com
Superintending Engineer,
Operation Circle, Sangareddy, TSSPDCL
H.O. No. - 10418-PP/C/L/ND/V/L/2021-22

Demand now leaning towards brands in Indian realty space: Abhishek

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The structure of Indian real estate is improving in a meaningful way with disciplined supply and consumers demand gravitating towards branded developers having better execution track record, Macrotech Developers MD & CEO Abhishek Lodha said.

Macrotech Developers, erstwhile Lodha Developers, is one of the leading developers in the country. It got listed in April this year with initial public offer (IPO) of Rs 2,500 crore.

In an interview with PTI, Macrotech Developers Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abhishek Lodha talked about the change in structure in Indian real estate over the last five years.

He said consumers preferred buying bigger homes and better homes from branded developers.

He said property prices, which have remained stable during the last few years, would appreciate, leading to huge wealth creation for the people especially the middle class.

"In India and globally, there is a lot of positivity about the Indian real estate sector. The reason is that the structure of the industry is changing in a very meaningful way," Lodha said.

"The demand is all going to



the very top brands who in the difficult period before the COVID pandemic, when there was slowdown in demand and projects were getting stalled, behaved well with customers and did not delay their projects," Lodha said.

By completing projects on time, those brands have built a lot of trust, he added.

"People want to buy from only those brands especially under-construction homes."

Asked about housing demand, Lodha said sales have been very strong after the second wave, with robust demand across all price points.

He said the supply has become disciplined and would remain moderate going forward.

"Customers are now understanding that they should purchase bigger homes, better homes from a brand. Three 'Bs--bigger, better and branded', Lodha said.

LIC improves asset quality ahead of IPO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of its proposed initial public offering (IPO), insurance behemoth LIC has improved its asset quality for the financial year ended March 2021.

The non-performing assets (NPAs) as of March 31, 2021, are Rs 35,129.89 crore out of a total portfolio of Rs 4,51,303.30 crore, according to the latest Annual Report of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC).

The sub-standard assets are Rs 254.37 crore whereas the doubtful assets are Rs 20,369.17 crore and loss



assets are Rs 14,506.35 crore. An amount of Rs 34,934.97 crore is provided as per IRDAI guidelines in the books of accounts towards

non-performing assets, it said.

The percentage of gross NPA is 7.78 per cent while the net NPA is 0.05 per cent at

the end of March 2021. This is lower than gross NPA of 8.17 per cent (as a percentage of its debt portfolio) and net NPA of 0.79 per cent in the previous year.

In absolute terms, the NPA was Rs 36,694.20 crore out of a total debt of Rs 4,49,364.87 crore in 2019-20. Stress threshold for banks is different from that for insurers. LIC usually makes full provisions for all NPA in the debt book. The corporation has made provisions to the tune of Rs 37,341.6 crore, of which Rs 34,934.97 crore is towards doubtful, sub-standard, and loss assets.

Bankers told to create robust digital platform

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Sunday exhorted the banking industry to create an innovative digital platform -- as powerful, seamless and robust as UPI -- for providing quick and easy credit to MSMEs, small businessmen, and those at the bottom of pyramid.

The building blocks required to create such a platform are already available, given the strong ecosystem of Aadhaar, mobile phones, UPI platform and digilocker, he said asking the banking industry



to come up with innovative idea and solutions in three months.

'Prolonged waiting period can hit car demand'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Longer waiting periods with semiconductor shortage affecting production can have a negative impact on car demand, although the supply constraints of chips have gradually improved over the last few months, according to a senior official of car market leader Maruti Suzuki India.

The company currently has a pending order of around 2.5 lakh units with demand in the market continuing to be buoyant, while its production was over 80 per cent of normal in November.

"The bookings show that the demand continues to be quite robust, both in terms of inquiries and the bookings, and now availability is an issue and waiting periods have gone

up," Maruti Suzuki India Ltd (MSIL) Senior Executive Director (Marketing & Sales) Shashank Srivastava.

He further said, "So we are a little bit afraid that the longer waiting periods will affect the demand pattern and it can have a negative impact."

Depending on models and variants the waiting period can range from weeks to months in the domestic passenger vehicles market at present.

Srivastava, however, said there have not been booking cancellations as the company has been constantly communicating with its customers.

"Almost every customer is being contacted every week, explaining the situation of why there is a waiting, and when they are likely to get the vehicle.

Tata Motors, Honda mulling price hike

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With input costs continuing to rise, automakers like Tata Motors, Honda and Renault are looking to increase vehicle prices from January next year to offset the impact.

Already, car market leader Maruti Suzuki and luxury automakers Audi and Mercedes-Benz have announced to hike vehicle prices from next month.

While Maruti said the price rise planned for January 2022 will vary for different models, Mercedes-Benz said its hike will be on select models by up to 2 per cent due to feature enhancement and rising input costs. On the other hand, Audi said its price increase effective January 1, 2022 will be up to 3 per cent across its entire model range owing to rising input and



operational costs.

When contacted over the issue, Tata Motors President Passenger Vehicles Business Shailesh Chandra said, "Prices of commodities, raw material and other input costs continue to rise. An appropriate price hike to at least partially offset this increase in costs seems

inevitable in the near to short term."

The company sells models like Punch, Nexon and Harrier in the domestic market.

Honda Cars India also stated that it is considering price increase in the near future.

"There is a severe impact on input cost due to commodity

prices' increase. We are still studying how much can be absorbed," a company spokesperson noted.

The maker of brands like City and Amaze had last hiked the vehicle prices in August this year. Renault stated that it is also looking at a "substantial" price increase across its vehicle range from January.

The French company sells models like Kwid, Triber and Kiger in the Indian market.

The companies have been forced to take price hike, with substantial increase in prices of essential commodities like steel, aluminum, copper, plastic and precious metals over the last one year. Besides, transportation cost has gone up in recent times affecting the total cost structures of original equipment manufacturers (OEMs).

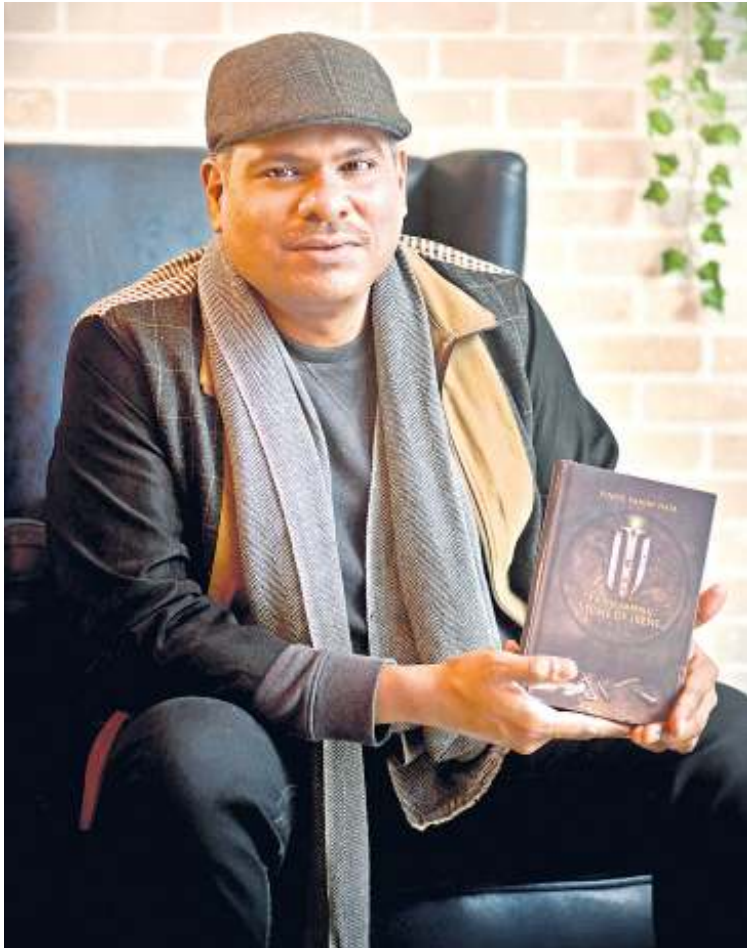
Chronicling golden age of 9th century Islamic Empire!

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Apart from being a film-maker, researcher, writer, producer, and thinker, Vinod Raman Nair, the self-confessed history buff, weaves an adventure around ninth century the Middle East through Tunisia to Armenia and Azerbaijan, and then to Turkey, Iran, and Iraq in his debut book 3 & The Emerald Stone of Irene.

When we got to know that he has worked with legendary talents across the world including Korean director Kwon Taek, producer-director Stanley Huntsman, and British actor Alex Goldwin, it was explicit for us to know how he came up with the idea of writing a book then. "I was taken aback by three pieces of work from the 9th century when I was travelling to turkey. An Arabic-written manuscript was translated into English. I derived my inspiration from the startling revelations I got to know about the golden age of its empire! The understanding of the Islamic empire is so trivial and insignificant in our country; very few names come to the forefront. The revelation is none of them were the opposite representation of that empire. How many people even know Babur was actually the descendant of Gengis Khan? So, many such exposures are what you are going to read in this book," he informs *The Pioneer*.

The author claims the era of 9th century to be the most fabulous era of all times and that this book



will also help many of his Muslim peers understand what a brilliant scientific fraternity they were in. He

continues, "I have personally witnessed many of my Muslim friends feeling disillusioned due to all of

them coming under the name of terrorism indistinctly. They can take pride in their scientific legacy now apart from other great achievements they have had across the world and given so much to us. Everyone knows that Aryabhata invented the zero, but who knew that algebra was the offering of Arabic slang? My filmmaking instinct was another reason that compelled me to write this book!"

His cinematography nature looked at how many details were missed in the *Harry Potter* franchise when it turned into a series of films, while the books carried all the relevant elements and nothing was overlooked. That's why he skipped filming it and instead penned it down for the readers. Another unknown fact about this novelist is that he is one of the first Indians to have shot across the war-torn Gaza Strip for a German film, which entered the 2004 Berlin Film Festival. This led him to bigger projects like a show on Palestine for the Discovery channel! Further in conversation, he reveals, "Younger gen is very susceptible when it comes to history. Children in brown families are hardly encouraged to be a researcher. I also went through a time when I decided to unlearn all the indoctrination which was pushed into me by others. My documentary background also helped me in writing this book." The first reader to his book who was his kid made him certain that books on archeology can also be read by everyone if it's presented in entertaining ways and that was his motive.

EXERCISES FOR CONTROLLING BLOOD SUGAR

Physical inactivity is one of the major reasons that contribute to the proliferation of diseases like Blood Sugar. The best thing you can do for your blood sugar and cardiovascular health is to get moving. Which helps to regulate and reduce blood sugar levels is by making the muscles utilise glucose more efficiently.

As you exercise more, the effect is amplified over time, which is important for people who experience chronically high blood sugar levels. If you stay fit and active throughout your life, you'll be able to control this condition better. But the big question is what are the exercises that are best for diabetes? Well, if you're not sure where to begin, we've put together a list of physical exercises you can include in your daily routine.

Walking: A mild activity with major benefits

If you don't have an exercise routine in place, start with walking. It's an exercise that anyone can do almost anywhere, all you need is a good pair of shoes and somewhere to go. Spending 30 minutes of brisk walking, five times each week is a great way to increase your physical activity.

Effects of pilates on diabetes

We should know the benefits of Pilates in preventing and controlling diabetes. It is an effective exercise for diabetes management. It also helps diabetics build lean muscle and better metabolize sugar. As a result, the glucose levels in your blood stay lower, even when you're at rest.

Yoga: A traditional form of exercise

Yoga is one of the oldest forms of formal exercise. Some types of yoga can get your heart pumping (like power/vinyasa-style yoga), but there's value in gentle yoga or stretching, too. Spending time on the mat is a proven stress reducer, and that sweet relief can have a beneficial effect on your blood sugar.

Strength training

Strength training has many benefits for people with diabetes and is designed to improve one's strength and endurance. Ultimately, strength training builds muscle. More toned muscles can actually play an essential role in keeping your blood sugar in check.

Hate exercising? Try dancing!

If you don't like doing the same form of exercise repeatedly, then dancing is a perfect way forward. For those with diabetes, it is an exciting way to promote weight loss, increase physical activity, improve flexibility, lower blood sugar, and reduce stress.

Swimming is a low-impact exercise

Aquatic activities provide another

joint-friendly exercise option. Swimming stretches and relaxes your muscles and burns calories that promotes steady blood sugar levels. If you dislike sweaty t-shirts and smelly socks, just put on your swimwear and dive for health.

Burn calories with cycling

If getting in the pool isn't for you, biking is another great option. It increases your heart rate, which enhances blood circulation (and insulin) and ultimately helps to control high glucose levels in your blood.

Calisthenics

In calisthenics, you use your own bodyweight to strengthen your muscles. These exercises enhance endurance, flexibility, strength, and coordination without any equipment. It incorporates a full-body movement, which aids in lowering your blood sugar levels.

Weightlifting is necessary

Weightlifting can help build muscle mass and can increase the number of calories you burn. It can be very important for those who have type 2 diabetes. Incorporate weightlifting into your weekly exercise routine can help to a great extent.

Tai chi improves balance

This Chinese form of exercise uses slow, smooth body movements to relax the mind and body. It emphasizes on flowing motions and deep breathing. Tai chi is ideal for people with diabetes because it provides fitness and stress reduction in one.

Take away: Check your blood sugar

Regular physical activity is important, not only for managing diabetes but also for promoting your overall health. Testing your blood sugar before, during and after exercise may be just as important as the exercise itself. Especially if you're trying any new activity or increasing the intensity or duration of your workout. It will let you know if your levels are stable, rising, or falling and whether it's safe to keep exercising.



The author, Shobana Mahansaria, is the Director of Dolphin POD and Corefit Plus

Remake ka Zamaana hai

This remake era is not new, you'll be surprised to know that many of the 'thalaiva' aka Rajinikanth's films were remade by the angry young man of the Bollywood for entertainment purposes back in the 90s. Did you also know that the first ever south Indian film remake was *Ram Aur Shyam* as the recreation of the Telugu blockbuster *Ramudu Bheemudu*? Since then, the remake trend hasn't died till today. With back-to-back films in all the industries, the directors are surely keeping this tendency alive with a new cast in it always. Pan-India versions of it come as a cherry on the cake for all of us. Remakes were basically the birth of new millennium and it means that the concept can be revived back, no damage in it. Some run successfully on the box-office, some flop but the tag of the remake will always be etched in the cinema's history. Beginning our year-end stories with the hit remakes of 2021, let us dive deep into 'the repeat of hits':



JERSEY

After Nani's *Jersey* was released in southern states, he was enjoying an unexpected love from not just his own fans but cricket fans too. With the same name, now Shahid Kapoor is coming with it's remake all set to release by the end of this month. In his recent Insta live, the Hindi actor has accepted that *Jersey* felt like a story that needed to be told to the Hindi audiences as well because he was a fan of Nani's original one. The story is about a thirty six year old cricketer named Arjun who stopped his cricketering career 10 years ago, now aiming to play for the Indian team.



TADAP

Freshly released film *Tadap* will see Anhan Shetty and Tara Sutaria in some passionate romance all inspired from the telugu release *RX100* starring Karthikeya Gumma konda and Payal Rajput in the lead. Nobody knew *RX100* would become one of the highly grossing films here in Tollywood, and with Milan Luthria's remake of a zealous film in Hindi, it was the best roll of dice. Based in Mussoorie, Ishana essayed by Anhan meets foreign returned Ramisa that is essayed by Tara. As their passionate romance brews, Ishana falls madly in love with her, but things turn out differently when the time comes to disclose the affair to their elders, the couple gets separated through a very shocking twist. He becomes hyper aggressive. He loses his mind when he finds out Ramisa never loved him and used him for sex.

DRUSHYAM 2

Telugu crime-thriller *Drushyam 2* was launched recently featuring the iconic Venkatesh Daggubati reprising his role from the Telugu hit *Drushyam*. It takes off from where the first film ended, and takes the audience on a roller coaster journey, as Rambabu's family is threatened by an investigation into the events of the past. It is a remake of the Malayalam film *Drishyam 2*. Even if it may be a remake, the question remains about the relevance of this one in the digital era now. Despite the same trajectory, people have enjoyed the remake because of the additional jaw-dropping twists.



MAESTRO

With *Maestro* released in Telugu, it became *Maestro* v/s *Andhadhun*! The Telugu remake had a stellar cast with actors Niithin, Tamannah Bhatia and Nabha Natesh on board. The official remake of Bollywood superhit



Andhadhun, when the critics watched the Telugu version of it, they said that it stayed true to its original. Titled it as one of the safest remakes of 2021 by the critics, it managed to leave a lasting impression at least. As per the plot-line, a piano player pretending to be blind innocently becomes entangled in a number of problems as he witnesses the murder of a film actor.

NARAPPA

Narappa was the Telugu remake of *Asuran*, it was Dhanush's biggest hit that year and a film that led to a lot of debates around the rights of the land. The remake in Telugu directed by Srikanth Addala which came two years after the Tamil hit left us asking why wasn't it remade earlier. Venkatesh Daggubati and Priyamani Raj-starrer released on OTT. The story was based on a conflict between Dalits and Kamma landlords which resulted in the Kara mchedu massacre that happened in 1985.



VAKEEL SAAB

The remake of Hindi film *Pink* helmed by Pawan Kalyan in Telugu, was a star vehicle to be remembered already. He was trying to make or break a case involving three women in *Vakeel Saab*. Basically seen as the on-screen saviour of the masses in the movie, he was trying to reprise the role of Amitabh Bachchan. The remake certainly framed the idea of consent and didn't let its message loose. It was an apt courtroom drama directed by Venu Sriram in Telugu!



Snug up like a bug in a rug

The holiday season is here and so is the winter. We bring to you a list of a few books you can get your hands on this holiday season and get cozying.

RUN FOR THE SHADOWS

The poems in *Run for the Shadows* draw you into the jagged edges and crevices of lived experience. They speak of attachment with an intensity that belies the poet's capacity for restraint, and spill over with dread even as they draw the veil over pain. While responding to the ecological and political crises of the moment, they imagine an arc of time that encompasses both the deep past and the far future. Written over a period of seven years, this new collection of poems by one of our most charismatic poets is an invitation into a deeply personal yet expansive world. *SRIDALA SWAMI* is a poet, essayist and photographer.

LAST AMONG EQUALS

Sanjay Sahni was living an 'araam zindagi' in Delhi, working as an electrician, until a chance encounter with a computer sent him hurtling into the labyrinth that is the NREGA — one of the world's largest rural poverty alleviation programmes — and

the corruption within. It led him back to his village, where eventually, he and his comrades (primarily women from the Dalit and most backward castes) formed the anti-corruption group Manrega Watch. Their tale is one strand of village politics, a story of resilience among citizens, those outside the system. But what of the 'insiders'? Development economist M.R. Sharan brings these two interweaving strands of insiders and outsiders together to tell a tale of hope: that those on the margins can challenge entrenched hierarchies.

WHOLE NUMBERS AND HALF TRUTHS

Fuelled by a surge of migration to cities, the country's growth appears to be defined by its growing, prosperous middle class. It is also defined by progressive and liberal young Indians, who vote beyond the constraints of identity, and paradoxically, by an unchecked population explosion and rising

crimes against women. Rukmini marshals this information — some of it never reported before — alongside probing interviews with experts and ordinary citizens, to see what the numbers can tell us about India. As she interrogates how data works, and how the push and pull of social and political forces affect it, she creates a blueprint to understand the changes of the last few years and the ones to come — a toolkit for India.

LEADERSHIP SHASTRA

In *Leadership Shashtra*, Pradeep Chakravathy does just that. He studies the lives of well-known historical figures like Shivaji, Babur, Ahilyabai Holkar, Sankaradeva and many others with a view to understanding their motivations, actions and legacies. The book examines how developing a comprehension of our past could be the key to understanding our own selves, our actions, motivations and of those around us.

Anasuya's father dies of cancer

Tollywood actress-anchor Anasuya Bhardwaj's father lost his battle to cancer and breathed his last on Sunday in Hyderabad. Sudarshan Rao Khasba, 63, was known for working as a youth congress publicity secretary when Rajiv Gandhi was ruling the nation. It came as a sudden shock to the Tollywood sensation. Several Telugu celebrities and actors expressed their condolences to the bereaved family. On the work front, Anasuya who had two releases this year is making her Malayalam film debut with superstar Mammooty's 'Bheeshma Parvan' and has three including Pushpa.



Scared of flops, Priyanka wants to take things slow

K RAMYA SREE

Gamanam, releasing on December 10, has an awe-inspiring cast, one of whom is Priyanka Jawalkar, enjoying the success of her two releases — Thimmarasu and SR Kalyanamandapam — this year. The anthology film written and directed by debutant Srujana Rao is produced by Ramesh Karutoori, Venki Pushadapu, and Gnana Shekar V.S under the KRIA FILM CORP and KALI Productions banners. Priyanka sharing how she came on board this project, said, "Gnanasekhar first approached me with the project. Since it's the character of a Muslim girl, they first did a look test. When they felt I would do justice to my character, I was roped in to Gamanam. It was their choice I must say." Furthermore about her character, she

revealed, "I play Zara, a conventional Muslim college-going girl, who falls in love with Ali (played by Shiva Kandukuri). I have very few dialogues in this film. I express my emotions through my eyes, which I must say was the toughest part. I took a few references from films like Malli Malli Idi Rani Roju. Also, since my neighbours and friends during childhood were Muslims, I knew the nuances of my character." Gamanam will mark the debut of Srujana Rao as a director and Priyanka says she found a good friend in her. Although the actress doesn't find any difference between female and male directors, it's on the personal front that she got more connected to her director. The Taxiwalla fame shares, "I got more connected to Srujana than any other director on the personal front. I had that liberty to be however I wanted to be since she is a woman. By the end of this project, Srujana became my good friend. We used to talk more post-shooting."

This film will see Priyanka in a new avatar, a character she hasn't donned before. The actress says she chose this project because she wants to show diversity in her acting and strike through the notion many directors have about her that she is fit for commercial films only! "This character has scope for acting. I wanted to do such films. I wanted directors to notice me," said the actress. "I was hearing only commercial stories. This story was close to reality — somewhat like Ganyam film. When I was told Ilayaraja sir is composing music for this film, I was sold. I will not get this chance again in my life i felt," said Priyanka, who was supposed to do Choosi Chudangane with Shiva but couldn't do it. The actress who is good friends with Shiva off-screen said she found it difficult to emote shy feels looking at Shiva for a few scenes because of the bond they share off-screen. Priyanka is known to take things slow and steady.

When asked why, she answers, "I haven't signed any film yet. I have been choosy from the very beginning. Sometimes, I feel I should do films back to back, but I am scared if I can really do justice to them. I am also scared of straight flops; hence I am choosy about what I do. Moreover, I need to like the story to sign a film. I want to take things slow. I want to do a love story next, as it will give me more scope and equal importance as the lead actor." Priyanka who is hopeful that Gamanam will bring her interesting projects in the future, is constantly auditioning for Netflix. "I am constantly auditioning for Hindi Netflix, but nothing has materialised yet. I am hoping to do a project for Netflix soon. I am okay with doing bold sequences for Netflix if my character demands. Many felt Arjun Reddy was bold, but for me, it was a normal film. Definition of boldness differs from person to person," concluded the actress.

Bimbisara turns down fancy OTT deal

Nandamuri Kalyan Ram is gearing up for his upcoming film Bimbisara's release, in which he plays a 5th century King of Magadha of the Haryanka dynasty. Produced by K Hari Krishna under NTR Arts banner, the film is being helmed by Mallidi Vashist. Catherine Tresa and Samyutha Menon are playing the leading ladies. The latest we heard is that the film turned down a big OTT deal for the film as the actor wants to release it in theatres only. Sources close to Kalyan Ram revealed that he wants to have a big release for Bimbisara. The reports are coming that Bimbisara will have A-grade visual effects and it is being made as a high-budget film in Kalyan Ram's career so far.



RRR to be the biggest, widest Indian film release in the US

Filmmaker S.S Rajamouli who has made India proud with his last release Baahubali 1 and 2 is back with his next film RRR, starring superstars, Jr. NTR, Ramcharan, Ajay Devgn, Alia Bhatt, and Shriya Saran amongst other actors. The makers of the film are leaving no stones unturned to make this film reach as many people as possible. Apart from India, the makers of the film are aiming to release this film in almost 999+ multiplexes only in the US, bringing back the glory of Indian Cinema to the audience. Sarigama Cinemas and Rafta Creations are jointly distributing the movie in the USA. The anticipation among the audiences has been increasing day by day not just in India but worldwide as it is the biggest action-drama to date. The makers of SS Rajmouli's Pan-India film RRR have shared multiple assets including posters and songs with glimpses of Ajay Devgn, Alia Bhatt, Ram Charan amongst others. The film's trailer is also to be unveiled this month, on the 9th of December, followed by a grand event. Post Baahubali's success, SS Rajamouli became a nationwide household name, he has made another film on a grand scale and is set to break many records. The movie includes a star-studded lineup besides lead actors Ram Charan and Jr. NTR. Ajay Devgn, Alia Bhatt, Olivia Morris will be seen in pivotal roles while Samuthirakani, Ray Stevenson, and Alison Doody join in as supporting roles. Jayanti Lal Gada of PEN Studios has bagged the theatrical distribution rights across North India and has also bought worldwide electronic rights for all languages. Pen Marudhar will be distributing the film in the North Territory. The Telugu-language period action drama film is produced by D. V. V. Danayya of DVV Entertainments. RRR is releasing on January 7, 2022.

Nargis may replace Jacqueline in Krish-PK film

All the Jacqueline Fernandez fans were rejoicing the moment news broke that she is all set to make her Tollywood debut. Let's hold our horses for a while because there's some recent buzz hinting at her replacement now. The actress who is all over the news for getting involved in a recent controversy with con-man Suresh Chandrashekar possibly will get replaced. Sources say that director Krish seems to be contemplating roping in the popu-

lar American-Indian actress Nargis Fakhri. Rumors are rife that the only reason for the director to ponder about this was Jaqueline's personal controversy that she is busy sorting out. If it doesn't sort out on time, there is a strong buzz that Nargis will replace Jaqueline in the period drama named Hari Hara Veeramallu starring Pawan Kalyan and Nidhi Agerwal also! Hari Hara Veeramallu will resume the shooting in January 2022. The film's shoot has been halted in April 2021 due to the second wave of Covid-19.



ASHWIN TURNS IT ON AS INDIA AIM FOR FOUR DAY FINISH

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's middle-order worries going into South Africa series remained but that didn't deter Ravichandran Ashwin from turning the heat on as his three quick blows left New Zealand tottering at 140 for five in pursuit of an impossible 540 on day three of the second Test.

While Daryl Mitchell (60 off 92 balls) and Henry Nicholls (36 batting) added 73 runs for the fourth wicket, there is no denying that India in all likelihood will finish it early on the fourth day with Ashwin (3/27) looking menacing after every passing over.

What will hurt New Zealand team most in this defeat is the fact that this is the game where one of its own -- Ajaz Patel, equalled the world record and grabbed a match-haul of 14 wickets, something that no one has ever done against India in Test cricket.

The tall Mitchell at least tried to use his reach to counter Ashwin and also attack Jayant Yadav and Axar Patel but looked more like the last man standing, trying to delay the inevitable before a rush of blood saw him being holed at deep extra cover. Tom Blundell had a suicidal runout going for a non-existent single.

But it was Ashwin, who again got the new ball and immediately got into the act by removing skipper Tom Latham with an angular delivery while Will Young gave bat



'I DON'T THINK KOHLI HAS A TECHNICAL PROBLEM' I JUST THINK HE HAS TO WAIT PATIENTLY. IF THERE IS A PATTERN IN THE WAY HE IS GETTING DISMISSED, WHEN HE IS OUT THERE IN THE MIDDLE IF HE IS STRUGGLING TO TIME THE BALL, IF HE IS STRUGGLING TO GET ON TOP OF THE BALL, THEN IT'S A PROBLEM. I DON'T THINK HE HAS THAT PROBLEM. —VVS LAXMAN

pad to forward short leg and Ross Taylor, who has been a walking wicket, failed miserably in his attempt to slog sweep the wily off-spinner.

There was one over where Ashwin literally toyed with left-handed Nicholls who couldn't gauge which one would turn away like a classical off-break and the one that will straighten or come in with the angle.

But there will be some issues that would need coach Rahul Dravid's urgent attention.

For India, even in what could be a facile victory, the wobbly middle-order would keep them worried going into the South Africa series.

Ajinkya Rahane failed in the first Test and had to be dropped on pretext of a hamstring niggle. Cheteshwar Pujara had three bad innings and one where he looked better but that was after the pressure was released by the bowlers.

Skipper Virat Kohli, whose primary aim of not enforcing follow-on was to get some batting time under his belt, also didn't look confident during a scratchy innings of 36 off 84 balls.

Former India batter said Virat Kohli doesn't have a technical deficiency or any mental issue that is stopping him from getting to a 3-figure score and that the India captain has to be patient to end the long drought for a hundred in international cricket.

VVS Laxman said the 3-figure score will come Virat Kohli's way soon and once it does, Kohli will be back to scoring big runs for India. The former batter's comments come after Virat Kohli was dismissed for 36 on Day 3 of the 2nd Test against New Zealand in Mumbai.

India declared their second innings at 276 for 7 after Axar hit four sixes and three fours in his 41 off 26 balls to prop up the innings towards the end.

Their confidence already shattered, the New Zealand bowlers conceded as many as 25 fours and 11 sixes in the 70 overs they bowled in the second innings. In fact, all

Indian batters save Wriddhiman Saha hit at least one six.

Kohli's idea of batting again was partially successful because Pujara did look good during his 47 and Mayank Agarwal (62, 108 balls) did his cause no harm by smashing another half-century to top up his first innings score of 150.

The duo added 107 runs for the opening stand to add insult to New Zealand's injuries and it was compounded by another 82 runs that Shubman Gill (47) added with Kohli.

Save a six that he hit off opposition's weakest link, Will Somerville, Kohli for the better part of his 84 balls didn't look convincing before playing on to a friendly left-arm spin from Rachin Ravindra, who also had three wickets.

Agarwal was looking good for his second hundred of the game but in his bid to hit another six off Patel he could not reach to the pitch of the delivery and Will Young comfortably took the catch at long-off.

For Pujara this was the best chance to get a fifty and increase his confidence before the tour of South Africa.

He survived a strong DRS appeal but then one delivery that was pitched slightly fuller and turned, got his outside edge and went to Taylor's safe hands in the slips.

Sindhu settles for silver in BWF World Tour Finals

PTI ■ BALI

Indian badminton ace P V Sindhu settled for a silver medal at the BWF World Tour Finals after going down meekly against Korean teen sensation An Seyoung in the summit clash, here on Sunday.

Sindhu, the reigning world champion and two-time Olympic medalist, could neither match the pace nor breach the defence of the world number six Korean, losing 16-21 12-21 in the 40-minute lop-sided clash.

It was Sindhu's third successive loss -- all straight games -- to the Korean in as many meetings.

With this victory, An Seyoung became the first ever

South Korean woman to win the season-ending title.

It was also her third straight title in Bali, following wins at the Indonesia Masters and Indonesia Open in the last two weeks.

Making her third final appearance in the year-end tournament, world number seven Sindhu looked a pale shadow of the player who had claimed the title in 2018 to become the only Indian to achieve the feat.

"It was a good game. An Seyoung is a good player so I don't think it was going to be easy. I was prepared for a good match," Sindhu said after the title clash.

"From the beginning I should not have given her lead because in the end I came back covering



few points. It is a bit sad but lot to learn.

"It has been a good three weeks in Bali. So lot of positives

to take from here and it's time to go back, recover and get prepared for the world championships," added the 26-year-old.

Up against the 19-year-old Korean, Sindhu once again looked short of ideas. She couldn't mount her attacking game or make use of the full court.

An Seyoung looked more polished at the nets and rode on her good quality of strokes. She produced some sensational full stretch diving saves with her swift movement to blunt Sindhu's game plan.

The Indian had a forgettable start and was left to fight a tough battle after lagging 0-4.

Sindhu played a good rally to log her first points with a cross court return. She tried to narrow the gap by engaging her rival in rallies but An Seyoung was quick on her feet and showed better

anticipation to always keep her nose ahead.

The Korean doubled the lead to 16-8 after resumption. Sindhu tried to make up the deficit with a few good points but the Korean managed to collect eight game points. Sindhu saved four game points by putting pressure on her opponent's backhand, while the Korean also sent one long.

An Seyoung, however, sealed the opening game with a body return.

"During the rally, the shot which I wanted to attack, I was making mistakes. It was going side outs and points which I had to take were going to net. It is part of the game and it happens at times," said Sindhu.



India's fringe players look to make impact in final unofficial Test

PTI ■ BLOEMFONTEIN

The third unofficial Test between India A and South Africa A beginning here on Monday will give the fringe players another opportunity to make their case for national selection ahead of the senior team South Africa's tour later this month.

A squad of at least 20 is likely to be picked for the South Africa tour comprising three Tests and three ODIs beginning December 26.

Hanuma Vihari, who was controversially dropped for the New Zealand series at home, is expected to come back into the side. He looked good in the drawn second unofficial Test scoring couple of fifties.

Abhimanyu Easwaran, who could be picked as a back up batter in the top-order, has been in sublime touch on the tour.

He scored a hundred in the series opener and followed it up with a fifty in the second innings of the game held earlier this week.

Prithvi Shaw has not made most of his chances in South Africa, not helping his case for selection.

After a tough outing in the series opener, the pacers were impressive in the second game with the young Ishan Porel standing out with a match haul of six wickets. Navdeep Saini too was amongst the wickets, taking five in total.

Leg-spinner Rahul Chahar has not done much in the series but he is likely to be picked in ODI squad.

Mitchell says he took cue from Mayank to counter Indian spinners

PTI ■ MUMBAI

New Zealand batter Daryl Mitchell on Sunday said he took cue from India opener Mayank Agarwal to counter the home side's spinners on day three of the second Test here.

Mitchell (60 off 92 balls) shared 73 runs for the fourth wicket with Henry Nicholls (36 batting) to provide much needed resistance in New Zealand's improbable chase of 540.

"Set the template from Mayank's batting, the way he put pressure on our spinners," Mitchell said after the day's play.

"Disappointing to not still be out there and kick on, but nice to get a partnership going."

Mitchell admitted that his team is obviously in a tough situation in the Test.

"They (Indian bowlers) are constantly throwing things at you and you're trying to counter that. You have to keep trying to win the small battles.

"Tough situation we're in, but it was just



about trying to go out and do what we can. Obviously it is very challenging."

Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin took three quick wickets to leave New Zealand tottering at 140 for five at stumps.

Talking about the Wankhede pitch, he said, "It's a pretty challenging surface, there's definitely balls turning there with your name on it. It's just about trying to put pressure back on the bowlers. That's the beauty of Test cricket."

JK Tyre Novice Cup & Anish in JK Tyre presents Royal Enfield Continental GT Cup

PNS ■ COIMBATORE

The weather gods played hide & seek in the penultimate round of the 24th JK Tyre-FMSCI National Racing Championship here in Coimbatore.

Heavy rains halted the session for a couple of hours on Saturday but then the wet track condition made the races in the LGB Formula 4 & JK Tyre Novice Cup category even more exciting.

As the drivers & riders got geared up to take to the track to prove their mettle came the rain and halted the proceedings for over an hour.

But the race officials were determined to complete the race for the cars. It continued to rain but the Formula LGB4 drivers, the experienced of the lot, were given the task to handle the condition.

The race was run under the safety car and yellow flag for the first four laps but Arya Singh of Dark Don Racing did a much better job to bring home his first race win.

Rain limits play on day 2 of Bang v Pak test

AP ■ DHAKA

The majority of play on day two of the second cricket test between Bangladesh and Pakistan was washed out due to persistent rain on Sunday.

Just 6.2 overs from a possible 98 were possible as Pakistan resumed the day on 161-2 and reached 188-2 before the umpires called it a day.

Skipper Babar Azam was batting on 71 with Azhar Ali on 52 at stumps.

Rain and bad light also interrupted the game on day one, allowing just two sessions.

As the game started after the lunch session on Sunday, Babar resumed with a boundary through fine leg off pacer Khaled Ahmed, showing his intention to score quick runs.



Azhar also hit a boundary in the second ball he faced off pacer Ebadot Hossain.

He then struck two consecutive fours in Ebadot's next over to reach his 34th test fifty off 126 balls just before rain forced the postponement. Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam, who didn't bowl on day two, remains Bangladesh's biggest threat with match figures of 2-49.

Pakistan won the first test by eight wickets and leads the two-match series 1-0.

India lose to France to finish 4th in Jr Hockey WC

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Title hopes already shattered, defending champions India even failed to finish on the podium as they lost 1-3 to France in the bronze-medal play-off match of the FIH Junior Hockey World Cup here on Sunday. France skipper Timothee Clement slammed a hat-trick. Clement converted three penalty corners for France in the 26th, 34th and

47th minutes while India's lone goal was struck by Sudeep Chirmako in the 42nd minute.

It was the second consecutive flop show from the Indians after their superlative performance against Belgium in the quarterfinals.

The third-fourth place match was a chance for India to avenge their 4-5 defeat against France in their tournament opener, but it was not to be as the European side contin-



ued to dominate the hosts with a superb performance.

France were by far the better side on the pitch as they controlled the proceedings after a sedate first quarter and earned as many as 14 penalty corners as against India's just three. India started on a bright note and exerted pressure on France defence in the first quarter, which resulted in a penalty corner as early as in the first minute of the game, but

the hosts failed to utilise the chance. The Indians continued to press hard and came close to securing the lead in the 12th minute when Arajiet Singh Hundal's shot from top of the circle hit the post.

France got their footing into the match at the fag end of the first quarter when they secured three penalty corners in succession but the Indian defence did just enough to keep their rivals at bay.

Germany bow out of Davis Cup with "dead rubber" doubles win

AP ■ MADRID

Germany bowed out of the Davis Cup with a win in the doubles rubber of their semi-final in Madrid against Russia. Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz fought back to beat Aslan Karatsev and Karen Khachanov 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, but it was scant consolation as singles victories for Andrey Rublev



and Daniil Medvedev had earlier given Russia an unassailable 2-0 lead in the best-of-three tie.

Barcelona loses to Betis 1-0 before critical Bayern trip

AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona lost its first match under Xavi Hernández when it fell to Real Betis 1-0 at home just before its critical trip to Bayern Munich.

Striker Juanmi Jiménez finished off a well-orchestrated counterattack to take Betis' winner in the 79th minute at Camp Nou on Saturday night.

Barcelona had won twice and drawn once since Xavi took over as coach from Ronald Koeman. The defeat left the team in seventh place and in danger of falling even further behind leader Real Madrid, which played at Real Sociedad later.

Barcelona visits Bayern on Wednesday needing a win to ensure its place in the Champions League round of 16. Bayern, which is

already qualified as the group winner, beat Barcelona 3-0 in their first meeting this season.

If it loses, Barcelona would need Benfica to not beat Dynamo Kyiv to avoid elimination.

Before kickoff, Barcelona player Alexia Putellas presented the 65,000-plus fans her Ballón d'Or for the world's best women's player. Barcelona lost teen talent Gavi Páez in the 34th when he needed to be carted off after apparently feeling dizzy following the powerful impact of a ball to his head.

Manuel Pellegrini's Betis rose into third place, right behind crosstown rival Sevilla, which beat Villarreal 1-0 thanks to a goal from Lucas Ocampos.

Sevilla and Villarreal also have key Champions League matches this week. Sevilla must win at Salzburg



to move on, while Villarreal plays Atalanta needing a draw to advance.

MADRID WINS AT SOCIEDAD When Karim Benzema went

down injured, Vinicius Júnior and the rarely used Luka Jovic stepped up to secure Real Madrid a 2-0 win at Real Sociedad and strengthen its hold of the Spanish league lead.

The young attacking players struck goals early in the second half in San Sebastián to give Madrid its eighth consecutive win across all competitions and leave it eight points clear of nearest chaser Sevilla.

Madrid's victory came after Atlético Madrid and Barcelona were upset at home, leaving them further adrift.

"We knew that this was going to be a tough game at a difficult ground, but we played a great game from the very start," Madrid midfielder leader Luka Modric said.

"It was a complete game and these are three huge points."

Atlético Madrid trailed by 10 points in fourth place after the defending champion was stunned by Mallorca 2-1 in the capital.

Barcelona was a whopping 16 points behind in seventh place following a 1-0 loss to Real Betis, its first defeat since Xavi Hernández took over as coach.

Manuel Pellegrini's Betis rose into third place, right behind crosstown rival Sevilla, which beat Villarreal 1-0 thanks to a goal from Lucas Ocampos.

Jovic never found his spot on Madrid following his 60 million euros transfer from Eintracht Frankfurt in the summer of 2019. He scored two goals in a season-and-a-half before he was loaned back to Frankfurt.

MAN CITY GOES TOP OF EPL

Defending champion Manchester City is on top of the English Premier League for the first time this season.

And if Pep Guardiola's team keeps playing like this, it could be difficult to knock City off its perch — even in a tight title race that saw three different teams lead the standings during Saturday.

On a day when previous leader Chelsea faltered, City displayed total dominance in a 3-1 win at Watford that showed off the kind of fluid passing game that helped Guardiola's team win three of the last four league titles.

Bernardo Silva scored twice after Raheem Sterling's early opener as City proved once again that it can do perfectly fine without a recognized striker in the lineup. It was a fifth straight league win for City, which is one point ahead of Liverpool and two in front of Chelsea after 15 rounds.