

ANALYSIS 7
BATTLE TO BECOME THE
AAM AADMI OF PUNJAB**MONEY 8**
NEW BILL ON CRYPTOCURRENCY AFTER
CABINET APPROVAL: NIRMALA IN RS**SPORTS 11**
MESSI WINS HIS RECORD EXTENDING
7TH BALLON D'OR AWARD

VIJAYAWADA, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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THOUGHT
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High Court gives thumbs up to 'Navaratnalu-Pedalandariki Illu'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The division bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, on Tuesday, gave the green signal to the State government's flagship scheme Navaratnalu-Pedalandariki Illu. The High Court dismissed the judgment of single bench Justice M Satyanarayana Murthy on October 8 that no constructions be taken up in the plots allotted to the poor as part of the scheme.

The division bench headed by Chief Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra took up a petition filed by the State government challenging the single-judge bench's verdict.

Meanwhile, the petitioners who had questioned the government's orders withdrew their petition, as they had already been allotted plots. However, this was not informed to the High Court. The government brought this to the



notice of the court and said all the eligible people, who were left uncovered under the scheme, would also be allotted plots with-

in three months of their application.

The Central government, which also implemented in the case, told the court that the petitioners could not

understand the objectives of the PM Awas Yojana. The court, which agreed with the arguments of the State and the Central governments, dismissed the single-judge bench's orders. It said the cases would stand closed.

On October 8, Justice Satyanarayana Murthy set aside various guidelines issued by the State government to allot house sites to poor people and stalled the implementation of the scheme.

The judge appreciated the spirit of the scheme of giving house sites to 25 lakh families. He observed it cannot infringe the personal right of any citizen. The judge also criticised the government for allotting land only to women, which he said was discriminatory. He objected to the guidelines for the issuance of conveyance deeds instead of D-form pattas.

Legendary lyricist Sirivennela no more

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

The Telugu film industry plunged into gloom on Tuesday with the passing away of a legend - renowned lyricist and Padma Shri awardee Sirivennela Seetharama Sastry.

The lyricist breathed his last while battling pneumonia at KIMS Hospital in Secunderabad. He was 66 and is survived by his wife and two sons. The news left the entire industry shocked and messages and condolences

poured in as fans came to grips with the demise of the legendary writer. Chembolu Seetharama Sastry, better known by his screen name Sirivennela

Seetharama Sastry, was a lyricist and poet. Holding a record of writing lyrics for over 3,000 songs till 2020, Sastry is known for his philosophical approach in his songs.



Only 55% of lungs were functional

About six years ago, Sirivennela Seetharama Sastry was diagnosed with cancer and half of his lung was removed. This was followed by a bypass surgery. About a week ago, the other lung was infected with cancer and half of it was also removed.

Following this procedure, he did fine for two days. However, he was brought to KIMS hospitals for advanced treatment and he recovered well. Precostomy was also performed. KIMS MD Dr Bhaskar Rao who treated Sastry explained to the media the possible causes of death. He said, "While 45% of the lungs were removed, the remaining 55% were infected. Oxygenation was not proper, so he was put on ECMO support. He was on ECMO support for the past five days. With such a critical case history of cancer, post-bypass surgery, being overweight, his kidney was damaged and infection spread throughout the body which led to his demise at 4:07 pm."

Saddened by the passing away of the outstanding Sirivennela Seetharama Sastry. His poetic brilliance and versatility could be seen in several of his works. He made many efforts to popularise Telugu. Condolences to his family and friends. Om Shanti.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi

I was saddened to learn that Sirivennela Sitaramasastry was no more. Shastri's entry into the music field breathed a sigh of relief at a time when the lyrics of Telugu film themed songs were declining. He has enriched the Telugu film literature with songs. My tribute to the Sitaramasastry and my sympathy to family members, relatives, friends and millions of fans.

- Chief Justice of India NV Ramana

Sirivennela is the pinnacle of values in the world of Telugu film songs. His expression through words is immortal. His sudden death is a great loss to the Telugu people as a whole. Wishing peace to the soul of Sirivennela Sitaramasastry, I extend my deepest sympathies to his family members

- AP Chief Minister
YS Jaganmohan Reddy

Seetharama Sastry who could provide lyrics to any musical tune had enthralled both the scholars and common man alike and won their hearts. With his death, Seetharama Sastry had created a void in the film world and a great loss to fans of Telugu film and literature. I convey my condolences to members of the bereaved family.

- TS Chief Minister K
Chandrasekhar Rao

Saddened to know about demise of legendary Telugu lyricist Sirivennela Sitarama Sastry garu. Deep condolences to his family & fans

- TS Governor
Dr Tamilisai Sounderrajan

Cyclonic storm likely to hit Odisha, Andhra coasts on Saturday morning: IMD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A cyclonic storm is likely to hit the coasts of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha on Saturday morning, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Tuesday.

It said a low pressure lay over south Thailand and its neighbourhood at 8.30 am, which is likely to emerge into the Andaman Sea during the next 12 hours.

"Thereafter, it is likely to move west-northwestwards and concentrate into a depression over southeast and adjoining east-central Bay of Bengal by December 2 and intensify into a cyclonic storm over the central parts of the Bay of Bengal during the subsequent 24 hours," an IMD statement said.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Kartik & Krishna Paksha

Tithi : Dwadashi 23:35

Nakshatram : Chitra 18:47

Rahukalam : 12:05 pm - 1:27 pm

Yamagandam : 7:56 am - 9:19 am

Varjyam : 11:50 pm - 1:17 am

Gulika : 10:42 am - 12:05 pm

Amritakalam : 12:51 pm - 2:20 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham : Nil

VIJAYAWADA
WEATHER

Forecast: MOSTLY SUNNY

Temp: 30/21

Humidity: 68%

Sunrise: 06:19 AM

Sunset: 05:33 PM

Updated NOVEMBER 30, 2021 5:00 PM

Action plan to turn State into an incubation hub: Mekapati

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh Government has drafted an action plan involving nine technologies to turn the State into an incubation hub, said Minister for Industries and Commerce, Information Technology Mekapati Goutham Reddy. The nine technologies are: Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, Robotic Process Automation, Edge Computing (an extension wing of Cloud Computing), Quantum Computing, Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality, Block Chain, IoT, 5G and cyber security.

The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), in partnership with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the



Andhra Pradesh government, has set up the Centre of Excellence (CoE) on IoT and AI on the Andhra University campus. Minister Goutham Reddy inaugurated the CoE here on Tuesday

while Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, attended the event virtually from Delhi.

Pala Raju is incharge CP of Vijayawada city

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

G Pala Raju assumed charge as in-charge Commissioner of Police (CP) of Vijayawada on Tuesday. Director-General of Police (DGP) Gautam D Sawang has appointed Deputy Inspector General (DIG-Technical Services) of Police G Pala Raju as in-charge Commissioner of Police (CP), Vijayawada in view of the retirement of the incumbent B Srinivasulu on November 30.



GDP grows at 8.4 pc in Q2

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian economy remained on track to post the fastest growth among major economies this year as its GDP expanded by a better-than-expected 8.4 percent in the July-September quarter to cross pre-pandemic levels. The GDP growth in the second quarter of the current fiscal (2021-22) was slower than the 20.1 percent expansion in the previous quarter - which largely reflected a bounce back from last year's crash - but was better than the contraction of 7.4 percent in July-September 2020.

A big challenge ahead for father-son duo

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

Former minister and TDP national general secretary Nara Lokesh seems to be following in the footsteps of his father, TDP supremo Nara Chandrababu Naidu. Two days ago, Lokesh vowed that he would win from Mangalagiri in the next Assembly elections. Lokesh said: "I will win from Mangalagiri in the 2024 elections and step into the Assembly." Chandrababu Naidu recently announced that he was boycotting the Assembly and vowed to enter the House again as the chief minister. The father and the son are throwing challenges after challenges.



In the previous Assembly elections, Lokesh, who was a minister, contested from Mangalagiri and was defeated by YSRC's sitting MLA Alla Ramakrishna Reddy.

The YSR Congress Party headed by YS Jagan Mohan Reddy came to power. Compared to the period when the previous elections were held, the TDP is facing several

CM releases third tranche of 'Vidya Devena'

problems now. The TDP is gradually losing ground and weakening day by day. Considering the ongoing developments, by the time when the next elections are announced, the TDP may further weaken as several prominent leaders are planning to come out of the party.

The recent local body elections revealed the TDP's present condition in the State. Chandrababu Naidu is not safe in his own constituency Kuppam in Chittoor district. According to sources close to Chandrababu, he may contest from two seats in the next Assembly elections.



Dollar Seshadri cremated

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The mortal remains of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) Officer on Special Duty Dollar Seshadri were consigned to flames as the last rites were held at Harichandra crematorium here on Tuesday.

The funeral was held in the afternoon and the body was taken to the crematorium in a procession in which TTD chairman YV Subba Reddy, Executive Officer K S Jawahar Reddy, state government

adviser Ajay Kallam, TTD board member Ashok Kumar and former JEO Srinivasa Rao and CVSO Gopinath took part in the funeral procession.

MLAs Bhumana Karunakar Reddy, Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy and Additional Executive officer Dharma Reddy were among the pallbearers.

Earlier, Supreme Court Chief Justice N V Ramana paid homage to Seshadri.

UPTO 6 HOURS' WAIT AT DELHI AIRPORT IN NEW RULES FOR OMICRON

Flayers from countries where Omicron has been found may be stuck at the Delhi airport for up to six hours while they wait for their RT-PCR tests, sources said today. Testing at airports in India has been made essential for travelers from more than 14 at-risk nations where the Omicron variant has been detected. Covid test results will take between four to six hours - for each passenger - to be released, say sources. The company handling RT-PCR tests can process 400-500 tests an hour, the sources say, adding that efforts are being made to ramp up testing facilities.

BARBADOS DITCHES BRITISH QUEEN AS HEAD OF STATE, BECOMES A REPUBLIC

Barbados ditched Britain's Queen Elizabeth as head of state, forging a new republic on Tuesday with its first-ever president and severing its last remaining colonial bonds nearly 400 years after the first English ships arrived at the Caribbean island. At the stroke of midnight, the new republic was born to the cheers of hundreds of people lining Chamberlain Bridge in the capital, Bridgetown. A 21 gun salute fired as the national anthem of Barbados was played over a crowded Heroes Square. Prince Charles, heir to the British throne, stood somberly as Queen Elizabeth's royal standard was lowered.

INDIAN TALENT HAILED AS PARAG AGRAWAL, 37, NAMED TWITTER CEO

Twitter's new CEO Parag Agrawal, 37, joins a growing club of Indians heading global tech giants. Almost all prominent tech companies are headed by Indians, especially IIT alums. Agrawal, an IIT Bombay graduate, would take over after Jack Dorsey. One of the first to put it out was Stripe CEO Patrick Collison. "Google, Microsoft, Adobe, IBM, Palo Alto Networks, and now Twitter run by CEOs who grew up in India. Wonderful to watch the amazing success of Indians in the tech world and a good reminder of the opportunity America offers to immigrants. (Congrats, @paraga!)," Collison tweeted.

CENTRE EXTENDS DOOR-TO-DOOR COVID VACCINE CAMPAIGN TILL DECEMBER 31

The door-to-door Covid-19 vaccination campaign 'Har Ghar Dastak' has been extended till December 31 with a focus on 100 percent first dose coverage and completing the backlog of second dose vaccination, the Centre said on Tuesday. Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan chaired a high-level virtual meeting with States and UTs to review Covid public health response measures and preparedness amid cases of potentially more contagious Omicron variant. Noting the critical role of vaccination as a powerful defence against Covid, the campaign has been extended till December 31, the Ministry said.

AP govt sends 15% Covid samples for genome sequencing in view of Omicron

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

The health authorities in Andhra Pradesh are sending 15 percent of Covid-19 positive samples for genome sequencing in view of the new variant Omicron, which has been reported in some countries.

The health officials said the samples were being sent to the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) for the genomic sequence to identify this variant.

The medical and health department is also taking steps to set up a genome sequencing lab in Vijayawada.

Meanwhile, the authorities are laying special focus on people arriving from South Africa, Botswana and Hong Kong.

At a review meeting held on Monday by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on



the prevailing Covid situation in wake of the new variant, directed the officials to set up special medical teams at airports of Bangalore, Chennai and Hyderabad and screen people who are arriving in Andhra Pradesh. The chief

minister asked them to conduct only RT-PCR tests and avoid rapid antigen tests.

The officials pointed out that Omicron has been mutating and spreading fast and research is being conducted in various countries

on this variant.

The chief minister directed the officials to expedite the vaccination process and complete it by fixing targets. He asked them to start a drive on using masks, ensure that there are no mass gatherings and also continue door-to-door fever survey and vaccination.

He also wanted officials to check the facilities in the hospitals used to treat Covid patients in the past and also to ensure facilities in empanelled hospitals.

He directed the officials to inspect quarantine centers, Covid care centers and Covid call centers once again.

Jagan Mohan Reddy directed the officials to keep a target to complete two crore doses of vaccination by the end of December and said to focus on the districts where the

process is slow. He suggested the officials conduct mock drills of Oxygen Generation Plants in all hospitals.

The officials informed the chief minister recovery rate in Andhra Pradesh is 99.20 and the positivity rate is 0.64 percent. Daily average cases were 197 and total active cases were 2,140.

They said calls to the 104 number were reduced and all preparations were made to tackle the third wave. According to them, there are 8,200 beds in government hospitals.

The officials also informed Jagan Mohan Reddy that 87.43 percent of the people have taken the first dose of the Covid vaccine and 62.19 percent have taken both doses. They expect to complete the vaccination process by January.

4-day India Skills regional contest in Vizag from today

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and the Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) are jointly organising the regional competitions for southern States of India Skills-2021. The four-day event would start at various locations in the city on Wednesday. Over 400 youngsters skilled in various fields, belonging to Andhra Pradesh (74), Karnataka (68), Kerala (78), Tamil Nadu (84), Telangana (34), and another 100 youth will be taking part in the competitions.

Elaborating on the south regional competitions here on Tuesday, Challa Madhusudhan Reddy, Advisor to Government APSSDC, Konduru Ajay Reddy, Chairman, Andhra Pradesh APSSDC, Arun Chandel, Senior Head, SMIS Division, Central Ministries and World Skills, said that the competitions would be held in over 50 skills. The winners



would participate in the national-level competitions. National-level winners would represent the country in the World Skill Competitions to be held in Shanghai in October, 2022.

Those aged between 19-24 years would compete in a range of skills including painting and decorating, mobile robotics, patisserie and confectionery, health and social care, automobile technology, plumbing and heating, beauty therapy, renewable energy, visual merchandising, cyber security, welding, among others.

The skill competitions

would be held at 11 partner institutes located in the city.

Challa Madhusudhan Reddy, Advisor to the Government, said that India Skills Competition is a unique platform that provides the youth an opportunity to get exposure to the highest standard of skilling in today's progressively competitive and rapidly evolving world.

Arun Chandel said the determination and perseverance displayed by the candidates from other regions have been inspiring, and expected the same level of dedication and passion from the participants of the southern region.

Cargill to invest \$35 m in Krishnapatnam Port oil refinery

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Cargill has acquired an edible oil refinery located in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, and will invest \$35 million and will significantly expand its edible oil production capacity and footprint in southern India and strengthen its existing supply chain to meet growing customer demand. The facility is expected to be fully operational by May 2022.

Piyush Patnaik, managing director of Cargill's edible oils business in India, said, "We have driven significant growth of our edible oils business in India over the last few years. This acquisition propels our expansion, specifically in southern India, and demonstrates our commitment to India and our customers in the country."

Patnaik said that the newly acquired refinery gives Cargill the capability to supply



refined palm oil, palm olein, vanaspati (hydrogenated vegetable oil) and sunflower oil, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of the country's sunflower oil consumption and is currently being underserved. This facility also allows Cargill to produce and package its own edible oil brands for retailers and to better serve bakery and foodservice customers in the region. The refinery expands Cargill's offerings into Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Legendary...

Continued from Page 1

Sastry penned the most meaningful and soulful songs for the movie titled 'Sirivennela', one of the classics of Telugu cinema. The film brought him instant fame and critical appreciation from all over and he became 'Sirivennela Seetharama Sastry'.

Sastry wrote lyrics for many songs in films like 'Swayam Krushi', 'Swarna Kamalam', 'Samsaram' Oka Chadarangam', and 'Pelli Cheshi Choodu' and was regarded as one of the finest writers of Telugu cinema.

Born on May 20, 1955, the lyricist received 11 Nandi Awards and four Filmfare (South) Awards for his contribution to the entertainment industry. He was bestowed the Padma Shri for his contributions to the field of arts and aesthetics.

The industry and its fans recalled his invaluable and unparalleled contribution to Telugu cinema saying that it shall forever remain etched in the hearts of the people.

Sastry's recent hit song was 'Samaja Varagamana' in the Allu Arjun-starrer 'Ala Vaikaunthapurramloo'.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹200
Without Skin	₹220
Broiler at Farm	₹108
EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	448
HYDERABAD	444
VISAKHAPATNAM	402
RETAIL PRICE	₹4.48

Pala Raju is incharge CP...

Continued from Page 1

After assuming charge as the Commissioner of Police, G Pala Raju explained his primary responsibilities as the CP of Vijayawada. He said that B Srinivasulu has discharged invaluable service to the Police department during his entire career.

He has dealt with all kinds of cases very transparently and did justice in all capacities.

He said that he would seek his advice and suggestions while discharging duties and ensure friendly policing to the people. "I will use the latest technology and ensure better service to the people," Pala Raju said.

Cyclonic storm likely to hit

Continued from Page 1

It is then likely to move northwestwards, intensify further and reach north Andhra Pradesh-Odisha coasts around Saturday morning.

The Met office predicted "heavy to very heavy rainfall and extremely heavy rainfall" at isolated places over coastal Odisha and "heavy to very heavy" rain at isolated places over adjoining interior districts of the state, coastal districts of West Bengal and north coastal Andhra Pradesh.

"It is likely that the north-eastern states also experience enhanced rainfall activity on December 5-6, with isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall owing to the likely northeastward movement of the remnant of the system during the same period," the IMD said.

Elaborating on the system's movement in Odisha and its impact, IMD DG Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said, Though it will be near the Odisha and north Andhra Pradesh coast on December 4 morning, it will not make landfall immediately. The system will gradually move in north-north

east direction.

A clear picture on the rainfall activity, wind speed and landfall will be available only after the Lopar (low pressure area) turns into a depression, he said.

The DG said IMD has issued warnings for Friday-Sunday, and fishermen are advised not to venture into the sea after Thursday.

He said winds with 40-50 kmph speed is likely to prevail along the Odisha coast from Friday, and the velocity will increase gradually. During the cyclonic storm, it is likely to be within 60-90 kmph.

A big challenge

Continued from Page 1

Apart from Kuppam, he is planning to contest from Krishna district also. He is searching for a constituency with a strong Kamma belt to ensure his win.

In this circumstance, one can imagine the TDP's position in Mangalagiri. Opposition MLA Alla Ramakrishna Reddy defeated Lokesh there when he was minister. Now, Lokesh is in the Opposition and Alla Ramakrishna Reddy is a ruling party MLA. Moreover, Alla Ramakrishna Reddy is always there for the people while Lokesh is just a visitor in Mangalagiri nowadays. However, since Lokesh has thrown the challenge, he may

concentrate more on Mangalagiri and pay frequent visits hereafter.

It's not easy for both Naidu and Lokesh to win their challenges. There are speculations that YSR Congress may field former minister and MLC M Hanumantha Rao in Mangalagiri in the next elections. Hanumantha Rao was elected from this constituency in the past from TDP and he also served as a minister. Recently, he joined YSR Congress and became an MLC. Hanumantha Rao belongs to the Padmashali community, which is strong in Mangalagiri constituency. If Hanumantha Rao contests as YSR Congress candidate, things are going to be even more difficult for Lokesh.

Moving car catches fire at Sec'bad

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A car caught fire on the road near the Secunderabad Parade Grounds on Tuesday. No casualties were reported. The reason for the fire was not found. The police suspect that it could be a case of a short circuit in the electrical wiring of the vehicle.

Police said a car bearing the registration number AP 10 AU 7470 caught fire suddenly. Seeing the smoke, the driver got out. Passing two-wheeler riders called up the police.

The police reached the spot immediately and controlled the fire. Meanwhile, the panicky driver had fled.

Gopalpuram Inspector (Traffic) B Sai Eshwar Goud said, "We got a call from a person and we rushed there. We informed the fire service and controlled the fire. The driver had fled by that time. The vehicle is a Wagon R car and it was 15 to 20 years old. We think the fire occurred due to an electrical short circuit."

Centre rakes in Rs 3.7 L-cr from fuel in FY21

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union government's mop-up from excise duty levied on petrol and diesel more than doubled to Rs 3.72 lakh-crore in the pandemic year 2020-21, out of which States were given less than Rs 20,000 crore, according to a reply by the government in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

In a written reply to a question, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary stated that collection from levy of Central Excise duty on petrol and diesel increased from Rs 1.78 lakh-crore in 2019-20 to Rs 3.72 lakh-crore in 2020-21 (April 2020 to March 2021).

The increase in the collection was mainly on account of rise in the incidence of taxation on fuels.

Total excise duty on petrol



was Rs 19.98 per litre in 2019 and Rs 15.83 a litre on diesel. The government raised excise duty twice last year to Rs 32.98 per litre on petrol and to Rs 31.83 on diesel.

The duty was moderated to Rs 32.90 a litre on petrol and Rs 31.80 on diesel in the budget this year. And it was cut by Rs 5 a litre on petrol and Rs 10

per litre on diesel this month after retail prices jumped to record high across the country.

"The total amount of tax devolved to state governments from the corpus collected under the central excise duty in FY 2020-21 was Rs 19,972 crore," Chaudhary said.

While the total incidence of excise on petrol currently is Rs

27.90 a litre and that on diesel is Rs 21.80, states are entitled to get a share only from the basic excise duty.

Out of the total incidence of taxation, the basic excise duty on petrol is Rs 1.40 a litre. On top of this, special additional excise duty is levied of Rs 11 and a road and infrastructure cess of Rs 13 a litre. A Rs 2.50 agriculture infrastructure and development cess is levied on top of this.

Similarly, on diesel, the basic excise duty is Rs 1.80 a litre. Rs 8 per litre each is charged as special additional excise duty and road and infrastructure cess while a Rs 4 per litre agriculture infrastructure and development cess is also levied.

"Devolution to State governments is made out of the basic excise duty component on the basis of the formula prescribed by the Finance Commission

from time to time. At present, the rate of basic excise duty is Rs 1.40 per litre on petrol and Rs 1.80 per litre on diesel," he said.

Total excise collection from fuel was Rs 2.22 lakh-crore in 2016-17, which inched up to Rs 2.25 lakh-crore in the following year but fell to Rs 2.13 lakh-crore in 2018-19.

Petrol and diesel is currently not under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime and states levy VAT on top of the excise duty charged by the centre.

"The total amount of tax collected under VAT on fuel across various states from April 2016 to March 2021 is Rs 9.57 lakh-crore," he said.

This compares to Rs 12.11 lakh-crore collected by the Union government during the same five year period, according to the minister's reply.

Dollar Seshadri cremated...

Continued from Page 1

He told the media that he had been in a 25 years association with Seshadri and his death was a big loss to him personally. He used to arrange darshan of Lord Venkateswara whenever he visited Tirumala temple, he recalled.

TTD chairman Subba Reddy said Seshadri wished that he would die while worshipping Lord Venkateswara and his wish came true. Deputy Chief Minister Narayana Swamy said that he was a true devotee of

Venkateswara and he was senior to him at college. MLA Karunakar Reddy said that Seshadri dedicated his life to worshipping Lord Venkateswara.

TTD EO said that the death of Dollar Seshadri created a void to the TTD as he had been in the Tirumala temple as a priest. He used to work as an adviser and liaison among the priests of the temple. Former JE Bala Subramanyam, Srinivasa Raju, Mayor Bhumana Abhinay and a host of TTD officials were among those who paid homage to Dollar Seshadri.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
PANCHAKUTI RAJ ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

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CM releases third tranche of 'Vidya Deevana' scheme

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Tuesday released the third tranche of the 'Jagananna Vidya Deevana' of Rs 686 crore, crediting directly into the accounts of 9,87,965 mothers of 11.03 lakh students pursuing their higher studies.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister opined that education alone can eliminate poverty and empower the people and thus spent Rs 6,259 crore for the total fee reimbursement benefiting 21,48,477 students through the Vidya Deevana scheme since 2019, besides clearing Rs 1,778 crore pending dues of the previous government during. He said that the government is aiming for 100 percent graduates besides 100 percent literacy rate in the State.

The Chief Minister said that the scheme is being implemented to make education accessible to the poor, especially fulfilling the dream of pursuing higher education without burdening their families. He stated that the amount is directly credited to the mother's accounts as they could have better supervision on the college facilities and students' wellbeing, which would also improve accountability from college management. If there arises any problem with the college management or with Vidya Deevana, beneficiaries were advised to call on the 1902 toll-free number.

In regard to the scheme, the Chief Minister urged the beneficiaries to pay the credited amount to the colleges within

7-10 days without fail and notified that the government shall directly credit the amount to the college management if the beneficiaries fail to make payments on time. He said that the government had also taken steps to support the merit students, who secured admission in private universities by making a law where 50 percent of seats in Medical and Dental streams, 35 percent of the seats in Engineering and other courses will be filled under convener quota. So far, 2118 students studying in private universities are availing total fee reimbursement through Vidya Deevana scheme.

On this occasion, he recalled the All India Survey on Higher Education, which stated that the Gross Enrollment Ratio



(GER) of students between 17-23 years in colleges was increased to 35.2 percent in Andhra Pradesh registering a

growth of 8.6 percent against the national growth of 3.04 percent. While the GER of SC, ST, and Girl students across the

country has increased by 1.7 percent, 4.5 percent, and 2.27 percent, in Andhra Pradesh the increase was 7.5, 9.5 and 11.03

percent respectively.

The Chief Minister stated that the government is also implementing the Vasathi Deevana along with Vidya Deevana and so far spent Rs 8526 crore alone on these two schemes. Besides these, the government is also bringing up 16 new medical colleges, a JNTU in Vizianagaram district, a university in Prakasam district, along with an Architecture University in Kadapa, a tribal engineering college in Kurupam, medical college in Paderu, and Tribal University in Salur. He said that 10 new degree colleges are being set up across the State and 154-degree colleges are being revamped with Rs 880 crore under the Nadu-Nedu project. As part of the reforms in the education sector, bilingual textbooks have been introduced, internships have been made mandatory, and also offering skill up-gradation courses through 30 skill development colleges and one Skill University across the State by partnering with companies like Microsoft.

Ministers Adimulapu Suresh, Botsa Satyanarayana, Chief Secretary Dr. Sameer Sharma, Higher Education Special CS Satish Chandra, Social Welfare Special Secretary K Sunita, APSCE Chairman K. Hemachandradev, Higher Education Principal Secretary K Shyamala Rao, Tribal Welfare Secretary Kantilal Dande, Minority Welfare Special Secretary Gandham Chandradu, and other senior officials were present.



Prakasam district got Rs 53 crore: Collector

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam district has received Rs 53 crore under the third installment of the Jagananna Vidya Deevana scheme.

District Collector Pravin Kumar said here on Tuesday that Rs 53 crore was credited into the accounts of 71,737 mothers. Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday released the third tranche of the 'Jagananna Vidya Deevana' of Rs 686 crore, crediting directly into the accounts of 9,87,965 mothers of 11.03 lakh students pursuing their higher studies today.

The Collector said that Jagananna Vidya Deevana's benefit would be a boon to the students of poor Vidya Deevana as it provides a great opportunity to the students of poor to pursue education without impediment. The Collector appealed to avail the Vidya Deevana scheme and complete their education.

The Collector said that Chief

Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy announced the establishment of Andhra Kesari University in Ongole. The government aimed to provide all facilities for students to complete their graduation. The new education policy of the state government enhanced the GKR growth to 35.2 from 27.2.

In the programme, one of the beneficiaries of the scheme Naga Sai told the Chief Minister that he was deserted by her husband and she is educating her two daughters. Her elder daughter got Rs 25,000 and her younger daughter got Rs 10,000 under the Jagananna Vidya Deevana scheme. Her two daughters are continuing their studies with the help of the government, she told the Chief Minister at the video conference and thanked him. ZP chairperson B Venkayamma, Mayor G Sujata, MLA Anna Venkata Rambabu, Joint Collectors and other officials were among those who were present.

Rs 51.39 cr disbursed in West Godavari

PNS ■ ELURU

West Godavari district has got Rs 51,39,00,322 under the third tranche of the Jagananna Vidya Deevana scheme.

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday released the third tranche of the 'Jagananna Vidya Deevana' of Rs 686 crore, crediting directly into the accounts of 9,87,965 mothers of 11.03 lakh students pursuing their education. A programme was held here on Tuesday on the occasion.

Collector Kartikeya Mishra said that Rs 51.39 crore was credited into bank accounts of



69,441 mothers for their children's education. As many as 78,343 students got the bene-

fit in the district of the scheme today. Out of the total 78,343 Vidya Deevana beneficiaries,

17,343 belonged to the SCs, 33,507 belonged to the BC communities, and 8,836 belonged to the EBC students.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Women and Child Welfare Taneti Vanita said that the Jagananna Vidya Deevana scheme is being implemented with the objective of providing education to all the poor. Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy headed government is providing all the needy to the students including financial assistance to complete their studies. The government aimed to educate all, she said.

Return Rs 1,309 crore to panchayats: Lokesh to CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national general secretary Nara Lokesh on Tuesday urged Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy to take immediate steps to transfer Rs 1,309 crore back into the accounts of the gram panchayats. In an open letter to the CM here, Lokesh demanded that the government return all the diverted funds to the panchayats so that the sarpanches would be able to take up developmental activities. In the past two-and-a-half years, the AP government snatched away over Rs 1,309 crore from over 12,918 panchayats all across the State.

Lokesh termed it 'unconstitutional' to take away the funds of the panchayats without

informing the elected sarpanches and ward members and without having any resolution from the panchayat board. The funds diversion was nothing but disrespecting and betraying the local elected representatives. The accounts of panchayats, which had funds, showed zero balance overnight. This was outright betrayal on the part of the State Government.

Nara Lokesh said the panchayats were not having funds now even to take up sanitation works. The Centre had given hundreds of crores of funds of 14th and 15th Finance Commissions to the panchayats to lay roads, drains, drinking water pipelines, sanitation and street lighting. All these funds were snatched away.

Lack of funds had totally ruined the panchayats.

Condemning the government's 'ulterior plans', Lokesh called it 'irresponsible' on the part of the Finance Minister to defend the transfer of panchayat funds. The Finance Minister was unjustly saying that Rs 344 crore of the 14th Finance Commission funds released by the Centre four months ago were adjusted towards electricity arrears. The Central government had given guidelines that the panchayat funds should not be diverted. The AP government was violating all such rules at every step. The State government owed an explanation on the repayment of loans of Power Finance Corporation and Rural Electrification Corporation.

SILK ROBES TO GODDESS



On the occasion of the annual Karthika Brahmotsavams at Goddess Sri Padmavathi Devi temple at Tiruchanoor, near here, Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Tribal Welfare Pushpa Srivani offered 'Pattu Vastrams' on behalf of the State government on Tuesday. She was received and welcomed by JEO Veerabrahmam at the Mahadwaram of the temple. After presenting the Pattu Vastrams, she offered prayers to the presiding deity Sri Padmavathi Devi. Temple Dy EO Kasturi Bai and other TTD staff were also present.

2 burglars involved in 27 cases arrested

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyberabad Police on Tuesday, arrested two interstate house burglars, detected 27 cases they were involved in and recovered 1 kg gold ornaments and 7 kg silver, all worth Rs 55 lakh from their possession.

The arrested persons have been identified as Mohsin, 42, a native of Bidar and Shanker Chowhan, 40, a resident of Zaheerabad. Chowhan took his 6-year-old son on his two-wheeler while committing property offences to avoid raising suspicion while moving around, said the police.

Mohsin was involved in 39 property offences from the year 2003 to 2015. He was detained under the PD Act in 2015 and released in 2016. After being

released, he again began burglary offences in 2017, this time, using Shaikh Mahmood's help.

Officials identified 24 cases in Cyberabad and four in Sangareddy district from 2017 to 2021, that Mohsin was involved in.

The Miyapur Police were able to identify the accused with the help of technical evidence. Two teams were deployed to trace the accused, who was eventually apprehended.

The RC Puram police apprehended Shanker Chowhan, who was involved in 11 cases from the year 2018 to 2019 in the limits of Sangareddy and Cyberabad. He was arrested by the Chandanagar Police and detained under the PD Act in 2020 and again released in the same year.

Rs 5 L given to kin of 2 deceased rail staffers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Chennai Railway Employees Cooperative Credit Society (RESS) has handed over cheques of Rs 5 lakh each to the family members of two railway employees who died in accidents recently, under the accident insurance scheme. D Srinivasa Rao, Additional Divisional Railway Manager, Infrastructure, handed over the cheques to the kin of the two deceased employees at the Divisional Railway Manager Office, Vijayawada, on Tuesday.

The deceased employees are K Mahesh, Track Maintainer, Guduvada, and S Viswanadham, Sr Technician, diesel loco shed, Vijayawada. Mahesh lost his life in a train accident while on duty and S Viswanadham died in a

road accident recently. The outstanding loan amounts of both the employees were waived off by the RESS, Chennai.

Both were members of RESS and availed of loans from the Cooperative Credit Society, Chennai. As per the society policy, all the members of the society are covered under the accident insurance scheme for a sum of Rs 5 lakh, in case of death of a member due to road or on-duty accidents. Earlier, the amount was 3 lakh, which has been raised to Rs 5 lakh.

Srinivasa Rao appreciated Lokesh Kumar, Chief Office Superintendent, RESS, Chennai, and Surendra, Head Clerk, RESS for supporting the family members in distress and waiving off the outstanding loan amount.

NTR UHS on warpath, to strike work from today

C PRADEEP KUMAR ■ VIJAYAWADA

Employees of the NTR University Health Sciences (NTRUHS) are on the warpath with diversion of the university funds not going down well with them. Making a strong statement on Tuesday, they not only took out a rally in protest against the State government's action, but also announced that they would intensify the agitation by boycotting work from December 1 (Wednesday).

The employees' and students' associations formed a Joint Action Committee (JAC) against the university and discussed the issue of funds diversion from the university. Students expressed solidarity with the university employees who raised slogans against the NTRUHS Vice-Chancellor and the



Registrar demanding that the university funds be protected.

The employees' association leaders met with the NTR University registrar on Tuesday.

It is learnt that orders have been issued for transfer of Rs 400 crore university funds to the AP Finance Services Corporation.

Orders were received for the transfer of FDs in banks and the authorities have already taken

steps despite losing interest in the FDs. The employees expressed ire over the decision of the university senior officials. The employees demanded that the university officials take back the decision on diverting the funds.

However, University V-C Shyam Prasad was negligent towards the employees who expressed protest against the

funds' diversion. On the other hand, employees were outraged at the Vice-Chancellor's behavior.

JAC convenor Venkatanarayana later told the media persons that the employees would intensify their protest over the diverting of the university funds. He said that the issue would be taken to the notice of the Governor. He

alleged that the university funds are being diverted under pressure from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO). He said that the State government was debt-ridden and was unable to generate funds and loans and was hell-bent to divert university funds. He further alleged that if the university funds were diverted, the employees would be on the road, he added.

Grand farewell to CP Srinivasulu on his retirement

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Commissioner of Police B Srinivasulu received the guard of honour from the city police forces on the occasion of his retirement on Tuesday.

Srinivasulu assumed charge as City Police Commissioner on June 15, 2020 after the retirement of Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao.

On the occasion, Srinivasulu said that serving as a police officer was a challenging job and that he had faced many challenges in his entire career. "My first posting was in Nandigama in Krishna district and I retire



as Vijayawada Commissioner of Police, which gives me immense pleasure," he said. During his career, he served Vijayawada four times in various capacities.

On the 2014 and 2021 elections, he said that the whole

process was held peacefully without any untoward incidents and the credit went to the entire police force. He complimented the police force for being proactive in serving the people during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. He said



that out of 3,500 police personnel under the commissionerate about 1,000 were infected with the COVID-19 virus. Ten of them succumbed to the virus.

He further said that for the welfare of the society, the police were discharging their duties

with commitment that was witnessed by the denizens. He thanked all the police officials, staff, political leaders, media and the people of Vijayawada for extending their cooperation to serve them better.

DCPs Mary Prashanti,

Harshavardhan Raju, ABTS Udayarani, ADCPs MR Krishnam Raju, Ch Lakshmiipathi, T Sarkar, K V Srinivas Rao, M Satti Babu, ACPs, Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors and others were present.

Meanwhile, Director General of Police (DGP) Gautam D Sawang appointed Deputy Inspector General (DIG-Technical Services) of Police G Pala Raju as in-charge Commissioner of Police. Orders to this effect were issued on Monday. Pala Raju will hold the additional charge until further orders and will assume charge as Vijayawada CP on Wednesday.

SRM-AP to hold first convocation today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The first Convocation Ceremony of SRM University-AP is scheduled on December 01, 2021. In all, 228 undergraduate students from Engineering, Liberal Arts and Sciences will be conferred degrees in the presence of New York University President Dr Andrew D Hamilton as the chief guest and Dr Sethuraman Panchanathan, Director, National Science Foundation, will be conferred Honorary Doctorate by SRM University-AP on this occasion.

The ceremony will be presided over by Dr TR Paarivendhar, Chancellor, Dr P Satyanarayanan, President, Prof V S Rao, Vice-Chancellor, Prof D Narayana Rao, Pro Vice-Chancellor, and Dr R Prem Kumar, Registrar will also participate in the ceremony to present degrees and medals to the students. Dr Sethuraman Panchanathan, Director, National Science Foundation, will be conferred Honorary Doctorate by SRM University-AP on this occasion.



Core committee by Central office shocks senior BJP leaders in AP

MARTHI SUBRAHMANYAM
■ VIJAYAWADA

The formation of AP BJP Core Committee comes as a shock to some senior leaders in Andhra Pradesh as the names which they suggested were found missing.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah held discussions with the State BJP leaders in Tirupati recently and explained to them the strategy of BJP to be followed by them. The national leadership of the party gave a shock to 'Sunil Deodhar' and 'Somu Veeraj', who said that the Core committee announced by them was final.

The BJP sources said that the formation of the Core committee by the BJP central leadership came as a shock to some senior leaders including Somu Veeraj and Sunil Deodhar. It may be recalled that 'The Pioneer' has published a series of reports on the leaders' dissatisfaction with the way the State leadership is dealing with the core committee.

The latest AP Core Committee announced by the national leadership is indicative of the changes that are going to take place in the near future. The national leadership, which has so far not seriously focussed on the AP BJP, has

Bharatiya Janata Party Andhra Pradesh		
Core Committee		
S. No.	Name	Responsibility
1	Dr. Sunil Deodhar	State President
2	Dr. D. Chandrababu Naidu	National Vice President
3	Dr. N. Chandrababu Naidu	State Vice President
4	Dr. T. D. Deodhar	State Vice President
5	Dr. K. Chandrababu Naidu	State Vice President
6	Dr. N. Chandrababu Naidu	State Vice President
7	Dr. K. Chandrababu Naidu	State Vice President
8	Dr. K. Chandrababu Naidu	State Vice President
9	Dr. K. Chandrababu Naidu	State Vice President
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100	Dr. K. Chandrababu Naidu	State Vice President

embarked on major changes with the arrival of Amit Shah. Until Amit Shah's meeting with State BJP leaders it was not clear whether the YSRCP government in AP is friends with the BJP or not. During the meeting in Tirupati, Amit Shah made it clear to the BJP state leaders that they would fight against the State government. It is learnt that BJP MPs Sujana Chaudhary and CM Ramesh had complained about the arbitrary decisions of State president Somu Veeraj and co-in-charge Sunil Deodhar.

The two explained to Amit Shah that they were inviting people of their choice in the name of Core Committee and Mini-Core Committee. Ban on the media and the prevention of senior leaders from appearing before the media was taken to the notice of Amit Shah.

It is learnt that Amit Shah had made it clear that Satyakumar would be the nodal officer for the State party. The core committee members announced by the BJP central office include Somu Veeraj,

Purandeswari, Kanna Lakshminarayana, TG Venkatesh, CM Ramesh, Sujana Chaudhary, Satyakumar, GVL Narasimha Rao, Madhukar, PVN Madhav, Nimmaka Jayaraj, Chandramouli and Relangi Sridevi.

It also announced the appointment of national joint secretary general Shiv Prakash, State in-charge and Union Minister V Muralitharan and co-in-charge Sunil Deodhar as special invitees.

"Normally, the State president himself sends the names

of the core committee members to the central office for information. Since the two-State in-charges are also coordinating, the Central office usually does not pay much attention to the core committee affairs. But lately, the BJP leadership recognised that the core committee is decided as per the whims and fancies of State presidents and co-in-charges and constituted the committee on its own," said senior leaders of the State unit.

When Kanna Lakshminarayana was the State president, there were 27 members of the core committee. This time the number has been reduced to 13. Vishnuvarthan Reddy, who is very close to Sunil Deodhar, was removed as social media in-charge. The name of Suryanarayana Raju who is said to be a close associate to Somu Veeraj was also found missing in the new core committee.

However, the name of Sridevi was included on the recommendation of Somu Veeraj and the name of Chandramouli on the recommendation of Sunil in the new core committee. Ravela Kishore Babu and former IAS Dasari Srinivasulu were not taken into the core committee.

Manohar promises sand free of cost if JSP voted to power

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena political affairs committee chairman Nadendla Manohar has said that sand will be supplied at free of cost to those who construct houses, if the JSP is voted to power.

Manohar addressed the party activists in Razole in the EG district on Tuesday. He said that the state government had amended sand policy five times and consequently the scarcity of sand had gone up substantially.

The YSRCP Ministers and MLs are plundering the sand and other national resources. A lorry of sand is sold at Rs 70,000, he said and asked how could common men and the poor construct a house for them. The YSRCP leaders have created an artificial scarcity for sand to plunder the people by selling the commodity at an exorbitant price. The sand contract was entrusted to an agency which is their benami, he lashed out.

"There is neither transparency nor efficiency in the government. Chief Minister Jagan Reddy deceived the people by promising that he would provide an able and transparent government, which he has failed to do", he slammed.

"The YSRCP government has borrowed over Rs 6 lakh crore loans but there is no sign of development. Nobody knows what happened to the government's job calendar. When the people are in deep trouble with



Jana Sena leader Nadendla Manohar handing over a cheque for Rs 5 lakh toward compensation to the bereaved family of Veerababu who was killed in a road accident.

the Coronavirus crisis and floods, the government is insisting people pay money under One Time Settlement. The ward and village volunteers are intimidating the beneficiaries on the issue", Manohar slammed, adding that they had taken loans for the construction of houses about 30 years ago but the government now suddenly insisted they to repay the loans under One Time Settlement, he lambasted.

Manohar criticised that the government had taken the funds of village panchayats, released by the 14th and 15 FC for the development of villages, he criticised. No development has taken place in the rural areas even after six years of gram panchayat elections, he regretted, stating that in EG district alone Rs 230 crore funds of panchayats were diverted, he pointed out.

The development which the YSRCP government had achieved in the two and half years regime was that of two-and-a-half feet long potholes on the roads across the state, he ridiculed. He called upon the Janasena cadres to take Razole as an example as Janasena won the MLA seat to overcome the YSRCP's wave.

Earlier, Manohar took part in the Shrama Danam programme by repairing the main road at LIC here. He also inspected the bad condition of the road. He garlanded the statues of Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi at the Tatipaka centre. Later, Manohar consoled the family members of Abbireddy Veerababu, Janasena activist, who was killed in a road accident, at Yerupalli village in Ramachandrapuram constituency. He handed over a Rs 5 lakh cheque to the bereaved family members.



JC inspects breached tank in Prakasam dist

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Joint Collector J Venkata Murali inspected the breached Kotta Cheruvu irrigation tank at Pamuru village on Tuesday. The officials got information that the irrigation tank had breached and water was gushing out. He along with other officials visited the tank and took stock of the situation.

Speaking to the media, the JC said that the bund of the irrigation tank developed a breach and the breach was

temporarily plugged with sand bags. Steps were taken to divert the water to the Munneru stream. He directed the officials to take all precautions in the wake of the incessant rains in the district.

Later he also inspected the damaged crops at Challagariga and Yedavalli villages in Kanigiri manal. He saw the damage of Bengal gram and paddy crops. He directed the agriculture officials to take up enumeration of crop loss and ensure that no farmer incurs a loss.

Police urged to register FIR over attack on TDP office

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) senior leaders on Tuesday met Urban SP Arif Hafeez and appealed to him to register an FIR against the attack on TDP national headquarters.

The TDP leaders, including former minister Alapati Raja, Nakka Ananda Babu, MLCs P Ashok Babu, Mantena Raju and former MLAs T Shrawan Kumar met the urban SP here

on Tuesday appealed him to take to register an FIR on the attack on the TDP national headquarters which took place on October 19, 2021.

Talking to the media, MLC Ashok Babu said that the attack on the TDP national headquarters took place on October 19, 2021, but the case had not been registered so far. The police failed to register an FIR so far, he said.

The TDP leaders said that they

would file a private case if the police did not fire FIR on the incident. He said that the TDP leaders lodged a complaint with the Mangalagiri police station against the attack on the TDP office. Yielding to the pressure exerted by the YSRCP leaders, the police had not filed the FIR so far, Alapati Raja alleged. He said that cases were registered against the TDP leaders for cases were not registered against those who attacked the TDP office.



Speed up housing project: Min

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Housing Cherukuvada Sri Ranganatha Raju has instructed the officials to speed up the mega flagship housing programme of 'Navaratnalu, Pedalanderiki Illu' and 'Jagananna Sampoorna Gruha Hakku'. The minister conducted a review meeting with the joint collectors and housing officials of all districts here on Tuesday.

Minister Raju said that the mega housing programme was stalled due to court litigations but now the High Court gave clearance on Tuesday in its verdict hence the officials should focus on the resuming of construction of houses. He instructed the officials to con-



struct godowns in housing colonies to store the construction materials and further provide the same to the housing beneficiaries. The minister instructed to restart the halted construction works including internal roads in all housing colonies in 13 dis-

tricts of the state. Special Chief Secretary Housing Department Ajay Jain stated that there is a good response from beneficiaries to Jagananna Sampoorna Gruha Hakku and said that the officials are conducting a vast campaign about the scheme.

Muslims protest against spending liquor money for their welfare

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Muslims, led by Telugu Desam Party (TDP) East constituency in-charge Mohammad Naseer Ahmad held a dharna at Himani centre at the Gandhi statue in protest against the government spending liquor money for their welfare.

Addressing the gathering, TDP State Minorities Cell president Moulana Mushtaq Ahmad said that the YSRCP government is implementing welfare schemes for the Muslim minorities and spending money that the govern-



ment is earning by selling liquor.

As per Islam Shariat, selling liquor is a sin. Spending liquor

money on the welfare of Muslims hurt their sentiment, he said and demanded that the liquor sale be stopped.

Sports contest for disabled gets underway at Eluru

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector Kartikeya Mishra inaugurated the district-level sports competition for the differently-abled persons, organised on the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) here on Tuesday.

Competitions in different events for physically challenged persons were organised at the Indoor Stadium. Tricycle race, javelin throw, sprint for the deaf, short foot, caroms, sprint for the mentally retarded, softball, disc throw, cricket and other sports were organised for the differently abled



persons. About 700 physical challenge persons participated in these games.

The event was attended by Padmavati, Joint Collector

(Welfare), Jhansi Rani, Assistant Director, Department of differently-abled, Srinivas Reddy, Principal, School for the deaf and other officials.

Gold worth Rs 23L seized at RGIA

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Officials of the Hyderabad Customs at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) in Shamshabad on Tuesday seized gold in paste form worth Rs 23.33 lakh.

Customs officials said that the passenger who arrived from Guwahati by flight 6E187, had concealed the gold weighing 472.8 grams, in paste form and hid it inside the flight seat pockets. Efforts are on to track down the passenger, said officials.

The seizure comes a day after officials of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) arrested a man and seized gold worth over Rs 1 crore. The accused was working in a private firm providing catering services to an airline company and was part of a larger gang involved in

a racket that smuggled gold and other contraband into the country. Officials are investigating if Tuesday's gold seizure is also a part of the racket.

According to DRI, the accused had picked up the gold concealed in an aircraft to hand it over to receivers on November 27. DRI sleuths intercepted the accused near the airport when he was carrying smuggled foreign origin gold. They seized two gold bars, weighing a kg each, bearing foreign markings and two thin gold sheets weighing 100 grams each. The value of the total seized yellow metal was Rs 1.09 crore.

The DRI found that as per the instructions from the handlers, the accused was picking up gold concealed in the aircraft at the time of loading or unloading food trays.

Man found murdered in car at Trimulgherry

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 50-year-old man was murdered and the body left in a car at Trimulgherry on Monday, police said on Tuesday.

According to the police, the man was identified as Vijay Bhaskar Reddy, a realtor from Alwal. Local residents had found the car parked in an open ground at Trimulgherry on Monday night and alerted the police, who on inspection found the body on the front seat of the car.

"We suspect the man was murdered and the body left in the car. There is an injury on the head and we suspect some person might have hit him with some object," police officials said.

UBI announces loans to farmers, traders, SHGs

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Union Bank of India (UBI) has announced that it will disburse loans to a tune of Rs 5,000 crore, to rescue farmers and traders affected due to cyclone, floods and Covid across the state, said Chief General Manager V Brahmananda Reddy.

Speaking at a meeting organised here on Tuesday,

Brahmananda Reddy said that of the total, loans to a tune of Rs 1,000 will be provided to the farmers under Kisan Tatkal Scheme, Rs 1,500 crore for SHGs and Rs 2,000 crore for small, micro and middle industries. A detailed list was prepared and 15,800 are eligible for getting instant home loans in the Vijayawada region. Customers who pay home loans



regularly would be provided another loan of up to Rs 15 lakh

without any mortgage, he added.

He said to restore farmers' and traders' operations in Kadapa, Anantapur, Nellore and Chittoor, the bank has decided to provide loans for the farmers, SHGs and traders for economic progress, agriculture and business activities. Under Kisan Tatkal Scheme, Rs 50,000 immediate loan will be provided

to the farmers up to 50 percent of the crop loan without any collateral.

He said for micro, small and medium-sized industries, which have been reeling under the pandemic crisis, will be provided an instant loan of 30 to 40 percent to industry categories under the Covid Emergency Credit Scheme. Under the Festival Bonanza

scheme, new MSME units can get a loan with the lowest interest rate and discounts which will be applicable till December 31, added Reddy.

Deputy Zonal Head and Deputy General Manager K Srinivasulu Reddy, Vijayawada Regional Head and Deputy General Manager V Ramesh and other representatives from the bank were also present.



Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharita inaugurating Guntur East Circle Tahsildar office here on Tuesday.

INDIA CORNER

Vinod Dua remains 'extremely critical and fragile', says daughter

The condition of veteran journalist Vinod Dua continues to be "extremely critical and fragile", his daughter and actor-comic Mallika Dua said on Tuesday. The 67-year-old journalist, a pioneer in Hindi broadcast journalism with stints in Doordarshan and NDTV, was last night moved to the Intensive Care Unit of Apollo Hospital on the advice of doctors here. "... he was moved to the Apollo Hospital ICU last night where he can be cared for better. He remains extremely critical and fragile. He has been a fighter his entire life. Uncompromising and relentless. His family is the same when it comes to him," Mallika Dua wrote on her Instagram Story. Meanwhile, sources at the hospital said, he was "in a sick condition but stable". Vinod Dua, who was hospitalised with Covid earlier this year, lost his wife, radiologist Padmavati 'Chinna' Dua, to the virus in June.



Kangana Ranaut files FIR, alleges threats over posts on farmer protests

Actor Kangana Ranaut on Tuesday said that she has filed an FIR after allegedly receiving threats over her posts on farmers' protests. Ranaut, who has been constantly critical and sometimes incendiary against the farmers' movement, posted a lengthy statement in Hindi on Instagram. The actor alleged that she has been "constantly receiving" threats from "disruptive forces" over her recent posts. "I am getting constant threats from disruptive forces on this very post of mine. One man from Bathinda openly threatened to kill me. I am not afraid of these type of threats. 'I will continue to speak against those who conspire against the country and terrorist forces, be it Naxalites killing innocent jawans, tukde tukde gangs or terrorists sitting abroad dreaming of forming Khalistan,'" Ranaut said. Along with the post, the actor shared a photo from her recent trip to Amritsar's Golden Temple.



Extortion cases: Param Bir Singh appears before CID for 2nd day

Former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh appeared before the Maharashtra Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for the second consecutive day on Tuesday to record his statement in connection with two extortion cases against him which are being probed by the agency. Singh, who is currently Director General (DG) Home Guards, arrived at the CID's office in Konkan Bhawan building at Belapur in neighbouring Navi Mumbai at 3.10 pm in a private SUV. Earlier in the day, Singh went to a court here in connection with a case against him and from there, he had went to the DG Home Guard office in south Mumbai. The CID is investigating the extortion cases registered against Singh at the Marine Drive police station in south Mumbai and Kopri police station in adjoining Thane city. The agency had earlier arrested police inspectors Nandkumar Gopale and Asha Korke in connection with the Marine Drive case.



Oppn walkout after Chair refuses to revoke suspension of 12 MPs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Members of Congress and other opposition party on Tuesday staged a walkout from Rajya Sabha after Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu justified the suspension of 12 MPs for the entire winter session of Parliament, saying they haven't shown any remorse for their act of sacrilege of the House in the previous session in August.

"Motion (for suspension of the 12 opposition MPs) was moved, it was approved, action is taken, it is final," Venkaiah Naidu said as he rejected an appeal by the Leader of the Opposition and senior Congress leader M Mallikarjun Kharge to revoke the suspension.

Venkaiah Naidu said he was not considering Kharge's appeal as the suspended MPs have not shown any remorse, but on the contrary, justified their acts.

"You try to mislead the House, you disturb the House, you ransacked the table, you also threw papers on the chair and also some of them have got on to the table and then you are giving me lessons. This is not the way," he said.

"I don't think the appeal of the Leader of the Opposition is worth considering. I am not considering it at all," he added.

Raising the issue when the House met for the day, Kharge said the motion for suspension moved by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi was in gross violation of the rules and action was taken in the current winter session of Parliament for alleged "unruly" conduct in the last session.

Also, the rules require the chair to name the members before a motion of suspension is



Lok Sabha adjourns for day amid opposition protests

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha proceedings were disrupted for the second day in the ongoing Winter session as protests by opposition parties over farmer issues lead to repeated adjournments on Tuesday. Soon after a new member took oath and the Question Hour began, members of the TRS trooped into the Well demanding a law on Minimum Support Price (MSP) as well as compensation for the families of farmers who lost their lives during the agitation against the farm laws.

moved, which did not happen when the 12 MPs were suspended on a government motion on November 29, he said, adding that the chair had on Monday not even allowed him to raise of point of order, which according to the well-settled conventions of Rajya Sabha is always permitted.

Appealing to the members to go back to their seats, Speaker Om Birla said they should discuss issues during the Question Hour and that their conduct was not sending out the right message. TRS members shouted slogans and displayed placards standing in the Well of the House while other Opposition members, including from the Congress and Left parties, sought to raise certain issues from their seats. Later, members of the Congress, NCP, Left parties and DMK walked out of the House alleging that the government was suppressing the voice of the

Opposition. However, Trinamool Congress members neither joined the protests nor walked out. A visibly anguished Birla lamented that proceedings were being disrupted when important questions were being answered. It is not right, the Speaker repeatedly asserted but as the din continued, he adjourned the proceedings till 2 PM. As the House reconvened, members of the opposition again started their protest. In less than two minutes, A Raja, who was in the Chair, adjourned the House till 3 PM.

A member named by the chair has to withdraw from the proceedings of the House. Six of the suspended MPs are from the Congress, two each from Trinamool Congress and Shiv Sena, and one each from CPI and CPM. Venkaiah Naidu also rejected

Kharge's contentions of action being taken on deeds done in the last session, saying the Rajya Sabha is a "continuing institution" and the Chairman of the House is empowered to suspend members for unruly conduct under rules 256, 259, 266 and other residuary powers.

No case of Omicron variant reported in India so far: Govt tells Parliament

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has so far not reported any case of the new COVID-19 variant Omicron, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya informed Parliament on Tuesday, underlining that the government has taken measures to ensure that it does not reach the country. The Centre has issued an advisory after looking at developments globally and is keeping a close watch on ports, he said, adding genome sequencing of suspected cases is being done.

Omar asked the people to support the National Conference and make it further strong to help "reverse the changes which were forced on the people of Jammu and Kashmir" on August 5, 2019 with the abrogation of the Article 370 and bifurcation of the erstwhile state into two union territories. In a reference to Lt Governor Manoj Sinha's statement that his administration is working for the welfare of all the people of the union terri-

BJP took advantage of 'weak' NC to scrap Article 370 in J&K: Omar

PNS ■ JAMMU

National Conference leader Omar Abdullah Tuesday said the BJP-led central government was able to abrogate Article 370 after his party was rendered weak after the 2014 elections with PDP founder Mufti Mohammad Syed declining his offer of unconditional support and stitching an alliance with those who do not have "good intentions" towards Jammu and Kashmir.

Omar asked the people to support the National Conference and make it further strong to help "reverse the changes which were forced on the people of Jammu and Kashmir" on August 5, 2019 with the abrogation of the Article 370 and bifurcation of the erstwhile state into two union territories.

In a reference to Lt Governor Manoj Sinha's statement that his administration is working for the welfare of all the people of the union terri-

tory, and not just a select few, Omar said, "I do not see it happening. What we see is that this government is only for the benefit of BJP and a few leaders of some Kashmir-based parties."

Addressing a public meeting at Chatroo in Jammu, Omar said, "We have started a fight for Jammu and Kashmir and its people following the changes which were forced on us - the changes which were possible because the National Conference was weak. If we have not lost the (assembly) seats in 2014 elections and formed the government, neither would they have removed Article 370 or Article 35A nor taken away land transferred to the people under Roshni Act

or given jobs and contractors to outsiders," the former chief minister said.

He said the BJP-led central government took advantage of the "weak position" of the NC and snatched what was given to the people of J&K by the Constitution.

"I had foreseen such a situation and went to Mufti Sahib to extend unconditional outside support for forming the government. I told him that the path he is going to treat (by forming the government with BJP) will be a disaster for J&K and we will not be able to save ourselves," he said, adding "I told him that I have no greed for power as I have just completed six years as chief minister and desist from bringing those to power who do not have good intentions for J&K."



Param Bir, Waze behind Antilia bomb scare: Nawab Malik

PNS ■ PUNE

Maharashtra minister Nawab Malik on Tuesday alleged that former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh and dismissed cop Sachin Waze had planned the bomb threat near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence 'Antilia' in the state capital.

The duo had also planned the "fake" encounter of a goon by showing him as a Pakistani national with the help of a bogus passport (after the bomb scare incident), Malik claimed while talking to reporters here.

The NCP leader also claimed that Singh and Waze had "misled" the state home ministry in connection with the the Antilia bomb scare case.

Asked about NCP leader



Anil Deshmukh's resignation as the state home minister earlier this year, Malik termed it as "politically motivated".

An explosives-laden SUV was found near Ambani's residence in south Mumbai in February this year. A few days later, businessman Mansukh Hiran, who was in possession of the SUV, was found dead in a creek at Mumbra in neighbouring Thane district.

SC to deal with contempt matter involving Vijay Mallya on Jan 18

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Tuesday said the contempt matter involving fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya, accused in bank loan default case of over Rs 9,000 crore involving his defunct Kingfisher Airlines, will be dealt with finally on January 18 next year.

Observing that the apex court has waited "sufficiently long", a bench headed by Justice U U Lalit said, "We can't be waiting any longer now".

The bench noted that Mallya was held guilty of contempt in 2017. The bench, also comprising Justices S R Bhat and Bela M Trivedi, said Mallya is at liberty to advance submissions, as are deemed appropriate, and if for any reason, he is not present before the court, lawyer on his behalf can advance submissions.

5,579 farmer suicides in 2020: Tomar in LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The number of farmers who committed suicide dropped to 5,579 in 2020 as compared to 5,957 in the previous year, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar informed Parliament on Tuesday, citing the latest NCRB report.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which functions under Ministry of Home Affairs, has not given 'separate reasons' for farmers' suicide in its 2020 report, the minister said in his written reply to the Lok Sabha.

"However, the causes of suicides of persons (including

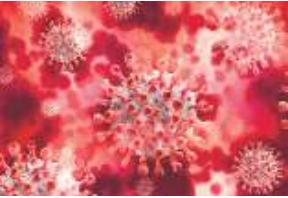
farmers) are family problems, illness, drug abuse/addiction, marriage related issues, love affairs, bankruptcy or indebtedness, failure in examination, unemployment, professional/career problem and property dispute," he added.

Of the total number of farmers' suicides committed during 2020, maximum 2,567 cases were reported from Maharashtra, followed by 1,072 cases from Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh (564), Telangana (466), Madhya Pradesh (235) and Chhattisgarh (227), as per the NCRB data placed before the Lower House.

8.3 lakh Covid cases treated under Ayushman Bharat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Approximately 8.3 lakh hospital admissions were authorised for the treatment of COVID-19 under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) in the last two years, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Tuesday. "This is with respect to transactions recorded on the NHA (National Health Authority) IT platform as well as the information shared by states, using their own IT systems," Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar said in a written reply to a question in the House.



Out of these 8.3 lakh, approximately 4.7 lakh have been authorised in empanelled private hospitals under Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), she said.

Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country, therefore, urban-rural bifurcation is not maintained for the

beneficiaries, she stated.

Public Health being a state subject, response to the COVID-19 pandemic is primarily directed by state governments, she said, adding the National Health Authority has been providing necessary support to states and UTs for ensuring free COVID-19 testing and treatment to all eligible beneficiaries under AB-PMJAY.

When COVID-19 pandemic started, initially existing treatment packages were used for providing Covid-related treatment. Later, special packages were introduced, she explained.

Same sex couples seek live streaming of proceedings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Tuesday directed the Centre to respond to a plea by LGBTQ couples who are seeking live streaming of proceedings on a batch of petitions to recognise same-sex marriages under the special, Hindu and foreign marriage laws on the ground that the matter is of great national and Constitutional importance.

The high court also issued notices on three more fresh petitions by same-sex couples seeking recognition of their marriages, taking the total number of such pleas to eight.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh



granted time to the Centre's counsel to take instructions on the matter and file replies on the three fresh petitions and the application for live streaming of proceedings. It listed the matter for further hearing on

February 3. The court was hearing a batch of petitions filed by several same-sex couples, seeking a declaration recognising their marriages under the special, Hindu and foreign marriage laws.

Over 37k hectares okayed for tree plantation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over 37,000 hectares of land has been approved for tree plantation under National Afforestation Programme (NAP), the Centre's scheme for the development of forest areas, the Environment Ministry informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

Minister of State for Environment Ashwini Kumar Choubey said the ministry has been making constant efforts to increase forest and tree cover and has taken several initiatives towards tree plantation activities in the country.

In response to a query in the House, he said 37,110 hectares of land has been approved in the last three years under the NAP.

The Environment Ministry



has approved the merger of NAP into Green India Mission (GIM) and accordingly financial allocation for both the schemes is provided under one budgetary head so that the overall efforts are augmented,

Choubey said.

"The budget allocation for the merged scheme has increased from Rs 160 crore in the year 2020-21 to Rs 220 crore during the year 2021-22," he said. "Afforestation programmes

under various Centrally sponsored schemes of the ministry such as National Afforestation Programme and National Mission for a Green India are implemented with a participatory approach," Choubey said.

The Lower House was told that the funds under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority are used for forest and wildlife management related activities including compensatory afforestation. Elaborating on other steps being taken by the government to increase tree plantation in the country, the minister said the ministry promotes tree plantation as a people's movement through School Nursery Yojana and Nagar Van Yojana.

The Ministry of Environment has been implementing the NAP scheme since 2000-01 for ecological restoration of degraded forests and to develop the forest resources with peoples' participation with a focus on improvement in livelihoods of the forest-fringe communities, especially the poor.

NAP aimed at supporting and accelerating the ongoing process of devolving forest conservation, protection, management and development functions to the Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) at the village level.

The scheme was implemented by a three-tier institutional setup through the State Forest Development Agency at the state level, Forest Development Agency at the forest division level and JFMCs at the village level.

Family man

It is high time men start participating in a rational conversation about family planning

Not even one among ten men uses condoms in India. Hardly any men go for sterilisation. In contrast, sterilisation is the preferred contraception method among women. Around four in ten women undergo sterilisation. These are some of the revelations of the National Family Health Survey-5 that examines male and female attitudes to safe sex and avoiding pregnancy in India. Women prefer sterilisation over other methods of contraception like pills, injectables and intrauterine devices. In 23 States and Union Territories of the country, condom use is less than 10 per cent. Uttarakhand has the highest condom use at 25.6 per cent. The only silver lining is the use of condoms has gone up by around four per cent since the last health survey. The onus of avoiding pregnancy still falls on women in India. They go through the biological process of bearing a child and giving birth and on top of it are made responsible for 'family planning'. Male engagement in family planning is extremely limited and dismaying. Given the low condom usage and a negligible number of vasectomies done, men seem to be simply unwilling to share the responsibility of family planning. In rural areas, where lack of education is still glaring and women are unemployed, they often come forward to get sterilised arguing that a vasectomy can weaken their men, the family's only breadwinners.



Unfortunately, the public health campaigns on family planning engage more with women than men. In both rural and urban India, men often refuse sterilisation, even though it is safe and simple, because of misconception that it affects their virility. Similarly, their ideas of patriarchy and pleasure make them forego the use of condoms. Both men and women are even today ignorant about the need to use contraception, seeing it merely as a tool to avoid pregnancy rather than for delaying or spacing children. The only way to change these perceptions is through interactive national campaigns that make men reassess their attitudes. The Government has to play a proactive role to make men return to the contraception conversation. Memories do not fade easily and people are aware of the dark days of the Emergency when in 1976, about 6.2 million men were forcibly sterilised, around 2,000 died in botched up operations, and police action against protesting victims led to many more deaths. The family planning programme has never been holistic, wavering, in phases, between sterilisation and contraception, birth control and population control, sterilisation of men and sterilisation of women, or linking large families with national instability. In 21st century India, permanent sterilisation can no longer shape the family planning programme. It is not about population explosion either as the total fertility rate has dropped to 2.0 in 2019-2021, compared with 2.2 in 2015-2016. It is about making men and women participate in a rational conversation about planning their families rather than promoting a bureaucratic agenda to control the population.

PICTALK



Artist creates a sand sculpture on the eve of the World AIDS Day at Puri beach, Odisha

PTI

Contagion

To stop Omicron from becoming another Delta, vaccines and protocols become utmost important

The unending restrictions are back again as the newest and potentially the most contagious strain of the Coronavirus — Omicron — has caused panic across countries and made them cautious about resuming international travel. While a bunch of countries have detected cases of Omicron, rest have their fingers crossed. The Government has, therefore, issued new guidelines and identified about a dozen "at risk" countries — the UK, South Africa, Brazil, Bangladesh, Botswana, China, Mauritius, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Hong Kong, Israel and entire Europe. This comes as a disappointment both to the economy and citizens as international travel was restarted just a few days ago after a hiatus of 20 months. Now passengers travelling from "at risk" countries will have to provide their travel history for the last 14 days and undergo an RT-PCR test on arrival. The findings on the new variant are not much but are enough to arouse fears of a possible third wave which was seemingly avoided.



Meanwhile, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Tuesday said that "no case of Omicron has been found in India so far", however, Omicron could possibly have entered the Indian borders already. India recorded 6,990 new COVID-19 cases, the lowest in 551 days, on Tuesday; but now is not the time to relax. In fact, the discovery of the mysterious new strain gives all reasons to worry and, more importantly, to follow the protocols that have been successfully dodged so far. In light of the new variant, the Government has extended COVID-19 measures till December 31. Therefore, while scientists figure out Omicron's risk and transmissibility, the public should refrain from heedless travel and diligently follow COVID appropriate behaviour. In order to stop Omicron from becoming another Delta, which wreaked sheer havoc during the second wave, people must realise the danger. However, there are certain factors that can make things go south pretty quickly: our careless tendency towards COVID-19, this being the high time for weddings and festivities and, of course, only about 40 per cent of the population being fully inoculated so far. Therefore, vaccination becomes of utmost importance and the unvaccinated have a good reason to shed hesitancy and get jabbed. The mistake of taking it lightly caused heavy losses last time and whether we allow it to happen again depends significantly on our behaviour.

Democracy would continue to thrive

An autocracy survives when there is no alternative. In a well functioning democracy, this is usually not a problem as a vacuum seldom occurs



PRAFULL GORADIA

Aspersions are being cast in the media that democracy is on decline. Those ignorant of history can only say so. Today, Europe is prima facie democratic; at least to the extent of holding elections. Before WWII, there were mostly autocracies, for example, Germany, Italy and Spain. For most of the 19th century and earlier, democracy was an Anglo-Saxon monopoly. It was inaugurated by England in 1215 with the signing of the Magna Carta or Great Charter by King John at Runnymede in Surrey. All citizens obtained concessions and this was the beginning of the rule of law. Most of the noblemen were present at the signing at Runnymede in the county of Surrey. It began the tradition of the enforcement of the rule of law, which became a big pillar of democracy. All are equal before the law and all are to be treated justly.

The English noblemen had virtually forced the Magna Carta for King John to sign or else his endeavour would have to avoid his signature. Who is normally willing to give up power? Had the noblemen not been gradual and tactful, the King would probably not have signed the carta and there could have been a civil war. Simple measures like the Church shall have full freedom, London city will be free to levy the taxes it used to earlier. All merchants could leave and return to England without harassment or taxation. Mild and acceptable measures were the beginning of modern democracy.

From the early centuries to the end of World War II was a long era of autocracy in most parts of the universe. In Europe, religion usually provided the ideology and monarchs came and went. China was a centralised empire for 22 centuries uninterrupted. India had Muslim monarchs, emperors or otherwise, Europe was dominated by Holy Roman Emperor backed by the Roman Catholic Church based in the Vatican; the Eastern Church was at the back of the Russian Czars. Africa was waking up while South America was



an island with a local king until Spain and Portugal conquered them. Where was democracy? In England and later Great Britain with Canada, Australia and other colonies followed suit when they became independent. So did the USA after 1776.

England, its culture and leaders usually thought about what is fair. Whereas other good cultures were guided by what is right as prescribed by their religion. Yet others were conveniently guided by what is possible, by might or right. Had it been otherwise, King Henry VIII would not have survived on the throne after leaving the Vatican Church merely for annulling his marriage to Catherine of Aragon and marrying Anne Boleyn. The independent Church of England has thereafter followed what suited the interests of England not the presumed wishes of God.

Germany tried democracy called the Weimar Republic between 1920 and 1931 but failed. By May 1945, Adolf Hitler's regime was roundly defeated. Thereafter, Konrad Adenauer came to power with his Christian Democratic Party; a democratic Government has ruled thereafter. France was ruled by Napoleon III until 1870 when

he was defeated by Germany, led by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. Italy was not a democratic country until after 1945. Eastwards onwards, there was a variety of autocracies.

India has performed admirably, especially because we started in 1947 with a low rate of literacy. Incidentally, Nehru was a democrat, moreover, he kept winning all the elections until he lived. So did Indira Gandhi in 1972 and 1980 and Rajiv Gandhi in 1985. Except for two years between 1977 and 1979, the dynasty ruled India. The great advantage of democracy is the synergy it produces. Freedom lands enthusiasm to people and the work willing. Compulsion, which often results from autocracy, semiparalyses. As Prime Minister Modi said that India was able to achieve 100 crore vaccinations within some months because it was everybody's effort, the results of synergy are amazing.

Another reason for the success of democracy is the very size of the country where a takeover by civilians or by soldiers would find it extremely difficult to capture power and hold it. Additionally, the country is so diverse in the language and culture of the people that a

unity amongst people to capture and retain power is difficult.

An autocracy usually survives when there is no alternative. In a reasonably well functioning democracy, this is usually not a problem as a vacuum seldom occurs. The nature and temperament of the people is important. Here, the credit must go to the Hindu faith which makes people believe in their Karma. To an extent, this makes the people individualistic who seldom want to unite to knock out another group. This is unlike Islam which prefers rule by *jamhuriyat* or consensus under a monarch. The contrast between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh tells the story of different temperaments. The contrast between Islamic countries and the rest of the world is interesting. Wherever there is monarchy the people are happy if they are Muslim. The concept begins with the Caliph who is supposed to be the spiritual and temporal head of Sunni Islam. The world of Muslims is meant to be one or pan-Islamic.

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

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ANOTHER REASON FOR THE SUCCESS OF DEMOCRACY IS THE VERY SIZE OF THE COUNTRY WHERE A TAKEOVER BY CIVILIANS OR SOLDIERS WOULD FIND IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO CAPTURE POWER AND HOLD IT

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TEST CRICKET IS THE BEST THRILLER

Sir — The true beauty of Test cricket was witnessed after many years, when New Zealand rearguard snatched a thrilling draw in the first Test match against India. Debutant Rachin Ravindra and tailender Ajaz Patel braved the wicked last-session pitch to defy India's three accomplished spinners Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel and Ravichandran Ashwin at Kanpur's Green Park. The last-wicket Kiwi batters managed to survive the final 52 balls to deny India for 40 minutes when the umpires finally decided it was too dark to play on. Interestingly, after the drawn Test, the two teams ended up getting four World Test Championship points each.

Cricket lovers were surprised about India's delayed declaration on the fourth day. Though the Man of the Match Shreyas Iyer explains that there wasn't much happening on the wicket and India needed a competitive total, maybe around 275-280; which is not digestible to many. Whatsoever, this Test should be remembered fondly as India fielded with a depleted squad, with several frontline players either rested or recuperating. The match proved why this format of cricket is called 'Test' and that Test cricket 'ka koi jawab nahi'.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

COVID NORMS ARE FOR LEADERS, TOO

Sir — The Maharashtra Government has issued new guidelines with regard to the new variant of Coronavirus. However, the way Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut's daughter's wedding in Mumbai and Maharashtra minister Gulabrao Patil's son's wedding in Jalgaon took place in the presence of a large crowd, it raises doubts on the credibility of the Government. There is public outrage about this. But there is no one to take action on it. There is no one to question the wrongdoers because they are the Government. How is the framework of rules not the same for the leaders and the public? Clearly, if your own Government is in power then who is going to take action against you? No one would dare to do that.

Jayesh Rane | Mumbai

Need to look back to move ahead



India is a divine tree that stands tall and offers shade to people of all races, gives fruits of wisdom, teaches ethics and morality and has a culture that is as vast as the history of humankind itself. But sadly, the tree is falling apart and we are just not able to see it. If one was to notice, India is a colourful country that offers traditional yet ultra-modern solutions to even the most complicated problems. Traditionally, our food is such that it nourishes and heals our mind and body and not just fills the stom-

ach. Our traditional music is therapeutic. Today, Raga therapy is used to heal the mind and body as Ragas can calm the nerves. At the same time, they are mighty enough to evoke fire or rain, when performed correctly, of course.

We are blindly running towards the 'western culture' which is not tuned for Indian bodies. The western culture is based on materialistic factors while the Indian culture is based on spirituality. We need to understand that spirituality does not mean religion or rituals; it simply means being aware of your mind, body and soul. Indeed we have to adopt certain modern practices to develop economically and otherwise, but we must not forget our roots. If we start living an Ayurveda-inspired lifestyle, many of our health problems wouldn't even arise. The idea is not to put on a *dhoti* and head to the mountains, but to use the wisdom of those who have already been there and contribute to the betterment of humanity.

Manish Kumar | New Delhi

question papers in order to secure the berth for undeserving candidates in lieu of money. It badly impacts the mental and physical health of aspirants and also decays the administration by promoting corruption.

The Uttar Pradesh Government has failed to conduct the State-sponsored exams time and again and it reflects the ineptitude and level of corruption deeply entrenched in State machinery which also exposes the racketeering nexus. The Government can't shy away from its responsibilities with false assurance every time such rackets are busted. It's really shameful that State exams are losing credibility day by day. However, what's more disgraceful is that no strict action has been taken by the authorities even after taking massive hits on reputation.

Janga B Sunuwar | Bagrakote

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Narendra Modi ji, you are not a sympathiser of farmers, you are a sympathiser of votes.

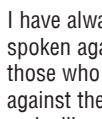


Congress general secretary — Priyanka Gandhi



If a social media company lets you say something with a mask on, we'll hold it to account.

Australian Prime Minister — Scott Morrison



I have always spoken against those who go against the country and will continue to speak against them.

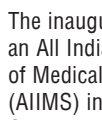


Actor — Kangana Ranaut



It's great to see the young guys come through and perform straightaway on debut.

Team India head coach — Rahul Dravid



The inauguration of an All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Gorakhpur will be done next month.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister — Yogi Adityanath

FIRST COLUMN

POLITICALLY, WOMEN CANNOT BE IGNORED

The Indian subcontinent bests the west when it comes to primacy of women in politics



NILOFAR SUHRAWARDY

The patriarchal trend where males get more opportunities to make it to the top is visible even in the most progressive, liberal, and even so-called democratic societies. Ironically, politics is one field where the women of the Indian subcontinent seem to have broken the glass ceiling, more boldly than even in the west. The United States still has to boast of having a lady as its President. India has had women as President as well as Prime Minister. Women have been politically dominant in similar key positions in Pakistan, Bangladesh and also in Sri Lanka. Of course, the United Kingdom, Germany and New Zealand stand out as few countries where women have got opportunities to head their respective governments. Be it Margaret Thatcher from the UK, Angela Merkel (Germany) or Jacinda Ardern (New Zealand), there is no denying that the strong stamp of their distinct personalities could not have been ignored. Their rise could not have been possible without the backing of their parties. However, political charisma linked with their personalities is not solely dependent on their parties but has to do with their individual personalities. The possibility exists that Indira Gandhi may not have joined politics if she was not Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter. Initially, she was viewed



as a "puppet," "dumb-doll" and/or a totally weak politician. But her entry into politics and later her role as Prime Minister led her to be known as the Iron Lady. Incidentally, Sonia Gandhi refrained from picking up political reins immediately after the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. She decided to head the Congress only when intra-party worsened. Her political credentials were untested but she succeeded in helping the Congress-led coalition remain in power for two consecutive terms. She is now the natural "high command" of the party. Priyanka Vadra's entry into politics seemed natural. Initially only her smiles and the crowds attracted by her hit media headlines. But her current moves are scripting a different tale. The reference is to her "broomstick-policy" in the aftermath of the Lakhimpur Kheri violence that gave her credibility as a politician. The political rise of Mamata Bannerjee, Mayawati and the late Jayalalithaa is quite similar. Their initial entry was backed either by their party and/or specific politicians in their domains. Subsequently, however, each moved on to successfully establish their own identities quite successfully. While Mamata rose from the ranks of Congress, she parted company to form Trinamool Congress in 1998. She led the party to oust Left bloc from West Bengal and head the government since 2011. The two names are inseparable — Mamata and TMC. So is the case of Mayawati and Bahujan Samaj Party. The same can be said about Jayalalithaa and AIADMK. Interestingly, the most vocal and eloquent voice of TMC in Lok Sabha is also a woman, Mahua Moitra. Women's political empowerment extends to other parts of the subcontinent. In Bangladesh the two lady prime ministers, Begum Khaleda Zia (1991-96 and 2001-2006) and Sheikh Hasina (1996-2001 and from 2006) have compelled acknowledgement of the importance given to women's leadership. Pakistan had late Benazir Bhutto as Prime Minister from 1988-90 and 1993-96. Sri Lanka gave the world its first woman Prime Minister in 1960 — Sirimavo Bandaranaike. Politically speaking, in the Indian subcontinent, women have carved a distinct niche of their own without being tagged as puppets or as pawns of their parties. Compared to their limited significance in most parts of world, they take the lead here. Against this backdrop, perhaps Priyanka's political message of encouraging entry of more women into politics should not be dismissed as mere rhetoric.

(The write is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

Battle to become the aam aadmi of Punjab



AMITABH SHUKLA

Rejecting the so-called 'Delhi model', the Punjab CM said that the State is witnessing the 'Channi model' which stands for equal opportunities for all

Which party is the true custodian of the *aam aadmi* (common man) image in Punjab? The million rupee question is playing out in the election campaign as two of the contesting parties-ruling Congress and its challenger Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) are insisting that they are the "real" representatives of the common man, ones battling for the plebeian and have the interest of this section paramount in their scheme of things.

With Charanjit Singh Channi, the self-proclaimed common man from a lower middle class family, who had once sold crackers for Diwali on a cot outside his tent house and was also working full time in the tent business of his father, becoming the chief minister taking over from Amarinder Singh of Patiala royal family, known in political circles as Maharaja, politics has taken a 360 degree turn in the state and the one facing the heat is the original party named on common man-Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

Not surprisingly, during his election campaign in the state, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said that he had reasons to believe that he has imitators in Punjab and a "fake Kejriwal" is roaming around, making same promises, asking people to know the fake from the real. Kejriwal was referring to Channi as the fake copy though he did not mention anyone by name in his speech.

Ever since he became the chief minister, Channi has been cultivating the image of the *aam aadmi* with a missionary zeal. He has been stopping at roadside 'dhabas' regularly to have tea with commoners, dancing bhangra to drum beats on the stage at functions, participating in wedding ceremonies and giving 'shagun' to couples, getting photographed with auto-rickshaw drivers, meeting workers, farmers and so on. This has clearly rattled AAP to an extent as it believes that Channi's new image could be problematic to its poll prospects in the state and spoil its dream to come to power.

Sample this: "These days a *nakli* Kejriwal is roaming in Punjab. Whatever I promise, he announces it the next day but doesn't implement it. Beware of him. Only *asli* Kejriwal can fulfill what he promises." And more, "In the entire country, only one man, Kejriwal, can bring down your electricity bill to zero. So, beware of that fake Kejriwal," said AAP's national convener, referring to Channi and his promise to bring down power rates by ₹3 across all categories of consumers.

Interestingly, both Kejriwal and Channi were in Ludhiana the same day to sell their USP of common man in the industrial city. Hours before Kejriwal was scheduled to meet the auto and taxi drivers, Channi made a surprise halt at an auto-rickshaw stand to listen to the



EVER SINCE CHANNI BECAME THE CHIEF MINISTER OF PUNJAB, HE HAS BEEN CULTIVATING THE IMAGE OF AN AAM AADMI WITH A MISSIONARY ZEAL. THIS HAS RATTLED THE AAP TO AN EXTENT AS IT BELIEVES THAT CHANNI'S NEW IMAGE COULD BE PROBLEMATIC TO ITS POLL PROSPECTS IN THE STATE AND SPOIL ITS DREAM TO COME TO POWER

(The writer is Senior Resident Editor, The Pioneer, Chandigarh. The views expressed are personal.)



problems of the drivers and got himself clicked with them while sipping tea. This was too much for Kejriwal who was quick to retort, pointing out that he had a pre-scheduled meeting and when the 'nakli Kejriwal' came to know about this, he reached the auto-rickshaw owners' office. "Still, I think fear is good. He may do something out of fear of the real Kejriwal, but he cannot do, because he is 'nakli'," said Kejriwal.

So this *asli-nakli* (real-fake) war of words continued with Kejriwal attacking the Punjab CM for imitating him (Delhi CM) on promises on electricity tariff. Kejriwal went on to add that former Chief Minister Amarinder Singh had also imitated the Delhi Government and declared free bus service for women. But it was incomplete because Captain Amarinder had provided free travel to women only in government buses.

Channi was quick to retort and trained his guns at the AAP supremo, emphasizing that the Delhi Model of Arvind Kejriwal is nothing more than a 'bundle of lies'. "The Punjab government has already taken several path-breaking initiatives to benefit the masses whereas Kejriwal and his company are just making promises for them. I can never be a duplicitate of Kejriwal as I can't be as treacherous and cunning as he is," the Punjab CM said. That went slightly off the mark and enraged the AAP leaders who retorted back in



the same coin the next day in their statements.

Rejecting the so-called Delhi Model or the Kejriwal model, the Punjab CM said that the State is witnessing 'Channi Model' which stands for equal opportunities for all. "Channi model is in unison with the teachings of the Great Sikh Gurus who have shown us the way of equality and brotherhood. This model is being implemented in the State for its progress and prosperity of its people...and this model will be there till I am in this office," the first Dalit chief minister of the state emphasized in one of his election speeches.

To further consolidate his image of *aam aadmi*, Channi spent the night at the same Gurdwara, Shaheed Baba Tega Singh at village Chand Purana (Moga) where he had stayed during his cycle yatra in 2016. His spin doctors were quick to point out, "departing from convention, the chief minister chose the Gurdwara sahib for stay at night instead of any hotel, rest house or palatial house of party leader".

Left behind in the race to project him as the *aam aadmi*, SAD President Sukhbir Singh Badal too is trying to catch up with his two *aam aadmi* rivals-Kejriwal and Channi. He is obliging the selfie-seeking youths and is happily posing for them and hunting for space in the social media to project this image. The image of the common man is difficult to stick with the Badal family as they are considered

as tycoons, having business interests in several sectors, including hospitality, transport, cable and entertainment, etc. However, there is no harm in flowing with the political wind, a SAD supporter says on why the party chief should also project the image of the common man.

While Amarinder Singh kept mostly to his residence and farm house in his second term of office and remained cut off from the people, Channi is doing the opposite. He never lets go of any opportunity to consolidate his assiduously cultivated *aam aadmi* image and his political advisors say that this is playing out well with the electorate who for the first time in over two decades, have seen a different political persona as the head of the state.

Parkash Singh Badal was a five-term CM, Amarinder Singh held the post for nine and a half years and both of them together occupied almost a quarter of a century at the helm. While Badal believed in distributing largesse through his Sangat Darshan scheme, Amarinder was largely cut off from grassroots, instead depending on his support and advisors to reach out to the people. So, this image of both Channi and Kejriwal is like a breath of fresh air for many in the poll-bound state.

Not surprisingly, there is a fierce competition to emerge as the real champion of the common man and that has become the USP of the election campaign so far.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THERE'S NO POINT IN RAISING ARTICLE 370 IN PARLIAMENT. OUR DEMAND IS RESTORATION OF STATEHOOD AND ELECTIONS IN J&K.
—SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER
GHULAM NABI AZAD



ARTICLE 370 IS A LEGACY OF THE CONGRESS. IF THE CONGRESS IS NOT READY TO SAVE ITS OWN LEGACY, HOW CAN IT SAVE OTHERS'?
—FORMER J&K CHIEF MINISTER
OMAR ABDULLAH

Impact of greenhouse gasses and deforestation on climate

Trees can absorb four tons of CO2 over the course of 40 years. A forest is considered a carbon sink if it absorbs more carbon than it emits

India is the world's third largest producer of renewable energy and the third largest consumer of electricity. As the country advances, the per capita consumption of electricity is likely to rise sharply. Consumption of coal, gas and crude oil is also expected to increase. At present, solar and wind produce less than 13 per cent of the total energy consumed and the rest comes from coal, petroleum, nuclear, etc. Burning of coal, natural gas, and oil to generate electricity and heat is the leading cause of greenhouse gas emissions globally.

Would it be possible to generate all the electricity we need without emitting additional greenhouse gases?

India emits 83 per cent of greenhouse



BKP SINHA

(The writer is a former IFS officer. The views expressed are personal.)

Additionally, India's population growth will intensify the demand for food, which in turn will necessitate more urea and irrigation, and using the Haber-Bosch process to produce urea will exacerbate greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, it is necessary to switch to less CO2-intensive energy. The developed nations like the US and Western Europe have the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through appropriate measures and specific innovations because their research and development budgets are relatively large for this purpose. Obtaining carbon-free electricity will be a huge challenge for India because to achieve zero emissions, all of our electricity must come from non-emitting sources. Solar, wind,



hydroelectric, biomass, and geothermal power can provide energy without causing global warming.

While natural gas plants are running, they need to purchase fuel and the price of fossil fuels does not reflect the cost of climate change in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. Solar and wind energy are intermittent sources. The maximum conversion capacity of solar energy is only 33 per cent. They cannot generate electricity 24 hours a day, so their storage and generation costs

should also be considered. Batteries used in off-grid solar systems can be charged during the day and used during the night. It is a reasonable solution for using solar power throughout the day, but it is also quite expensive due to the costs associated with the battery and its life, which will determine how much it adds to the electricity bill and the public exchequer.

Solar power generation is significantly less in winter than in summer. Solar power and wind energy generation is totally dependent on natural circumstances. Even in bright sunshine and strong winds, production will always be less than the installed capacity due to intermittent shutdowns caused by maintenance. To collect as much sunlight as

possible, we need a large number of solar panels that take up a lot of space, and some roofs are not big enough to accommodate them, so space is also an issue. Location is also increasingly important in solar energy. Our installation needs to be increased many times compared to the current one.

Even though nuclear power could be a solution, it is risky and capital intensive.

The main reason why zero-carbon electricity is so expensive is intermittency. Because of this, the state is aiming to generate more renewable electricity by combining solar and wind power with other options like gas-powered plants, which is a necessity for cities and towns. It can be argued that the grid -a single connected network is

the solution, but in practice, this is not feasible, at least in the near future.

To use renewable energy more efficiently and generate carbon-free energy, we must invest more in research and development. Furthermore, issues such as widespread poverty alleviation, education, health, clean drinking water, water for sanitation and job creation require more money to be diverted to address these issues, which in turn can adversely affect investment in research and development. Even if we take into account the government's efforts towards clean energy, new innovations will be required to remove its impediments. Diffusion of innovations requires R&D expertise and also a long period of persua-

sion, decision-making, and implementation that will take a considerable amount of time.

Therefore, conservation, afforestation and sustainable forestry practices are also the most efficient and cost-effective ways to combat carbon emissions.

Trees can absorb four tons of CO2 over the course of 40 years. A forest is considered a carbon sink if it absorbs more carbon from the atmosphere than it emits. Photosynthesis absorbs carbon from the atmosphere. It is then deposited in forest biomass (such as trunks, branches, roots and leaves), in dead organic matter (litter), and in soil and microorganisms. This process of carbon absorption and deposition is known as carbon sequestration.

Majority of Indians comfortable with automation at homes, shopping

PNS ■ MUMBAI

With automation and AI being widely adopted across many sectors at varying levels of visibility to consumers, a report has revealed that most urban Indians are comfortable with them in their homes and for online shopping.

On a personal level, urban Indians are more comfortable with automation in their homes, for online shopping and in manufacturing but prefer more human-led approaches in areas such as education, medical consultation, and government policies, according to a report.

A third of urban Indians interviewed feel that the impact of AI on society will be "more positive than negative", but when compared to those who claim to be well-informed about the technology, the number increases from 32% to 50%, which suggests that knowledge and positive outlook are correlated to a great extent, the report said.

New Bill on cryptocurrency after Cabinet approval: Nirmala in RS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government will soon bring in a new Bill on cryptocurrency after it is approved by the Union Cabinet, said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday in the Rajya Sabha.

A Bill on Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency for introduction in the Lok Sabha has been included in the Lok Sabha Bulletin-Part II, as part of the government business expected to be taken up during the ongoing winter session.

The Bill seeks to create a facilitative framework for the creation of the official digital currency to be issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for the ongoing winter session of Parliament. It also seeks to prohibit all private cryptocurrencies in India, however, it allows for certain exceptions to promote the underlying technology of cryptocurrency and its uses.

Replying to a series of ques-



tions in the Rajya Sabha, Sitharaman said, "This Bill, once the Cabinet clears, will come into the house".

The government had also listed a similar Bill for the last Parliament session (monsoon) but it was not taken up.

"The earlier attempt was definitely to come up with a Bill that the house can consider. But, later, because rapidly a lot of things had to come into play, we had started working on a new Bill. This is the Bill that is now being proposed,"

she said adding that there was a "genuine attempt" to bring the Bill even during the monsoon session.

The minister informed the house that the proposed legislation is likely to be introduced soon.

On asked if the government proposes to ban misleading advertisements in media, she said the guidelines of Advertising Standards Council of India are being studied and their regulations are also being looked into "so that we can

take, if necessary, some kind of position or a decision to see how we can handle it".

The minister also said cryptocurrencies are unregulated in India and the government does not collect data on transactions in cryptocurrency.

Sitharaman also said the government, RBI and Sebi have been cautioning people about the cryptocurrencies that could be a "high risk" area and "more can be done" to create awareness.

A study was conducted by the government through a research firm on "Virtual Currencies: An Analysis of the Legal Framework and Recommendations for Regulation" in July 2017. Thereafter, the government constituted an interministerial committee (IMC) in November 2017 under the chairmanship of the secretary (economic affairs) to study the issues related to virtual currencies and propose specific action to be taken in this matter.

Rs 26,697 cr lying in dormant accounts of banks, says FinMin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As much as Rs 26,697 crore was lying in dormant accounts of banks, including cooperative banks, as on December 31, 2020, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman informed the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

This money is lying in nearly 9 crore accounts which have not been operated for 10 years. As per information received from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), as on December 31, 2020, the total number of such accounts in Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) was 8,13,34,849 and the amount of deposits in such accounts was Rs 24,356 crore, Sitharaman said in a reply.

Similarly, she said, the number of accounts not operated for more than 10 years and the amount in such accounts with Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) was 77,03,819 and Rs 2,341 crore, respectively, as on December 31, 2020.

"The number of deposit accounts (i.e. public deposits matured but remaining

unclaimed for 7 years including the year in which they have matured) and the amount in such accounts with Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) was 64 and Rs 0.71 crore, respectively as on March 31, 2021," she said.

As per the instructions issued by the RBI to banks vide their Master Circular on "Customer Service in Banks", banks are required to make an annual review of accounts in which there are no operations for more than one year, and may approach the customers and inform them in writing that there has been no operation in their accounts and ascertain the reasons for the same.

"Banks have also been advised to consider launching a special drive for finding the whereabouts of the customers/legal heirs in respect of accounts which have become inoperative, i.e., where there are no transactions in the account over a period of two years," she said. Further, she said, banks are required to dis-

play the list of unclaimed deposits/ inoperative accounts which are inactive/ inoperative for ten years or more on their respective websites, with the list containing the names and addresses of the account holder(s) in respect of unclaimed deposits/ inoperative accounts.

As regards action taken on deposits in such accounts, she said, pursuant to the amendment to the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 and insertion of Section 26A in the said Act, the RBI has framed the Depositor Education and Awareness Fund (DEAF) Scheme, 2014.

"The DEAF is utilised for promotion of depositors' interests and for such other purposes which may be necessary for promotion of depositors' interest as may be specified by the RBI. In case of demand from a customer whose deposit had been transferred to the DEAF, banks are required to repay the customer, along with interest if any, and lodge a claim for refund from the DEAF," she said.

MONEY MATTERS

Hyd's electric ride-sharing startup Hala Mobility opened

Hala launches its User application for customers to make their rides, rentals, charging stations, or service booking. Hala is currently offering a single-seater e-bike within closed campuses of the city. Hyderabad | 30th November 2021: Hala Mobility, a startup incubated at T-hub under the lab32 project cohort 6, launched its user application today. The launch was done by Principal Secretary to ITE&C Department, Shri. Jayesh Ranjan, IAS, and other prominent ecosystem leaders Mahankali Srinivas Rao, CEO of T-Hub Hyderabad, Ajit Rangnekar, Director General of Research and Innovation Circle of Hyderabad, and Dr. Shanta Thoutam, Chief Innovation Officer at Telangana State Innovation Cell (TSIC). At the launch, Hala showcased its inhouse made keyless smart app and the first booking was made by Principal Secretary to ITE&C Department, Shri. Jayesh Ranjan, IAS.



Rupee pares initial gains, settles 10 ps lower at 75/\$



The rupee on Tuesday pared its initial gains to settle 10 paise lower at 75.17 (provisional) against the US dollar as investor concerns grew over fresh impact of new COVID variant on the economy.

At the interbank foreignexchange market, the local currency opened on a strong note at 74.91 and witnessed an intra-day high of 74.86 and a low of 75.19 against the US dollar in a highly volatile trading session. The local unit finally settled at 75.17 a dollar, down 10 paise over its previous close. The rupee on Monday dived 18 paise to close at a five-week low of 75.07 against the US dollar on worries over the new coronavirus variant. The appreciation bias in the rupee was curtailed, as investor concern has resurfaced about how much damage the new Omicron coronavirus variant may unleash on the economy, traders said. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.68 per cent down at 95.69. Meanwhile, Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 2.85 per cent to USD 71.35 per barrel.

Star Health raises Rs 3,217 cr from investors ahead of IPO

Star Health and Allied Insurance Company on Monday said it has raised a little over Rs 3,217 crore from anchor investors ahead of its IPO on Tuesday. The company has decided to allocate a total of 3,57,45,901 equity shares to 62 anchor investors at Rs 900 apiece, aggregating to Rs 3,217.13 crore, according to a circular uploaded on BSE website. Monetary Authority of Singapore, Government of Singapore, Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, Morgan Stanley Asia (Singapore) Pte, Goldman Sachs (Singapore) Pte, BNP Paribas Arbitrage and Societe Generale are among the anchor investors. In addition, SBI Life Insurance Company, HDFC Life Insurance Company and Edelweiss Mutual Fund have been allocated shares.



Gold jumps Rs 41; silver cracks Rs 667



Gold in the national capital on Tuesday jumped Rs 41 to Rs 47,217 per 10 gram in line with rally in international precious metal prices, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal had settled at Rs 47,176 per 10 gram. Silver in contrast dipped Rs 667 to Rs 61,337 per kilogram from Rs 62,004 per kilogram in the previous trade. In the international market, gold was trading with gains at USD 1,794 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 22.94 per ounce. Gold prices traded higher with spot gold prices at COMEX trading half a per cent up at USD 1,794 per ounce on Tuesday," according to HDFC Securities, Senior Analyst (Commodities), Tapan Patel.

Centre committed to compensate states for 5 yrs for revenue loss: FM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre is committed to compensate states for five years for the revenue loss due to GST implementation as provided in the statute, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Tuesday.

The GST Constitutional Amendment Act provides for the centre compensating the state for five years for loss of revenue arising on account of implementation of the goods and services tax (GST) and during the transition period, the states' revenue is protected at 14 per cent per annum over the base year revenue of 2015-16, she said.

"The central government is committed for GST compensation to States/UTs for 5 years as per the Constitutional provision," Sitharaman said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

She was replying to a question on whether the government is aware of the fact that the projected 14 per cent growth rate of revenue is not attained by any state and, if so, whether the government intends to provide the GST compensation after 2022.

GST, which subsumed indirect taxes like excise duty, service tax and VAT, was rolled



out from July 1, 2017. The five year period for compensation ends in June 2022.

After the 45th GST Council meeting, chaired by the Union Finance Minister and comprising state finance ministers, on September 17, the Centre had said that the regime of paying GST compensation to the states for revenue shortfall will end in June next year.

However, the compensation cess, levied on luxury and demerit goods, will continue to be collected till March 2026, to repay the borrowings that were done in 2020-21, and 2021-22 fiscal years to compensate states for GST revenue loss.

In a reply to a separate question, Sitharaman said Rs 37,134 crore and Rs 14,664 crore worth GST compensation is yet to be released to

states for 2020-21 and 2021-22 fiscal years respectively.

Under the GST law, states are compensated for any loss of revenue arising on account of implementation of GST for five years till June 2022. The compensation amount to be paid from the compensation fund which is arrived at by levying cess on top of the highest tax slab on luxury, demerit and sin goods. GST compensation for financial years 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 has already been paid to the states.

Since collections in the compensation fund are falling short of requirement, for 2020-21 and 2021-22 fiscal years the centre has borrowed funds worth Rs 1.10 lakh crore and Rs 1.59 lakh crore respectively and passed it on to the states as back-to-back loans.

Sebi to auction realty firm's properties to recover money

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday said it will auction four properties of Ravi Kiran Realty India Ltd and its promoters on December 16 to recover investors' money.

These properties located in West Bengal will be auctioned at a reserve price totalling Rs 3.22 crore, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a notice.

Inviting bids for the sale of these properties, Sebi said the auction will be conducted through online mode.

The regulator has asked the



intending bidders to make their own independent enquiries regarding the measurement, nature, type, classifications, encumbrances, litigations, attachments and liabilities of the properties put on auction.

CIL to infuse Rs 19K-cr to strengthen rail infra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Coal India Ltd on Tuesday said it will invest an estimated Rs 19,650 crore to strengthen its rail infrastructure.

The move will increase coal evacuation capacity of the PSU through rail mode by an additional 330 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) by FY2023-24 when the production is expected to scale up significantly.

The upcoming projects, some of which are already operational, would help CIL despatch increased volumes of coal through rail, above the existing capacity, from its greenfield and brownfield min-



ing areas, Coal India (CIL) said in a statement.

The coal mining behemoth is constructing three important railway lines from its own

funds, on deposit basis, in CCL and MCL at an estimated capital of Rs 7,994 crore having 170 MTPA coal transportation capacity.

Additionally, the company has forged four rail joint ventures with Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha at a capital outlay of Rs 11,656 crore which would help move 160 MTPA of coal.

Central Coalfields Ltd (CCL), Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL) and South Eastern Coalfields Ltd (SECL) are subsidiaries of CIL.

"These rail infra projects would boost our evacuation. It is important to have a robust coal transport mechanism in place to cope up with increased volumes of production in the ensuing years. We are laying the groundwork for it," the company said.

Tariff hikes, moratorium on govt dues to help telcos invest more aggressively in 5G tech

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The announced tariff hikes by the telcos could boost their operating profits by at least 40 per cent and coupled with the moratorium on government dues, will help them invest more aggressively into 5G technology, says a report.

Tariff hikes to lift the EBITDA, or earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization, of telcos by 40 per cent and along with the moratorium on government dues, this will support 5G investments and credit profiles, Crisil said in a note on Tuesday.

Airtel and Vodafone Idea have announced up to 25 per cent hike in their prepaid plans tariffs to improve financials, While Reliance Jio has



announced up to 21 per cent hike in mobile services tariffs from December 1.

The agency sees an estimated 20 per cent improvement in the Average Revenue Per Unit (ARPU) of the telcos, driven by the twin tailwinds of recent tariff hikes and ongoing customer upgrades, and expects this to lift their oper-

ating profit to Rs 1 lakh crore in fiscal 2023.

Improving bottomline along with the moratorium on government dues will provide telecom companies room to invest an estimated Rs 1.5-1.8 lakh crore for 5G services over the current and next fiscal years, apart from improving their return on capital employed, it

said.

Moreover, the tariff hikes will also support their credit profile notwithstanding higher investments, it added.

The tariff hikes and ongoing customer upgrades can push the sectoral ARPU by 20 per cent to Rs 160-165 next fiscal from Rs 135 last fiscal.

ARPU growth will lead to non-linear growth in profitability due to the high operating leverage.

The tariff hike will lift the sector's operating by 40 per cent to Rs 1 lakh crore next fiscal from Rs 72,000 crore in fiscal 2021, the agency said. Yet, the return on capital employed will be moderate at 7-8 per cent because of high capital intensity and adjusted gross revenue dues, it added.

Cargill acquires edible oil refinery in Andhra

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

2021 – To better serve its oil customers in the country, Cargill has acquired an edible oil refinery located in Nellore, State of Andhra Pradesh, India. Cargill's US\$35 million investment to acquire and upgrade the facility will significantly expand its edible oil production capacity and footprint in southern India and strengthen its existing supply chain to meet growing customer demand. The facility is expected to be fully operational by May 2022.

Highlighting the significance of this acquisition, Piyush Pattnaik, managing director of Cargill's edible oils business in India, said, "We have driven significant growth

of our edible oils business in India over the last few years. This acquisition propels our expansion, specifically in southern India, and demonstrates our commitment to India and our customers in the country."

The newly acquired refinery gives Cargill the capability to supply refined palm oil, palm olein, vanaspati (hydrogenated vegetable oil) and sunflower oil, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of the country's sunflower oil consumption and is currently being underserved.

This facility also allows Cargill to produce and package its own edible oil brands for retailers and to better serve bakery and foodservice customers in the region.

Bradley Cooper recalls being held up at knifepoint while picking up daughter

Bradley Cooper is sharing the scary details of a mugging incident in New York City when he was held up at knifepoint.

During the latest episode of Dax Shepard's "Armchair Expert" podcast, the *Licorice Pizza* star, 46, opened up about the incident, which took place on a subway as he was on his way to pick up his daughter, Lea, now 4, at school in October 2019.

"I used to walk around New York City all the time with (headphones) on — this was pre-pandemic. I was on the subway, 11:45, to pick Lea up downtown at Russian school and I got held up at knifepoint," said Cooper.

"It was pretty insane. But I realized I had gotten way, way too comfortable in the city. My guard was down," he added.

The *A Star Is Born* actor recalled his senses being dulled because in addition to his headphones, he was also wearing sunglasses and



a hat in an effort to be "incognito".

"I'm all the way at the end of the subway — I would just innately go all the way down to the end — and I felt somebody coming up," Cooper recalled. "And I thought, oh, they want to take a photo or something. I'm up against the post like it's *The French Connection* or some s---, and then I, like, turned. I looked down and I see a knife," he continued, describing the assailant's knife as being approximately 2 1/2 inches long, with a wooden handle. "I remember thinking, oh, it's a nice knife," he said.

Cooper, who shares Lea with ex-girlfriend Irina Shayk, also recalled the holdup had a soundtrack: the music on his own headphones.

"I have my headphones on the whole time. So I can't hear anything. I'm just listening to music. So it's scored, the whole thing is scored," he said, laughing.

When Cooper saw the mugger's eyes, he was surprised by how young he

was. Though he knew it may not have been wise to try to run from an assailant, Cooper did just that.

"I just started booking, just started running," he said. "I jumped over the ... turnstile, hid around the white, tiled foyer entrance to the subway, took my phone out. He jumped over, running away, and I took a photo of him. Then I chased him up the stairs. He started running up 7th Avenue. I took two more photographs of him. I ran down two police officers in an SUV, showed them the photograph and I'm, like, talking to them, and the guy kept saying — it was so interesting — he's like, 'Are you stabbed?' I was like, 'No, no, no.' And he goes, 'No, check to see if you're stabbed'."

That's when Cooper learned that mugging victims are often so shocked, they don't realise until later that they've been injured.

Luckily, Cooper was fine, just shaken up.

"It was crazy, bro," he said.

Rapper Kanye West's car breaks auction records

Rapper Kanye West's old car broke records while up for auction in Wyoming.

The rapper's motor made history after his 2019 F-150 Raptor sold for \$86,900, including the \$10 buyer premium, which made it the most expensive Raptor ever sold, at a sale at Musser Bros. Auctions that included a total of seven vehicles previously owned by the 44-year-old star.

Harold Musser, the owner of the auction house, told TMZ the sale generated a staggering \$434,780, and attracted 137,000 views and more than 800 bids, making it their biggest ever auction.

As well as the record-breaking Raptor, a 2017 Ford F-250 sold for \$43,250, while the lowest amount was paid for a 2016 Ford F-250, which attracted 84 bids before going for \$39,250.

Another 2019 Raptor, which had a slightly higher mileage, went for \$72,515, while a 2018 Raptor sold for exactly \$1,000 less. Two 2020 Ford Expeditions went for



\$62,250 and \$67,000 to complete the sale.

The cars were previously sold by the 21-time Grammy Award winner to the local Ford dealership in Cody, the city where West, who has officially changed his name to Ye, has a ranch, which is currently on the market for \$11 million — who then put them up for auction.

Along with the ranch, the 'Gold Digger' rapper also has listed his \$57 million Malibu mansion for sale. This comes after he and his wife Kim Kardashian West separated earlier this year.

Despite splitting from his wife, West has vowed to win back the reality star, who has recently been romantically linked with Pete Davidson.

Truely grateful that Anand ji chose me to be his Rinku: Sara Ali Khan

The makers of the Anand L. Rai directorial *Atrangi Re* released the first song from the film, which showed the absolutely vivacious Sara Ali Khan grooving in a saree.

The actress' radiant performance and screen presence in the song, stole the hearts of the viewers and the audience, and has broken the internet today.

Expressing gratitude for the love audience is showing on the trailer and the song, Sara says, "Really overwhelmed at the Chakachak response to Rinku :) The trailer and my first solo song has released so far and the love that's coming my way is exciting."

She further adds, "Working with Anand Ji has been all that any actor could want so I'm truly grateful that he chose me to be his Rinku. Now I am eagerly waiting for more content to release for the audiences and see their response!" The song perfect for wedding season also marks Sara's first solo song, and according to the audiences she has done an impressive job.

Atrangi Re will also be the first time, Sara would work with the ace director Anand L Rai. The film is all set to hit the OTT platforms on December 24.



Ankur Bhatia confirmed for second season of Crackdown

Actor Ankur Bhatia, who made a mark with his work in the International Emmy-nominated crime thriller series *Aarya*, has been roped in for the second season of spy thriller *Crackdown*.

The show has garnered a lot of appreciation and praise for its gripping storyline and the performances of its stellar star-cast that includes names like Saqib Saleem, Shriya Pilgaonkar and Rajesh Tailang, in addition to Ankur.

The espionage thriller directed by Apoorva Lakhia, follows the life of R&AW agents as they embark on a journey to uncover a conspiracy that threatens the safety of the country. Talking about the development, an elated Ankur said, "It is always great to be directed by Apoorva Lakhia, who also happens to be my mentor. I'm currently shooting for the show and really looking forward to its release."

In addition to Voo's *Crackdown*, Ankur also has Disney+ Hotstar's *Aarya* Season 2 right up his alley where he will be seen alongside Sushmita Sen, playing the role of Sangram, an unconventional villain.



ARCHIE

GARFIELD

NANCY

GINGER MEGGS

CALVIN AND HOBBS

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

1	2		3	4	5
			6		
7			8		
			9		
	10				
11			12		
		13			
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					

SUDOKU

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5		2		9	1			
	3		8		9			
				4	1		9	
8	5						6	1
	9		3	8				
			6		8		3	
	8	3			5			2
7		1						

Yesterday's solution

3	8	9	7	6	4	2	1	5
4	2	1	5	9	8	3	6	7
6	5	7	3	2	1	8	4	9
2	1	5	4	3	6	9	7	8
7	3	6	9	8	2	4	5	1
8	9	4	1	5	7	6	2	3
9	7	8	6	4	5	1	3	2
5	4	2	8	1	3	7	9	6
1	6	3	2	7	9	5	8	4

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Baking instructions
- Factual
- Play this with two sticks
- Rub to a shine
- Young hen
- Fake document
- Extra-intelligent person
- Finished
- Playthings
- Almost

SOLUTION

S	T	A	R	B	O	A	R	D
R	O	X	O					
T	E	S	T					
R	E	S	T	S	I	L	D	O
T	I	C	K	E	N			
C	E	P	S	E	R			
H	A	L	V	E				
F	O	R	T	U	N	A	T	E

DOWN

- Travel by horse
- Captured
- Water from the sky
- Breathe out

- From another country
- A sea creature with many arms
- Aeroplane trip
- Motorist
- Jealousy
- Large group of soldiers

K RAMYA SREE

You are living your life to the fullest when you do what you love. It's been a childhood dream for 21-year-old Anfal to be a motorcycle racer. Hailing from Thrissur, Kerala, Anfal Akdhar has been practicing on the tracks since 2019. The 21-year-old has weathered the story and is now the youngest racer in the 18 finalists of the Continental GT Cup.

A probable source for what we are passionate about may come from what we were exposed to during our childhood. Many simple things such as sketching, music, collecting action figures or airplane models that we did when we were young evolve to become what we are passionate about when we are adults. True to these words, Anfal was exposed to riding since his childhood days. Cut to present, he is now a passionate rider turning tables.

"I have been passionate about riding motorcycles since childhood. My mentor, my grandfather, taught me to ride a motorcycle. The first motorcycle that I rode was a Hero Honda CD100 when I was 13 years old," says Anfal, adding, "At my first track in 2019, my coach Mohammed Shafin noticed my riding skills and he told me that I can make a great future out of this sport. I was lucky enough to receive special training from him where he didn't only enhance my skills but also motivated me. I think that's the time when I realised that racing is and will always be my calling."

RACING LIKE A PRO



Racing has fundamentally brought a lot of changes to Anfal. He says racing gave him a new perspective in life and boosted his confidence to overcome any situation. "Though motorsports is a risky sport, I've always been very passionate about it. My goal in life is to become one of the most

successful racers in the world. Racing has pushed me to take risks in life and as it rightly said without risk there is no progress. Had I not been a racer, I would have pursued my studies and worked hard for a good future," shares the young rider, who just graduated from Nehru Arts and Science College,

Coimbatore. Anfal, an ardent movie lover, says racing is an expensive sport and it's difficult to handle the expenses. He says he tries to give his best in every race so that he can plan for his next races with the prize money he wins in every competition. Sharing his experience with Royal Enfield Continental GT Cup and racing the GT-R650, he says, "It was a pretty good experience with the Royal Enfield team and racing on the GT-R650, the team has done an amazing job with the motorcycle as well as they are handling the event very nicely. There is good sync between riders and the Royal Enfield team, wherein they are working in line with riders



requirements, and that personally makes me feel great."

The youngster is quite excited about his first national championship. "2021 is my debut year in racing and it's the first time I'm participating in the Indian National motorcycle racing championship. At present, I have finished 3 rounds and 6 races and I got 2 wins and 3 podiums.

I'm currently leading the championship with god's grace, and I am hoping for the best for the next 2 rounds," concludes Anfal, whose goal is to compete in international championships.



AIDS

& Infertility: THERE IS HOPE!

About 80% of people infected with AIDS are of reproductive age. That's quite shocking and it's important to know that HIV/AIDS can cause infertility issues in both men and women. But this need not put an end to the parenthood desires of HIV-infected individuals, as antiretroviral therapy and advanced fertility treatments can bring the joy of children in their lives. Though ethical reasons and the safety of the child remains a high priority in these couples, they need not give up their desire to have a biological child, says Dr Vasundara Jagannathan, clinical head and fertility specialist at Oasis Fertility Centre.

Explaining the factors that cause infertility in HIV positive women, the doctor explains, "Biological and psychological factors could cause infertility in HIV-positive women. Systemic illness, weight loss, protracted anovulation, amenorrhea, weakened immune system, other sexually transmitted diseases are some of the biological reasons. It has also been observed that there is a higher risk of cervical abnormalities, pelvic inflammatory disease, early menopause, and tubal factor infertility. Reduced pregnancy rates and the risk of miscarriage are also high in these women."

Psychological factors like shame, guilt, fear regarding the risks involved in the health of the child, etc. can adversely affect the fertility potential of HIV-positive women. According to a study published by Johns Hopkins, the fertility rate of HIV-infected women is 37% less than that of healthy women.

Whereas, Hypogonadism, a decrease in serum testosterone levels, reduced sperm motility,

sperm concentration, and sperm count are observed in men who are HIV-positive as per a report by WHO.

HIV-infected men are more likely to have erectile and ejaculatory dysfunction, diminished libido, impotence, oligospermia, teratozoospermia

NCBI).

The doctor says advanced fertility treatments can enable HIV couples to achieve parenthood.

"Antiretroviral therapy can help to reduce the viral load in HIV-infected individuals. The risk of transmission in serodiscordant couples (one partner is HIV infected and the other is uninfected) can be reduced by safe sexual practices, self insemination (in the case where in female partner is uninfected), sperm washing, IUI, IVF, or ICSI (in the case where in male partner is infected). PreP (Pre-exposure prophylaxis) is another treatment approach that can prevent the transmission of infection to the female partner. The chances of vertical transmission (transmission from mother to child) are high during vaginal delivery and breastfeeding. This can be mitigated through elective cesarean and avoiding breastfeeding. Pre-conception counseling is very critical for HIV couples to understand the several treatment possibilities, risks, precautions, and possible outcomes before planning for pregnancy," shares Dr Vasundara.

AIDS doesn't necessarily put away your reproductive desires! There is hope.



Smart, effective strategies for robust job search

In this new age the way to look for a job has changed dramatically and age-old methods will not be effective anymore.

Today for every job there are an average of over 200 candidates who apply and only 2% of these applicants i.e. just 4 out of the 200 candidates may actually be contacted and interviewed. Getting noticed by recruiters and being called for an interview is getting more and more difficult.

To counter this situation the successful job seekers use a combination of job search strategies that range from developing an online brand, ensuring a strong social media presence, targeting companies and creating customised job applications that help them stand out in today's super competitive and network-driven job market.

You will need to find out the right combination of strategies that best apply to your situation and your job search. Below are some job search strategies that will surely help you power your job search and be more successful in your search for your next job.

Identifying the right job:

Many job seekers make the mistake of applying to jobs that are just not right for them. Right at

the beginning of your job search you must reflect on what your interests are and what skills you bring to the table. You must then match your strengths, work experience and background to the jobs you are applying for. You must ensure that the jobs you apply are a fit for you rather than applying to any job that "sounds" right. Narrowing your search will actually help you get a better response to your applications.

Target companies and industries that are hiring

Another strategy that gets results for job seekers is when they target specific companies or industries that are actively hiring. It is a fact that

many times companies put up a Job Opening only to build their talent pipeline or meet people to know what candidates are thinking rather than actually hiring them. Figure out which or your target companies are actively hiring and apply for jobs in those companies only to get better responses to your applications.

Customise your applications

Most job seekers end up sending the same application or resume to multiple jobs. This is a sure way to guarantee a rejection from the companies you applied for. If you are serious about getting a job you must customise your application and resume for every job. Sending the same resume or application to multiple job opportunities is a big "NO" and a sure way of getting rejected right at the beginning of your job search.

Leverage your network:

Networking is the most effective and impactful way of

finding a job quickly. Did you know 80% of the jobs by companies are never advertised and these jobs are filled through refer-



ences or through networking. Make a conscious effort to connect with people who are influencers, decision makers and recruiters either online or offline. Build your network and leverage it when looking for a job. This is the most effective job search strategy ever. Remember when it comes to networking your network is equal to your net worth! you never know which contact may be able to help you in your job search or connect you with someone who can actually even offer you a job!

Build a strong online brand to get noticed by employers

In this age having a

strong online presence and brand is critical to your job search. Did you know that 40% of recruiters admit to having actually rejected applicants who do not have an online presence or are not active online.

Absence of an online presence may raise doubts about your "digital" capability or your ability to be adaptable to the new age. So develop, build and guard your online presence and brand to get noticed by employers and recruiters.

Leverage the digital medium to stay ahead of the pack

In this new age where job seekers use a combination of social media and job portals to search for jobs. You must find a way to ensure you are at top of your job search effort.

A simple but effective strategy is to set up google alerts for jobs that are best suited for you. You can also setup news alerts for your target companies to ensure that you are one step ahead of the other job applicants by getting to know when these companies release new jobs or are planning to expand their operations which in turn would mean hiring more people.

It is really a simple strategy but 90% of the job seekers just don't use it at all. So leverage the digital medium and

setup google alerts to get a leg up in your job search!

Prepare for your job interview

Once contacted and called for an interview, a critical job search strategy is to prepare for the job interview. Ensure you research the company, know the job description and deliverables and have a clear idea of how you can contribute in the job. Nothing trumps preparing for a job interview. Preparation is the key to success in getting that dream job and is a must for your job search strategy.

Have a communication plan and follow up effectively

An important part of the job search strategy that every candidates must ensure is build an ability to clearly communicate throughout the job search. Be clear about how and what you will communicate during the different stages of recruitment and ensure you follow up in the right manner as a part of your job search strategy! Candidates who communicate clearly and follow up effectively with companies and recruiters have a 30% better chance of getting the job offer. So ensure you have a clear communication plan and effectively follow up with recruiters to ensure they find you a great candidate to be hired.

So there you are, the above are strategies you can employ to be more successful in your job search use them wisely and I can't wait to hear your success stories! All the best!

(The writer, Swati Hirey, is the founder of Job Boosts & CEO Source Solutions Inc)



Messeven

Argentine legend wins his record extending 7th Ballon d’Or award

AP ■ PARIS

Lionel Messi admitted winning the Copa America with Argentina might have been the determining factor in him claiming the men's Ballon d'Or prize for the seventh time after a turbulent year, as Spain's Alexia Putellas took the women's award.

Now 34, Messi pipped much-fancied rivals like Robert Lewandowski and Karim Benzema to take the award in a glittering ceremony on Monday in Paris, the city he now calls home after leaving boyhood club Barcelona for Paris Saint-Germain in August.

Despite his tearful goodbye from Barcelona and his relatively underwhelming start to life in France, the jury of journalists from around the world rewarded him in particular for captaining Argentina to their first major international title since 1993.

"Two years ago I thought I was coming into my final years but here I am again back here," said Messi, who won the last edition of the Ballon d'Or in 2019 before last year's awards were cancelled due to the pandemic.

Messi also won in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and in 2015.

"People were starting to ask me when I was going to retire but now I am here in Paris and I am very happy," he said at the Chatelet Theatre in central Paris, where he was joined by his wife Antonella Rocuzzo and their three children.

"I don't know how many more years I have left but I hope there will be many because I am really enjoying myself this year.

"What I achieved with Argentina was a dream come true. I think I won this trophy thanks to what we did at the Copa America, so I dedicate it to my teammates."

Argentina beat Brazil 1-0 in the final in Rio de Janeiro as Messi won a major title with his country for the first time. He also scored 38 goals in 48 games in his final season with Barcelona and won the Copa del Rey.

Lewandowski second

However Messi has played just 11 times and scored four goals for PSG since joining the French club and there was a feeling that this year might see a different winner.

Poland striker Lewandowski would have been a shoe-in in 2020, when he scored 45 goals in 37 games for Bayern, only for the awards to be cancelled.

He ended last season with a remarkable 41 Bundesliga goals but had to settle for second place in the voting for the

KEY NUMBERS

53 Robert Lewandowski has scored 53 goals across all comps for FC Bayern in 2021; the most among all players in the big five European leagues. Lewandowski has averaged a goal every 67 minutes in this period, which is 42 minutes fewer than Lionel Messi (109).

7 Lionel Messi, now seven-times winner of the Ballon d'Or, was involved in nine goals for Argentina in the Copa América 2021 (four goals + five assists), the most of any player in the tournament.

41 Alexia Putellas has been directly involved in 41 goals in the Primera Iberdrola in 2021 (22 goals and 19 assists), more than any other player in the competition.

Ballon d'Or, which is organised by France Football magazine and voted for by a panel of journalists from around the world.

Lewandowski instead was given a consolation prize for the year's best goal-scorer and received glowing praise from Messi.

"I wanted to say to Robert that it was an honour to go up against him. He deserved to win it last year," Messi said.

Midfielder Jorginho, who won the Champions League with Chelsea and Euro 2020 with Italy, came third, followed by Real Madrid's Karim Benzema and another Chelsea player, N'Golo Kante.

Five-time winner Cristiano Ronaldo came sixth. He was absent from the ceremony.

Between them, Messi and Ronaldo have won 12 of the last 13 editions of

the Ballon d'Or with the exception coming in 2018 when Luka Modric claimed the prize.

Putellas succeeds Rapinoe

This is just the third year that a



PSG's Gianluigi Donnarumma poses for photo after winning Yashin Ballon d'Or Trophy as best goalkeeper



Barcelona player Alexia Putellas, left, holds the Women's Ballon d'Or trophy; Pedri holds 2021 Kopa Ballon d'Or for best young player



Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski holds the 2021 Ballon d'Or trophy for striker of the year

women's Ballon d'Or has been awarded, with Putellas following in the footsteps of Norway's Ada Hegerberg, winner in 2018, and the United States' 2019 World Cup superstar Megan Rapinoe.

Spain international Putellas, 27, captained Barcelona to victory in this year's Champions

League, scoring a penalty in the final as her side hammered Chelsea 4-0.

She also won a Spanish league and cup double with Barca, the club she joined as a teenager in 2012 and who are fast becoming the dominant force in the women's game.

Her Barcelona and Spain teammate Jennifer Hermoso was second, with Sam Kerr of Chelsea and Australia coming in third.

TOP 10 MEN'S PLAYERS (2021)			
Rank	Player	Team(s)	Points
1	Lionel Messi	Argentina, Barcelona, PSG	613
2	Robert Lewandowski	Poland, Bayern Munich	580
3	Jorginho	Italy, Chelsea	460
4	Karim Benzema	France, Real Madrid	239
5	N'Golo Kanté	France, Chelsea	186
6	Cristiano Ronaldo	Portugal, Juventus, Man Utd	178
7	Mohamed Salah	Égypt, Liverpool	121
8	Kevin De Bruyne	Belgium, Man City	73
9	Kylian Mbappé	France, Paris-SG	58
10	Gianluigi Donnarumma	Italy, AC Milan, PSG	36

ALL-TIME BALLON D'OR LEADERBOARD			
Player	Winner	2nd place	3rd place
Lionel Messi	7 (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2019, 2021)	5 (2008, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017)	1 (2007)
Cristiano Ronaldo	5 (2008, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017)	6 (2007, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2018)	1 (2019)
Michel Platini	3 (1983, 1984, 1985)	—	2 (1977, 1980)
Johan Cruyff	3 (1971, 1973, 1974)	—	1 (1975)
Marco van Basten	3 (1988, 1989, 1992)	—	—
Franz Beckenbauer	2 (1972, 1976)	2 (1974, 1975)	1 (1966)
Ronaldo	2 (1997, 2002)	1 (1996)	1 (1998)
Alfredo Di Stéfano	2 (1957, 1959)	1 (1956)	—

We did it together bro: Ravindra to Patel

PTI ■ KANPUR

New Zealand's Indian-origin spinner Rachin Ravindra, who played a pivotal role in helping his side draw the first Test against India, said he was quite nervous about how the game would pan out as far as his bowling was concerned.

The 22-year-old Ravindra, in the company of Indian-born Ajaz Patel (2 off 23 balls), held a 91-ball vigil that yielded 18 runs for him to save the match for his side which was nine down in pursuit of 284 on the final day here.

Patel, who was born in Mumbai, played for the first time in the country of his birth. He also picked up three wickets in the game even though Ravindra went wicket-less.

The 33-year-old Patel interviewed Ravindra for the New Zealand cricket team's official Twitter handle and recalled his own Test debut.

"I remember my my first Test match, I was really nervous, and my hands were shaking when I first got the ball. How was it for you?" Patel asked.



Ravindra candidly admitted to having nerves of his own.

"I felt a bit nervous bowling wise. We were about four down in first innings when I was next, so definitely felt a few butterflies (that time), but I think after a few balls, I did what I do. Luckily it ended up okay," said Wellington-based player.

Ravindra has already a lot of attention for his Indian roots and his first name which is inspired by Indian greats Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid.

The youngster said he enjoyed playing in front of Indian fans.

"Being able to play in India in front of crazy fans. Glad to have done that. My mum and

dad have been such big influences on my career. I am sure that they are proud," said Ravindra.

"We did it together bro," he said, sharing a smile with Patel.

Later, in another video posted by New Zealand Cricket, Ravindra said the partnership with Patel was unforgettable.

"I think I was actually alright in the end, I knew my process, my training, and I backed myself to do it. You are kind of pretty focussed, taking in the crowd, you know, how loud they were..."

"It was quite nerve-wracking. I guess we (he and Patel) somehow managed our nerves together."

West Indies 69-1 after dismissing Sri Lanka for 204 on Day 2

AP ■ GALLE

West Indies made a steady start in reaching 69-1 after bowling out Sri Lanka for 204 before rain forced an early end to day two of the second cricket test on Tuesday.

Left-arm spinners Veerasammy Permaul and Jomel Warrican combined for nine Sri Lanka wickets with career-best performances.

When play was called, West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite was on 22 and Nkhrumah Bonner on 1. The tourists trailed Sri Lanka by 135 runs with nine wickets in hand.

Permaul, in his first test in more than five years, snared 5-35 to register his first five-wicket haul.

Warrican took 4-50, also a career best.

The pair ensured they reversed a good Sri Lanka start which featured a 106-run opening partnership. The last nine wickets went for 98 runs.

Sri Lanka resumed on 113-1, and Pathum Nissanka and Oshada Fernando added 26 more runs to the total before Permaul struck in the seventh over of the day. Fernando tried to play a cut shot close to his body and was caught behind by Joshua da Silva for 18.

Permaul took two wickets in one over, trapping Nissanka lbw for 73 to end an innings that lasted 148 deliveries and contained a six and five boundaries. Two deliveries later, he had Dhananjaya de Silva caught behind on 2.

Charith Asalanka, playing his first test, scored 10 before becoming Permaul's next wicket, caught by Bonner.

Pakistan beats Bangladesh by 8 wickets in 1st cricket test



AP ■ CHATTOGRAM

Opener Abid Ali missed out on back-to-back centuries by nine runs but Pakistan comfortably chased down a 202-run target to beat Bangladesh by eight wickets on Tuesday in the first cricket test.

Abid and Abdullah Shafique put on a 151-run partnership for the first wicket, their second consecutive 100-plus stand in the match to give Pakistan's chase a powerful start. Abid, who hit 133 in the first innings, struck 12 boundaries and scored 91 off 148 deliveries in the second innings.

Resuming Day 5 at 109 without loss, and just 93 runs away from the victory, Pakistan's openers appeared to be in full control until offspinner Mehidy Hasan

struck.

Shafique followed his first-innings half-century to reach 73 before Mehidy (1-59) trapped him lbw.

Seven overs later, left-arm spinner Taijul Islam (1-89) had Abid out lbw, baffling him with a sharp turn to make Pakistan 171-2.

Azhar Ali then combined with captain Babar Azam to complete the inevitable, hitting consecutive boundaries off Mehidy to finish off the game. Azhar was unbeaten on 24 and Azam was not out on 13.

Liton Das' maiden test century helped Bangladesh post 330 in its first innings, then Taijul Islam claimed 7-116 to bowl out Pakistan for 286 — giving the hosts a 44-run first innings lead.

South Africa tour on as of now: BCCI treasurer

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

BCCI treasurer Arun Dhumal on Tuesday said India's tour of South Africa remains on schedule provided the situation doesn't aggravate in the rainbow nation after a new COVID-19 variant was detected there.

India play the final Test against New Zealand in Mumbai and are scheduled to depart to Johannesburg from there on December 8 or 9 on a chartered flight. Dhumal expressed confidence the bio-bubble environment created by South Africa will keep the players safe. The first Test will be played in Johannesburg from December 17. "We stand with them (as they deal with this threat), the only thing is we won't compromise on players' safety. As of now we have a chartered flight going to Johannesburg as scheduled and players will be in a bio bubble," Dhumal told PTI.

On the possible change of venues within South Africa to deal with the threat, Dhumal said: "We are in constant touch with the Cricket South Africa (CSA) officials."

"Whatever best we can do to not compromise the series we will try and do but if situation aggravates and if it compromises our players' safety and health, we will see."

"In the end, whatever is the Government of India advisory, we will abide by that," Dhumal told PTI. Countries around the world have already pressed the panic button and imposed travel bans from South Africa but India has not done that. However, South Africa is among the "at risk" countries as per the revised guidelines of the Indian Government.

Sindhu leads India's campaign at World Tour Finals

PTI ■ BALI

PV Sindhu will look to ensure that her consistent run yields a title, while all eyes will also be on the fast-rising Lakshya Sen and the men's doubles pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty as they make their debut at the BWF World Tour Finals beginning here on Wednesday.

It will be the best ever representation for India at the year-end tournament with as many as seven of them qualifying for the



USD 1,50,000 event.

Save for mixed doubles, the Indians compete in all other categories with Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy, who made the cut after the completion of the Indonesia Open last week, set to represent the country in the women's doubles event.

The only Indian to win the prestigious title in 2018, reigning world champion Sindhu was a finalist at the event the year before and she will look for another good outing when she opens her campaign against

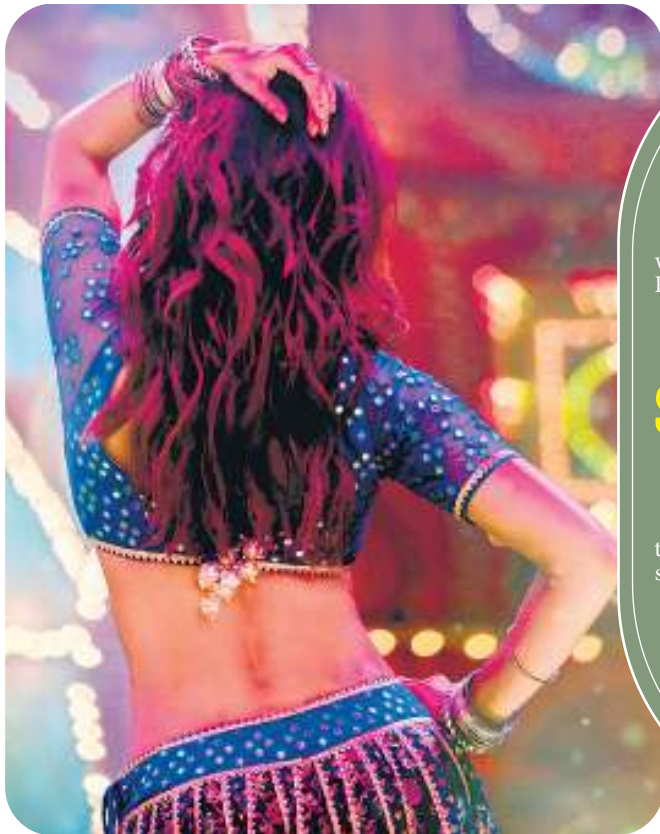
top seed Pornpawee Chochuwong of Thailand in group A.

Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist, has been consistent with three semifinal finishes in the last three events and is likely to make it to the knockout stage.

The 26-year-old from Hyderabad is expected to finish among the top two in the group as she has a good record against the other two opponents -- Denmark's Line Christophersen and Germany's Yvonne Li. Srikanth, only the fourth player ever to

win four Super Series titles in a year, has looked in good touch in the last few events with semifinal finishes at Indonesia Masters and Hylo Open.

The former world No.1 had reached the knockout stage of the year-ending event in 2014 and he will look to relive those moments when he begins his campaign against Malaysia's second seed Lee Zii Jia in group B which also comprises France's Toma Junior Popov and Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand.



The makers of *Pushpa*, on Monday, teased fans with Samantha's partial look from the sets of the special song she is performing for the film. This song will be Samantha's first ever dance number. The makers tweeted: "A Rocking Number with Icon Star Allu Arjun and Samantha Ruth Prabhu being shot in a gigantic set, Get ready

Gigantic set for Sam's special song in *Pushpa*

to witness the 'Sizzling Song of The Year' soon." In the poster, Samantha is dressed in blue skirt. The special song is being choreographed by Ganesh Acharya and it is touted to be a fast-paced song. Helmed by Sukumar, *Pushpa: The Rise*, based on real-life incidents, will release in theatres on December 17.



K RAMYA SREE

Satyadev was sold by *Skylab* director's clarity of thought

I am generally a very funny guy. But my face and body structure made me take up intense roles all this while." This is what Satyadev had to say in a one-liner on why he chose *Skylab*, a comedy-based, at a time when he is being regarded as an intense performer. *Skylab* is all set to hit the screens on December 4. A film directed by debutant Vishvak Khanderao and produced by Prithvi and Nithya Menen. The comedy film is a period drama set in the backdrop of Bandilingampally village in Karimnagar of Telangana state. For the first time, Satyadev will be seen in a full-time comedy film, and the actor is all happy playing Dr Anand in *Skylab*, "a humorous, fun-filled and quirky-author-backed role". "Whenever I played an intense character, my family and friends wondered why I was doing it, as they know how funny I am in real life," says Satyadev. About the film, the actor shares, "*Skylab* has situational comedy. This is a beautiful comedy film about the incidents that happen between the hero of the film and some villagers and the *Skylab*. The film is set in the backdrop of 1970s. Apart from fun, this film will talk about seriousness in life with a philosophical touch. This film caters to all classes."

Set in Karimnagar during 1970's means the film also has authentic language Telangana dialect, that the actors need to follow. How did Satyadev, a native of Vizag, cope up with the dialect? He answers, "I didn't find it difficult as I knew bits of pieces of Telangana slang. I didn't struggle to pull off the funny sequences either because Anand's role itself is funny. Moreover, since we performed with the sync sound shooting live on the locations; which needs no dubbing, I was even more relieved about maintaining the authentic Telangana slang in the film." *Skylab* also stars Nithya Menon as a journalist named Gowri, but there is no love track in this film. In fact, the actor shares he did no scene with Nithya Menon in the film, while they only interacted with each other off-screen. Meanwhile, when asked the actor what made him choose a comedy

film, Satyadev credits his director's clarity of thoughts. "Vivek Athreya told me to listen to the story. Director Vishvak Khanderao came to me with a suitcase to narrate the story. He had prepared a lot of data and information before explaining the script with many newspaper clippings and more. The storyboarding was done meticulously. He was crystal clear about the subject. I loved the clarity of thought in Vishvak. I was sold by it," says Satyadev, adding, "During the pandemic, I asked Vishvak if we should do a simple film. But the director was determined to make *Skylab* first. He wanted to deliver the project before he does something else." The actor is very confident about the film's success because no one has done a film on *Skylab* so far, a real-life incident. For this film, the actor had to shave off his beard and hair which otherwise he would never do. "I

want to do different genres. I am also doing a love story, a political thriller, and many more in the pipeline. I am happy I am able to do something different with every project. My role in *Godfather* too will be different about which I cannot talk now," shares an elated Satyadev, who is happy to have two theatrical releases during Covid times, one of which was a big success already.



After making her debut opposite Hrithik Roshan in Ashutosh Gowariker's *Mohenjo-Daro*, Pooja Hegde took the pan-India approach and worked in various regional film industries. The actress always wanted to be recognised as an Indian actor rather than an actor limited to just one particular industry. Talking about being a part of different film industries across India, Pooja said, "God has been really kind to have given me the opportunity to showcase my talent in different film industries and be given so much love by the audience. I always wanted to be known as an Indian actor and not let the barrier of language restrict my work. The idea is to do good work, work hard and prove your credibility." Revealing as to how she progresses from one project to another, the actress said, "The big question that an actor always has

Pooja Hegde: The idea is to do good work, prove your credibility

to face is 'what next?'. One has to go by their instinct, give their 100 per cent and leave the rest up to the Almighty. I have been doing that ever since I started my acting career." She also praised Ahan Shetty for she feels he is a promising talent, she said, "Ahan's debut is certainly one of the most significant and talked-about ones in Bollywood over the last few years. With his tall demeanour, rich baritone and machismo, Ahan looks like a perfect

hero on the big screen and has an arresting screen presence." "Ahan's raw and intense avatar in *Tadap* is being appreciated a lot and I'm sure Ahan will not just prove his mettle as an actor, but also win audiences' hearts. Ahan has a promising bright future and he will go a long, long way," she added. Pooja will soon be seen in Bollywood with *Kabhi Eid Kabhi Diwali* and *Cirkus*, the multi-lingual *Radheshyam* and Kollywood film *Beast*.



Raashi looks like an angel in *Pakka Commercial* teaser

Raashi Khanna who has her hands full for next two years is currently busy shooting for *Pakka Commercial*, starring Gopichand. The film, directed by Maruthi and produced by UV Creations and GA2 Pictures,

also has Sathyaraj, Rao Ramesh and Anasuya Bharadwaj in crucial roles. On Monday, the actress celebrated her birthday. The makers of *Pakka Commercial* took to twitter to share a teaser where the actress looks like an angel. The actress

seems to play a pakka commercial role in this film, while Gopichand will be seen as a lawyer in this Maruthi's magnum opus. The shooting of the film went on floors in the first week of March has Jakes Bejoy as the music composer.



Lavanya signs action-comedy film

Lavanya Tripathi, who was last seen in *Chavi Kaburu Challenga*, has signed an action and comedy film, directed by *Mattu Vadalara* fame Ritesh Rana. According to the latest update, the yet-to-be titled film was officially launched on Monday with a puja. The first shot was directed by Koratala Siva. Naresh Agastya, Vennela Kishore, Satya, and Gundu Sudarshan will be playing important roles in the film. Kala Bhairava is rendering

the tunes and Suresh Sarangam is handling the cinematography. The movie will be bankrolled by Clap entertainment in association with Mythri Movie Makers. Speaking on the occasion, Lavanya Tripathi said, "I have been working on my comic quotient, and timing, apart from body language for my role. It has been a great experience and I am looking forward to start the shoot." The actress will be undergoing a makeover looks-wise too.



Balayya's talk show sets new OTT record

Telugu star Nandamuri Balakrishna's maiden celebrity talk show on Aha has set a record as *Unstoppable With NBK* has clocked over 4 million video plays on the OTT platform. An official statement from Aha Video said Balakrishna's talk show *Unstoppable With NBK* has seen over 4 million video plays. As per the reports, this number is said to be the highest tally for any talk show in the Telugu OTT space. The curtain riser episode of the talk show had Manchu Mohan Babu as the guest, who was accompanied by Manchu Vishnu Vardhan Babu and Manchu Lakshmi Prasanna. Nani had appeared to chat with Balakrishna on the second episode. Both episodes struck a chord with the OTT audience.