

**ANALYSIS 7**  
 VILLAGE SECRETARIATS OF  
 AP: DOORSTEP WELFARE

**MONEY 8**  
 GDP LIKELY TO GROW  
 MORE THAN 9.5% IN '22: REPORT

**SPORTS 11**  
 PV SINDHU GETS FIRST ROUND  
 BYE IN WORLD C'SHIPS...

VIJAYAWADA, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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 SEERAT KAPOOR  
 GROOVES TO  
 BADSHAH'S  
 PARTY ANTHEM  
 Page 12

## BILL CANCELLING 3 FARM LAWS GETS PRESIDENTIAL SIGN-OFF

President Ram Nath Kovind has signed a bill to cancel three controversial farm laws, against which farmers - especially from Haryana, Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh - have been protesting for a year. The bill to cancel the three farm laws was passed in record time in both houses of parliament on the first day of the winter session on Monday. The farm laws repeal bill was passed in Lok Sabha within four minutes amid opposition demands for a discussion. In Rajya Sabha, it was passed after a short discussion.

## 'WHAT IS UPA? THERE IS NO UPA': BENGAL CM MAMATA BANERJEE

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee -- seen as making a beeline for the political space occupied by the Congress -- today indicated that she is visualising a fresh opposition line-up for the next general elections. And this, she made clear, is being done because the Congress is not fighting against "the ongoing fascism". "What is UPA? There is no UPA," Banerjee declared after her meeting with Nationalist Congress chief Sharad Pawar in Mumbai this afternoon. Mr Pawar, who was a key interlocutor of the opposition ahead of the 2019 contest, spelled it out: "Template for 2024".

## 6 PASSENGERS FROM 'AT-RISK' COUNTRIES TESTED COVID POSITIVE: MAHARASHTRA

Six international passengers arriving from 'at risk' countries - which include those that have confirmed cases of the highly transmissible Omicron strain - have tested Covid positive, the Maharashtra Health Department said Wednesday morning. All six are either asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic and their samples have been sent for genome sequencing, the Health Department said. Contact tracing for all six passengers is underway. Three of the six have been traced to the Mumbai, Kalyan-Dombivli and Meera-Bhayandar areas, with the fourth traced to Pune. Two others - arrivals from Nigeria - have been traced to Pimpri-Chinchwad.

## INDIA'S NOVEMBER COVID COUNT LOWEST SINCE MAY, 2020

With over 3.1 lakh fresh coronavirus cases, November saw the lowest number of people contracting the viral disease in the country since May last year. The monthly tally of fresh Covid cases registered a decline for the sixth time in a row in November. The number of daily cases peaked on May 6, when the country registered 4,14,188 Covid cases in a span of 24 hours. On Wednesday, the number of active cases of the infection was recorded below one lakh in the country after 547 days. The daily rise in the number of new coronavirus cases has been below 20,000 for 54 straight days and less than 50,000 daily new cases have been reported for 156 consecutive days now.

# CM seeks support from NITI Aayog for development of AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has requested Niti Aayog Vice-Chairman Rajiv Kumar to extend support to ensure development of the State.

During a meeting with the Niti Aayog team, AP officials sought assistance for getting the special status tag, industrial concessions and tax exemptions similar to the ones being offered to backward districts like Koraput, Balangir and Bundelkhand.

They explained the welfare initiatives that are being implemented under Navaratnalu and the development projects launched in the State.

On agriculture, they said the government has established Rythu Bharosa Kendralu (RBK) at the village level to provide farmers a com-



prehensive solution. This offers agri testing labs, free electricity, zero interest crop loans, crop insurance, price stabilization, input subsidy, and Rythu Bharosa services.

The officials said that construction of eight fishing harbours, four fish landing centres, aqua

hubs, processing units and integrated labs have been launched at a cost Rs 3,176.61 crore.

Niti Aayog Vice-Chairman Rajiv Kumar suggested focus on organic agri produce through RBKs, as they would bring in good returns.

## Natural farming promotes health, says NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Natural farming contributes to public health and gives good income to the farmer, NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Dr Rajiv Kumar said on Wednesday.

NITI Aayog Members inspected the natural farming techniques used at the Battula Satish Reddy Farm on Wednesday at Veerapanenigudem in Gannavaram Mandal.

## Centre claims its paddy policy is clear

❑ No confusion among states on procurement across the country

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Seeking to clarify its position on paddy procurement in view of the Centre-state row, the Union government said on Wednesday: "There is no confusion among States regarding rice procurement policy of the Government of India. The interests of farmers are always protected by the Government of India as outreach and volume of procurement has been increasing over years, thereby percolating the benefit of MSP to large number of farmers".

The pace of procurement had been increasing continuously in comparison to the pace of production, indicating increased outreach of Minimum Support Price operations to farmers.

The Centre told Members of Parliament that the target for Rabi crop was decided before the onset of the season. The Centre said:



## AP, Odisha & C'garh too asked Center to take parboiled rice

Apart from Telangana, the Union Government has received representations from Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Chhattisgarh to procure boiled rice. Over the last couple of years, Telangana has sent at least eight representations to the Center over the issue of parboiled rice procurement, as per a reply given in the Lok Sabha. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister wrote to the Center in April 2021 about procuring parboiled rice. In the letter dated 26-04-2021, AP urged the Center to accept boiled rice through FCI in all the districts of Andhra Pradesh during Rabi 2020-21. The Center, responding to AP on May 27, 2021, agreed for delivery of 4 LMT of the surplus CMR (custom milled rice) in the form of parboiled rice to FCI against Rabi crop of KMS 2020-21 and remaining surplus CMR in the form of raw rice.

"Increase or decrease of procurement estimate is decided on the basis of estimated production, marketable surplus and agricultural crop pattern".

The Center acknowledged that

Telangana CM had a written letter to the Prime Minister to enhance rice procurement target beyond 40 lakh tonnes during the ongoing Kharif season to 90 lakh tonnes from Telangana as had been done in the case of Punjab.

## CM extends support to family members of Sitarama Sastry

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed officials to extend support to the family of film lyricist Sirivennela Sitarama Sastry.

The officials informed the Chief Minister that they have spoken to Sirivennela's family and are also monitoring Sastry's condition.

They said they have spoken to the hospital management as per directions of the Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy regarding the expenses incurred by his family for his treatment and that it will be paid from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

The Chief Minister directed the officials to look into possibilities of allotting a plot to Sirivennela's family.

Leading songwriter Sirivennela Sitarama Shastri, who was admitted to the Secunderabad KIMS Hospital on November 24 with pneumonia and cancer, died on Tuesday.

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy came to know on Monday that Sirivennela Sitaramashastri had already spent nearly Rs 17 lakh for his treatment.

CMO officials brought to the notice of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy that Sirivennela has not earned anything big financially. Moreover, he had produced a film and lost money.

## AP employees to launch agitation over demands

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Government employees in Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday announced a series of agitation programmes to press for their long-pending demands, including implementation of the Pay Revision Commission recommendations.

The employees' associations served notice to the state government, urging it to immediately act on the outstanding issues.

Leaders of the AP Joint Action Committee and the APJAC Amaravati met Chief Secretary Sameer Sharma at the Secretariat



and served notice. They expressed their displeasure

over non-fulfilment of assurances given to the employees in the past.

## CM to tour 3 flood-hit districts for two days

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy will visit three flood-hit districts on December 2 and 3. Jagan will visit Kadapa, Chittoor, and Nellore districts' flood-hit areas and would interact with the flood victims.

Jagan will depart from his residence to Gannavaram airport at 9 am on Thursday and will reach Kadapa airport at 10.15 am.

He would go to Pulpathuru village by helicopter, walk in the flood-affected areas and would interact with people in the relief camp. The CM will visit Eggumandapali habitation and after interacting with flood victims would inspect the Annamayya dam site. He would conduct a review meeting with



district officials. Later, the CM will inspect places in Kadapa district. The Chief Minister will reach Renigunta airport on Thursday at around 3.30 pm.

## Nov GST mop-up at Rs 1.31 lakh cr; second highest since roll-out

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection in November grew 25 per cent to Rs 1.31 lakh crore -- second highest since its implementation -- indicating economic recovery with normalisation of business activity and increased compliance, a finance ministry statement said on Wednesday.

This is the fifth month in a row that the revenues from goods sold and services rendered was over Rs 1 lakh crore.

"The gross GST revenue collected in the month of November 2021 is Rs 1,31,526 crore of which CGST is Rs 23,978 crore, SGST is Rs 31,127 crore, IGST is Rs 66,815 crore and Cess is Rs 9,606 crore," the statement said.

## NTRUHS employees boycott duties

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The employees of Dr. NTR University of Health Sciences (NTRUHS) boycotted duties on Wednesday and squatted in front of the university gate in protest against the diversion of funds.

They alleged that Rs 400 crore belonging to the university was diverted to the Financial Services Corporation by Vice-Chancellor Shyam Prasad. The employees said they would continue to boycott duties till the government gave back the diverted funds.

The university employees alleged that instead of developing the university the officials were involved in illegal activities. They said that Rs 400 crore was diverted by the V-C violating rules. The V-C does not have the right to divert university funds, they said.

## RETRIEVAL OF DIVERTED FUNDS



The employees said the university's programmes were being carried out with the interest of the Rs 400 crore. They pointed out that the university was incurring an annual expense of Rs 30 crore while the government was releasing only Rs 5 crore.

They said that this would hit the students. Quality medical education and practical training cannot be provided due to lack of funds. The salaries of contract employees were being stopped and there is no job security for employees, they alleged.

## DIFFERENT STROKES Can anti-BJP KCR and anti-Cong Jagan get along well?

 SNCN ACHARYULU  
 ■ HYDERABAD

Differing perspectives of Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on the churn in national politics may strike a discordant note in their mutual ties. It could even lead to a widening of the perceived gap between the Chief Ministers of the Telugu states on inter-state issues.

The sudden change in KCR's attitude towards BJP may affect the

relations between the Telugu states. Until recently the Telugu Chief Ministers had tried their best to maintain cordial relations with the Union government as well as the BJP's top guns Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, though they were fighting with BJP at the state level. But now KCR has become a bitter enemy to BJP at the national level also. As for Jagan, the Congress has been a bitter enemy from the beginning.

## TODAY

### ALMANAC

**Month & Paksham:**

Kartik &amp; Krishna Paksha

**Tithi :** Trayodashi 20:26

**Nakshatram :** Swati 16:27

**Rahukalam :** 1:28 pm - 2:51 pm

**Yamagandam :** 6:34 am - 7:57 am

**Varjyam :** 9:25 pm - 10:50 pm

**Gulika :** 9:20 am - 10:42 am

**Amritakalam :** 8:30 am - 9:57 am

**Abhijit Muhurtham :** 11:43 am - 12:27 pm

## VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

**Forecast:** MOSTLY SUNNY

**Temp:** 30/21

**Humidity:** 68%

**Sunrise:** 06:20 AM

**Sunset:** 05:33 PM

Updated DECEMBER 01, 2021 5:00 PM

## Centre puts off resumption of intl flights

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Wednesday decided not to resume scheduled international flights from December 15, less than a week after announcing the decision in the wake of rising concerns over the COVID variant Omicron.

Aviation watchdog DGCA said the effective date for resumption of scheduled commercial international passenger services will be notified in due course. Scheduled international flights remain suspended since March 23, 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The latest move also comes



after Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 27 asked officials to review the plans for easing international travel

restrictions amid concerns over Omicron.

## 6 cases detected after screening 3K passengers: Govt

**New Delhi:** Six Covid cases were reported on Wednesday after screening 3,476 passengers of 11 flights that arrived in India from "at-risk" countries and the samples have been sent for genomic sequencing, the Health Ministry said amid concerns over the 'Omicron' variant of coronavirus.





## Cop held for rape attempt on minor girl

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A constable was arrested in an attempt to rape case on Thursday.

The accused identified as Sekhar, was working at the Kukatpally Police Station.

According to the police, Sekhar who hails from Shankarpally is a constable at the Kukatpally Police Station. On Tuesday night, he allegedly tried to sexually assault a minor girl near his home.

When the girl started shouting for help, locals caught him. They beat him up and handed him over to the ACP, Chevella. A case was registered against Sekhar at the Shankarpally Police Station. Higher police authorities promised local people including the family of the victim that Sekhar will be suspended after probe.

# Cyclone threat to coastal Andhra Pradesh, Odisha

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Indian meteorological scientists have warned about a cyclone threat to the north coastal districts of AP and the south east of Odisha.

Tuesday's low pressure over south Thailand and its neighbourhood emerged into central Andaman Sea on Wednesday evening.

It is likely to move west, north westwards and turn into a depression over south-east and adjoining east central Bay of Bengal by December 2.

The depression is expected to intensify into a cyclonic storm over central Bay of Bengal by December 3.

The IMD said the system is likely to move north westwards, intensify further, and reach the shore between north AP and Odisha coasts by December 4.



Light to moderate rains are possible at many places and isolated heavy rain is likely to commence over north coastal Andhra Pradesh and south coastal Odisha from December 3 evening.

On December 4, heavy to very heavy rains are likely at

a few places and isolated extremely heavy rain is possible over north coastal AP and coastal Odisha.

From December 2 to December 4, squally winds ranging from 55 kmph to 110 kmph are likely across coastal AP.

## State-level committees soon to save accident victims in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State and district level committees will be constituted in the State to manage a scheme to save the lives of road accident victims, the Director-General of Police, Gautam D. Sawang, said.

The scheme will be implemented by the Centre and monitored by the state and district level committees.

An incentive of Rs 5,000 will be given to Good Samaritans who rush accident victims to hospitals soon after the mishap. In a press release on Wednesday, the DGP said that the Centre launched this scheme to save the lives of accident victims.

He said a state-level committee will be constituted with the Principal Secretary, Home, as Chairman, Transport - Commissioner as Member Secretary, the Health Commissioner and the Additional DG, Road Safety, as



Members.

He said district-level committees will be set up with the Collector as the Chairman, Deputy Transport-commissioner as Member Secretary, the SP and the Chief Medical Officer as Members.

The Central scheme will be implemented from 2021 October to March 31, 2026. He said the district and State-

level committees will monitor the implementation of the scheme.

Three proposals will be selected by the state-level committee and will be sent to the Centre for selection of the national-level award, which has a cash award of Rs 1 lakh. Every year 10 Good Samaritans will be awarded Rs 1 lakh.

## Centre claims its paddy policy is clear

Continued from page 1

Minister of State for Agriculture Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti replied: "The target set for paddy (in terms of rice) procurement by the Government of India for central pool during 2021-22 (Kharif Crop) is 521.89 LMT. Target for Rabi crop is decided before the onset of Rabi season".

In a written reply, MoS said that during Rabi season of KMS 2020-21, a record 61.87 LMT of rice had been procured by the Telangana State Government/its agencies against the target of 55.00 LMT of rice fixed in consultation with the State Government. The MoS said: "The surplus rice offered by the State government is accepted by FCI under the central pool stock".

Sadhvi said that at the States' Food Secretaries meeting held on 17August2021, procurement estimate of 40 LMT of

### AP, Odisha & Chhattisgarh too...

Continued from page 1

Odisha sent three letters. Chief Minister of Odisha, on 10 October 2021, urged the Centre to take maximum parboiled rice up to 10 LMT during KMS 2021-22, which should be in form of fortified rice. The Centre approved only 50% of this request and conveyed approval for delivery of 5 LMT of parboiled fortified rice to FCI in Odisha during KMS 2021-22 and remaining surplus GMR in the form of raw rice. Chhattisgarh wrote five letters to the Centre regarding procurement of parboiled rice. The State Government of Chhattisgarh, in September 2021, requested the Centre to accept 23 LMT of parboiled rice and 24 LMT of raw rice through FCI during KMS 2021-22. The state government was allowed procurement of 61.65 LMT of rice during KMS 2021-22, in October 2021 and it was made clear that only raw rice will be accepted by FCI as surplus during KMS 2021-22.

KMS	AP	TS
2018-19	48.06 LMT	51.90 LMT
2019-20	55.33 LMT	74.54 LMT
2020-21	56.67 LMT	94.53 LMT

rice for the Telangana State was fixed by the Government of India in consultation with the State Government and the Food Corporation of India

(FCI), considering the estimated production, marketable surplus and agricultural crop pattern.

The Center had procured

more paddy from TS than from Andhra over the past three years. It shared the details of paddy (in terms of rice) procured under the central pool in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana by state agencies in coordination with the FCI during the last three years. Both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are DCP (decentralized procurement system) states, wherein procurement is undertaken by State Govt. through its agencies.

In a reply about debt of FCI, the Center said that the Government of India was aware of all the debt obligations relating to FCI. As per the Center, "In the current financial year, FCI has received subsidy of Rs. 1,25,200 cr till October and the current debt obligation of FCI as on 31.10.2021 is Rs. 46,173 cr. The regular allotment under the budgeted food subsidy is released to FCI by GOI from time to time".

## Can anti-

Continued from page 1

KCR has directed MPs belonging to his party to fight with the Union government in Parliament. He has told the MPs to bring pressure on the Union government regardless of which party is waging a fight with the central government in Parliament. He has asked them to go to the podium to bring pressure on the Centre. It is a different matter whether the other parties opposing the Centre in Parliament would benefit if the TRS joins hands with them should the demands in question be state-specific.

Although KCR is opposing the BJP bitterly, Jagan continues to maintain cordial relations with the Centre, but for some recent hiccups. In Andhra Pradesh, politically Jagan has no threat from BJP or Congress. But in Telangana, KCR is deemed to be facing threat politically from BJP and Congress.

After the previous Assembly elections in Telangana, Congress has not strengthened, though BJP has been gradually strengthening its position. BJP's growth in Telangana will be politically more disconcerting to TRS than a somewhat toned up Congress. Given recent overtures, if KCR continues to strongly oppose BJP at the national level while cozying up to Congress, he may lose the support of Jagan with regard to the proposed Federal Front.

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

## AP employees to launch

Continued from page 1

They said it was unfortunate that the government has not fulfilled the promise to take a call on implementing the Pay Revision Commission (PRC) report by October end.

They submitted a five-page notice listing out the agitation programmes. They told reporters that the Chief Secretary assured them that the issues would be addressed by December 7.

The associations said the government owed at least Rs 1,600

crore to employees in the form of provident fund, general life insurance, leave encashment, and other benefits.

Release of pending dearness allowance, regularisation of contract employees, abolition of contributory pension scheme, streamlining of employee health cards and hike in salaries of outsourced and other contractual staff are among the key demands of the employees' associations.

The leaders said though the PRC submitted its report more than three years ago, the government has not done anything

except giving 27 per cent interim relief.

They found fault with the government for not even giving them the PRC report. They made it clear that the recommendations of the PRC should not be diluted and the employees should get a revision of 55 per cent.

They also took exception to certain remarks made by Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy and alleged that he is trying to create a wedge between the government and the employees.

### CM extends support to family members of Sitarama ...

Continued from page 1

Jagan Mohan Reddy asked officials to talk to the KIMS Hospital management and tell them that Sirivennela's hospital expenses would be borne by the AP Government. The Chief

Minister also spoke on the phone with Sirivennela's family.

CMO officials spoke to the KIMS Hospital management and sent a State government funded LOC to speed up the process. The KIMS Hospital management was

also asked to return the money paid by Sirivennela's family.

Even though the Sirivennela family did not ask the Chief Minister for help, Chief Minister Jagan said that it was a privilege to help Sirivennela's family.

## CM seeks support from NITI Aayog

Continued from Page 1

The authorities explained in detail healthcare initiatives like village urban clinics, family doctor, construction of new medical colleges, super specialty hospitals, reforms under Nadu-Nedu, recruitment of medical staff and Aarogyasri. They also discussed measures taken to prevent anaemia in women and children.

The AP officials described the reforms launched in the field of education along with the schemes that are being implemented. Rajiv Kumar inquired about the Amma Vodi scheme along with the categorisation of schools and functioning of anganwadis.

The CM explained the steps taken to keep teachers in proportion to the number of chil-

dren ensuring subject-wise teaching.

Regarding women empowerment, the Chief Minister explained the objectives of employment programmes like Cheyuta and Aasara.

The officials also described housing projects for the poor, the steps taken for providing good governance through village and ward secretariats and the rolling out of the Disha App to ensure women's safety. Rajiv Kumar praised the AP government for launching the Disha App.

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy urged Niti Aayog to provide adequate assistance to streamline power generation as the Discoms are facing severe losses. The officials brought the financial difficulties of the State due to the post-partition

consequences to the attention of the Niti Aayog team and explained that the loss of Hyderabad had resulted in huge revenue loss while the promises on special status tag have not been fulfilled. They said the per capita income in AP is much lower than in Telangana.

The officials asked the Niti Aayog team to set up the Kadapa steel plant and to develop other infrastructure facilities as promised in the Bifurcation Act. They demanded sanction for four iron ore mines in Anantapur for the Kadapa steel plant and to provide GST reimbursement and other incentives.

The AP officials also asked for financial assistance for ports and to get the revised estimates of the Polavaram

project approved.

The officials sought help for the Rayalaseema Drought Mitigation Project and the 1,250 MW power plant in the Upper Sileru Project.

The officials asked the Niti Aayog team to get the Rs 6,284 crore arrears from Telangana power utilities cleared and for money to bridge the resource gap of Rs 18,969 crore.

The officials explained the issues related to the irrational identification of beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act and said it has become a huge loss for the State.

Niti Aayog Vice-Chairman Dr Rajiv Kumar said the meeting was intended to foster cooperative federalism through engagement with States and Union Territories.

Continued from page 1

He will first visit Vellacheruvu ST colony in Renigunta Mandal, where he will interact with villagers and review the damage caused by the flash floods.

Jagan will inspect infrastructure damages at Papanaidupet and Padipeta villages in Chittoor district where several causeways-bridges were washed away in the Swarnamukhi flood waters recently.

The Chief Minister will later hold a review meeting with elected representatives and officials at the Sri Padmavathi guest house. Jagan will leave for inspection of flood affected areas in Nellore district on Friday morning.

The Chief Minister will visit the rain-affected areas of SPSR Nellore district including Nellore city, rural and Kovur constituent

cies on December 3.

The CM would proceed by road to Devarapalem in Nellore rural Mandal to inspect the damage and breaches to the local R&B roads apart from a major breach to the flood bank of Penna river at Jonnawada.

Jagan will inspect damage to crops besides sand deposits in the agriculture fields apart from the ravaged Panchayat Raj roads at Penuballi village.

He would examine the extent of damages at Bhagat Singh Colony in Nellore and interact with the victims.

He will visit a photo exhibition being arranged at the Zilla Parishad Office in Nellore city and interact with officials on the rains and flood situation that created havoc in the region. After that he will proceed to Renigunta airport.

### 25 of 45 warehouse projects...

Continued from page 1

However, 25 projects have been withdrawn due to unavailability of land. These projects were to

come up in districts of Chittoor, Guntur, East and West Godavari, Kadapa, Krishna, Nellore, Prakasham and Visakhapatnam, she added.

### Natural farming promotes health, says NITI Aayog...

Continued from Page 1

Dr Rajiv Kumar said that it is fortunate that many young farmers of Andhra Pradesh are following natural farming. The other farmers in the village are taking up natural farming inspired by Satish Reddy's Farm, he said.

He said that natural farming using organic fertilisers will not only reduce the cost of cultivation but also generate higher income, prevent water wastage, protect the environment and reduce pollution.

He said the Centre was giving priority to natural farming and was trying to expand natural farming to four other states, including Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh.

Dr Rajiv Kumar said that not only the farmers of Veerapanenigudem but farmers of nearby villages too should be

made aware of natural farming. Battula Satish Reddy, the owner Satish Reddy Farms, said he started agriculture after completing B.Sc in Computer Science.

He said he has five acres and cultivated one acre of paddy in his first year through natural farming methods. The cost of cultivation has come down due to the use of solid and liquid jeevamrutham.

He said the liquid manure was made from cow dung, cow urine and jaggery, and later he had reduced the cost by replacing jaggery with palm seeds. Soil fertility is also increasing due to natural farming, he said.

He told the NITI Aayog team that he was cultivating 18 varieties of commercial crops and millet which can be grown in 45 days.

NITI Aayog Special Secretary

Dr K. Rajeshwara Rao, Senior Adviser Dr Neelam Patil, Advisors Ch. P. Sarath Reddy, Avinash Mishra, Senior Associate Sujit Kumar, young professional Manpreet Kaur, Vice Chairman Additional Private Secretary Shivam Tatia, State Farmer Empowerment Agency Executive Vice Chairman TK Vijay Kumar, Secretary, State Planning Department, GSRKR Vijay Kumar, Agriculture Commissioner Ch. Arun Kumar, Collector J. Nivas, CEO of Farmer Empowerment Agency Rama Rao, Joint Collectors Dr K. Madhavi Latha, L. Shivashankar, Vijayawada Sub Collector GSS Praveen Chand, RDO K. Rajyalakshmi, Parks Department Deputy Director Ravikumar and officials from other departments were present.



# Tension during ‘Mahapadyatra’

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Farmers and women from Amaravati participating in the ongoing ‘Mahapadyatra’ staged a sit-in on the road in Nellore district on Wednesday to protest the alleged restrictions imposed by the police. Alleging that the police are creating hurdles in their foot march, they sat on the road near Marupuru, leading to a huge traffic jam and triggering tension.

The protestors raised slogans denouncing the attempts by the police to impose restrictions.

The protest led to a nearly two km-long traffic jam, causing hardship to motorists.

The farmers and women, who are demanding that Amaravati be developed as the only state capital, resumed their ‘Mahapadyatra’ for the 31st day on Wednesday. Former minister and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader S. Chandramohan Reddy welcomed them.

The protestors alleged that the police at the instance of the leaders of the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) were creating problems during their



walkathon. They said they were denied any place for a night halt at Marupuru.

After completing the day's programme on Tuesday, the farmers and women were scheduled to stay at an ashram in Marupuru. However, the police conveyed to them that the villagers do not want them to stay there. This forced the farmers and women to go back to Nellore and resume the padyatra from Marupuru on Wednesday.

Called ‘Court to Temple’, the walkathon from Amaravati to Tirupati began on November

1. Raising slogans of ‘Jai Amaravati’, the protestors are covering 10-15 km every day. Organised by Amaravati Parirakshana Samithi and Amaravati Joint Action Committee (JAC), it is scheduled to reach Tirupati on December 15 after stopping at 70 villages.

The Amaravati farmers have been protesting for over 700 days against the state government's plans for trifurcation of the state capital. With the ‘Mahapadyatra’, their protest entered a new phase.

The police restrictions on

the ‘Mahapadyatra’ at a few places in Prakasam district had also evoked strong protests from the organisers.

Last week, the YSRCP government withdrew two legislations enacted last year for trifurcation of the state capital. However, the government clarified that this was done to bring new and comprehensive legislation for developing three state capitals.

The protestors have vowed to continue their protest till the government drops its plans and continues with Amaravati as the only capital.

## Expose YSRCP's misdeeds, Naidu tells TDP leaders

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu has reiterated that public anger was rising against the Jagan Mohan Reddy Government in Andhra Pradesh because of its unlawful and autocratic decisions. “The TDP would give priority to those leaders and activists who effectively expose the ruling party's misdeeds and inefficiency,” he added.

The TDP chief held a meeting with the party leaders of Kondapalli municipality on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, he lauded the efforts made by the party leaders there to win the recent municipal polls.

Naidu pointed out that the CM was following a confrontationist policy towards all constitutional institutions. “Jagan Mohan Reddy held the local body elections in total violation of the court orders. The violations and election offences of the ruling YSRCP should be explained to the people,” he said.

# CM orders action against campaign directed at OTS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed officials to take strict action against those spreading malicious propaganda about the One-Time Settlement (OTS) Scheme.

Addressing a meeting at the CMO on Wednesday, the CM asked officials to clarify on the doubts of beneficiaries by creating awareness among them and by clearly explaining the benefits of the scheme including details of their loans and interest, which were being waived through the Registrar of documents.

He said that the OTS scheme would benefit millions of poor and would provide them legal rights to their properties.

Meanwhile, addressing a press conference, the Minister for Municipal Administration, Botsa Satyanarayana, said that the OTS scheme is voluntary.



He said that the government had launched this initiative to help the poor by providing complete rights to their house by paying a nominal sum for regularisation.

He said that the Opposition is trying to sabotage the OTS although they are aware that it would benefit the poor.

The Minister flayed opposition leader Chandrababu Naidu for trying to betray the people again and asked him

why he didn't think of such a scheme during his tenure.

Responding to the controversial circular issued by Santhabommali Panchayat Secretary K. Prasad, the Minister suspected the opposition's hand behind it as the incident took place in the constituency of TDP leader Atchannaidu and said that the government had already initiated action against the Secretary.

## Sri Srinivasa Kalyanam performed on a grand note

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Sri Venkateswara Swamy's special celestial wedding was held at the Sri Bhooametha Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Dokiparru on Wednesday in festive mood.

The special kalyanam of the deity was performed by the founder trustees of the temple, P V Krishnareddy and Sudha Reddy. They both sat on the pedestal and performed the kalyanam of lord Srinivasa.

Vedic scholars explained the significance of Venkateswara Kalyanam amid the chanting of mantras. The temple was decorated with flowers to officiate the marriage of Sri Venkateswara. Vedic scholars explained that those who do not have daughters consider god-



dess Lakshmi and goddess Padmavati as their own daughters and perform Srinivasa Kalyanam according to the Divyashree Vaikhanasa Bhagavachchastra path.

Before the celestial wedding of Sri Venkateswara, the vedic scholars performed a special

bath of the deities. On Wednesday morning, after the Nitya Archana and Tomala service, the idols were brought to the Snapana Mandapam and anointed with milk, yoghurt, honey and spices, and then performed Chakrasnanam in the specially decorated conch on

the temple premises.

P V Subbareddy, Sumalata, P Veera Reddy, Vijayalakshmi, Kommareddy Bapireddy, Vijaya Bhaskaramma P Nagireddy, Prasanna couple, their family members and a large number of devotees participated in Srivari Chakrasnanam and kalyanam.

# Biswajit Dasgupta assumes charge as ENC FOC-in-C

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Vice Admiral Biswajit Dasgupta, has taken over as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C) of the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) at a ceremonial parade held at the Naval Base here on Wednesday.

Vice Admiral Dasgupta inspected the guard of honour and reviewed naval personnel drawn from various ships and establishments of the ENC.

The ceremony was attended by all Flag Officers and Commanding Officers of ships, submarines and naval establishments.

Vice Admiral Biswajit Dasgupta is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy. He was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1985 and is a specialist in navigation and direction.

He is a graduate of the Defence Services Command and Staff College, Bangladesh, Army War College, Mhow, and the National Defence College, New Delhi.

He has commanded four frontline ships namely the missile corvettes INS Nishank, INS Karmuk, stealth frigate INS Tabar and the aircraft carrier INS Virat.

Vice Admiral Biswajit



Dasgupta has held other operational, training and staff appointments like the Commander Work Up at Headquarters with the Indian Naval Work Up Team (Kochi), Directing Staff at the Defence Services Staff College (Wellington), Officer-in-Charge of the Navy's Navigation and Direction School, Naval Assistant to the Chief of Naval Staff and Fleet Operations Officer of the Western Fleet.

After promotion to Flag Rank, he was appointed the Chief Staff Officer (Operations) at the Headquarters of the Western Naval Command at Mumbai.

During 2017-18, he held command of the Eastern Fleet at Visakhapatnam and after

that was appointed as Additional Director General at NCC Headquarters, New Delhi. After promotion to the rank of Vice-Admiral, he was appointed as the Controller, Personnel Services, at the Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy) at New Delhi.

Vice Admiral Biswajit Dasgupta was awarded the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and Vishisht Seva Medal for distinguished service. He was also awarded the Yudh Seva Medal for coordinating evacuation from strife-torn Yemen in 2015 during Operation Raahat.

Vice Admiral Dasgupta was the Chief of Staff, Eastern Naval Command, from June 2020 before being promoted as Commander-in-Chief of ENC.

## Atal Tinkering Labs sanctioned to tribal schools

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Central government has sanctioned Atal Tinkering Laboratories to 39 tribal welfare residential high schools in the Visakhapatnam Agency. The government has released Rs.12 lakh for setting up the laboratories.

Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) Project Officer Paderu R. Gopala Krishna convened a meeting with headmasters of the 39 schools on Wednesday.

The Project Officer directed them to establish the laboratories by December 31.

He also said that the suppliers of the laboratory equipment should open an office at Paderu to ensure hassle-free functioning of the laboratories. The Central government has started the Atal Tinkering Laboratories to educate and create awareness on science and technology and attract young minds towards research.

Tribal Welfare Deputy Director G. Vijaya Kumar was also present.



## ‘Sirivennela songs rich legacy for Telugu race’

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leader of the Opposition and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday paid rich tributes to Padma Shri late Sirivennela Sitarama Sastry. Naidu said that the songs and literature written by Sastry would remain a rich legacy for the Telugu race forever. Naidu said it was painful to think that Sirivennela has passed away. As a songwriter and poet, he has left an indelible impression in the minds of the Telugu people all over the world.

At a condolence meeting held at the TDP central office, Naidu conveyed his condolences to the bereaved family members. With his outstanding contributions, Sirivennela has emerged as

a big literary asset for the Telugu states, he said.

The TDP chief described Sastry as a socially conscious literary personality who had focused on doing good to the people. When he fell ill and was admitted to hospital, everybody expected he would recover and continue his services. But, fate was inescapable, Naidu added.

The TDP supremo said that Sastry was the first person he would ask before writing any political songs. He had extended all help whenever needed. All of his songs would continue to retain their place in the hearts of Telugu people forever. In a career of three decades, the lyricist has penned over 3,000 film songs. Nobody would be able to fill the void caused by his death.

## MP urges Centre to make fertilisers available to states

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Narasaraopet MP Sri Krishnadevarayalu raised the issue of non-availability of fertilisers in the Parliament on Wednesday. The MP said in the House that the farmers in the Palnadu region of Andhra Pradesh were facing fertiliser scarcity. “The non-availability of both urea

and DAP at subsidised rates has created problems for farmers who are crowding distribution centres while their fields are wasting away. Due to non-availability, the black market for such fertilisers has been flourishing, where poverty-stricken farmers have to pay high rates to access fer-fertilisers to sustain their crops,” he said.



## High-end lab set up at DMSSV Hindu College

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

An advanced computing lab costing Rs 1 crore, catering to the high-end computing and research needs of students has been established at the DMSSV Hindu College in Machilipatnam. Prof Suryanarayana, Professor Emeritus, Central Florida University, USA, donated the lab and inaugurated the lab at the Hindu College of Engineering.

## Stop issuing property tax notices, say APUCF, TPA

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The AP Urban Citizens Federation (APUCF) has demanded that the government should stop issuing notices for the collection of property tax as per the new taxation system till the HC delivers its verdict on the matter. APUCF convenor Ch. Babu Rao said that APUCF and the Tax Payers Association (TPA) of Vijayawada have filed a writ in the AP High Court seeking cancellation of GO 198 increasing property tax.

He alleged that the government is putting an extra burden of Rs. 186 crore through the property tax hike on the people who were badly hit by the Covid pandemic. Babu Rao said that crores would be extracted from urban residents across the state while

people are suffering from the Covid first and second waves and as a third wave seems inevitable.

He alleged that the government was yielding to the Centre's conditions. He deplored the YSRCP Government for not responding to the protests against property and garbage tax hikes.

Babu Rao said the HC had postponed the hearing to December 8 and had directed the municipal department and government to file counters regarding the new property tax system.

He alleged that the government is issuing notices to property owners under the new capital value-based property tax instead of the earlier annual rent value-based tax although the matter is in High Court.

# Rs 1L fines collected from vendors at rail stations

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Commercial Department of Vijayawada Division has been undertaking special drives to curb unauthorised vending at railway stations and in trains all over the division.

Recently, the officers and catering inspectors of the commercial department, ticket checking staff and RPF personnel conducted a special drive from November 24 to 30 to check unauthorised vending as per the direction of P. Bhaskar Reddy, Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Vijayawada.

During the special drive, 47



trains and 28 static units (general, minor units, stalls and food plaza) checks were conducted across Vijayawada Division from

Gudur to Anakapalle. Railway officials nabbed 97 unauthorised vendors and Rs 1,28,500 was imposed as penal-

ty on them. The unauthorised vendors who could not pay the penalties were handed over to the RPF for prosecution.

The Vijayawada Division is conducting special drives every month to check the unauthorised sale of eatables, beverages etc. on railway premises.

Shivendra Mohan, Divisional Railway Manager, Vijayawada Division appreciated the efforts of P. Bhaskar Reddy, Sr.DCM, and the commercial team to check unauthorised vending in the division. He said that strict action will be taken against anyone involved in such activities.

He also emphasised that the special drives act as a deterrent against the sale of unhygienic food on trains and railway station premises.



# Tirumala ghat road caves in following landslides; closed

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

A ghat road leading to famous Sri Venkateswara temple atop Tirumala hills was shut down on Wednesday after landslides damaged the road at three places, officials said.

Huge boulders rolled on to the road late Tuesday night damaging the vital link and bringing the movement of vehicular traffic to a halt.

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) officials swung into action to stop the vehicles and deployed earth movers to clear the debris. The officials were surveying the damage and were working out plans to take up repairs.

All vehicles on the up road were stopped in view of the damage to the roads. As an



alternative, the vehicles were being allowed in batches through the down ghat road. This is the second time in

less than a month that ghat road witnessed landslides. Following heavy rains that triggered landslides, the ghat

roads were closed on November 11 and were reopened only on November 20. The heavy downpour and

gusty winds had resulted in boulders rolling down on ghat roads. Trees also uprooted and fell on the roads that connect the famous hill shrine with Tirupati.

Protection wall on the first ghat road was damaged due to landslides at four places while there were 13 landslides on the second ghat road.

The heavy rains had also damaged both footpaths (Alipiri and Srivari Mettu), forcing the authorities to close them. The rains had also led to inundation of Vaikuntham queue complexes and four mada streets.

According to the TTD chairman, TTD suffered damages of about Rs 4 crore. Tirumala and Tirupati recorded 19 cm rainfall from November 17 to 19, the highest in over 30 years.

## Weekly offs for AP police personnel to be resumed

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The SPs of Prakasam and West Godavari districts have said that weekly offs would be given to the police personnel.

Prakasam District SP Malika Garg said that the 'weekly-off' system would be re-enforced in all the wings of the District Police Department as per the directions of DGP Gautam Sawang. The SP said that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the weekly-off system could not be implemented in a full-fledged manner as they were entrusted with additional duties and responsibilities.

The SP said that all necessary steps had been taken to resume the weekly-off system.

She directed the officers to take measures to implement the system in a planned manner. She hoped that it would be a relief for the police personnel who work under severe stress. The SP also said that the staff availing the weekly-off should not leave the district without informing the officers concerned.

The SP directed officers of each police station to discuss with the staff and draw up a plan of implementation immediately so that everyone could use the weekly-off system.

Meanwhile, West Godavari SP Rahul Dev Sharma said that weekly-offs would be given to all from sub-inspectors to constables.



## Minister assures rain-hit farmers of immediate help

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister for Energy Balineni Srinivasa Reddy has assured the farmers affected by the heavy rain of all needed help.

The minister visited the rain-hit Daivalaravuru and Medarametla villages and saw the damaged blackgram and groundnut crops. The farmers told the minister that they raised blackgram crop investing Rs 30,000 per acre and the rain damaged the crop just five days before the harvest.

Farmers B Shiva Shankar Rao and Subba Rao told the minister that they raised groundnut crop in their 25 acres of land and the crop was completely damaged in the rain water. The farmers urged the minister to take steps to give groundnut seeds on 80 percent subsidy. They also appealed to the minister to extend the deadline to enrol in e-crop.

Later, the minister visited the photo exhibition on the crop damage held at the



MPDO office at Korisapadu village. The farmers showed the tufts of damaged crops to the minister. He directed the officials concerned to expedite the enumeration of crop loss and extend the compensation at the earliest. The government would take steps to extend input subsidy and seeds at subsidised prices. The enrolment of crops in the e-crop system should also be completed soon.

Joint Collector J Venkata Murali apprised the minister

that kharif crops in 40,889 acres in 32 mandals as well as rabi crops in 57,236 acres in 36 mandals were damaged. The Joint Collector told the minister that horticulture crops in 18,000 acres were also damaged. As many as 288 people were shifted to four relief centres. However, the loss of livestock is very less. DRO S Saralavandanam, ZPCE O B Jalireddy and Agriculture JD S Srinivasa Rao were among those who accompanied the minister.

## Alla promises to bring NTRUHS funds diversion to Jagan's notice

PNS ■ ELURU

Minister for Health Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas has assured student union leaders that he would bring the issue of diversion of funds of NTR University of Health Sciences (NTRUHS) to the notice of Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Progressive Democratic Students Union (PDSU) leaders met the minister at his camp office here on Wednesday and submitted a memorandum to him regarding the diversion of Rs 400 crore funds of Health University to the AP State Financial Services Corporation Limited (APSFCL).

The students told the minister that the government had issued a GO diverting the funds of the university to the APSFCL.



The student leaders told the minister that it was not proper to issue the GO for the diversion of funds without the approval of the governing body of Health University. They said that the APSFCL was not a bank and wondered how the funds were diverted to the corporation. The annual expenditure of the university is Rs 68 crore, of which the government's contribution is only Rs 5 crore.

"Diverting Rs 400 crore

funds of the university is not justifiable and proper," the students said and appealed to the minister to take steps to stop the move. The minister told the students that the APSFCL would spend the funds for the development of Health University. PDSU state president M Ravichandra, state general secretary S Rammohan, vice-president E Bhushnam and other students were among those who met the minister.

## Purchase soaked paddy from farmers: JS to govt

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena Party political affairs committee chairman Nadendla Manohar has demanded that the government take steps to purchase the rain-soaked paddy from farmers. He took strong exception to the decision to impose Rs 5 lakh penalty if paddy is dried on the roads.

Manohar visited the fields where the farmers were drying their soaked paddy at Eppanapadu village in Mandapeta constituency in East Godavari district on Wednesday. The farmers narrated their difficulties in selling the soaked paddy. They told Manohar that when they urged the officials to purchase their paddy, the officials asked them to bring the paddy produce to the Rythu Bharosa Kendras.

Moreover, many conditions were set to purchase the paddy, the farmers alleged.

The Union government announced that only 25 quintals of paddy produce could be purchased from each farmer. "When we cannot sell our paddy produce, how can we raise crops again? I spent Rs 30,000 to raise the paddy crop in one acre. Now, there is no possibility of yielding even 10 bags of paddy due to untimely rains," one of the farmers lamented.

Nadendla Manohar said the Jana Sena Party was strongly opposing the officials' threat to impose Rs 5 lakh penalty to the farmers for drying up their soaked paddy produce on roads. "Instead of purchasing the paddy from the rain-affected farmers, the government is giving them more trouble," he said.

## Over 500 AIDS cases registered in WG every year, says Jt Collector

PNS ■ ELURU

West Godavari Joint Collector (Development) Himanshu Shukla has said that Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is still prevalent as over 500 cases are registered every year in West Godavari district. He asked the patients to take medicines correctly.

An AIDS awareness rally was taken out here on Wednesday on the occasion of the International AIDS Day, which the Joint Collector flagged off. A large number of students of various schools, ASHA workers, Red Cross workers, NCC cadets and MEPMA workers participated in the rally.

Holding placards and flexi banners, the participants of the rally started from the indoor stadium, passed ZP office, Fire Station and DEO Office and returned to the stadium. The Joint Collector administered the pledge on creating awareness on AIDS to the students.

Speaking on the occasion, Himanshu Shukla dismissed the misconception that AIDS was completely eradicated. "AIDS is still very much prevalent as over 500 new cases are registered every year in WG district," he said.



Joint Collector Himanshu Shukla flagging off an AIDS awareness rally on the occasion of the International AIDS Day

Asking AIDS patients not to fear social stigma, he advised them to take medicines to protect themselves from the disease. He said that the medicines being used in the USA and Europe to cure AIDS were provided to the patients here also.

The medicines would extend the lifespan of AIDS patients for around 20 years and they were being given free of cost in all government hospitals.

Stating that there would be no threat to the lives of AIDS patients as long as they took medicines, he asked them to

follow a healthy lifestyle. Earlier, District Collector Kartikeya Mishra had breakfast with HIV-infected children at the Collector's camp office. He enquired the children of their health and what they were studying.

He spent some time with the children. He gave them medical kits, fruits and toys which were sponsored by the Red Cross Society.

Later, the Collector released wall posters on creating awareness on AIDS.

DMHO Bhanu Naik and Additional DMHO AVR Mohan were also present.

## 70 quarry workers lose job for voting for Telugu Desam

PNS ■ GUNTUR

As many as 70 quarry workers, belonging to the Vaddera community, were allegedly expelled by the quarry management for voting for the Telugu Desam Party in the civic polls in Dacheppalli and they were not allowed to work on Wednesday.

The 70 quarry workers were working in a quarry at Nadikudi. Vaddera Corporation chairman Devalla Revathi's husband Devalla Murali is running one of the quarries while Bayyanna, on behalf of Gurajala MLA Kasu Mahendra Reddy, is running another quarry.

According to the workers, the YSRCP leaders suspected that they voted for the TDP in the nagara panchayat elections in Dacheppalli and expelled them.

The management of the quarry did not allow them to work.



## Third wave: Officials directed to be alert

PNS ■ ONGOLE

District Collector Pravin Kumar has directed the officials to be alert on the outbreak of the third wave of COVID-19 pandemic.

The Collector held a review meeting with the officials to discuss the matter here on Wednesday. He told the officials that the third wave was reported to be more serious and asked them to expedite the vaccination process. He asked them to ensure that all people who

have attained 18 years of age should be administered the vaccine.

The Collector asked them to create awareness among the people on the importance of wearing masks in public places and impose penalties. He also directed the officials to take steps to achieve targets on the One Time Settlement. Joint Collectors T S Chetan, K S Viswanathan, CPO Venkateswarulu, DPO Narayana Reddy and Panchayat Raj SE Kondaiah were present.

## Vizag Collector convenes meet on Covid readiness

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Visakhapatnam district administration convened an emergency meeting of all key officials on Wednesday in view of the possibility of a third wave of covid-19 due to the new variant.

Chairing the meeting, Collector Dr A. Mallikharjuna said that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed officials to get ready to face a possible third wave of Covid-19. The Collector directed officials to implement the covid-19 protocol and guidelines immediately.

The government has procured home isolation kits and shortly the material would be sent to various districts. 74 hospitals with 7,500 emer-



gency beds have been kept ready.

The Collector directed hospitals to check ventilators, oxygen concentrators, D-type cylinders and the condition of oxygen tanks.

The VRDL laboratory of Andhra Medical College is ready to conduct RT-PCR tests

at Narsipatnam, Anakapalle and Paderu.

The Collector directed all officials and the police to fine those who do not wear masks. Movie theatres, halls, shopping malls and other places that are not follow covid-19 guidelines would be fined heavily, the Collector warned.

## IndiaSkills will inspire the youth: Minister

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The last phase of the regional competitions of IndiaSkills 2021 commenced here on Wednesday, bringing together more than 500 participants from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana.

The two-day event will cover over 50 skills such as visual merchandising, web technologies, bricklaying, bakery, fashion designing, mobile robotics and 3D digital game art, among others. IndiaSkills, the country's biggest skill competition, strives for skilling excellence, discovers skilled and talented youth, and polish them for a global platform.

Mekapati Goutham Reddy, Minister for Industries, Commerce, Information



Technology and Skill Development, Andhra Pradesh, while inaugurating the event, said that IndiaSkills Competitions would inspire many young Indians to devel-



op a passion for skills, pursue excellence and look for an opportunity to represent India on the global stage.

The event also fulfils the objective of motivating the

youth to pursue vocational education and training (VET), creating a robust partnership network along with building a healthy association with World Skills

International and other member countries.

"The Andhra Pradesh Government, following the vision of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, is giving top priority to education and skill development programmes for the youth," the minister said.

He advised the youth not to feel bad when defeated and said every defeat would give concrete experience to chase the victory.

Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation Chairman K. Ajay Reddy, Principal Secretary G. Jayalakshmi, Andhra University Vice-Chancellor Prof. P.V.G.D. Prasad Reddy and several officials from the National Skill Development Corporation were present on the occasion.

## Bankers told to offer loans to ryots liberally

PNS ■ ELURU

West Godavari District Collector Kartikeya Misra has asked the bankers to extend more loans to the farmers liberally.

Addressing the district-level technical committee meeting here on Wednesday, the Collector directed the officials to fix the scale of finance in such a manner that it would benefit the farmers. He asked the officials to extend loans to the farmers as per the scale of finance.

The Collector said that the scale of finance was fixed based on the investment of farmers to raise their crops.

On some occasions, some expenditure is not taken into consideration so that loans could be sanctioned to farmers liberally.

"In WG district, 1.20 lakh tenant farmers were issued the CCRC cards. The tenant farmers were given loans worth Rs 1.30 lakh crore last year," the Collector said.

## Active Corona cases constant in AP

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Active Covid cases in State remained constant at 2,149 as the state reported 184 fresh infections, 183 recoveries and one death in 24 hours ending 9 am on Wednesday.

The Covid positives in the state has now increased to 20,73,093, a health department bulletin said. The total recoveries touched 20,56,501 and toll 14,443, it said. Chittoor district reported 39, Visakhapatnam 28, West Godavari 27, Guntur and Krishna 20 each, East Godavari 14 and Anantapur 11 fresh cases.



INDIA CORNER

## CBI takes over probe into intimidation case involving IPS officer P Sivanandi

The CBI has taken over investigation into an intimidation case allegedly involving IPS officer P Sivanandi in Tamil Nadu, officials said on Wednesday. The agency, on the directives of the Supreme Court on September 29 confirming a Madras High Court order in this regard, re-registered an FIR of the CB-CID of the state according to the procedure. It is alleged that on April 1, 2015, complainant D Pandiraj was returning from Chennai Police commissioner's office when one Ganapathy along with 10 others, at the instance of the then inspector general Sivanandi, blocked his vehicle, threatened to kill him and asked him to withdraw the complaint, the FIR said. The Madras High Court transferred the case to the CB-CID from the local police on July 24, 2015, observing that it was a textbook case demonstrating the 'evil effects' of an unholy nexus between a serving senior police officer, lawyers, businessmen and goondas.



## Int'l passengers subject to random COVID sampling can leave airport

The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) on Wednesday said only two per cent of the passengers coming from countries that are not in the 'at-risk' list will be subject to random sampling for coronavirus and such passengers will be permitted to leave the airport after giving the samples. Amid mounting concerns over the new COVID variant Omicron, stricter norms for international passengers came into effect from Tuesday midnight and all passengers coming from 'at-risk' countries have to compulsorily undergo COVID test, among other requirements. Issuing a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), the ministry said that travellers undergoing random sampling may give the sample and be allowed to leave. "Now, the random sampling would be limited to 2 per cent as per latest MoHFW (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare) guidelines and it would be on self-paid basis.



## MP: Six killed, 25 injured as passenger bus collides with truck

Six persons were killed and 25 others injured, five of them seriously, when a passenger bus carrying them collided with a truck in Betul district of Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday, a police official said. The accident occurred around noon near Narkhed village on Multai-Prabhatpattan road, some 65 kms from the district headquarters. "A private passenger bus travelling from Prabhatpattan to Multai collided with a truck coming from the opposite direction. Both the vehicles overturned after the collision," Multai police station in-charge Sunil Lata said. Six persons, including the driver of the bus, died on the spot, while around 25 passengers were injured, five of them seriously. Those five grievously-injured passengers were rushed to Warud town in neighbouring Maharashtra for the treatment, he said.



# Rajya Sabha adjourned for the day amidst Opposition protest

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The proceedings of the Rajya Sabha were adjourned for the day on Wednesday amid unrelenting protests by opposition members over the issue of suspension of 12 MPs.

When the House assembled at 3 pm following an adjournment post-lunch, the opposition members again started their protest inside the Well and continued their sloganeering.

The members did not allow Union Minister for Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, who was moving The Dam Safety Bill, 2019 for consideration in the House, to complete his speech.

Bhubaneswar Kalita, who was presiding the proceedings of the Upper House, persuaded the opposition members to return to their seats and allow



the minister to complete his speech.

As soon as the House resumed in the afternoon, Deputy Chairman Harivansh, who was in the chair, asked Union Minister for Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat to move the bill.

He also assured the agitating members that Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge would be allowed to

speak on the suspension of 12 members of the House, once they return to their seats.

"Whatever is happening is not good. You have to maintain decorum," said Kalita, adding "It is not sending good signals to the public. You are not allowing him, the minister is in the middle of his speech."

However, the opposition members continued their protest and Kalita adjourned

the house for day.

Earlier, when the house met at 2 pm, Deputy Chairman Harivansh, who was in the chair, asked Shekhawat to move The Dam Safety Bill for consideration in the House.

The minister moved the motion for consideration of the bill by the House and thereafter, the deputy chairman asked him to speak on the bill.

In the meantime, Kharge asked the deputy chairman to allow him to speak on the suspension of members of the House.

However, Harivansh did not allow him to raise the matter, and said he can speak on the bill.

As the minster started his speech on the bill, opposition members started raising slogans and demanded that Kharge be allowed to speak on the issue of suspension of

members.

Harivansh requested the opposition members not to come into the Well and to go back to their seats.

He also told some members that photography in the House was not allowed when they tried to click pictures with their phones. When opposition members refused to relent, the deputy chairman adjourned the House till 3 pm.

The Upper House was first adjourned soon after it met for the day and then again at noon till 2 pm, after opposition members created an uproar seeking revocation of the suspension of the MPs.

When the House met earlier, placard-carrying opposition MPs trooped into the Well of the House and shouted slogans against the suspension.

## ‘Anti-BJP parties should come together’

PNS ■ MUMBAI

NCP president Sharad Pawar on Wednesday made a fresh pitch for the unity of opposition parties to take on the BJP after meeting West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee here.

Banerjee, notably, made a cryptic remark that there was "no UPA" now.

The Trinamool Congress supremo paid a visit to Pawar on Wednesday after meeting Shiv Sena leaders the day before.

"All those opposed to the BJP are welcome to join us. There is no question of excluding anyone," Pawar told reporters when asked if an alliance without Congress was on the cards.

"We discussed the prevailing situation and the need for all like-minded parties to come together



and provide a strong alternative to the BJP," the NCP chief said.

"Leadership is not an issue at this point. We need to unitedly work against the BJP," he added.

When asked if she wanted Pawar to be the chairperson of the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA), Banerjee said, "Three is no UPA now."

## ‘Maha order on int’l passengers against Centre’s guidelines’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After the Maharashtra government revised the guidelines on quarantine for international passengers in view of concerns over the Omicron variant, the Centre on Wednesday asked the state to align its order with the SOPs issued by the Union Health Ministry.

Maharashtra has mandated seven-day institutional quarantine for travellers arriving in the state from 'at-risk' countries under the guidelines issued by the State Disaster Management Authority on Tuesday night.

Such passengers will also undergo-PCR test on the second, fourth and seventh day of arrival. If found to be COVID-19 positive, the passenger will be shifted to a hospital. In case the test is negative, the passenger will still have to undergo seven-day home quarantine. Union Health Secretary

Rajesh Bhushan, in a letter, said that the order issued by the Maharashtra government is in divergence with the COVID-19 SoPs and guidelines issued by Union Health Ministry for international passengers.

"I would, therefore, urge you to align the orders issued by the state with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health, Government of India, so that uniform implementation of the guidelines may be ensured across all states and UTs.

"I would also advise that such modified orders of the state government are given wide publicity to obviate any inconvenience to travellers," he said in the letter addressed to Pradeep Kumar Vyas, Additional Chief Secretary of the state's Department of Health & Family Welfare.

Under the new guidelines

issued by the Union Health Ministry on November 28, passengers originating or transiting from at-risk countries will have to undergo-PCR testing post-arrival and will be required to wait for the results at the airport before leaving or taking a connecting flight.

Travellers from countries excluding those countries at risk will be allowed to leave the airport and shall self-monitor their health for 14 days post-arrival but five percent of the total flight passengers shall undergo post-arrival testing at random at the airport on arrival.

However, according to the Maharashtra government guidelines, passengers from other than 'at-risk' countries will have to undergo a compulsory-PCR test at the airport.

Even if found negative, they will have to undergo 14-day home quarantine.

# ‘No material to show larger conspiracy in 2002 riots’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There was no material to substantiate claims of any larger conspiracy in the 2002 Gujarat riots and the idea behind alleging that the violence was state-sponsored is to keep the "pot boiling" which showed "sinister signs", the Special Investigation Team (SIT) told the Supreme Court on Wednesday.

The SIT told a bench head-

ed by Justice A M Khanwilkar that complaint filed by Zakia Jafri alleging larger conspiracy in the riots was not converted into an FIR and the apex court had asked the SIT to look into it and act in accordance with law.

Zakia Jafri, the wife of slain Congress leader Ehsan Jafri who was killed at Gulberg Society in Ahmedabad on February 28, 2002, during the violence, has challenged the

SIT's clean chit to 64 people including Narendra Modi, the then Gujarat chief minister during the riots.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for SIT, told the bench that a protest petition of around 1,200 pages was filed by Zakia Jafri and it was said that the same be treated as a complaint.

"Now, after 20 years, treat this as a complaint. Why? You want to keep this as a boiling

pot or what? This also shows sinister signs, to keep this as a pot boiling. Why would anybody keep the pot boiling? Because there is something else," Rohatgi told the bench, also comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and C T Ravikumar.

"That is why it is saying state sponsored, look at this, look at that, look at higher echelons. Because the idea is to keep the pot boiling," he told the bench.

He argued that the top court had asked the SIT to look into Zakia Jafri's complaint as it had recognised the "pain of a widow".

He said Teesta Setalvad, who is petitioner number two in the plea filed by Zakia Jafri in the apex court, had joined the proceedings when it was before the high court.

"And in fact, your lordships will get material, that several people came to the SIT with pre-prepared statements.

## Dip in terrorist incidents in JK after nixing of Article 370

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The number of terrorist incidents in Jammu and Kashmir during a period of 841 days after Article 370 was revoked dipped to 496 from the 843 cases reported in a same span of time prior to the abrogation, the government informed Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said during April 16, 2017 to August 04, 2019, 843 terrorist incidents were reported in Jammu and Kashmir in which 86 civilians

and 78 army personnel were killed.

During the period August 05, 2019 to November 22, 2021 (841 days after the abrogation), 496 terrorists incidents have been reported from Jammu and Kashmir in which 79 civilians and 45 army personnel have been killed, he said. "The overall statistics shows that there has been decline in terrorist attacks on civilians and army in Jammu and Kashmir," Rai said.

In response to a separate question, Rai said during the last 12 months from December

2020 to November 2021 (up to November 26), 14 terrorists have been apprehended and 165 terrorists have been killed.

He said during last year, October 2020-21, 32 security forces and 19 Jammu and Kashmir police personnel were "martyred".

The minister said a total of 251 terrorist incidents have been reported between October 2020 and October 2021.

Rai said the incidents of infiltration and terrorist attacks have decreased significantly since 2018 in Jammu and Kashmir.

## Stop 'injustice' towards job seekers in Railways: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday extended his support to those seeking jobs in the Railways and called for stopping the "injustice" towards them.

In a tweet, he also claimed there are now "no jobs" in the Railways. "Earlier a job in the Railways was an honour, today there are no jobs in the Railways. Soon, the Railways will no longer be what it was earlier.

## ‘No specific data on attacks on journalists’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) does not maintain specific data with respect to attacks on journalists, the government has informed the Rajya Sabha, underlining that it had issued an advisory to state governments in 2017 to strictly enforce the law to ensure the safety and security of mediapersons.

Responding to a question, Minister of State for Rajya Sabha Nityanand Rai said 'police' and 'public order' are state subjects under the seventh schedule of the Constitution.

The state governments are



responsible for prevention, detection and investigation of crimes and for prosecuting the criminals through their law enforcement agencies, he said.

"The National Crime Records Bureau does not maintain specific data with respect to attacks on journalists," he said.

He said the ministry of home affairs has issued advisories to states and Union Territories from time to time to maintain law and order and ensure that any person who takes law into his/her own hand is punished promptly as per law.

"An advisory specifically on safety of journalists was issued to the states/UTs on October 20, 2017 requesting them to strictly enforce the law to ensure the safety and security of mediapersons," he said.

He said the central government attaches highest importance to the safety and security of all residents of the country including journalists.



## Open approach

The need is to remove the fear of memory-based tests so that students start understanding concepts

There is a lot of churning on the higher education front. For one, Delhi University is checking for any discrepancies in the process of admissions to undergraduate and graduate courses. Secondly, Delhi University is conducting online Open Book Exams (OBE) for undergraduate and graduate students of four semesters. This is because the university is not yet offline and students are pressing for re-opening of classes after the tapering down of the coronavirus pandemic. Whatever the reasons that caused the university to re-evaluate its admission process and hold OBEs, the fact is both are progressive steps. One is in keeping with making admissions a fair and just exercise. The other is adapting to new technology even in adversity. The university, and for that matter all higher education institutions in the country, need not stop here but use the occasion to reform the education system. The focus is on revising the method of teaching. The OBE process leaves several hints at why the focus area is critical. In this mode, students take the exams remotely with no bar on consulting books and other resource materials. There are two issues. One is the presumption that the new system would make the students complacent and they would not study seriously, thinking they can copy from the open books. The second is another presumption that the teachers may not be adept at setting meaningful question papers and evaluating the answer sheets efficiently.



The OBE allows consultation of books, but is not an exam that encourages rote learning and superficial knowledge either. It is a method that challenges the students' mastery of the subject, analysis and critical thinking. It requires a higher order of thinking skills. Unfortunately, heuristic teaching is still not in vogue in higher learning institutions in India. The concept of rote learning is carried over from school days. There is spoon-feeding and over-dependence on guide books. The pattern of teaching is changing but only because of individual efforts of some teachers. This is where the University Grants Commission and the Ministry of Education should step in, using the OBE exams as the pretext to introduce new teaching that enables students to research and discover things for themselves. A university cannot expect teachers to overnight devise question papers that challenge the examinees' critical thinking abilities. Resorting to OBE as a quick fix solution can lead to avoidable issues about setting the question papers, in turn, affecting the performance of the students who may be lulled into a false sense of security that writing with open books is easy. Many countries in the west have shifted to OBE culture. In India there, discussions on the subject have not led anywhere. The greatest achievement of the education system would be to remove the fear of memory-based tests so that students start learning and understanding concepts with teachers acting more as mentors than advisors at exam time.

### PICTALK



An aerial view of the flooded DLF residential locality at Semmancheri, in Chennai

PTI

## Humour hurts

Criticising someone in a free democracy is fine until it starts taking an ugly turn

Who doesn't like to laugh? Most sane people do. But lately, jokes and comedians have stirred more controversies than politicians in the country. Apparently, their jokes and "poems" have hurt the sentiments of some sections of the society. So much so that they received serious backlash on social media while some have repeatedly received death threats, too. Does it have much to do with a sense of humour or is it intolerance and religion-sensitivity that is disturbing the audience. Interestingly enough, most of these "hurt" people aren't even part of the audience. The Freedom of Speech and Expression is much talked about. Politicians in India usually enjoy this right pretty well. Derogatory remarks against Opposition leaders come as prerequisites to woo the voters during election campaigns. But those are rarely accounted for. However, actor-comedian Vir Das's "Two Indias" monologue "maligins" the country's image. It was so "hurtful" that a BJP leader had filed a complaint against him at Tilak Marg police station alleging that he used 'derogatory' statements against the country on an international platform.



There may not be a definitive answer to whether his satirical monologue could actually hurt India's image but it might hurt his future comedy prospects, as has been seen lately. Another comedian, Munawar Faruqui, recently announced his decision to quit stand up comedy after 12 of his shows got cancelled in various cities due to 'pressure' created on event organisers and venue hosts. Faruqui spent a month in jail earlier this year on charges of "insulting Hindu gods and goddesses" in one of his shows. This is not a win for anybody but rather a defeat for the country that boasts of tolerance and secularism. If comedy can be a crime then what profession can't be? Of course, jokes and satire should be respectable. But what defines respectable? When you start putting out disclaimer on jokes, you reach the borderline of intolerance. The term 'boycott' has become the bread and butter of religious fanatics these days. A new boycott hashtag trends on social media everyday. It's high time we addressed the question that where are we heading as a tolerant nation? Because all that's happening is that we are finding religious loopholes in jokes, comments, statements, movies etc. We were not like this before, orange was just a color until it became a sign board and humour used to lighten us until it started shrinking our minds.

# Who really murders democracy in India?



PRAFULL GORADIA

Only a democrat can face the public as the Indian Prime Minister does on *Mann ki Baat*. Anyone can ask anything and embarrass the respondent

There were repeated mentions of the 'murder of democracy' on the opening day of Parliament. The cause was the suspension of 12 Rajya Sabha members by the Vice President of India presiding over the house. The behavior of some of the MP's was extraordinary to put it politely. In my year in the Rajya Sabha, such a scheme was unthinkable; times obviously change. The repeal of the farm laws so soon was, to my mind, a new peak of democratic step. The Sanskrit saying *kshama virasya bhushanam* or forgiveness is the ornament of the valorous is to the effect. A variation of this wisdom would be 'a gifted retreat behoves the generous king'. A mere politician could have suspended the laws and gone on to separate the farmers from the middlemen who feel threatened; but, in fact, were permitted to do what they liked; sell their produce to anyone overseas, including resorting to middlemen in the event of an emergency. How this is a murder of democracy, I do not know.

If the Opposition has any doubt with the democratic nature of the repealing of laws, let us glimpse at the track record of Prime Minister Modi. The abolition of the Planning Commission on the following day of his coming to power in 2014 was the big beginning. It was the control of national wealth which could be distributed at the will of the Central Government.

Every statement came up with a Plan and its budget. The Chief Minister came to annually call on the vice chairman of the Commission with a bouquet of flowers. No one asked questions except as a formality if the Centre was happy with the particular State. The two VIPs had a photograph taken with grins on their faces and the CM returned to his State.

The grant was money for jam. The responsibility for the implementation of the projects was that of the State Government. For example, one of the proposals of the State was to build a bridge for ₹800 crore



and it was granted. The CM and his side-kicks would have the foundation stone laying photographed for record. After that whether the State built the bridge or not was to be seen by the State. No one at the Centre needed to bother about that. On the other hand, the State could year after year debit in its annual plan the depreciation of say ₹80 crore or ten per cent. In short, the Planning Commission amounted to a gifting body; what the State did with the gift was at its discretion as is a birthday present.

The Modi Government replaced the Planning distribution as well as the State sales tax with the Goods and Services Tax (GST) which the State independent of reliance on the Centre to distribute its annual doles. Every State was on its own and the Centre had no discretion. It is based on the merits of each State's economy, production, service and so on. The Centre cannot deny anything to an Opposition ruled State or give more to its favourite State. Is that not very democratic compared to the previous arrangement? This is related to the main finances



TO INTERRUPT PROCEEDINGS IS TO CUT ONE OF THE MAIN BRANCHES THAT THE PARLIAMENT MEMBERS OCCUPY. THE MEMBERS CAN DRAW PUBLIC ATTENTION BUT THEY SHOULD NOT LOSE FLOOR TIME WHICH IS TELEVISED TODAY

of a state.

I am alleging that everyone was corrupt but the scope at the State level was considerable. Take a Planning grant from the Centre and do not spend it. Equally, the scope for favourite was also substantial. Once in power at the Centre, a party could make a State the way it chose. I do not know whether Planning had any connection with the economic progress or its lack. But one thing is certain that no planned economy has reached the First World.

Only a democrat can face the public as the Prime Minister does on the *Mann ki Baat* programme. Anyone can ask anything and embarrass the respondent. The Opposition can have the mischief played; the respondent has to have a clan record and no skeletons in his cupboard. No previous Prime Minister has experimented with such an open public programme. The public, on the other hand, feels that the country's top leader is accessible to them. He does not keep away from the common folk. This means that the PM is not their indirect representative but a direct one. This is how the Greek city democracy

began and is the ultimate is freedom and people's rule. This is unusual for a leader who carries the highest security risk in the country and perhaps is the world. He mingles with people when he campaigns in the elections. He spares no punches.

The Parliament is essential to remain in the limelight. To interrupt its proceedings is to cut one of the main branches the Parliament members occupy. Rushing into the well, in that sense, is suicidal for the Opposition. I realised that it is very necessary for the Opposition to protest as obviously as possible, but not to provoke its adjournment. The members can draw public attention by, for example, wearing black, whether masks, clothes or anything else. They can also sit in the aisles instead of their seats, and so on. But they should not lose floor time, which in today's time, is televised. Another gain is avoiding the impression that MPs collect their pay but avoid work.

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A DAY NOT FOR POLLUTION

Sir —The National Pollution Day is observed in India every year on December 2, to spread awareness among people towards the rapidly growing problem of pollution and in the memory of those who died in the Bhopal gas tragedy. As per data, about 2.5 million people succumb to pollution in India every year. India has ranked 155th out of 180 countries in the Environmental Performance Index. Many Indian cities, including the Capital, rank among the top most polluted cities globally.

There are several reasons that aggravate pollution; whether air, land, noise or water. While the Government should be blamed for not dealing with the issue proactively, the citizens, too, owe responsibility to protect the environment they live in. In the recent COP26 Summit that was held in Glasgow, countries pledged to reduce net-zero emissions and this is a welcome step. Only time can tell whether such summits are fruitful and till then, we need to do our bit. Simple measures like using public transport, using biodegradable bags, reducing forest fires and smoking, avoiding firecrackers and being aware that if we don't start acting early, we will face consequences.

Tarun Patidar | Ujjain

### CARRYING FAITH ON GROWTH

Sir —The 8.4 per cent growth compares well with the 7.4 per cent fall that the GDP saw last year in the same quarter, the peak period of the pandemic-induced lockdown. The first quarter of this year, however, had seen a 20.1 per cent growth, which puts the number for the first half at 13.7 per cent. With this being the fourth consecutive quarter of growth, the indications are that the economy has found its feet after the pandemic-induced contraction. Employment-intensive sectors like hospitality and construction seeing an uptick is also positive news.

Economists, however, see several issues in this growth story. A key one is that it is Government investments that are the main drivers of growth rather than private consumption. Rising infla-

### An era passes away



The sudden demise of the prolific Telugu film lyricist Sirivennela Seetharama Sastry is a great blow especially to the Telugu film industry which was already in pain after the demise of SPB Garu a year ago. The combination of SPB and Sirivennela was a beautiful one. The two made some wonderful songs together and their work is still loved by the listeners. The words of Sastry, coupled with the voice of SPB, captivated the audience. The speciality of this great lyricist is that his lyrics are simply beautiful and

thought provoking. He captured millions of hearts through his lyrics. Having written around 3000 movie songs, received the Padma Shri and the Nandi Awards more than 10 times are enough to prove his devotion towards creating a healthy lyrics culture in the Tollywood industry.

Sirivennela has penned poems that showered the light of knowledge, aroused mind-boggling thoughts and, at the same time, calmness, too. The accolades he has earned speak enough of his excellence, expertise and legacy. However, if one wants to know him truly then his songs and poems are the way. Sastry created magic with his vocabulary and command over the Telugu language. In his career, he wrote songs for some amazing movies, including Swayamkrushi, Gaayam, Alludu Garu and many more. Writers will come and go but Sirivennela's contribution as a lyricist and human will be remembered by generations.

Katuru Durga Prasad Rao | Hyderabad

tionary pressures as indicated by the difference between real and nominal GDP is also a matter of concern. Some of the economists are projecting only single digit growth for the year compared to the Government's double-digit expectations. These differing perspectives on India's current economic scenario is vital.

Mr Jayanthi | Mumbai

### UNWARRANTED SUSPENSION OF THE MPS

Sir —What the wider implications of the suspension of 12 MPs from the Parliament are for our democracy is a broad topic on which opinion can well be divided depending on political leanings. The BJP supporters hold that it was needed to protect democracy, whereas others denounce it as an undemocratic decision. Be that as it may, the suspension of the MPs for something that happened in the previous monsoon session under provocation is amenable to be explained in terms of several considerations. It gave a clear indication that the Government was

not quite keen on winning the cooperation of the Opposition for the smooth functioning of Parliament. The Government may have gone for this high-handed action to divert attention from burning issues like farmers' protests, price rise and inflation.

The prospect of being placed in a clear majority in the Rajya Sabha may have been another consideration that motivated the decision. We would consider it a sad day for Indian democracy if the decision was taken in the mistaken belief that the Opposition should be subservient to the Government. When the BJP was in the Opposition, disruption of Parliament was a 'legitimate form of protest'. But when it is in power, it becomes nothing short of 'misconduct' and 'unruly behaviour' deserving suspension.

G David Milton | Maruthancode

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

## SOUND BITE

This time, we have prepared 30,000 oxygen beds. Out of these, 10,000 are ICU beds.

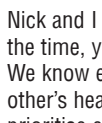


Delhi Chief Minister — Arvind Kejriwal



We're going to learn a lot more in the next couple of weeks about the lethality of the new variant.

US President — Joe Biden



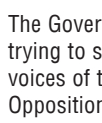
Nick and I talk all the time, you know. We know each other's hearts and prioritise each other.

Actor — Priyanka Chopra



Virat Kohli has taken a pay cut for the larger interest of the ECB. We all know how good a player he is.

Former Indian batsman — Parthiv Patel



The Government is trying to silence the voices of the Opposition. No question arises to offer an apology.

Congress leader — Mallikarjun Kharge



FIRST COLUMN

FASHION DESIGN AND E-LEARNING

Aspiring designers can learn and show their creations in a web-friendly format



ARCHANA SURANA

While the world is struggling with a health pandemic, an economic depression, and a global social justice movement, Bill Cunningham's quote — "Fashion is the armour to survive the reality of everyday life" — became the inspiration to the fashion and design fraternity. From adjusting to the new normal to navigating through it and bringing creativity to reality, the fashion industry has set trends yet again. In the modern world, creativity has never been just about classroom learning. Now, with the 'anything anywhere' approach of the digital world, fashion design learning has stepped into a transformative revolution. When FHCM's couture week 2020 went digital, the fashion industry was in awe. FHCM stands for Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode that brings together fashion brands that foster creation and international development. However, with Gucci partnering with the art auction house Christie's on NFT video "ARIA", the industry realised that we had just scratched the surface of technology. Fashion design institutes have taken the pandemic as an opportunity to innovate old-fashioned teaching methods and adapt to the fast-moving digital world. Being a stu-



dent-centric process enables the learner to customise the procedures and processes based on her needs. With digital platforms for aspiring designers to learn and show their creations in a web-friendly format and accelerated personalisation in digital tools to customise one's virtual studio, it has never been a better time to flow along with creativity. The importance of exploring global perspectives through international fashion shows, exhibitions, webinars that reflect the global context in fashion education and industry cannot be emphasised enough. The design education colleges have been quick on the uptake and started organising virtual events and platform during the lockdown in 2020 where they allow the students to showcase their learnings and creations. These institutes also use social media platform like Facebook Live where students presented their work online.

The field of technology is growing every day and therefore, it is impacting education, teaching and learning processes with its innovative solutions and sustainable methods. Increasing use of technologies like AI, IoT and AoIT is helping effectively in saving costs, time and energy in the education sector especially the creative fields. In 2020, due to the pandemic, all the education institutes introduced many innovative ways of teaching and learning in order to maintain the quality of education and content material. According to InTech report 2017, design learning needs digital or online learning to have a progressive future. There is a great need for active interaction between humans and technology through activities using creative intelligence for a bright future of designing field. Even if we were in a digital utopia with digital equity and no technical glitches, to imagine learning fashion design virtually is difficult. From the touch of the fabric to the aesthetics and design, physical interaction is as essential as the field itself. Paris Fashion Week's physical return to the runway, including industry heavy weights from Chanel and Hermes to Louis Vuitton and Yves Saint Laurent, proves that fashion cannot survive without it being inferred by the senses. Rethinking decades-old teaching models requires a more finely tuned equilibrium between physical and digital education to work successfully. Combining face-to-face lectures with technology may give rise to blended learning, increasing students' learning potential. Need of the hour is for institutes to become omnichannel and build an efficient e-learning model and for the fashion fraternity to come together as a community and use technology as a venue for Sustainable Fashion Culture.

(The writer is Founder and Director, ARCH College of Design & Business. The views expressed are personal.)

# Village secretariats of AP: Doorstep welfare

Impressed by the idea of taking governance to doorsteps; Karnataka, Punjab, Rajasthan and some other States have evinced interest to adopt similar systems



AMAR DEVULAPALLI

A game-changer initiative in Andhra Pradesh Government's unique grass root administration and a brain child of young Chief Minister, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, the concept of Village/ward Secretariat - door-step services to ensure welfare programmes reach the beneficiary — is gaining the attention of international agencies, the Union Government and a number of states.

Aimed at revamping and improving the delivery of government services, the largest of its kind in India, the setup involved hiring 389,000 volunteers to ensure that government benefits-ration cards, pension accounts and other welfare schemes-are made available in the rural areas as also in the wards in towns.

The Village Secretariat and Ward Secretariat (VWS) Department was created to manage the operations. The volunteers who are key in the new set up are being paid a monthly remuneration of ₹5000 and they are always available in the area to provide government benefits that are listed under various schemes at the door step of the beneficiary.

On average, there is one volunteer for every 70-100 households, tasked with doorstep-delivery of government services and ensuring that beneficiaries are identified and mapped for proactive service delivery. To ensure that services improve, issues relating to the delivery of food, social and health security benefits are to be addressed within specified time frames, with a team of 200 call-centre executives to track and monitor service delivery requests and notify relevant secretariats about impending deadlines. It all started on October 2, 2019 when the Chief Minister launched the flagship programme of his government. As a preamble to the new concept, he recruited village secretaries who would head the village secretariats. The idea came to him during his 'padayatra' before the 2019 general elections when villagers complained how they are going around offices and officials for benefits of welfare programmes and how they are denied them on account of lack of funds.

The Ministry of Jal Shakti Sanitation has acknowledged the services being offered to the people at their doorstep through the new system. National Jal Jeevan Mission under the Ministry which brings out a monthly e-book, Jal Jeevan Samvad, highlighted the village/ward secretariat system in AP and pointed out: "This is a unique experiment in itself and furthers the spirit of the 73rd Constitution Amendment, 1992 and in line with 'Sarkar Aapke Dwar' - administration at your doorstep. Now by setting up of village secretariat, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has taken a concrete step towards administrative transparency and accountability to provide better services to the people at their door step".

The special story in the magazine also



THE VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE KEY IN THE NEW SET-UP ARE BEING PAID A MONTHLY REMUNERATION OF ₹5000 AND ARE ALWAYS AVAILABLE IN THE AREA TO PROVIDE GOVERNMENT SERVICES THAT ARE LISTED UNDER VARIOUS SCHEMES AT THE DOORSTEP OF THE BENEFICIARY. ON AVERAGE, THERE IS ONE VOLUNTEER FOR EVERY 70-100 HOUSEHOLDS

(The writer is Advisor, National Media and Inter State Affairs, Government of Andhra Pradesh. The views expressed are personal.)



mentioned that out of various services for the people, around 318 services have started reaching villagers through the village secretariat system. The beneficial effects of government schemes are clearly visible in the villages.

UNICEF, which has identified the potential strength of the village secretariat system, associated itself with the grass root network to continue its awareness campaign among children as mothers about nutrition food. A special cell with three representatives has been created by UNICEF attached to the State level Head office of village/ward secretariat. Besides, the Institution has also appointed district coordinators to take the task.

Impressed by the idea of taking governance to the people's doorsteps, Karnataka, Punjab, Rajasthan and some other states have evinced interest to adopt similar systems. Ministerial and Official representatives from these states are planning to visit AP soon to have the first-hand experience of the functioning of the setup.

As a matter of fact, the then Chief Minister of united AP Chandrababu Naidu too launched the village secretariat concept in 2002. But there is no comparison between the two since the present setup is well thought over and target-oriented, supported by a digital road map to ensure doorstep deliveries of benefits.

While Naidu had to introduce the village secretariat in view of World Bank guidelines in the name of reforms, the current CM made it happen in real terms and

people are getting total benefits from the new system.

Between the first and third of every month, the present government disburses ₹1,420.5 crore worth of pensions to 6.1 million beneficiaries under the YSR Pension Kanuka. They are delivered to beneficiaries wherever they might be, even those displaced from their homes. For transparent, well-targeted delivery of benefits, the state relies on biometric identification. A call centre with toll-free number 1902 has been set up to enable the people to register their grievances and also obtain feedback on the welfare schemes.

In all, a strong contingent of 1,34,694 village ward secretariat staff along with dedicated gram volunteers numbering 2,47,344 extend 540 services under 35 departments. Fact sheets reveal that while 3,31,57,081 service requests were registered till the end of October last, 3,29,70,051 services have been delivered.

Specific time frames are fixed for delivery. While Pension card, rice cards are to be handed over within 21 days, eligible applicants should get Arogyasri cards in 20 days and the deadline for getting house site pattas is 90 days.

A study paper on the village administration in Andhra Pradesh published in The Indian Journal of Political Science in its quarterly publication in 2006 clearly mentioned the 'outcome' of the reforms in Panchayat Raj introduced by Chandrababu Naidu.

The paper originally submitted by its author D.Ravinder at an International conference on "State,

Civil Society and Citizens: Revisiting the Relationship" held in Osmania University in February, 2004, concluded that "it (the system) introduces babudom at the local level". The study paper highlighting the lacunae said with the onset of World Bank led reforms processed under the regime of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh, "good governance" has become a catchy word. It is in this name that a number of reform processes were introduced in the state. One such important reform process at the grass roots level has been the introduction of "Village Secretariat" system.

The paper said this system instead of bringing good governance has become a bone of contention between hitherto existing departments, panchayat raj and revenue, and also between the elected representatives and government officials, i.e., between Sarpanch and the newly created position of "Village Secretary". Thus, the process of good governance at the grass roots level unleashed new conflicts. The present paper makes an attempt to analyse the dynamics of these new reforms at the grass roots in Andhra Pradesh.

Quite contrary to the setup introduced during Chandrababu regime, the present village/ward secretariat system supported by village secretaries and a battery of village/ward volunteers day and night ensuring the targeted people get welfare programmes at their doorstep without spending a single pie and wasting time.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

WHICH IS THE MAIN PARTY, THE CONGRESS OR THE TMC? THE SESSION WILL BE OVER BEFORE THEY COME TO ANY DECISION.  
—BJP NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT  
DILIP GHOSH



IT IS INSIGNIFICANT TO MAKE ANY COMMENT ON DILIP GHOSH'S OBSERVATION. LET THEM THINK OVER THEIR DEFEAT IN THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS.  
—TMC LEADER  
SOUGATA ROY

# Role of universities in fostering entrepreneurship

Interdisciplinary approach and new teaching methodologies should be used to provide entrepreneurship experience to students in university settings

Entrepreneurship is extremely important for any economy, for its ability to make a significant impact on citizens and nations as a whole. Great entrepreneurs can change the way we live and work, by creating jobs and wealth, with changes varying between social impact to immense innovations. But can entrepreneurship be taught? The answer to this age-old debate is both yes and no. Since education is essential to enhance the thinking abilities and as entrepreneurship ecosystem is developed by the interplay of actors like universities, government and entrepreneurs themselves, universities become the hotbed of fostering the required entrepreneurial environment. An early introduction and expo-



HIMMA BINDU KOTA

(The writer is Associate Professor at Amity University, Noida. The views expressed are personal.)

sure to entrepreneurship and innovation is more likely to sow the seeds of entrepreneurial careers for students at a future juncture. Cities which are ranked highly for their entrepreneurial activities also boast promoting entrepreneurial education and culture. To take an example, Silicon Valley is known for entrepreneurship and is also the home to more than 10 universities, including Stanford and UC Berkeley.

There are three ways in which universities can take advantage of their position to further entrepreneurship. As universities are places of higher education, attracting workforce who wants to lead a better life, they can transform themselves into breeding grounds for budding entrepre-



neurs. Recognizing the importance of entrepreneurship to the economic development and job creation, universities can impart entrepreneurial skills and knowledge by updating existing programs and developing new courses. Going forward, interdisciplinary approach and new teaching methodologies should be used to provide entrepreneurship experience to students in a controlled environment in the university setting. Creation of industry linkages to provide internships to students with

local companies will further enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Secondly, universities can act as incubation centres to follow up and promote potential ideas by facilitating collaborations and incubation capacities not only to students from the area of business, innovation and entrepreneurship, but also from other areas like engineering, humanities, applied sciences and medicine. Provision of physical space to give wings to potential ideas and suitable support to raise funds at an early stage to transform these ideas into business models are their added advantages. of for the development of the business model. The faculty also play an important role in the incubators, as they are crucial resource for mentorship

and can channelize the energy of their students by providing proper guidance in research activities. However, not much can be achieved with research and publications of an idea, if it cannot be exploited for business opportunities.

Therefore, thirdly, the role of a university as a knowledge transferrer and as a bridge between academia and industry is noteworthy. Universities involved in applied research have large number of patents, articles and registered intellectual property rights, converging the joint efforts, experience and creativity of students and faculty. However, such research has to be commercialized as well, and here comes the role of universities as a conduit to industry linkages. By establishing connections with industry,

universities develop entrepreneurial ecosystems and provide students entrepreneurs with advice on aspects like licenses, consulting, and spin-offs. Entrepreneurship education in universities inspires students to start their own ventures. Several surveys have shown that a majority of students enrolled in an entrepreneurship course aspire to set up their own businesses. Through their studies, it is also found that entrepreneurship courses at universities have a profound impact on the students. Thus, entrepreneurship courses have a positive impact the students' founding abilities.

Entrepreneurs are assets to any nation as they contribute towards innovation, job creation, and enhanced standard of living and the best way to

promote entrepreneurship is to make people aware of it by educating them.

Entrepreneurship education can provide students with technical skills and managerial skills, but most importantly should cultivate entrepreneurial intent among them, which ultimately increases their tendency to start their own enterprise. The Indian higher education system has to step up and distinguish a general business management course from an entrepreneurship course to motivate, train and support budding entrepreneurs. The demand is for education programs which can expand their horizons in entrepreneurship by their unique and hands-on content and teaching techniques. Are the universities listening?



# GDP likely to grow more than 9.5% in '22: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The country's gross domestic product (GDP) is likely to grow more than 9.5 per cent in fiscal 2021-22, an SBI research report-Ecowrap said.

The economy grew at 8.4 per cent in the second quarter of the current fiscal, according to data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Tuesday. The growth in the April-June quarter of this fiscal stood at 20.1 per cent.

In October's monetary policy review, the Reserve Bank of India had retained its projection for real GDP growth at 9.5 per cent in 2021-22, consisting of 7.9 per cent in Q2; 6.8 per cent in Q3; and 6.1 per cent in Q4 of 2021-22.

"We believe that the real GDP growth would now be higher than the RBI's estimate of 9.5 per cent, assuming the RBI growth numbers for Q3 and Q4 to be sacrosanct," the research report said.

The real GDP growth may



be near to 10 per cent, it added.

The report said the GDP grew by 8.4 per cent in Q2 FY22 on the back of double-digit growth in mining and quarrying, public administration, defence and other services. The real GVA increased by 8.5 per cent, a tad higher than the GDP growth.

In H1 FY21, the country exhibited a real GDP loss of Rs

11.4 lakh crore (on a year-on-year basis) due to complete lockdown in April-May and partial lockdown in June-September, it added.

The situation has improved in FY22, and in H1 FY22 the real gain was around Rs 8.2 lakh crore. "This indicates that real loss of Rs 3.2 lakh crore still needs to be recouped to reach the pre-pandemic level," the report said.

The sector-wise data indicates that trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting are still the most affected, and the real loss of Rs 2.6 lakh crore is still needed to be recouped in these sectors, it noted.

Overall, the economy is still operating at 95.6 per cent of the pre-pandemic level (with trade, hotels, transport, communication & services related to broadcasting still at 80 per cent) and should take one more quarter to recoup the losses.

In Q2 FY22, the FMCG sector reported top-line year-on-year growth of 11 per cent, while EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation) and PAT grew by 4 per cent each.

However, rural markets, which showed good resilience thus far during the pandemic, have slowed in the last couple of months as suggested by some of the industry majors, according to the report.

## Upstox allows IPO applications via WhatsApp

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Online brokerage Upstox on Wednesday said it will allow investors to invest in initial public offerings (IPOs) and open demat accounts through WhatsApp.

Also, the company aims to increase its customer base to 10 million by the end of FY2022 from 7 million currently, Upstox said in a statement.

It has grown its customer base by 1 million in October 2021 alone.

Upstox provides end-to-end support for IPO applications via WhatsApp, empowering customers by easing the process of account opening, it said.

The key highlight of the latest feature is that all investors, whether they are registered with Upstox or not, can now subscribe to any IPO without moving out of the WhatsApp chat window at any point during the application journey.

## Benchmarks recoup losses amid global rebound; RIL, banks shine

PNS ■ MUMBAI



The Sensex rallied 620 points while the Nifty reclaimed the 17,100-level on Wednesday as investors piled into recently-battered banking, finance and energy counters amid a recovery in global equities despite lingering concerns over the Omicron coronavirus variant.

A sharp jump in the rupee and encouraging macroeconomic data further enthused domestic investors, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rallied 619.92 points or 1.09 per cent to close at 57,684.79. Similarly, the NSE Nifty surged 183.70 points or 1.08 per cent to 17,166.90.

IndusInd Bank was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, surging 5.73 per cent, followed by Axis Bank, SBI, Tech Mahindra, Maruti and Reliance Industries.

On the other hand, Dr Reddy's, UltraTech Cement, Sun Pharma, Bharti Airtel, Titan and Kotak Bank were among the laggards, shedding up to 1.58 per cent.

"After the sharp sell-off in the global markets yesterday, Indian equities reversed course following recovery in global markets and strong domestic GDP data. India's Q2 GDP recorded a growth of 8.4 per cent as economic activity moved towards normalcy after the impact of the second wave.

"Though the Fed chair's comment on speeding up the pace of the bond-buying taper plan kept investors cautious

along with the concerns of Omicron, the global markets recovered sharply today," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

India's manufacturing sector activities gained further strength in November, and witnessed the strongest increase in production and sales since February on improving market conditions, a monthly survey said on Wednesday.

## MONEY MATTERS

### BSNL has given Sept 2022 timeline for pan-India 4G

State-owned BSNL has given a timeline of September 2022 for rollout of its 4G services across India, and estimated an incremental revenue of about Rs 900 crore in the first year from such rollout, Parliament was informed on Wednesday. Minister of State for Communications Devusinh Chauhan, in a written reply to the Lok Sabha, made it clear that there is no proposal under consideration for disinvestment of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd (MTNL). As per audited financial statement, the assets of BSNL and MTNL as on September 30, 2021 are worth Rs 1,33,952 crore and Rs 3,556 crore, respectively. The value of assets have been arrived at on historical cost basis. As per financial statement, net block of property, plant and equipment in respect of BSNL and MTNL as on March, 2021 are Rs 89,878 crore and Rs 3,252 crore, respectively.



### Rupee gains 22 paise to end at 74.91 against US dollar



The rupee gained 22 paise to close at 74.91 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday as positive domestic equities and a weak American currency in the overseas markets boosted investor sentiment. At the interbank forex market, the domestic unit opened at 74.96

against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 74.79 and a low of 75.02 during the day's trade. It finally ended at 74.91 a dollar. On Tuesday, the rupee dropped by 6 paise to 75.13 against the US dollar amid concerns over the fresh impact of the new COVID variant on the economy. The rupee has been under pressure over the last few trading sessions, as the detection of a new coronavirus variant re-ignited growth concerns and hurt risk appetite. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, declined 0.03 per cent to 95.96. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, jumped 4.75 per cent to USD 72.52 per barrel.

### NHAI borrowings jump over 2-fold to Rs 3.38 lakh cr

Total borrowings of state-owned National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) have increased more than twofold to Rs 3,38,250 crore in three years to March 2021 compared to Rs 1,22,561 crore as of March 2018, Parliament was informed on Wednesday.



Replying to a written question in the Rajya Sabha, Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said NHAI creates valuable road assets which are financially viable. Gadkari said that tolling of the completed public funded road assets and monetizing the assets through Toll/InVT modes are major steps taken by the government to generate revenue for repayment of the loans and further construction by NHAI.

### NHAI suffers toll loss of Rs 2,731 cr due to protests



State-owned National Highways Authority of India suffered a revenue loss of Rs 2,731.32 due to the farmers' protests in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan, Parliament was informed on Wednesday. Replying to a written question in the Rajya Sabha, Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said the protest started affecting toll collection from October 2020. He said initially the toll plazas in Punjab were made non-operational by agitating farmers in October 2020. It eventually spread to neighbouring states of entire Haryana and parts of Rajasthan. Overall 60 to 65 NH toll plazas were affected due to farmer agitation resulting in loss of toll collection of Rs 2,731 crore," the minister said. Gadkari said MORTH and NHAI have made continuous efforts to operationalize the affected toll plazas through active communication with state administration, help of toll collecting agency etc.

## IPO rush continues; 10 firms line up public issues worth Rs 10K-cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The IPO lane will continue to be busy in December as 10 companies have lined up initial share-sale plans worth more than Rs 10,000 crore, merchant banking sources said on Wednesday.

Moreover, the initial public offerings of Star Health and Allied Insurance and Tega Industries are currently open for public subscription.

This comes after 10 firms successfully concluded their initial public offerings (IPOs) in November.

Among the companies that scheduled their IPOs in this month include RateGain Travel Technologies, travel and hospitality technology services provider, and Anand Rathi Wealth Ltd, part of Mumbai-based financial services group Anand Rathi.

RateGain's Rs 1,335-crore initial share-sale will open for public subscription during December 7-9, and the Rs 660-crore IPO of Anand Rathi Wealth will open on December 2.

In addition, the companies that have firmed up their IPO plans are -- Global Health Ltd, which operates and manages hospitals under the

Medanta brand, pharmacy retail chain MedPlus Health Services and Healthium Medtech, merchant banking sources said.

Apart from these, Metro Brands, Shriram Properties, AGS Transact Technologies, Shri Bajrang Power and Ispat and VLCC Health Care may also float their public issues in the period under review, they added.

Investment bankers said these companies will raise more than Rs 10,000 crore collectively.

The companies are raising funds to support business expansion plans, to retire debt and for general corporate purposes.

Some of the IPOs are an offer for sale (OFS), where private equity players or the pro-

moter wants to cash out part of their holding.

Prateek Singh, founder and CEO of LearnApp.com, attributed the impressive pipeline to the bull run in the equity markets.

"The best time for any company to go for an IPO is during the Bull market, which is also the reason why many companies are going for a public listing at this time. Companies look to tap into the sentiment from the public markets at such opportune times and are highly successful," he said.

Further, initial share-sales are receiving tremendous applications from the investors and IPOs have been subscribing multifold times. This has pushed companies to raise funds through IPO.

## Sebi asks debenture trustees to disclose investors charter, plant data on website

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Markets regulator Sebi has directed debenture trustees (DTs) to disclose investors charter and data on complaints they received on their websites.

The new guidelines will come into effect from January 1, 2022, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a circular.

To facilitate investor awareness about various activities where an investor has to deal with DTs for availing various services, Sebi has developed an investor charter for DTs, detailing the services provided to investors, timelines for various DT services provided, rights and obligations of investors and grievance redressal mechanism.

In this regard, Sebi has asked all the registered DTs to take necessary steps to bring the investor charter to the notice of investors in non-convertible

debt securities by way of disseminating the charter on their websites and displaying the charter at prominent places in offices etc.

Also, the Trustee Association of India (TAI) will disseminate the Investor Charter on its website.

Additionally, in a bid to bring transparency in the investor grievance redressal mechanism, Sebi asked DTs to

disclose on their respective websites, the data on complaints received against them or in respect of non-convertible debt securities issuances dealt by them and redressal thereof.

They will have to submit such data latest by the 7th of the succeeding month, the regulator said.

In addition, the regulator has also prescribed a format for

disclosing data of complaints on their websites.

Under the disclosure, DTs will have to disclose about complaints received during the month, those carried forward from the previous month, complaints pending for more than three months, complaints resolved and the average time is taken in the resolution of a complaint, among others.

Last week, Sebi had asked registrar and share transfer agents (RTAs) and merchant bankers to disclose on their websites the investor charter for a bunch of categories.

Besides, it had directed stock exchanges, depositories and clearing corporations to disclose on their websites the data on complaints received against them and redressal thereof.

This came after the Securities and Exchange Board of India came out with an investor charter in November.

## Cane arrears mount to Rs 4K-cr in 2020-21

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cane dues to be paid by sugar mills to farmers stood at Rs 4,445 crore during the 2020-21 season (October-September), with maximum arrears in Uttar Pradesh, Parliament was informed on Wednesday.

During the 2020-21 season, a total of Rs 92,804 crore was to be paid towards sugarcane price to the farmers. Out of which Rs 88,359 crore has been paid and the balance Rs 4,445 crore dues are pending, as per the data placed before Lok Sabha by Minister of State for Food Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti.

Of the pending dues during 2020-21 season, a maximum of Rs 3,752 crore cane dues is to be cleared by sugar mills in Uttar Pradesh, followed by Rs 394 crore in Maharashtra, Rs 64 crore in Chhattisgarh

and Rs 63 crore in Haryana, the data showed.

About Rs 52 crore dues need to be cleared to farmers in Uttarakhand, Rs 44 crore in Gujarat, Rs 37 crore in Andhra Pradesh, Rs 25 crore in Tamil Nadu and Rs 9 crore in Punjab in the said period, it added.

The cane dues of Rs 130 crore are still pending for 2019-20 season, while Rs 365 crore for the 2018-19 season, the data showed.

The minister said the data regarding cane dues of the farmers are received from the concerned state governments.

The powers to enforce the provisions of the Sugarcane (Control) Order 1966 with regard to payment of cane dues to farmers is vested with state governments as they have necessary field information for its implementation, she said.

## VE CV sales rise 10% to 4,085 units in Nov

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Eicher Motors Ltd on Wednesday said its joint venture with Volvo VECV posted a 10.1 per cent increase in total sales at 4,085 units in November 2021.

VE Commercial Vehicles Ltd (VECV), an unlisted subsidiary, had sold 3,710 units in the same month last year, Eicher Motors said in a regulatory filing.

Eicher trucks and busses sales grew 3.1 per cent to 3,184 units last month against 3,088 units in November 2020.

Exports of Eicher brand of commercial vehicles stood at 783 units, compared to 473 units in the year-ago month, a growth of 65.5 per cent, the company said. Sales of Volvo trucks and busses were down 20.8 per cent at 118 units last month as against 149 units in November 2020, it added.

## NTPC appoints 3 addl directors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-run power giant NTPC on Wednesday said its board has appointed three additional directors (independent directors). The board of NTPC has appointed Jitendra Jayantilal Tanna, Vivek Gupta and Vidyadhar Vaishampayan as Additional Directors in its meeting held on November 30, 2021, a BSE filing stated. Jitendra Jayantilal Tanna, aged 47 years is a Chartered Accountant by profession.



# STRENGTHEN YOUR BACK

Since most of us are working for long hours in this WFH set-up, DR SHUBHANG AGGARWAL tells us how to take care of the spine



**W**hile working from home has many personal and professional benefits, it is also making you susceptible to spine-related issues due to your poor posture during work. Since most of us are working long hours in this new set-up, the uncomfortable chair and no break during the work hours all lead to back pain. Due to the space crunch in our homes, it's difficult to accommodate today's ergonomic office furniture. Therefore, one should be careful about their body posture while working from home. Ensure that none of the parts of the body are awkwardly bent or twisted. It's equally essential to move around periodically in order to promote circulation.

**Posture**

One needs to take care of their posture to relieve the stress from the elbows and neck. When we sit for a long time, our 'S' curve of the spine changes into 'C' curve, thereby putting more stress on your muscles, ligaments and tissues.

**Adjust your seat**

When you are working on a laptop, it's necessary to adjust your seat so that it can be comfortable for your eyes as well as your back. Your eyes should be lined up 3 inches below the top of your screen if using a desktop computer, or tilt your laptop screen back to 120 degrees. The screen should be at least an arm's length away. Make sure you're not sitting upright or hunching forward in your chair like a turtle. While sitting back in your chair, some of your body weight is being supported by the chair back and sit close enough to comfortably reach your keyboard and mouse.

**Change your position frequently**

Don't get immersed in your work. Take small breaks. Instead, try to get up every 45-50 minutes, even if it's just to walk around the room. Stand after every half an hour, stretch and move around for a minute or two to promote circulation and relax muscles. You can also walk to get a glass of water or make tea or coffee for yourself. But don't try to work for hours on end standing up. Standing for extended periods of time also increase the risks of varicose veins. Our body comprises 360 joints and they all need to move in order for the proper circulation of blood. Therefore, stretch breaks are important

**Exercises for a stronger back**

Exercise can help strengthen and support your back. A scheduled walk, every day for 30 minutes, can do a lot to strengthen your lower back and the muscles that support your spine. One needs to make exercise a priority. There are many great and effective home workouts that you can do with basic household items. These are just a few simple steps you can take to help relieve back pain. Remember that the more you can work in a neutral posture, and the more you can move around, the less the chance of any spinal injury. But, if you are still struggling with pain that interferes with your daily life, consider talking to a specialist.

*The writer is Orthopaedic & Robotic Joint Replacement Surgeon and Director, NHS Hospital, Jalandhar*

## Quality oil for good health



**Q**uality oil will cover all three main aspects of good health, diet, and nutrition. During the pandemic that started in 2020, the trend has been to have as many home-cooked meals as possible since most people have been at home. This has given rise to different trends of using traditional grains and legumes like millets in different ways. Most of us have also experimented with local and seasonal vegetables in some form or the other. This is indeed the best example of a balanced diet with carbohydrates, proteins, and lipids or oil.

That good oil will help you saute, bake and garnish well! There are no right or wrong oils for one, but a fine-quality one does exist. The best meals are those cooked with the freshest and top quality ingredients and this includes the oil used in cooking. Home cooking needs oil that assures purity and world-class quality. The oil needs to ensure that the taste of food cooked delights the whole family and stays fresher for longer. The oil that may start smoking or burning, is a big no-no. Choose the oils that don't harm the flavours or don't degrade the nutritional value of your meal! Choose the oil which is free from all of this like the Gold Drop refined oil.

The lighter the oil, the purer it is. Also, oil must be odour-free. Both these qualities are what it offers its consumers, and this purity level and consistency ensure great taste. Mitesh Lohiya, Director, Sales and Marketing tells *The Pioneer*, "With this oil, you can be assured of the best raw materials used. Along with our ultra-modern refining facilities and stringent testing, it has consistent quality and purity in every drop." The right cooking oil can be vital for protecting brain cells and reducing the risk of heart diseases.

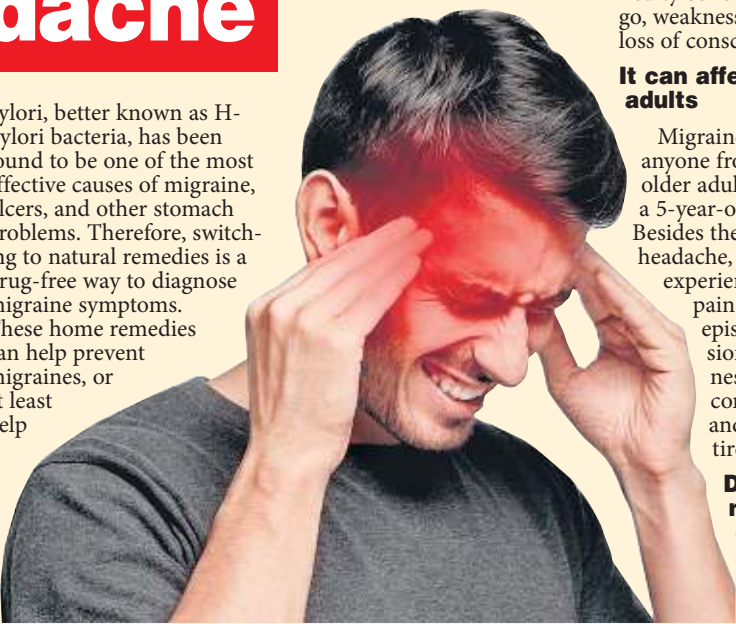
Migraine has become a common phenomenon with about one in seven people suffering from this condition globally. DR PRAVEEN JACOB shares myths and tells you how to fight it naturally

## Decoding headache

**M**igraine, an excruciating headache coupled with nausea and sensitivity to light and sound, not only hampers your sleep cycle but also your quality of life. It has become quite a common phenomenon; with about one in seven people suffering from this condition globally. The condition makes you so helpless that you become ready to alleviate the excruciating pain. Medications can help manage pain, and antidepressants and beta blockers can help prevent recurrent episodes. However, all of these methods have potential side effects, including nausea, insomnia, high blood pressure, and heart attacks. Clinical studies have shown that home remedies provide more effective pain relief compared to conventional care.

**Causes**

If you have found out the root cause of your migraine then half of the battle is won. Dehydration, high blood pressure, tight muscles in the neck or shoulder, emotional stress, certain medications, supplements or reactions to other foods are some of the prominent causes of migration. Even *Helicobacter pylori*, better known as H-Pylori bacteria, has been found to be one of the most effective causes of migraine, ulcers, and other stomach problems. Therefore, switching to natural remedies is a drug-free way to diagnose migraine symptoms. These home remedies can help prevent migraines, or at least help



reduce their severity and duration.

**Myths**

**They are like normal headaches**

It is important to note that headaches are only one symptom of migraine. Along with the headache, migraines also cause nausea, sensitivity to light, difficulty concentrating, vertigo, weakness, vomiting and loss of consciousness.

**It can affect only adults**

Migraines can affect anyone from children to older adults. It can affect a 5-year-old child. Besides the excruciating headache, they can also experience abdominal pain, irritability, episodic confusion, severe dizziness, difficulty in concentration and extreme tiredness.

**During migraine, only one side of the head pains**

There is no set pattern for migraine headache. It can be either one-sided or they can involve the whole head, or even the back of the head or neck, and sometimes the face too. All the patients don't end up throwing up when they are hit with migraine.

**Women are more prone to migraines**

Women are three times more likely to have migraines, but men suffer from migraines too. While 18-20% of women suffer from migraine, 8-10% of men also suffer from migraines.

**Natural Remedies**

**Keep yourself well hydrated**

If you want to treat migraine without medication, you should drink loads of water or an electrolyte beverage. If you are opting for an electrolyte beverage then ensure that it doesn't have added sugar or colour in it. Excessive sugar can also aggravate headache. Taking a vitamin C drink is also a good option.

**Perform yoga regularly**

Studies have shown that yoga can be effective in controlling headaches. Yoga is an ancient discipline that promotes a holistic approach to pain management through a combination of breathing techniques and posture. These asanas and pranayama have no side effects. Exercising twice daily under the guidance of a certified trainer will reduce the severity of migraine pain and help prepare for future attacks.

**An effective tactic**

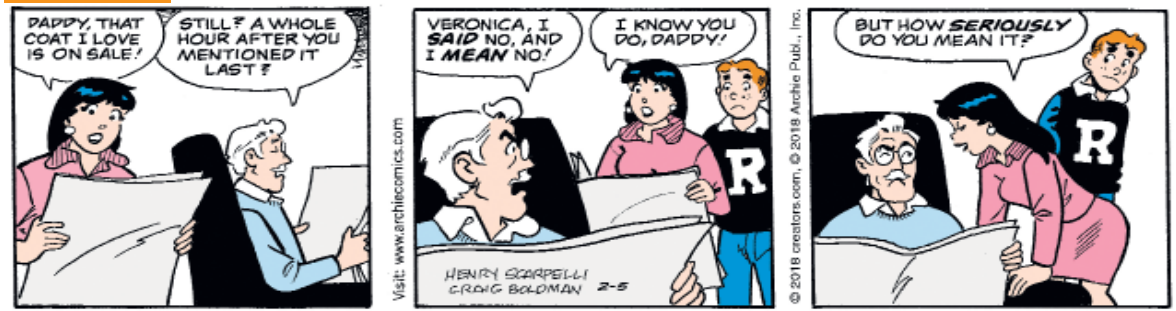
Contemplative meditation involves focusing on the present moment with a non-judgmental mind. This in some way helps to reduce stress, which is one of the most common causes of migraine. Techniques such as meditation and relaxation can sometimes soothe headaches.

**Exercise**


In order to reduce the frequency and intensity of migraine attacks, doing some physical activity regularly can help.

### FUN


#### ARCHIE




#### CALVIN AND HOBBS




#### GARFIELD



#### REALITY CHECK




#### SPEED BUMP



#### CROSSWORD

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	9				
10					
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#### NANCY



#### SUDOKU

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	3		8					
				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.

#### GINGER MEGGS



#### ACROSS

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

#### DOWN

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

6 From another country

9 A sea creature with many arms

11 Aeroplane trip


12 Motorist

14 Jealousy

15 Large group of soldiers

**SOLUTION**

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







## Looking on the 'Bright Side'

SHREYA SRIKONDA

**M**ental illness is still a hush-hush topic in today's world. People still feel reluctant to acknowledge how real and common this issue is. Bringing in a fest with a special focus on mental health is The Bright Side foundation which started 'project Udaan'. Founder Swetha Desiraju talks about her dream, saying, "Growing up, I watched closely how mental illnesses can affect people. More than the illness itself, I've noticed how much the stigma of mental illness can affect a person. If someone close to you is admitted to a hospital due to mental illness, you have to lie to other people and cover up the reason why they're ill. I realised something has to be done about this. There had to be a change — it had to go from stigma to support."

Swetha, who is a psychologist by profession, started to meet people who shared her vision. She introduces the board of directors — a varied group of changemakers including a lecturer, a scientist, a community worker, psychol-

ogists, and a student of psychology as well. Together, they organised Udaan — a 'mental health festival', on November's last Sunday. It was an event that was one of the first-of-its-kind in Hyderabad. Focusing on the positive side of the discourse around mental health, the event saw powerful stage performances, painting stations, food stalls, games and was full of smiles.

The NGO is registered under the act of 2001, and since their formation last year, they've been busy with projects that Swetha describes as being "very close to their hearts".

"When we were brainstorming, we asked ourselves, 'What did we need the most when we were kids?' We realised that the answer was that we all needed someone who could help us navigate the emotional changes and guide us to make responsible choices — someone who could be the 'wind beneath our wings.' The foundation's project named 'Wind beneath the wings' aims to do just that for the adolescents of the country. They created a curriculum for school children for social and emotional learning. "Our goal is to tie up with the state governments and see schools



across the country adopt the curriculum and have children learning about social and emotional learning," says Swetha.

During the pandemic, they came up with 'Art therapy', a project that was a huge hit with young children. Understanding that children will not be able to grasp the concept of mental well-being, the Bright Side foundation



came up with exercises where a child can be creative while being taught how to manage their mental health. They would paint their palms with colour, and leave an imprint of it on paper. In the palm they write about their future, things they like to do, people they're grateful for — leading to a productive session where children are allowed to verbalise their emotions and take some

time to be grateful for things in their life. They plan to grow in other sectors as well. Bhavana Srirangam, a board-member, says that they're hoping to get into the healthcare sector, to provide sessions for those affected with fatal illnesses. "By being provided with training sessions, they will have more resilience, which in turn strengthens their treatment."

The foundation also has its own podcast (which is available on all platforms) called By your side by the Bright Side foundation, and it talks about relationships, companionship, and social well-being.

A special thing the foundation does, Swetha mentions, is how they provide free counselling for people. The main reason why people shy away from seeking the therapy they really need is how expensive it can get. By providing free counselling, the foundation allows those in need to at least start a dialogue with a qualified psychologist, and better understand their own health.

Board-member Nikitha Vattikuti talks about 5 years down the lane, they hope to be the wind beneath the wings for many children across every district through the govt of Telangana, and get national recognition to take the foundation to other states. "With teammates hailing from many professional sectors like healthcare, education, etc- we're hoping to grow in many aspects. 5 years down the line, I think we will be able to make a mark in many ways," says Nikitha.



### Reduce vehicular pollution

"The dust and particulate material from vehicular pollution and smoke from stubble burning have caused smog-like conditions in Delhi and its nearby cities. The dangerous mix of pollutants in our air also increases the risk of respiratory diseases, much like smoking cigarette toxins does. For children who grow up in highly polluted cities like Delhi, Jalandhar, and other north Indian states the impact of this dangerous air can be catastrophic for their undeveloped lungs and respiratory systems. We have seen a significant spike in people reporting respiratory problems in such weather and environmental conditions. Common complaints include cough and breathlessness. It is well-known that the burning of stubble releases a toxic mixture of gases which include carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and even manganese and cadmium particles in the atmosphere. This means city residents are practically inhaling poisonous air, which is severely affecting their lung health."



Dr. Shubhang Aggarwal from NHS Hospital.

### Children most affected

"The air quality has degraded beyond our control and the winter season in many parts of India is adding to the adverseness of the situation. The pollution caused around this time takes around 3-4 months to dissipate and therefore increases prolonged exposure to these gasses. Every individual is affected by bad air quality; the most badly affected are children. Children's ability to filter out or detoxify environmental agents and pollution is different. Also, in kids airway epithelium is more permeable than in adults, which makes them more vulnerable to diseases. For children who grow up in highly-polluted cities like Delhi and Gurugram, the impact of this dangerous air can be catastrophic on their undeveloped lungs and respiratory systems. No surprise, our pulmonary department will be overflowing with patients. I urge the people to save our environment by following all the guidelines to curb pollution."



Dr. Shuchin Bajaj from Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals.

## Stop being mean and keep the air clean!

**C**lean air is a basic requirement for healthy living. Although pollution has been a longstanding subject of public debate, this National Pollution Prevention Day today, we will be making people aware of the things that we can do in order to prevent pollution and control the pollution of the world as per its theme. The National Health Portal of India data revealed that around 7 million people die every year due to air pollution. The data also reveals that nine out of 10 people globally do not have access to clean and safe air! There were some thought leaders, medical experts, and industry leaders in this space who wanted to address the issue of air pollution and how it's affecting our lifestyle in the long run, or how to overcome the problem and sustain.

### Cycle for a friendly environment

"Pollution remains high in many parts of the country despite the implementation of all possible measures. Every day, vehicular emissions contribute to pollution in Indian cities. It is therefore important that people consider environmentally friendly options for transportation, such as cycling, to counteract the shrinking share of a healthy environment. There has been a tangible shift towards cycling due to limited mobility and activity options during the pandemic but we will need well-thought-out policies to maintain this momentum. While this will need some focused behavioral change by the consumer, the government should also do more to promote cycling such as creating more cycle lanes, reducing GST, and conducting awareness campaigns for it. Cycling is one of the safest and best forms of exercise and is very effective for people with diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, to mention a few. A cycle is also a quieter vehicle and more people adopting them may address the issue of noise pollution."



Pankaj M Munjal, Chairman, and Managing Director, HMC.

### Lead a less consumptive, carbon and other pollutant-free lifestyle

"While pollution has been a subject of constant and animated public discussion for many years now, there is a need to shift the focus from outdoor to indoor pollution. With the governments on their part taking all possible measures to mitigate the impact on people, the common people too have a responsibility in this regard. In order to minimize the emissions from their day-to-day activities, they should not only educate themselves and others in the community on the exigent need of cutting down on indoor pollution but also try to lead a less consumptive and carbon and other pollutant-free lifestyle in their own lives as much as possible. In light of an unprecedented pandemic increasingly reshaping our lifestyles and mobility habits prompting more spending of time indoors coupled with the established connection between dirty pollutants and harmful pathogens, there is never a better time than now to give a war cry on indoor pollution."



Himanshu Agarwal, CEO, and Founder of Magneto CleanTech.



## Spicing it up: Here's how millennial Indians are exploring intimacy

**P**ee Safe, a hygiene and wellness brand, recently carried out a pleasure survey among Indian audiences under its female sexual pleasure and wellness brand Domina. The survey was conducted across age groups and over 25,000 respondents from more than 200 cities identified the changes in sexual habits, opinions, and preferences during the pandemic. It also aimed to assess the sexual awareness and hygiene levels among audiences and has unraveled some surprising stats.

The survey revealed that about 57% of Indians don't use any form of contraception such as condoms. While having sex with their partner, 33% of the people in the sample size fantasized about someone else. The focus here is on raising awareness around the contraception options available even for women such as female condoms. They ensure safety and pleasure for women and there is an increasing acceptance of

such products as well.

A major indicator of the mindset change towards sexual pleasure is the fact that nearly 48% of the respondents either used sex toys or expressed interest in using them. The survey also found that 82% of the respondents masturbate more than once a month. People are not shying away from foreplay, mutual masturbation, or even watching porn with their partners. About 38% experienced heightened sexual activity in the pandemic period. These and other findings indicate that there is a greater emphasis on sexual pleasure and experimentation among Indians. Those without partners are exploring channels such as dating apps (nearly 36% of the respondents claimed that they've used dating apps).

Speaking about this, Vikas Bagaria, Founder, Pee Safe, says, "The pandemic has been an eye-opener when it comes to people's sexual preferences and usage of related products. There is experimentation, a

greater acceptance of sexual needs, and a need for pleasure in intimate relationships. This is gratifying for both men as well as women. However, there should be aware as well, which was also my primary reason for starting Pee Safe. I was a man in a sea of women-dominated categories and started out to change the narrative, break myths and speak out about taboos."

Adding further, Divya Sethi, Sexual Wellness Expert at Domina by Pee Safe, says, "There are multiple ways to enhance sexual pleasure including experimenting, foreplay and so on. Still, the O word continues to evade women often."

However, with female condoms available now, why should boys have all the fun! It is time for both men and women to discover the full joys of intimacy by using various products. With Domina, we want to start a dialogue around what physical intimacy means for women and give the power in their hands."



PTI ■ HUELVA (SPAIN)

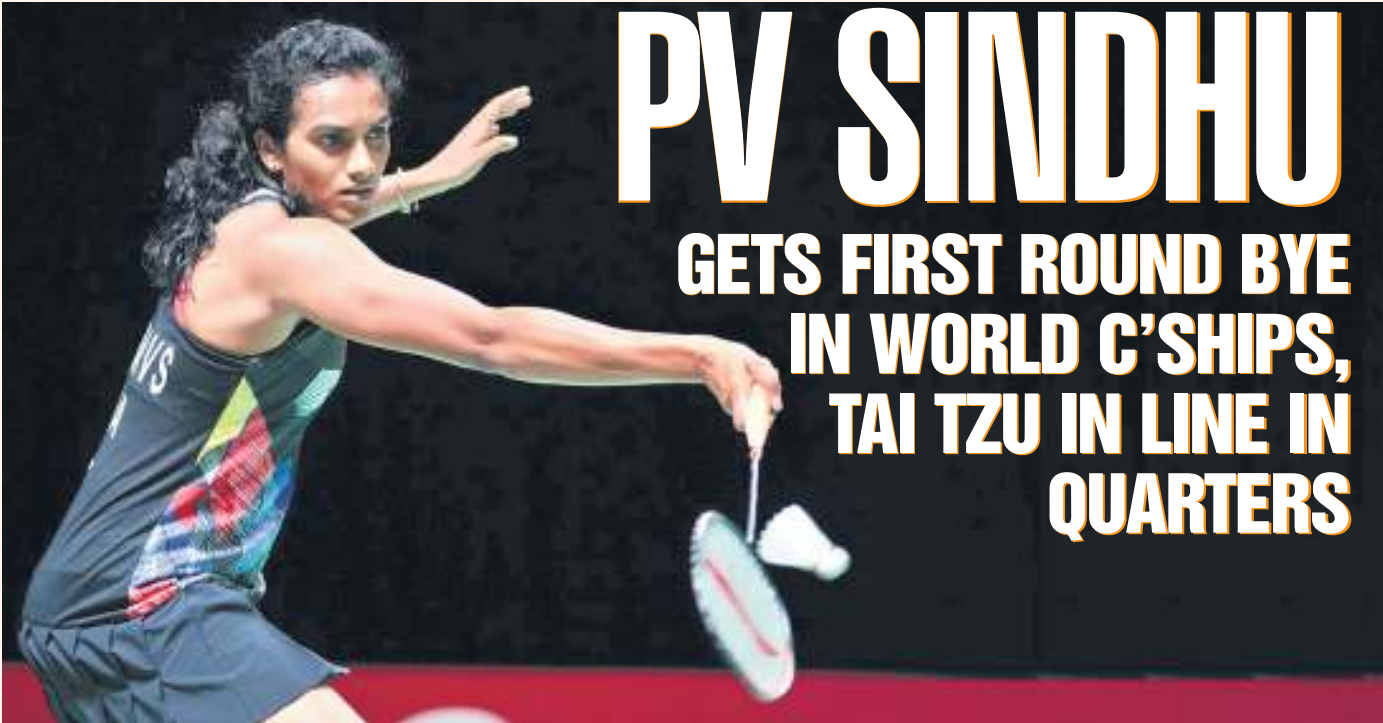
Defending champion PV Sindhu has got a first round bye and faces the prospect of coming up against Tokyo Olympics silver medallist Tai Tzu Ying and former world number one Carolina Marin in the quarterfinals and semifinals respectively of the World Badminton Championships here.

Sindhu, who won a bronze in the Tokyo Olympics, has been seeded sixth in the December 12-19 showpiece event.

The world number seven Indian has seen a resurgence in form as she had reached semifinals in the last three tournaments she had played.

Sindhu faces the winner of Martina Repiska of Slovenia and Ruselli Hartawan of Indonesia in the second round. If she clears the third round, Chinese Taipei's Tai Tzu, who had beaten her in the Tokyo Olympics semifinals, will be awaiting her in the quarterfinals.

If she Sindhu gets past Chinese Taipei's Tai Tzu, she could be up against Marin who had beaten her in the 2016 Rio



## PV SINDHU GETS FIRST ROUND BYE IN WORLD C'SHIPS, TAI TZU IN LINE IN QUARTERS

Olympics summit clash.

Marin returns from injury straight into the World Championships and she will be

playing in an arena named after her. Tai Tzu has also taken sufficient rest as she hasn't played since winning silver at Tokyo 2020.

The other half of the women's singles has two players -- Akane Yamaguchi of Japan and An Seyoung of Korea -- who have

swept the prominent World Tour titles since the Olympics.

Nozomi Okuhara of Japan whom Sindhu had beaten in the

2019 final is also in the other half of the draw.

Tokyo Olympics champion Chen Yu Fei of China is not taking part like many other players from her country.

In men's singles, Kidambi Srikanth, seeded 12th, will open his campaign against local player Pablo Abian and has the prospect of facing compatriot B Sai Praneeth (seeded 14th) in the quarterfinals, if both are able to reach that stage.

Defending champion and top seed Kento Momota of Japan could be the man waiting for the Indians in the semifinals.

Young Lakshya Sen has also been drawn in the same half as his two senior compatriots and faces Max Weisskirchen of Germany in the opening round. He can be up against Momota in the quarterfinals if the Indian reaches there.

In the men's

doubles, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have been seeded eighth and handed a first round bye. Three other Indian pairs -- Manu Attri and B Sumeth Reddy, MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila, and Arun George and Sanyam Shukla are also in the fray.

In women's doubles, the pair of Ashwini Ponnappa and N Sikki Reddy will face the French duo of Delphine Delrue and Lea Palermo in the first round.

Two other Indian pairs — Pooja Dandu and Sanjana Santosh, and Maneesha K and Rutaparna Panda — are also in the fray.

In mixed doubles, three Indian pairs — Saurabh Sharma and Anoushka Parikh, MR Arjun and Maneesha K and Utkarsh Arora and K a r i s h m a Wadkar — are in the fray.



## We are getting best possible preparation for World Cup: Mithali

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India are scheduled to play Only one series before the Women's World Cup early next year but ODI skipper Mithali Raj feels the team is getting the best preparation possible ahead of the mega event.

In the last nine months, India hosted South Africa before playing a three-match series in England and Australia. They lost all three series but made the mighty Australia work really hard for it and also ended their 26-match winning streak in the third ODI Down Under.

India will play World Cup hosts New Zealand before the ICC event in March-April.

"We have played three best teams since March and it has



given us good preparation. Players have played domestic cricket and also in the Women's Big Bash so they are getting game time which is the most

important thing.

"We are getting to play in New Zealand before World Cup which is also good," said Mithali after a partnership

between KFC and Indian Deaf Cricket Association was announced here on Wednesday.

India, who were unable to post 250 plus scores, did that twice in the Australia series and chased down 265 in the final ODI.

"When you play against a strong team in its backyard you try to give your best. Though we lost the series, the matches were very close. We scored 270 and chased 270 odd, if we can do that consistently we will be among the best sides in world cricket," said Mithali.

Middle-order batting needs improvement but Mithali said all departments must fire as a unit if they are to win the World Cup.

"We bat as a unit so you can't pinpoint one area. There

are times when top order failed and the others performed. As a unit if we look to post a good total then it will help. If we focus on one area like middle order then it becomes too much of a burden for that particular slot."

India finished runners-up in 2017 when not many expected them to but expectations will be high this time.

"There were not enough expectations back then. Now in 2021 players have got experience and got a lot of exposure with the T20 leagues. Overall we have young players but they have got enough exposure. It is just of matter of gelling well as a team.

"Every match will be different there. The quicker we read our opponents the better it will be for us," she added.

## Andy Flower steps down from coaching role at Punjab Kings



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Assistant coach Andy Flower has parted ways with Punjab Kings and is expected to land a role in one of the new teams ahead of IPL 2022.

Former Zimbabwe captain Flower, who worked as a coach in England for more than a decade and guided the national team there, was hired for his maiden IPL stint ahead of the 2020

season.

"He sent his resignation to the team recently. It has been accepted.

There is a good chance that he goes to one of the new teams (Lucknow or Ahmedabad)," a BCCI official told PTI.

There is a good possibility that the 53-year-old is given a bigger role in his next IPL assignment.

Flower worked alongside head coach Anil Kumble for the past two seasons. The development comes at a time when K L Rahul, Punjab Kings skipper for the past two seasons, is expected to move to the Lucknow franchise.

Punjab wanted to retain Rahul but he did not want to stay.

It remains to be seen if Flower stays as head coach of CPL franchise Saint Lucia Kings, which is owned by same consortium that owns Punjab Kings. Saint Lucia finished runners-up in 2020 and 2021 season.

## Injury-plagued Saina pulls out of World Championships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former world no.1 Saina Nehwal will miss the World Championships for the first time in her international career due to multiple injuries that have derailed her season.

The London Olympics bronze-medallist, who has won a silver and bronze besides eight quarterfinal finishes in the World Championships over the years, is recovering from a groin pull and knee injury.

The big event will be held in Huelva, Spain from December 12 to 19. "Saina had to withdraw from World Championship as she is still recovering from the groin and a knee injury. She

won't be able to regain fitness in time to play the tournament," Saina's husband and fellow shuttler Kashyap told PTI. Returning to action at the Thomas and Uber Cup Final in Aarhus, Denmark in October, Saina had to retire midway in the round-robin match against Spain's Clara Azurmendi due to a groin niggle. She played in Denmark but again withdrew midway into the second game of the first round match at French Open.

"She had a tough groin injury in Uber Cup. She was fine in Denmark but it didn't heal properly and again started paining when she was playing in French Open. It aggravated and became serious," said Kashyap. "She also had a



knee injury in France and had to pull out. She is doing her rehabilitation now. Hopefully, she will be able to get back to training from 10th or 15th of this month." In a stellar career, Saina has never missed the World Championships since making her debut in the 2006 edition. The 31-year-old from Hyderabad claimed the silver in 2015 when her rampaging run was stopped by Spain's Carolina Marin in the final. She also secured a bronze two years later at Glasgow, Scotland.

In 2018, Saina claimed her second individual gold medal at the Commonwealth Games and also helped the country win its first mixed team title in the quadrennial event.

## 'Golden Boy' Neeraj Chopra to launch PM's mission

**New Delhi:** Tokyo Olympics gold medallist Neeraj Chopra will visit Sankardham School in Ahmedabad on December 4 and launch Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mission to spread awareness about balanced diet, fitness and sports.

During his meeting with Tokyo Olympians at his residence on August 16, Modi had urged India's Olympians and Paralympians to visit 75 schools each by the 2023 Independence Day and spread awareness against malnutrition and also play a sport with schoolchild-

ren. On Wednesday, Sports Minister Anurag Thakur tweeted to say that javelin thrower Chopra will set in motion the PM's mission.

"PM Sh @narendramodi ji gave a call to our Olympians & Paralympians to visit schools and interact with students on the importance of 'santulit aahaar', fitness, sports & more. Starting Dec 4 @Neeraj\_chopra1 will be at Sankardham School in Ahmedabad to launch this mission," Thakur wrote on his Twitter handle. **PTI**

## Germany beats Britain in Davis Cup for 1st semi since 2007

AP ■ INNSBRUCK

Germany came from behind to upset Britain in the Davis Cup quarterfinals after Kevin Krawietz and Tim Pütz won the decisive doubles match.

The German pair defeated British teammates Joe Salisbury and Neal Skupski 7-6 (10), 7-6 (5) after the best-of-three tie was level following the two singles.

Krawietz and Pütz saved four set points in the tiebreaker before taking the opening set and won the second tiebreaker after winning seven straight points from 5-0 down.

"This is an incredible team achievement," Krawietz said.



"We have a great atmosphere in the team from day one."

Daniel Evans had given Britain the lead by beating Peter Gojowczyk 6-2, 6-1, but Jan-

Lennard Struff pulled Germany even with the 10-time champion by beating Cameron Norrie 7-6 (6), 3-6, 6-2.

Germany has won the Davis

Cup three times but not since 1993. In its first semifinal since 2007, Germany will meet either Sweden or the team from Russia on Saturday. Croatia will face either Serbia or Kazakhstan in the other semifinal.

"We have done everything to win," Struff said. "We hope our journey goes on and the next goal is to win the semifinal."

Britain was seeking its fourth semifinal berth in the last six editions of the tournament. It last won the event in 2015, and it had beaten Germany 2-0 when the teams also met in the quarterfinal two years ago.

"Everyone is gutted, this is a tough day to swallow," Britain

team captain Leon Smith said. "It could have gone either way, but it wasn't to be today. They gave their best effort but sometimes that is not enough, and Germany deserves to go through."

Struff said his win over Norrie was "one of the most important victories of my career. Cam Norrie is a real fighter. I started very well, went 4-1 up, but when you take so many risks, you can expect that more mistakes will come."

The 12th-ranked Norrie failed to serve out the opening set against Struff when leading 6-5, and the Briton missed two set points in the tiebreaker.

## Hyderabad kick off December with Jamshedpur challenge



PTI ■ BAMBOLIM

Coming off a memorable victory over defending champions Mumbai City FC, Hyderabad FC will be raring to go when they take on in-form Jamshedpur FC in an Indian Super League game here on Thursday.

The game will be the first of six for Manolo Marquez's men in a hectic December, and inci-

dentally, all of them are scheduled to be played at the same venue.

Currently in fourth position, Owen Coyle's Red Miners are fresh from a 3-1 victory over FC Goa and will be high on confidence going into this game.

HFC head coach Marquez believes his team is ready for the game but also knows that it will not be an easy one for his side.

"For me, Owen Coyle's team are always tough to face. Last season, both games were very equal and ended in a draw," the coach said.

"This season, they have players who are comfortable playing different styles of football and are happy to play with more possession. They also have a similar squad from last season and for me, they will surely fight for the top-4," he added.

In attack, Jamshedpur have Nerijus Valskis and Jordan Murray, both of whom were on the scoresheet in the last game.

## Liverpool primed to pile on misery for Everton

AP ■ LONDON

ENGLAND

Arriving with the best attack in the Premier League, Liverpool looks primed to pile on the misery for local rival Everton in the Merseyside derby at Goodison Park.

Everton hasn't won any of its last seven games and the pressure is increasing on manager Rafa Benitez, who is taking on his former club.

Meanwhile, Liverpool great Steve Gerrard could do his old club a big favor by leading Aston Villa, where he has recently taken over as manager, to a win over Manchester City, one of Liverpool's main title contenders. Second-place City is a point ahead of third-place Liverpool and a point behind Chelsea, which is also in action at Watford. Fourth-place West Ham is at home to Brighton, third-to-last Burnley looks for just its second win of the season in a trip to Wolverhampton, and Leicester travels to Southampton.



SPAIN

Spanish league leader Real Madrid can increase its advantage at the top when it hosts Athletic Bilbao

in a match postponed from the ninth round. Madrid is four points clear from both Atlético Madrid and Real Sociedad.

Madrid is unbeaten against Athletic in 12 league matches, with eight wins and four losses.

Eighth-place Athletic hasn't won in five consecutive league matches.

In the Copa del Rey, Sevilla plays at Córdoba, Real Sociedad visits Panadería Pulido and Real Betis plays at CFI Alicante.

ITALY

After losing back-to-back Serie A matches, AC Milan will try to get back on track in the league when it visits relegation-threatened Genoa.

Milan has slipped three points below league leader Napoli, which travels to Sassuolo.

Inter Milan will be looking to take advantage of any slip up from the top two and hosts lowly Spezia. The defending champion is third, four points below Napoli. Also fifth-placed Roma visits Bologna.

FRANCE

It's Super Wednesday in Ligue

1 with 10 games in the evening. Leader Paris Saint-Germain will miss an injured Neymar when it hosts third-placed Nice.

PSG will rely on Kylian Mbappe and Lionel Messi to crack the joint-tightest defense in the league. On a 13-game unbeaten run in all competitions, Rennes can consolidate second place against defending champion Lille.

Expect goals in that game as it features Lille's Jonathan David, the league's top scorer, and Rennes' Gaetan Laborde, the second most prolific scorer.

Marseille can make up ground in the race for Champions League spots with a win at mid-table Nantes.

Lyon will host Reims without spectators after the league sanctioned Lyon for incidents at home on Nov. 21 when Dimitri Payet was hit on the head by a bottle of water thrown from the stands in a game that was abandoned.

## Six-time champions Germany, Argentina, France enter Junior Hockey WC semifinals

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Six-time champions Germany and Argentina earned hard-fought wins over Spain and Netherlands respectively, while France cruised past Malaysia to enter the semifinals of the FIH Junior Men's Hockey World Cup here on Wednesday.

In the first quarterfinal of the day, Germany eked out a narrow 3-1 win over Spain in shoot-out after both the teams were locked at 2-2 in regulation time, before Argentina beat Netherlands 2-1.

In the third quarterfinal, the tournament's surprise package France beat Malaysia 4-0.

Germany took the lead from a penalty stroke through Christopher Kutter in the fifth minute but the lead was shortlived as Ignacio Abajo equalised for Spain from a penalty corner six minutes later.

After two barren quarters, it was Spain who shocked the Germans in

the 59th minute when Eduard de Ignacio-Simo scored a fine field goal to give his side the lead.

There was more drama in store as just at the stroke of the hooter, Germany secured a penalty corner and Masi Pfandt stepped up to take the match into shoot-out.

In the shoot-out, Paul Smith, Michel Struthoff and Hannes Muller found the back of the net, while Matteo Poljaric missed.

Spain were awful from the one-on-one situation as Abajo, Guillermo Fortunato and de Ignacio-Simo missed while only Gerard Clapes scored.

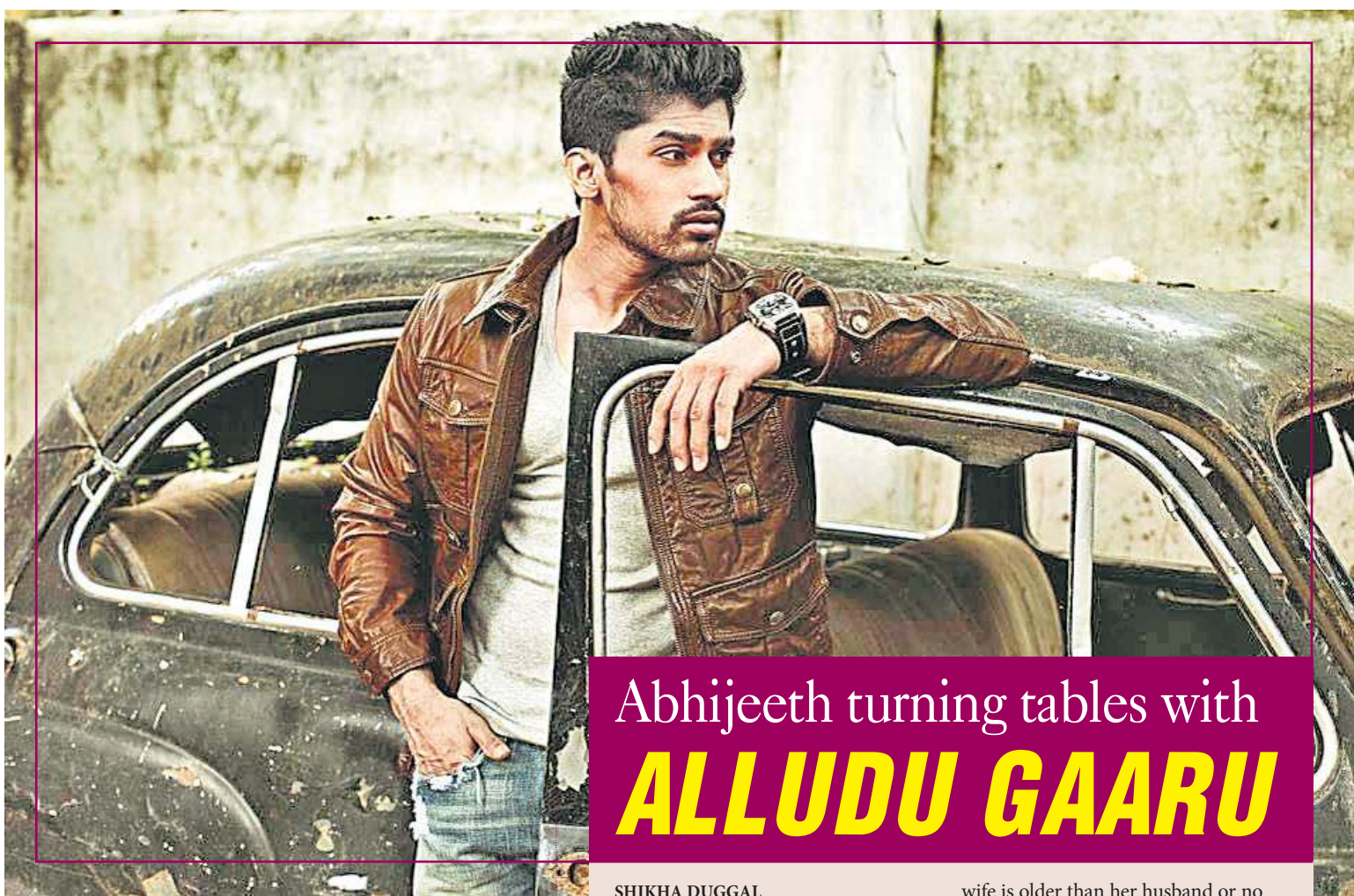
Germany are the most successful team in the history of the Junior World Cup having won the tournament six times.

The Germans won consecutive titles in 2009 and 2013 in New Delhi, which was their last crown. Germany secured the bronze medal in the last edition of the tournament in 2016 in Lucknow.



## Kiran Abbavaram loses his brother in an accident

**A**ctor Kiran Abbavaram who recently tasted success with *SR Kalyanamandapam* starring Priyanka Jawalkar, suffered a personal loss on Wednesday. The actor-writer lost his brother in a road accident on Wednesday. Kiran Abbavaram's brother Ramanjulu Reddy passed away in a road accident in Chennuru, Kadapa district on Wednesday. Ramanjulu Reddy was living in Sambepalle Mandal, Dudyala village in Andhra Pradesh. Condolences messages are coming from all quarters. Kiran Abbaram is making a name for himself making rapid strides in the industry after making his debut with *Raja Varu Rani Garu*. He has multiple projects like *Sammathame* and *Sebastian PC 524* and recently his film with Ramesh Kaduri. The project will be produced the film on Clap Entertainment and Naveen Yerneni and Ravi Shankar Yalamanchili of Mythri Movie Makers will be presenting the film.



## Abhijeeth turning tables with **ALLUDU GAARU**

SHIKHA DUGGAL

**T**he feel-good web series *Alludu Gaaru* has compelled many locals to ask a question: "why do only girls have to leave their house after marriage?" With the same idea, Dice Media announced its foray into regional content. The new series is a remake of the Hindi super hit family drama *What The Folks!* that has seen three successful seasons. Hyderabad-based Abhijeeth Poondla, the lead actor of the series, also questions the same as why this age-old custom can't be overturned. The actor in the show decides to reside in his wife's home. It is a coming-of-age story that revolves around the struggles of a newly-married son-in-law Ajay essayed by Abhijeeth Poondla, who is forced to stay alone with his over-caring in-laws in a conservative household for a few weeks. His bitter-sweet interactions with his in-laws to impress them add to the humor, which will make you laugh and feel sorry for him at the same time. Despite his initial reluctance, Ajay tries hard to meet their expectations and fit into the family, keeping his contrasting world views aside. While his struggles will tickle your funny bones without a doubt, you are sure to empathise with his plight.

"With this show, we wanted the masses to treat their son-in-laws the same way as they do the daughters-in-law. It is sometimes okay to not place your son-in-law on an unmatched pedestal. There is no harm if the

wife is older than her husband or no harm if she is earning more than him. The whole process of judgment should stop in this society!," says the actor in conversation with *The Pioneer*.

The actor clarified that the team neither wanted to please the audiences nor offend them with the theme of the show, they told the plot through the eyes of the filmmaker. The actor knew it won't turn out to be offensive content online, he confirmed that it will be food for thought for many. Everyone must understand the story from a girl's perspective! He continues, "We didn't label it to be a feminist story, it is a new point of view one can look at. It was also about how *aaj ka mard* thinks about these cultural practices. I never pick roles so that they'll recalibrate my career in this industry. Instead, I must enjoy doing the role and hence I'll do it or else will turn down the offer."

This time he found the role to be more challenging than enjoyable, he thought he'll be carrying the show completely on his shoulders and therefore it was his responsibility to give it his best shot. He is happy that the show did well, and is glad to have worked with a wonderful cast and crew.

Narrating to us a real-life experience, where his family can be seen breaking stereotypes similarly in a marriage, he recounts, "We are a typical Telugu family but my older sister got married to a Punjabi man. My parents are extremely fond of my brother-in-law, so much so that they accept him as their own child. We respect him immensely but we haven't ever thought of placing him on any pedestals. All this makes me feel that yes, such a show like *Alludu Gaaru* is relevant."



## Tollywood biggies postpone promotions after lyricist Sastry's death

**F**ollowing the death of renowned lyricist Sirivennela Seetharama Sastry, the makers of Pawan Kalyan's *Bheemla Nayak* have altered their promotional schedules. The makers of Pawan Kalyan starrer *Bheemla Nayak* dropped their plans to release the song *Adavi Thalli Maata*, which was supposed to be out on Wednesday.

"Due to unforeseen circumstances, #AdaviThalliMaata song will not be coming out tomorrow," the production house said in a tweet.

Seetharama Sastry's contribution to cinema is unmatched. Trivikram Srinivas is one of the closest aides of the legendary writer Sirivennela. Hence, the makers have decided to postpone their song's release.

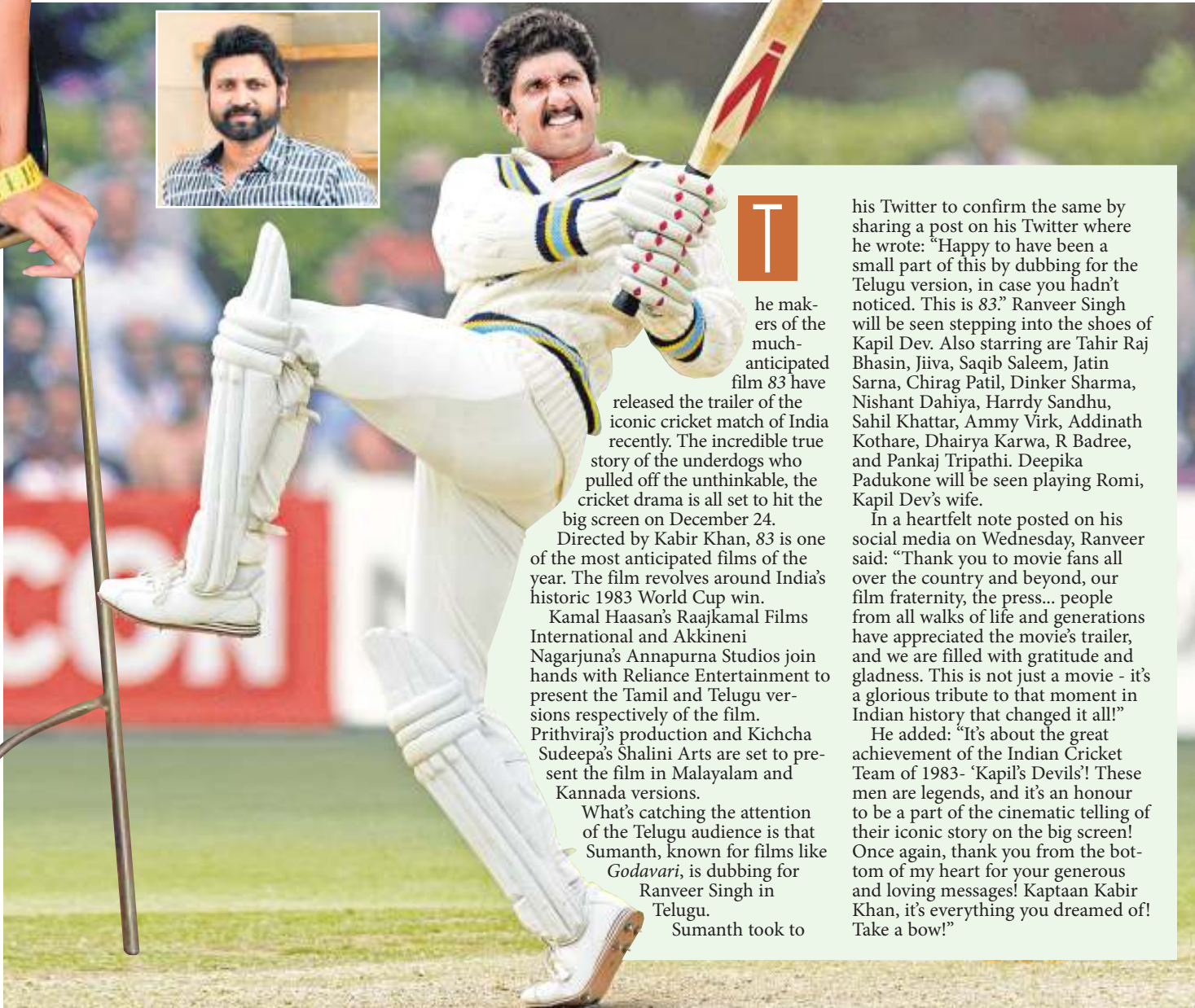
On the other hand, the makers of Ram Charan and NTR-starrer *RRR*, also took to their social media handles to announce the postponement of the theatrical trailer's release. The makers of *RRR* quote technical reasons behind the postponement. "Due to unforeseen circumstances, we aren't releasing the #RRRTrailer on December 3rd. We will announce the new date very soon," the makers wrote.

Meanwhile, the makers of *Bangarraju* too postponed the release of their second single from the film. Nagarjuna announced the same by sharing a post on his Twitter: "In respect to a great lyricist Sirivennela Seetharamasastry garu, *Bangarraju Naakosam* song teaser will be released on 2nd December 10.08 am instead of today."

*RRR* and *Bheemla Nayak* are scheduled to hit the screens for the Sankranti festival 2022. *RRR* is to hit theatres on January 7 while *Bheemla Nayak* is slated for release on January 12.



## Sumanth turns dubbing artiste for 83



**T**he makers of the much-anticipated film *83* have released the trailer of the iconic cricket match of India recently. The incredible true story of the underdogs who pulled off the unthinkable, the cricket drama is all set to hit the big screen on December 24. Directed by Kabir Khan, *83* is one of the most anticipated films of the year. The film revolves around India's historic 1983 World Cup win. Kamal Haasan's Raajkamal Films International and Akkineni Nagarjuna's Annapurna Studios join hands with Reliance Entertainment to present the Tamil and Telugu versions respectively of the film. Prithviraj's production and Kichcha Sudeepa's Shalini Arts are set to present the film in Malayalam and Kannada versions.

What's catching the attention of the Telugu audience is that Sumanth, known for films like *Godavari*, is dubbing for Ranveer Singh in Telugu. Sumanth took to

his Twitter to confirm the same by sharing a post on his Twitter where he wrote: "Happy to have been a small part of this by dubbing for the Telugu version, in case you hadn't noticed. This is 83! Ranveer Singh will be seen stepping into the shoes of Kapil Dev. Also starring are Tahir Raj Bhasin, Jiiva, Saqib Saleem, Jatin Sarna, Chirag Patil, Dinker Sharma, Nishant Dahiya, Ammy Virk, Addinath Kothare, Dhairya Karwa, R Badree, and Pankaj Tripathi. Deepika Padukone will be seen playing Romi, Kapil Dev's wife."

In a heartfelt note posted on his social media on Wednesday, Ranveer said: "Thank you to movie fans all over the country and beyond, our film fraternity, the press... people from all walks of life and generations have appreciated the movie's trailer, and we are filled with gratitude and gladness. This is not just a movie - it's a glorious tribute to that moment in Indian history that changed it all!"

He added: "It's about the great achievement of the Indian Cricket Team of 1983- 'Kapil's Devils!' These men are legends, and it's an honour to be a part of the cinematic telling of their iconic story on the big screen! Once again, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your generous and loving messages! Kaptaan Kabir Khan, it's everything you dreamed of! Take a bow!"

## Seerat Kapoor grooves to Badshah's Party Anthem

**A**ctress Seerat Kapoor is all set to blaze fire in the coming days. Seerat made her acting debut in *Run Raja Run* in 2014. There was no looking back as she was seen in films like *Tigers*, *Columbus*, *Raju Gari Gadhi 2*, *Okka Kshanam*, *Touch Chesi Chudu* and more.

The actress is climbing the ladder of success with a hand full of projects — recently signing a film for Dil Raju's production house.

Currently, Badshah's new song *Jugnu* is on everyone's mind and has been grooved to on Instagram reels and stories. This time Badshah is coming up with his new party anthem for which he made the announcement recently. According to the sources, it is said that the beautiful actress Seerat Kapoor will be featured in Badshah's upcoming Party anthem *Song* which is said to be releasing this week.

Seerat Kapoor's fans are very much excited to see her in something new, as she will be seen showing off her best moves. The song is said to be very catchy and will make you dance on its every single beat.

On the work front, Seerat Kapoor is all set to make her Bollywood debut. She will be seen in *Maarich* alongside the veteran actor Naseeruddin Shah and the handsome Tusshar Kapoor, and is highly awaited by fans. The film is going to be produced under the banner of Tusshar Entertainments. The actress will be seen in Telugu film as a lead in Dil Raju's upcoming film. The actress was also spotted on the sets.

